

Current Challenges

A great number of the participants in the Charter process came to the hearings with the determination and need to share their concerns about current challenges to the British Columbia public education system. In particular, dramatic funding cuts to public schools and the resulting reductions in educational programs and opportunities for learners were highlighted by presenters again and again. As has been noted in other parts of this report, the breadth of criticism of public policy decisions presented the Charter panel with a conundrum. The panel was clear that its mandate was not a review of current concerns. On the contrary, the panel reminded presenters that the Charter was to be a document that expressed principles and vision rather than anxiety and criticism. Still, the panel felt the necessity to truthfully reflect in this report the depth of feeling expressed by participants. As a result, this section will highlight briefly what was presented in this regard.

In the rural areas where Charter hearings were held many presenters expressed their anger at the closing of schools. One concern with respect to school closures was, as has been mentioned in another section of this report, loss of schools as a centre of community life.

A school lost leaves a community without a heart . . .

Bill Shephard, Port McNeil



103.8, 105.5, 104.5, 109.3, 109.20, 113.4, 114.5, 122.2, 122.3, 122.11, 123.9, 129.1, 129.9, 130.1, 130.3, 130.4, 130.7, 131.1, 132.4, 132.5, 133.6, 135.1, 141.1, 150.10, 103.2, 103.4, 103.8, 104.11, 105.1, 105.5, 106.1, 108.2, 108.3, 109.7, 109.15, 109.19, 109.20, 109.21, 109.26, 110.1, 110.16, 113.11, 114.1, 114.4, 114.7, 114.13, 114.14, 115.3, 115.7, 115.10, 116.2, 116.6, 117.2, 117.3, 117.5, 117.7, 117.9, 117.12, 118.1, 118.4, 119.2, 119.4, 119.5, 120.13, 121.1, 122.5, 122.6, 122.10, 122.11, 123.9, 123.13, 124.12, 124.13, 124.16, 125.1, 125.6, 126.3, 127.1, 127.6, 129.4, 129.9, 130.1, 130.2, 130.3, 130.4, 130.5, 130.6, 130.7, 130.13, 130.17, 130.18, 131.1, 131.2, 132.3, 132.6, 132.15, 132.18, 134.26, 135.1, 141.1, 141.15, 141.29, 141.30, 141.33, 141.37, 150.10

Connected to this was a fear of long bus rides for learners and anxiety that transportation services too are being and will be cut.

102.1, 102.9, 102.13, 102.15, 104.2, 104.5, 104.6, 105.3, 105.4, 105.5, 106.1, 107.3, 107.8, 108.5, 108.7, 108.9, 108.14, 108.20, 108.23, 109.2, 109.6, 109.7, 109.9, 109.15, 109.16, 109.20, 109.24, 110.1, 111.12, 112.5, 113.4, 113.6, 113.7, 113.8, 114.12, 116.1, 119.4, 121.2, 121.7, 121.11, 121.12, 123.4, 123.14, 123.16, 124.7, 124.9, 124.11, 124.12, 124.13, 125.3, 126.10, 128.5, 129.1, 129.6, 129.7, 130.2, 130.3, 130.9, 130.15, 131.11, 132.4, 132.5, 132.6, 132.9, 132.10, 132.18, 133.1, 133.4, 133.6, 134.19, 134.28, 135.1, 135.2, 135.7, 136.1, 136.3, 137.1, 138.8, 138.9, 138.10, 138.14, 140.6, 140.11, 141.1, 141.9, 141.26, 141.27, 141.37, 150.2

A great many participants in the Charter process articulated their opposition to the increases in class sizes resulting from funding cuts and legislative change. Their anxiety focused on the cost to learners whose opportunities for individual attention from teachers is being adversely affected.



Individual attention is quite simply class size.

Barbara McGeough, Vancouver

Students in particular expressed their concerns in this area.

You shouldn't have to run to class just to get a seat.

Don Stevenson, Linus
Lucas, Enrica Marshal,
Lynnsey Amos, Lee Lucas,
students. Port Alberni.

