

December 16, 2024

Honourable Spencer Chandra Herbert
Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
TACS.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Chandra Herbert:

RE: BC Summer & Winter Games

We are writing on behalf of School District 42 Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows, School District 73 Kamloops Thompson, and School District 67 Okanagan Skaha to express our shared concern regarding the funding model for **BC Summer & Winter Games** (the "BC Games"). Maple Ridge recently hosted the games and have shared our experience with our school district colleagues who will be hosting upcoming games. The BC Games, a thrilling event that brings communities together and supports young athletes in their athletic endeavors, is a testament to the spirit and unity of our province. However, we believe the current funding model does not adequately address the diverse financial realities of different host communities.

As you are aware, the funding for the BC Games has remained largely unchanged since 2008, with only a modest increase in 2023. The stagnant funding has put significant pressure on communities like Maple Ridge, where the ability to secure corporate sponsorships is considerably more restricted compared to communities with increased options for industrial and private support. The expectation for all communities to meet the same financial obligations regardless of their size or local economy creates an uneven playing field that can undermine the very spirit of the games.

It's important to note that the costs to the school district include, but are not limited to, janitorial services, maintenance, waste disposal, hydro, managerial and administrative planning and oversight, loss of rental income for the eight days that the facilities were booked, increased deferred maintenance costs, and more. One of our most pressing concerns is the expectation that school districts bear these financial burdens for the games. In Maple Ridge, despite recovering a portion of direct operating costs incurred, the balance of unrecovered costs incurred and to be incurred by the school district has placed added strain on an already underfunded public education system, requiring the diversion of essential operating funds and human resources to support the event. We anticipate that this same financial reality will be shared by those districts who will be hosting the games in the future if the funding model is not addressed.

We strongly believe in the importance of the BC Games and the opportunities they provide for young athletes. However, we urge you to reconsider and restructure the funding model to better reflect the unique circumstances of each host community. Specifically, we ask that the province increase the base funding for the games to account for inflation and the rising costs associated with hosting such events. Additionally, we request that the requirement for school districts to contribute from their operating funds be reconsidered, as this burdens our educational institutions and often affects our most vulnerable students most.

School District 42 was committed to supporting the BC Games and the athletes participating, but the funding model must be equitable and sustainable for all host communities. We hope you will consider our concerns and ensure that the BC Games can continue to be a successful and inspiring event for years.

While the current financial structure of the Games was unsustainable, we would like to stress our commitment to the continuation of these games. The benefits it provides to young people across the province is evident and the sense of community pride felt throughout Maple Ridge was palpable.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your response. We are hopeful that a solution can be found that benefits all British Columbians and supports the continued success of the BC Games.

Sincerely,



Elaine Yamamoto, Chairperson
Board of Education of School District No. 42 (Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows)

cc: Lisa Beare, M.L.A. Minister of Education and Child Care
Lawrence Mok, M.L.A.
James Palanio, Chairperson SD67
Heather Grieve, Chairperson SD73
Mayor and Council, City of Maple Ridge
Alison Noble, President & CEO, BC Games Society
Laura Butler, Chair, 2024 BC Summer Games
BCSTA President and CEO
All Boards of Education