



Honourable Jennifer Whiteside

Minister of Education

Room 306, Parliament Buildings

Victoria, B.C.

October 13, 2021

Re: Concerns about revisions to IDL funding and boundaries

Dear Minister Whiteside,

My colleagues and I in the BC Liberal Caucus have received a range of correspondence regarding your government's planned changes to the enrollment conditions for students in Independent Distributed Learning (IDL) programs offered across the province.

It is my understanding that starting in the 2022/23 school year, public and independent online school authorities can only operate within their district unless granted special permission from the Ministry to cross-enroll from another district or authority. This will mean that students not currently residing within district boundaries will no longer be able to attend their chosen schools via online learning.

As you are aware, IDL supports a vast proportion of students with special learning needs, and the independent system has the two largest special needs high schools in the province. New district boundaries for IDL schools will restrict the availability of IDL programs for students who have specific religious, cultural, or special learning needs. This goes against the wishes of a significant number of parents and students who rely on the programs and resources offered by IDL schools which cater to their specific learning needs. If a special agreement isn't granted to the IDL schools, the impact on students will be significant.

Furthermore, B.C. families feel that there has not been the appropriate level of notification, nor has your ministry provided the opportunity for public engagement and consultation in this decision to move to a special agreement model for online learning.

To help answer the mounting questions and concerns expressed by people in every corner of the province, and in the interest of all who benefit from online IDL programs, I hope your ministry and government can answer the following questions:



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- What changes are being planned or contemplated for both IDL and public online learning?
- Does your government intend to offer public consultation for parents and families of students currently attending IDL and public institutions that will be affected by the new funding model and provincial district?
- Can your Ministry provide a clear plan and timeline for public consultation, within a reasonable timeframe so that IDL stakeholders and parents can effectively provide input?
- Is your government open to revising or rescinding the proposed changes to IDL boundaries and funding?

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for our education system, and we as public servants have a responsibility to ensure all British Columbians have access to the education that fits their specific learning needs, both through the current challenges and beyond. Online learning will continue to be a valued choice for many parents and students even after the pandemic is over.

In the spirit of reassuring the thousands of B.C. families concerned about potential changes to IDL, I hope you can provide our office with a response with the utmost urgency.

Thank you,

Jackie Tegart

MLA, Fraser-Nicola

Opposition Critic for Education