Every single person in my Biology 12 class would appreciate a smaller class size.

Oliver Clifton, student,
Prince Rupert

Cutbacks in services to students with special needs, those with behaviour problems and ESL students were also identified as an area of great concern. Many wondered about the long term costs of reduced services.

106.3, 118.1, 124.9, 124.11, 126.9, 127.1, 129.11, 130.7, 132.4, 133.4, 133.6, 134.16, 134.17, 134.20, 134.23, 134.26, 138.9, 141.44, 101.12, 102.13, 102.16, 102.18, 102.19, 102.20, 103.4, 104.2, 104.5, 104.6, 105.4, 105.5, 106.1, 107.8, 107.9, 108.3, 108.14, 108.21, 109.1, 109.3, 109.4, 109.5, 109.6, 109.9, 109.14, 109.18, 109.20, 109.24, 109.27, 110.1, 111.12, 111.20, 113.4, 113.6, 113.8, 113.10, 116.6, 117.2, 117.4, 117.10, 118.1, 121.1, 121.6, 121.8, 121.12, 122.4, 123.5, 123.9, 123.10, 123.13, 124.9, 124.10, 124.11, 128.7, 129.8, 129.9, 129.11, 129.15, 130.7, 130.9, 130.11, 130.13, 132.4, 132.5, 132.6, 132.7, 132.9, 132.15, 133.6, 133.9, 133.12, 134.20, 134.23, 134.24, 136.1, 136.3, 137.1, 137.2, 137.9, 137.13, 138.2, 138.9, 140.11, 141.1, 141.27, 141.28, 141.37, 150.21, 108.3, 108.7, 108.8, 108.14, 109.4, 109.7, 109.10, 113.4, 124.9, 130.6, 132.7, 135.4, 135.9, 136.1, 137.1, 137.2, 137.5, 137.7, 137.8, 137.9, 137.10, 137.11, 137.14, 138.1, 138.2, 138.10, 138.14, 141.6, 141.26, 141.27, 141.33, 141.36



We'll pay a huge price later for kids who aren't taken care of now.

Penny Kellett, Linda
McDaniels, Victoria

In particular, there was frustration that testing and assessment of students with special needs, always a slow process, is being affected negatively by funding cuts.

Significant numbers of presenters expressed the frustration that schools, communities, parents and students are now being forced to make choices about the continued funding of programs, all of which they value and want to have continue.

Do you want a fine arts program, or do you want special ed?

Peter Harris, Nanaimo

102.11, 104.9, 106.1, 106.2, 108.3, 109.5, 109.16, 113.4, 113.5, 116.2, 116.5, 118.1, 119.13, 120.11, 120.12, 123.15, 124.5, 124.11, 124.12, 124.13, 129.2, 129.3, 130.6, 130.7, 131.2, 132.9, 132.10, 132.12, 132.13, 133.3, 133.4, 133.6, 134.12, 134.20, 134.22, 134.24, 136.1, 136.3, 138.8, 138.9, 140.6, 141.10, 141.13, 141.41, 102.13, 102.14, 103.5, 104.2, 104.4, 106.1, 107.8, 108.3, 108.15, 108.23, 109.12, 112.6, 113.4, 113.8, 113.11, 114.1, 115.8, 115.9, 120.10, 126.5, 127.5, 128.2, 128.3, 129.2, 129.3, 129.5, 129.7, 129.12, 132.6, 132.19, 133.8, 134.18, 135.2, 135.9, 136.3, 136.4, 136.5, 138.9, 140.11, 140.17, 141.1, 141.2, 141.6, 141.22, 141.26, 141.27, 141.28, 141.33, 141.37, 141.38, 141.39

Special emphasis was placed by many participants on cutbacks in particular areas which they saw as fundamental. Reference has already been made to school closures. Counseling services for students, and especially the availability of trained teacher librarians and school libraries were mentioned on numerous occasions. Cuts in these areas were described as illogical and counterproductive.

