

# Executive Board Report – for March 9, 2015

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## Executive Meeting

Board executive meeting held March 6<sup>th</sup>. Discussion including planning for BCCPAC AGM, DPAC secretary position, school board meeting, recent presentations from the school district, DPAC grants available, nominating committee for DPAC AGM in March, conference committee, DPAC website.

## Williams Lake DPAC

Waiting to hear more information about dates that Gary Anaka would be able to be in Prince George, possibly during September 21 to 25<sup>th</sup>.

## Media

Brief mention in Citizen as a result of provincial budget announcement and “low hanging fruit” of school district administration.

## Policy and Governance

The most recent policy and governance meeting dealt with revision to the district’s leave of absence policy for teachers, as a result of revisions to their contract. This policy is currently out for comment.

## Presentation to Board – January 27, 2015

Hi - Sarah Holland, representing the District Parent Advisory Council.

At the January board meeting, I noted that we had high expectations for this new board. If you took from that the understanding that we wanted lengthy meetings, I’d like to apologize and clarify that that wasn’t what was meant.

As also noted, public education decisions affect real people in real ways, and real people often have real lives.

Perhaps I can refer you to the BC Ombudsperson guide for Open meetings: a Best Practices Guide for Local Governments. This guide doesn’t directly apply to school boards, but there are a great many similarities.

The in camera meeting of January 27th apparently dealt with a number of issues, including a decision related to strategic planning and a parent concern. While the school act does note that the public record needs to contain a general statement as the nature of the matters discussed, and the general nature of the decisions reached, this may be a bit too general.

There are valid reasons for in camera meetings and for not reporting publicly on details of some land-related issues, personal details protected by privacy legislation and legal information - the well-known trio “land, legal and personnel”. It is unclear how this would apply to a decision on strategic planning – at the very least, it should be evident from your general statement why and how this falls into this category.

The public has a right to know about material parts of your decision-making processes.

Next, the provincial government has offered a news release stating that “At the end of the day, government is looking for school districts to save 0.5% of total spending this coming year, rising to 1% in the year after.” They state that “We’re targeting more money for student instruction because we know parents want more teachers and classroom supports, not more administration. They want more of their tax dollars to deepen student learning, not duplicate payroll functions.”

If those administrative savings are meant to apply proportionally to each district, that’s about \$1 million in “administrative savings”, apparently to come from \$5 million spent in total in “district administration”.

That’s one heck of a costly payroll function that they seem to think you have.

Speaking as a parent, I’d like to see the government’s work that went into this. We’d like to see the decision making process. We’d like to see how and where these savings might be in those amounts.

The minister did note that they’ve been working with districts to find savings, and gave two examples – one of which saved a whole \$18,000 a year by converting board meeting processes to a paperless model.

And let’s not even get started on the premier’s comments regarding low hanging fruit.

In conclusion, DPAC looks forward in participating in what should be an even more challenging budget preparation.

We also would like to make it very clear to the provincial government that parents aren’t calling for more cuts for funding. Please do not insult us in this manner.