



VIA EMAIL

Ref. 659316

September 19, 2024

Tim Dunford
Chair, School District No. 63 (Saanich)
2125 Keating Cross Road
Saanichton BC V8M 2A5
Email: tdunford@saanichschools.ca

Dear Chairman Dunford:

Thank you for your letter of December 4, 2023, expressing your support of the Mobile Youth Services Team (MYST) and Crime Reduction and Exploitation Diversion Program (CRED) run by the Pacific Centre Family Services Association (PCFSA). I apologize for the delay in my reply.

Addressing vulnerable youth experiencing homelessness, exploitation, drug addiction, gang and gun violence is an issue that the Province takes very seriously. Improving the safety and security of British Columbians is of the utmost importance and a matter for which all levels of Government share responsibility. Local governments and agencies play an active and important role in this shared responsibility through the provision of local prevention and intervention services.

The Province recognizes the intricate and interconnected landscape of crime, particularly as it pertains to gang violence, and remains committed to addressing these issues through a multi-pronged approach that recognizes the interdependence of prevention/intervention, intelligence, enforcement, and legislation.

In 2023/24 the Province invested over \$100M into specialized enforcement and intelligence initiatives related to guns, gangs, and illicit drug trafficking across BC. This funding includes an increase to CFSEU-BC's total budget to reconcile RCMP salary updates, funding for priority initiatives within the Organized Crime Agency of BC, and support for municipal police department capacity through the federal Guns and Gangs Violence Action Fund (GGVAF).

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In addition, the BC government is also funding complementary justice sector initiatives to address gang-related violence and crime. This includes support to prosecution services to ensure expertise, reduce delays associated with gang-related trials, increase prosecutorial capacity, and bring about more specialized and tailored legal responses to gun and gang-related cases. It also includes specialized, court-based victim service workers to assist witnesses and victims of serious crimes (thereby contributing to increased justice/sentencing), and support for corrections staff to collect gang-related intelligence within provincial correctional institutions and provide anti-gang education to inmates.

The Province recognizes the importance of schools and local supports in ensuring a robust approach to preventing and responding to the exploitation of youth in communities across BC. Since FY 2018/19, government has provided targeted funding under BC's Expect Respect and a Safe Education strategy (*erase*) to support school staff to counter gang recruitment, exploitation and other organized crime activity impacting students in their districts. Beginning FY 2023/24, the Province partnered with priority districts, including School District #63 Saanich, to provide funding to support the hiring of resources dedicated to the enhancement of local knowledge and capacity to respond to student involvement and victimization in relation to gangs and organized crime. Enhanced capacity as a result of this investment is expected to support the coordination of community responses to potential, suspected or confirmed threats of student gang-related violence and/or exploitation in partnering school district staff, community and local law enforcement. The Province has committed to continue this funding and evaluate outcomes as part of a pilot project through FY 2025/26.

Over the last six years the PCFSA has received a total of \$777,000 of funding from the Province for their CRED and MYST Programs. The funding provided was a combination of one-time grant funding from the GGVAF as well as one-time funding from my Ministry's contingency fund. Grant funding, including GGVAF, is not intended to be a permanent funding source for programs and projects. I have asked my Ministry to contact PCFSA directly should they require any additional information regarding current or future GGVAF applications.

Additional funding opportunities that PCFSA may want to consider outside of GGVAF are:

Canada's Youth Gang Action Fund: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/crm-prvntn/fndng-prgrms/yth-gng-prvntn-fnd-en.aspx>

Canada's Crime Prevention Action Fund: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/crm-prvntn/fndng-prgrms/crm-prvntn-ctn-fnd-en.aspx>

BC's Civil Forfeiture Grant: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/crime-prevention/community-crime-prevention/grants>

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Local governments and agencies play a critical role in maintaining community programs. I appreciate your continued involvement and support of the MYST and CRED Programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Farnworth". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
and Deputy Premier

pc: The Honourable David Eby, KC
The Honourable Mitzi Dean, Minister of State for Child Care
The Honourable Grace Lore, Minister of Children and Family Development
The Honourable Niki Sharma, KC, Attorney General
The Honourable Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
His Worship, Kevin Murdoch, Mayor & Co-Chair, RGU-IPU
Her Worship, Maja Tait, Mayor & CRD Vice Chair
Paula Kully, Executive Assistant, Oak Bay Police Department
Liz Nelson, Executive Director, Pacific Centre Family Services Association
Colin Plant, Councillor & CRD Chair
Sharon Orr, Senior Committee Clerk, Legislative Services, CRD
Nicole Duncan, Board Chair, School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)
Amanda Dowhy, Interim Board Chair, School District No. 62 (Sooke)
Marie-Pierre Lavoie, Chairperson, School District No. 93 (Conseil scolaire francophone)