We talk about how we want to improve reading, and then we start cutting back libraries.

Michael Daniels, Maple Ridge

101.1, 101.4, 101.10, 101.11, 102.5, 102.6, 102.7, 102.10, 102.12, 103.2, 103.3, 103.7, 103.8 104.1, 104.10, 105.1, 105.2, 105.4, 106.1, 107.1, 107.3, 107.7, 107.9, 107.11, 108.2, 108.5, 108.6, 108.11, 108.14, 108.20, 109.7, 109.15, 109.16, 109.22, 110.4, 110.5, 110.7, 110.15, 111.20, 112.4, 112.5, 112.7, 113.3, 113.4, 113.8, 114.1, 114.3, 114.8, 114.9, 114.12, 114.15, 114.16, 114.21, 115.1, 115.3, 115.6, 115.7, 115.8, 115.9, 116.1, 117.10, 117.11, 117.12, 117.13, 118.4, 119.1, 119.3, 119.14, 120.10, 120.11, 120.13, 122.3, 122.10, 123.10, 124.4, 124.13, 124.14, 124.16, 126.1, 128.2, 128.3, 128.4, 128.8, 129.2, 129.3, 129.13, 130.1, 130.2, 130.5, 130.12, 130.13, 130.17, 132.18, 132.19, 133.1, 133.4, 133.8, 133.9, 134.2, 134.3, 134.4, 134.5, 134.6, 134.7, 134.8, 134.10, 134.11, 134.12, 134.13, 134.17, 134.18, 134.26, 134.27, 135.2, 135.9, 136.1, 136.3, 136.4, 136.6, 137.1, 137.2, 137.10, 137.13, 138.3, 140.3, 140.4, 140.7, 141.1, 141.2, 141.7, 141.23, 141.25, 141.26, 141.27, 141.28, 141.37, 141.44, 150.7, 150.15

Reductions in fine arts programs were of great concern and were mentioned by many parents.

I feel like we're going backward rather than forward. We used to have a music specialist in every school. I think we should look at what we've lost.

Sandy Cervo, Sparwood



Another area of particular concern, referred to by many presenters is deterioration in the availability of books and learning materials.

It puts parents in a terrible predicament when the only way to get textbooks is to do fundraising.

Dawn Glykherr, Vancouver, West Side

102.13, 102.19, 108.7, 110.3, 115.1, 115.8, 115.9, 116.1, 116.3, 119.11, 120.10, 120.12, 122.3, 123.4, 124.11, 126.5, 128.2, 128.3, 128.4, 129.1, 129.3, 129.12, 130.13, 132.5, 132.10, 132.14, 132.19, 133.6, 133.8, 134.18, 134.19, 137.1, 141.1, 141.2, 141.26, 141.27, 141.28, 141.39, 150.21, 106.1, 114.10, 114.14, 115.10, 116.3, 117.13, 118.3, 120.10, 120.11, 120.12, 122.7, 122.9, 122.11, 124.1, 124.5, 124.8, 124.11, 124.12, 124.13, 124.15, 125.4, 126.5, 128.2, 128.3, 128.8, 129.2, 129.5, 129.8, 129.11, 130.4, 130.5, 130.9, 130.17, 131.1, 131.4, 132.4, 132.5, 132.6, 132.10, 132.14, 132.18, 132.19, 133.6, 133.9, 134.17, 134.20, 135.1, 138.2, 140.11, 141.15, 141.29, 141.30, 141.31, 141.37, 141.39

The maintenance and upkeep of schools and the reduction in the numbers and time assignments of teacher assistants teacher aides, educational assistants and child care workers were frequently described as casualties of reduced resources.

