



STATEMENTS TO MEDIA

For Immediate Release

April 7, 2017

Statements from SSBA President Dr. Shawn Davidson

On Education Funding Cuts:

“We have some great concerns about some of the things that are going to be happening in the upcoming months as school divisions make difficult decisions connected to this year’s budget. We want the public to understand that all of the member boards around this process are going through a process right now where they are making those difficult decisions and we are very hopeful that all of our partners in education will respect those decisions and understand the situation that has been handed to us. As boards currently have the responsibility to make decisions surrounding the allocation of resources for their school divisions, we have been given resources that considerably less than they were last year. In fact, our per-student funding on average across the province is down almost \$500 a student for the upcoming school year. That’s really significant. And we think it would be remiss of our organization not to let the public know that this is going to cause some pain. The decisions don’t come easy. And when there are cutbacks, they are felt by our kids and by our classrooms. We are here to represent the public and to advocate for the kids. We understand what the province is experiencing financially and we’ll work through this, but we owe it to the public to let them know that we are going to find more efficiencies – we’re working on that every day – but we’re not going to find \$55 million worth. There will be changes. That’s the reality.”

On Bill 63, *The Education Amendment Act, 2017*:

“Bill 63, in essence, moves away the responsibilities of boards from law, which must be changed during the day in a legislative process, into regulations, which are essentially the rules that can be changed in the dark. We have some grave concerns with that. The bill also significantly enhances the responsibilities of the Minister. Had boards been consulted from the beginning on this matter, Bill 63 would not look as it does. Last night at our Spring General Assembly, the Minister asked us to work with the Ministry on this process and moving through with governance changes that are being proposed. We welcome the ability to do that and hope we will have opportunity to work with the Ministry and the Minister in coming up with a bill that amends *The Education Act* in a way that works for boards and works for government. But to this point, we have not had that opportunity. When other acts have been changed, it’s very common for organizations to be involved in that legislative process from the beginning. All we’re asking for is to be involved to ensure the law that governs education is appropriate for school division governance. Essentially, the act has preserved elected boards as existing; what it has not preserved is the responsibilities of those elected boards. When that happens, elected boards become the face of public education, instead of the voice of public education. We heard loud and clear through the consultation process in January that the public wants elected trustees to be the voice of the public in public education. We are committed to continue to do that, but we fear that an act that moves away those responsibilities will not effectively preserve boards in being that true voice. We’ve got, as trustees, those connections to the places we live and the communities we represent – and it’s vital those connections be preserved in law, permanently.”

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