



January 27, 2021

Ref: 241589

Tracy Humphreys, Founder and Chair
BCEDAccess Society
Email: tracy@bcdaccess.com

Dear Ms. Humphreys:

Thank you for your letter of November 19, 2020, regarding the Chilliwack Board of Education, which has been shared with me. As the newly appointed Minister of Education, I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond. I apologize for my delayed response.

I understand many people in Chilliwack and across British Columbia have concerns about trustee conduct in the Chilliwack School District. I share these concerns and have recently appointed two special advisors—Lynn Smith, QC and Mike McKay—to the Chilliwack Board of Education to evaluate the Board's commitment to a school system that is safe, inclusive and welcoming to all students and staff.

Ms. Smith and Mr. McKay bring extensive professional experience and expertise to their work as special advisors to the Board. Ms. Smith served as a Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia for fourteen years and earlier as a law professor and dean at the University of British Columbia; two of Ms. Smith's areas of speciality include the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and human rights law. Mr. McKay has broad experience in the BC school system, where he has served in multiple roles including as principal, superintendent, official trustee and special advisor.

Boards and individual trustees are responsible for providing an inclusive and safe school environment, welcoming students and families of all backgrounds and abilities. Trustee conduct is a very important issue and I can assure you that I and the entire Ministry of Education take these matters seriously. I have full confidence that Ms. Smith and Mr. McKay will conduct a thorough evaluation of the Board and will provide expert guidance and advice regarding the future governance of the Chilliwack School District.

Thank you for writing to share your concerns with me about this important issue. If you have any questions or require further information about the *School Act*, please contact Dave Duerksen, Executive Director, Legislation, Policy and Governance by phone at (250) 387-8037.

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Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Whiteside". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Jennifer Whiteside
Minister

pc: Dave Duerksen, Executive Director, Legislation, Policy and Governance Branch
Keith Godin, Assistant Deputy Minister, Governance and Analytics Division