102.19, 103.2, 116.1, 116.3, 117.7, 124.13, 132.5, 133.1, 133.6, 133.8, 136.2, 136.3, 138.9, 140.16, 141.26, 141.27, 141.28, 102.13, 108.18, 113.4, 113.5, 113.6, 113.7, 113.10, 114.12, 114.15, 114.16, 115.3, 116.5, 116.6, 116.7, 117.4, 117.1, 117.10, 118.1, 118.5, 118.6, 118.8, 119.14, 120.11, 121.1, 121.2, 121.7, 121.12, 122.8, 123.14, 124.1, 124.4, 124.9, 124.10, 124.11, 124.12, 124.13, 124.16, 125.2, 126.5, 127.1, 128.2, 128.5, 129.2, 129.4, 129.6, 129.7, 129.8, 129.15, 130.7, 130.9, 130.13, 130.13, 131.1, 132.6, 132.9, 132.10, 132.14, 132.17, 132.18, 132.19, 133.1, 133.4, 133.6, 133.7, 133.9, 133.12, 134.19, 134.20, 134.23, 134.24, 135.1, 135.5, 135.8, 136.1, 136.3, 136.4, 136.5, 137.2, 138.9, 138.11, 140.11, 141.1, 141.2, 141.26, 141.31, 141.37, 141.41, 141.44, 150.2



101.2, 101.5, 101.14, 101.16, 102.8, 102.9, 102.19, 103.8, 104.10, 107.6, 107.11, 108.4, 108.5, 108.8, 108.12, 108.13, 108.15, 108.19, 108.23, 108.24, 109.17, 109.20, 109.25, 110.3, 110.4, 110.6, 110.11, 112.2, 113.2, 113.13, 114.5, 114.10, 114.11, 114.18, 114.19, 117.12, 118.1, 118.2, 118.5, 119.15, 120.9, 120.11, 120.12, 120.14, 122.6, 122.7, 122.8, 122.10, 123.3, 123.5, 123.13, 123.15, 124.6, 124.11, 124.13, 125.2, 125.4, 126.10, 127.1, 128.4, 128.7, 128.8, 129.2, 129.3, 129.7, 129.8, 129.10, 129.13, 130.1, 130.2, 130.5, 130.7, 130.9, 130.11, 130.14, 130.16, 131.4, 131.5, 131.6, 132.3, 132.5, 132.8, 132.10, 132.11, 132.12, 132.14, 132.18, 132.19, 132.20, 132.21, 133.1, 133.2, 133.3, 133.4, 133.5, 133.6, 133.8, 133.9, 133.10, 134.14, 134.17, 134.18, 134.19, 134.20, 134.21, 134.26, 134.27, 134.28, 134.29, 135.1, 135.2, 135.5, 135.6, 135.8, 136.2, 136.3, 136.6, 137.1, 137.10, 137.12, 137.13, 138.2, 138.6, 138.7, 138.9, 138.14, 140.4, 140.11, 140.15, 141.1, 141.2, 141.8, 141.15, 141.17, 141.26, 141.37, 150.2, 150.21, 101.8, 101.13, 102.2, 102.8, 102.9, 102.10, 102.12, 102.13, 102.15, 102.17, 102.18, 103.8, 104.2, 104.6, 104.9, 104.11, 105.2, 106.1, 107.4, 107.9, 107.11, 108.4, 108.7, 108.14, 108.15, 108.18, 108.19, 108.20, 108.22, 109.1, 109.2, 109.3, 109.4, 109.12, 109.13, 109.17, 109.19, 109.20, 109.21, 109.24, 110.1, 110.3, 110.8, 110.12, 110.16, 111.12, 112.4, 113.4, 113.5, 114.8, 114.9, 114.10, 114.14, 114.17, 115.1, 115.3, 115.8, 115.9, 116.6, 116.7, 117.4, 117.10, 117.11, 117.12, 118.1, 118.4, 118.5, 119.12, 119.13, 120.10, 120.11, 120.12, 120.13, 120.16, 121.1, 121.2, 121.7, 121.9, 121.12, 122.2, 122.3, 122.4, 122.7, 122.8, 122.9, 122.10, 122.11, 123.3, 123.4, 123.5, 123.6, 123.9, 123.10, 123.13, 123.14, 123.16, 124.1, 124.12, 124.13, 125.2, 125.4, 127.1, 128.4, 128.5, 128.7, 128.8, 129.6, 129.7, 129.8, 129.9, 129.11, 130.5, 130.7, 130.13, 130.15, 131.1, 131.5, 132.3, 132.4, 132.5, 132.6, 132.8, 132.11, 132.13, 132.14, 132.15, 132.18, 133.4, 133.9, 133.10, 134.12, 134.18, 134.23, 135.1, 135.2, 135.8, 136.1, 136.3, 137.1, 137.2, 137.9, 137.10, 137.11, 137.13, 137.14, 138.2, 138.5, 138.7, 138.9, 138.11, 140.6, 140.7, 140.10, 140.14, 141.2, 141.5, 141.15, 141.16, 141.18, 141.26, 141.27, 141.28, 141.35, 141.37, 141.41, 141.42, 141.44, 141.45, 150.8, 150.19, 150.21, 124.8, 124.9, 124.11, 124.12,

