



Colquitz Middle School Parent Advisory Council

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Greater Victoria School District No. 61
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Sent via: trustees@sd61.bc.ca

*****Please include this letter in the next Board meeting under correspondence*****

Attn: SD61 Board Chair, Nicole Duncan

We write to the board on behalf of the Colquitz Middle School parent community to express our deep disappointment with both the process and the decision to eliminate the School Police Liaison (SPLO) Program from our district schools.

As parents and caregivers, we want to do our part in trying to address the wrongs of the past, to be forward-thinking in an era where the issues are complex, and devote the time and energy needed to find the right solutions to make our society better for our kids. We expect the same from the organizations and the school system that serves them. This means that we may have to do things differently or find collaborative ways to support students at a time when there are fewer people available to fulfil key roles.

There's no question we are living in an era where we must be sensitive to the cultural challenges and historical legacies that affect our diverse student population, as well as the staff whose primary job it is to foster inclusive and safe learning environments for children. We depend on the leadership of the people responsible for ensuring our students thrive in a system meant to deliver equitable and supportive educational services. But we also know that this endeavour can be complicated in the K-12 sector where many of the adults are seized by different objectives and whose agendas do not always align.

We understand that the impetus for this cancellation begins with the BC Human Rights Commissioner whose recommendation relied heavily on [research and data from the United States](#). While we agree the concerns expressed by marginalized students that led her to make this statement should be properly acknowledged and prioritized, we do not agree with the SD61 board's decision to wholly terminate the program. This decision seems short-sighted, especially without a **realistic** plan to replace the vital services it provided – particularly at this time when it is well known that gang activity around schools has increased exponentially in our region.

We understand that one of the main points being raised by the Commissioner is that SPLOs are providing services that should be done by other key positions, and we do not disagree with that view. Unfortunately, what is evident in K-12 — as it is across the rest of the provincial public sector — is that there are shortages of school psychologists, nurses, social workers and counsellors who are best suited to fulfil many of the services SPLOs have been providing in SD61 school. We also don't disagree that more of these supports would be better for our students, but it is just plain dangerous for an employer responsible for children to remove any reliable supports that are available – not to mention when the local police departments have indicated such a willingness to make significant changes to accommodate the concerns that have been expressed.

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When this issue was first raised through the board's survey in October of 2021, parents believed in good faith, that they would have access to those results for themselves as is the expectation of any organization that collects data from the public. We note that this survey was completed well in advance of the Commissioner's recommendation, and it is troubling that the board appears to have ignored results provided by one of its primary stakeholders — the parents and caregivers in our district. Moreover, the board appears to have favoured the input from external bodies when making its final determination to cancel the program.

Having only recently had the opportunity to review the results in the survey summary report which we gratefully obtained from the individual who had to submit a *Freedom of Information* request to receive it, it is curious that the board obviously set aside the results from parents and caregivers considering that they revealed a solid 66% of respondents reported that they were "comfortable or very comfortable" with the SPLOs in schools. This sentiment was compounded by the 60% who agreed they "would like to see the program continue". For the record, the CMS PAC conducted its own informal poll of parents and the results mirrored that of the survey with 100% of those who responded stating their support for the program to be reinstated.

In discussions with parents and staff at our school, we have heard many stories about the positive effect police liaisons have had with students and their families – which is in stark contrast to what students will now experience as only officers on patrol are now available to address sensitive and complex events without the benefit of SLPO's training.

Without a doubt, this is not a straight-forward problem that is easily resolved, and we fully grasp how difficult it is for any organization to find the balance and appear respectful to each of the positions represented within this issue. The CMS PAC, on behalf of our school community, strongly suggests your board re-engages with the local police departments and other concerned parties as soon as possible to collaboratively determine a path forward — one that will allow for the benefits of the SPLO program to remain available to students and schools while also working to address the concerns that have been outlined. We note that there is precedent for this in how the [Vancouver School District \(39\) – arguably an equally complex district – has successfully reinstated their program.](#)

Thank you for your time and consideration in reading the views expressed by the CMS PAC and our parent/caregiver community. We trust you will give them the attention they deserve.

Sincerely, on behalf of the CMS PAC executive and our parent community,

Kindrée Draper, Chair

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