

Shirley Bond is Desperate for Re-Election

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Sunday, September 14, 2008

<https://politicsrespun.org/2008/09/shirley-bond-is-desperate-for-re-election/>

If anyone has any pretense about being an effective school board trustee in British Columbia come this November 15th, read this piece from our Education Minister.

If you do not fly into a focused righteous rage at the insanity of it and your mission to destroy the provincial government's anti-human, anti-social agenda, step out of the way for those who will.

As Bond pretends to have nothing to do with boards of education closing schools, my jaw hangs in shock at her gall and offense to anyone connected with the 177 schools closed under their watch since 2001.

Boards of education are arms-length blockers for a government out to privatize education as they gathered \$10 billion in surpluses in the last 3 years. To avoid doing the nasty work, the Education Ministry strangles the budgets of school districts forcing them to enact Campbell's "tough choices" in his "new era."

Neighbourhoods of Learning is a fascinating solution to the problem her government created, but it is a solution implemented in the 1990s by the NDP government. The fact that it is showing up now indicates its effectiveness and the fact that Bond et al have realized they are behind in the polls with an election looming. Absolute cynicism.

Neighbourhoods of Learning as a broad philosophy could have been used to put in more subsidized childcare space to empty classrooms to avoid closing any schools. Since the ministry knows the declining enrolment is but a blip, when numbers rise again and our facilities will not be able to accomodate the capacity, expect provincial subsidization of private school infrastructure, just like last October's announcement of provincial subsidization of private child care infrastructure. It's all part of the crisis creation in the privatization agenda.

Shirley Bond: desperate for re-election, about to receive her termination notice.

Source: [Nanaimo Daily News](#)

Boards, not government, decide to close schools

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I'd like to take this opportunity to clarify some misconceptions that may have been created by an editorial on education that appeared recently in your newspaper.

Our government has not, in fact, directed boards of education in British

Columbia to close or sell schools. Those are decisions that have been made in good faith by locally elected school trustees -- the people we believe are in the best position to make them.

Over a decade of declining enrolment has led boards to close under-utilized school spaces in various parts of the province. However, I must point out that the trend of school closures did not begin under this government, nor is it limited to B.C. Declining enrolment is a nation-wide occurrence and many provinces are considering solutions that include incorporating more community usage of school buildings so that valuable assets don't sit empty.

The Neighbourhoods of Learning concept announced by our Premier last week is just such a plan - encouraging the development of community solutions to fill excess space in our schools and create community hubs where services are co-located within underutilized space.

This is not a new direction -- our government has encouraged community use of underutilized space through the School Community Connections program since the beginning of our mandate and our rapidly growing StrongStart B.C. program has continued in that vein. Our recently announced school closure and disposal policy requires boards to consider such usage, as well as potential space needs for early learning programming, in their future planning.

It should also be noted that despite a decline of more than 50,000 students since 2001, our government has increased overall education funding by 23% -- to a budget this school year of nearly \$5.7 billion. That clearly dispels claims of underfunding made by the president of the Nanaimo teachers' local that appeared in a recent letter to the editor in your newspaper.

Per-student funding in the province has risen to an estimated \$8,078 this school year, up nearly \$1,900 per student since 2001. We have the highest budget for education in B.C.'s history, despite a significant loss of students over the last decade.

*Shirley Bond
Minister of Education*