There was a generalized anxiety about the priorities of public policy decisions, and a perceived lack of emphasis on what learners and schools need and deserve.

I saw a school library in a portable, and then went to a new shopping mall where you could see your reflection in the floor. There was a fountain and skylights. It was a temple. Banks have marble floors and sunlight. We take kids and put them in rundown, smelly portables. If we really value them, kids and old people and sick people should be in palaces and goods and money should be in old portables.

Ian Mathews, Nanaimo



Another presenter expressed similar concerns in slightly different language.

Taking money out of public education looks great on the financial bottom line but obviously has huge immediate impacts on on parents and teachers ...

Andrea Reimer, Vancouver

In many small and rural communities concern about the cutbacks to education were connected to the general economic situation, and with reduced funding to other public services.

Our community is going to be hurt this year. We've managed to pull rabbits out of the hat the last six years. There is no rabbit and hat this year.

Larry Bancroft, Salmon Arm

One principal expressed his anxiety this way:

This school works, and cuts hurt.

Rod Kingsfield, Prince Rupert

Frustration was expressed that needed ongoing professional growth in the public system, and especially teachers' access to professional development, is hampered by cutbacks in resources.

104.2, 105.1, 105.5, 106.1, 106.2, 115.8, 117.2, 117.1, 117.10, 121.5, 121.6, 121.11, 122.8, 123.17, 129.11, 130.1, 130.6, 132.10, 132.17, 133.6, 134.20, 135.2, 135.3, 137.1, 138.5, 140.10, 141.1, 150.2

Many presenters were worried about the "burn out" factor as it affects teachers and school based administrators especially. They expressed the belief that educators need more time to carry out their tasks, and some referred especially to time for consultation with other professionals.

109.7, 109.9, 109.15, 113.4, 113.5, 113.14, 115.8, 116.3, 116.4, 116.5, 116.6, 121.2, 122.8, 125.2, 128.5, 130.13, 132.6, 132.12, 134.20, 138.14, 141.1, 108.18, 109.3, 113.15, 115.3, 115.8, 116.7, 121.6, 121.7, 121.11, 123.17, 124.10, 124.11, 124.12, 124.13, 124.16, 125.5, 125.6, 129.1, 129.4, 129.15, 132.9, 132.12, 132.14, 133.3, 133.4, 133.7, 133.8, 133.12, 134.12, 134.22, 134.25, 135.4, 135.6, 136.5, 136.6, 137.2, 137.4, 137.10, 137.13, 138.7, 138.9, 138.11, 138.13, 140.10, 141.1, 141.26, 141.42, 141.44, 150.4

In this context a great deal of concern was expressed about the proliferation of bureaucratic tasks and paperwork which were seen as getting in the way of the primary task of the system working directly with learners.

108.8, 109.2, 113.5, 113.8, 113.10, 114.1, 114.10, 114.18, 116.3, 122.8, 125.6, 129.3, 132.12, 132.19, 133.5, 133.9, 138.13, 141.1, 141.42