



British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

November 1, 2016

The Honourable Mike Bernier
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8V 9E2

RE: By-elections in School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap) and
School District No. 39 (Vancouver)

Dear Minister Bernier,

On October 29, 2016, the BCSTA Provincial Council passed the following motion:

That BCSTA's board of directors urge the Ministry of Education to immediately include in the terms of reference for official trustees: a date for a by-election which shall be set within six months of a board being fired, and that SD 83 and 39 be affected by the said change immediately. Additionally, the BCSTA Board of Directors call on the Minister of Education to amend the School Act Section 1.72 (3) to require a by-election be held within one year in the event that an "official trustee" has been appointed to a District Board of Education.

As you see above, the return of elected boards of education to both School District 83 and School District 39 is of paramount importance to BCSTA and its member boards. We encourage you to call by-elections in both the North Okanagan and in Vancouver as soon as possible.

It is our belief that citizens of these communities, as well as the students within each school district, are best served by elected school trustees. The very foundation of our democracy is a belief that citizens are best represented by elected officials who can represent the needs, desires, and goals of their local community. The unique nature of each school district and the differing needs of individual students within schools are best represented by school trustees chosen by the citizens of each community. While the North Okanagan – Shuswap region is much different than the city of Vancouver, they both deserve to have their school districts governed by trustees elected by the citizenship that they serve.

The oversight role of a board of education is critical to the proper governance of a school district. While we have confidence in our senior staff as managers of our schools and school districts, they do not have the same governance mandate as school trustees. The most effective stewardship of school districts, reflective of local values and context, can only be achieved when elected boards of education determine and guide the mission, vision, strategic plan, and finances of the district. The governance of local school districts must ultimately be answerable to the citizens of the communities it serves and this can only happen when elected boards of education are in place.

The motion passed at our most recent Provincial Council meeting recognizes this value and requests specific changes to the School Act that emphasize the need for a return to an elected board within a specified time.

On behalf of BCSTA, our member boards, and the communities they represent, I request that by-elections be called in both School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap) and School District No. 39 (Vancouver) to replace the boards recently dismissed. These by-elections should not be unduly delayed and should precede the scheduled general election process set for October 2018.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. For communities and the electorate to have confidence in the governance of their local school district, they must be able to elect local representatives to act on their behalf.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a vertical stroke, likely representing the name Teresa Rezansoff.

Teresa Rezansoff
President
BC School Trustees Association

cc: BCSTA Member Boards of Education