



Squamish - Whistler - Pemberton

April 6, 2010

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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The Board of Education of School District 48 (Sea to Sky) has decided to defer the provision of Full Day Kindergarten until September, 2011 when it is available to all students. “This is not a decision that came easily to the Board,” explained Chairperson Rick Price. “The Ministry of Education would only recognize 194 of the expected 300 kindergarten students as being full time for funding purposes in September 2010, so the Board was put in the position of having to choose which students in which schools in which communities would be offered full day kindergarten, and which ones would not. All possible options were explored but in the end, through the lens of fairness, and within the reality of an already difficult budget situation, none were feasible.”

A creative proposal that would have provided a full day program for all 300 kindergarten students commencing in January 2011 was submitted to the Ministry for approval in late January but it was turned down by the Minister of Education in early March.

For the 2010/2011 school year the Ministry of Education is providing the District with total funding of just over \$35 million - including funding for 194 full day Kindergarten students. To the dollar, this is the exact same amount of money that the Ministry provided in 2009/2010 when there was no funding for a full day kindergarten program. A careful reading of the fine print in the Ministry funding system reveals that accepting the funding for full time Kindergarten in 2010-11 would result in an equivalent reduction in other revenues. Therefore the provision of full time Kindergarten would have required approximately \$450,000 of reductions in other School and District services for the upcoming school year. In the Board’s opinion, the benefits of a 2010/2011 full day Kindergarten program for some students were outweighed by the painful sacrifices that would have had to be made throughout the District.

“The Finance Committee is still in the process of balancing the budget and difficult decisions are yet to be made” said Chairperson Price. “To further complicate matters we have also been advised that the Ministry intends, for the first time this year, to restrict our ability to balance the budget through the use of prior year surpluses. The Board could not, in good conscience, add to these serious challenges by accepting the additional cost of full day Kindergarten for the 2010-11 school year.”

A limited number of full time Kindergarten spaces will still be available at some schools during the 2010-11 school year for students who qualify under ESL, First Nations, or Special Education provisions. Kindergarten registration dates and procedures will be announced shortly.

For further information, please contact Rick Price, Board Chair at 604 898-5089.