

Dear

I am writing to you because I'm concerned about the major overcrowding issue we have at schools in Surrey. With well over 7,000 students in more than 230 portables right now, and those numbers projected to surpass 8,000 in a few years, we have a problem that needs fixing immediately.

Earl Marriott Secondary and Lord Tweedsmuir Secondary have been getting a lot of media attention recently due to the student walkouts, and for good reason. The District has been left to create another "Band-Aid" solution to try to address the severe overcrowding at these schools. However, the problem isn't isolated to those schools or areas. There are similar problems all over the school district. We have several elementary and secondary schools with 10 or more portables, and all of them are growing. We have elementary schools that are projected to have close to 20 portables in just 3 years' time, where they will have more students in portables than in the school itself, and where students are in portables from Grade 2 onwards. Children as young as 6 could be spending their days in a portable classroom and left to travel unassisted back and forth to the school to use a washroom or go to learning assistance. The increased population also means there are not enough washrooms, library resources, gym time or space to house all students for performances or full school assemblies. How does this help to strength the sense of community that is supposed to be nurtured through school?

In addition to the negative impact these portables have on the learning environment, they are also a drain on our resources. Each portable costs approximately \$10,000 per year (light, heat, maintenance) out of our district's budget. That means that right now, we are spending \$2.3 million per year to house our children in a poorer learning environment. For several years this has meant that the Board of Education has had to make cuts to programs and staff to be able to keep these temporary, but seemingly permanent, structures operational. With only 10% of the budget left for operations there soon will be no programs left to cut. This has a major impact on every student, whether in a portable or not.

I strongly urge our Provincial Government to act now to address this extremely important issue. There was a rally held on Sunday, March 14, that was attended by well over 100 concerned citizens, in spite of some miserable weather. I believe this speaks volumes for the high level of concern that many Surrey residents have. I hope you share this concern as well.

Sincerely,