

BC Education System Takes Hits

On March 6, I had the pleasure of visiting the stellar new Belmont High School. It is going to be an amazing school for generations to come. We are fortunate to have two new schools being built to replace the aging Belmont Secondary School. While these new schools are being built, the BC Liberal government seems determined to knock down our education system.

This spring's budget brought additional financial hits to our education system. At the same time as improvements are underway in Juan de Fuca, some school districts have been told that they will have to wait until 2030 to have their schools seismically upgraded. Premier Clark said before the election that nothing was more important than the safety of our children. Now that the election is past, that promise has been forgotten. Instead, we have another 15

years of our youth being put at risk – attending schools that are estimated to suffer catastrophic failure if there is a large earthquake.

On top of the school buildings at risk, school districts are being told that they have to find even further efficiencies in budgets that are already pared to the core. This year, \$29 million are being taken out of the K-12 system, \$54 million by the end of next year. The Premier called on school districts to find what she called “low hanging fruit” in their budgets. Make no mistake – each one of those dollars removed will hurt our children.

I recently met with the chair and trustees of School District 62 to review how these cuts will affect schools in our area. Cuts to budgets will affect school activities and mean less support for students. It will mean still more pressure on parents to fundraise and pay out of

pocket. Fundamentally, these latest cuts mean a lesser education for our children, and that is just wrong.

At a time when parents and young people are worried about opportunities to gain skills and training, the government has also cut \$14 million from higher education. Young adults are leaving school and trying to launch careers with tens of thousands of dollars in high-interest debt. Our government should be bolstering our education system, not breaking it down. We need well-educated, independent youth to fill the gaps the retiring boomers will leave behind. Young people deserve the opportunity to find fulfilling, well-paying jobs.

This year's budget includes a \$230 million tax break for the top 2% of income earners. A tax break for the

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COMMUNITY EVENTS

Mar 14 Craft Fair and Garage Sale. The Royal Canadian Legion Branch #91 Ladies' Auxiliary will be hosting a Craft Fair and Garage Sale with up to 36 tables. There will be a Silent Auction, Meat Draw, Painted glass, hats, Book table, Jewelry and more. From 10am-2pm. Prince Edward Legion, 761 Station Ave. Info: 250-478-1828.

Mar 21 Salmon Saturday. There is something fishy going on in Sooke! Check out the demonstration hatchery and the displays at the Charters Interpretive Centre with a CRD naturalist. For ages 5 and up. 11am-2pm. Charters Interpretive Centre off of Sooke River Rd. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).

Mar 21 Sooke District Lioness 12th Annual Yard Sale. Please help send a child to Easter Seals Camp Shawnigan. Donations welcome – clean, complete, and in working order please. For info or to donate, contact 778-425-4547 or 250-642-7158. From 9am to 1pm at Sooke Community Hall, 2037 Shields Rd. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).



Mar 27 5th Annual Community Services Auction. Mark your calendars and plan on being there for one of the best couple of hours you'll spend all year. If you attended the 2014 Auction you will know that nearly sixty local companies and individuals donated services ranging from firewood splitting to a limo winery tour, from a septic tank pump out and even portrait painting. The value of the services offered range from about \$100 to well over \$1,000. And almost always the winning bid is a steal! From 7-9 pm Metchosin Community House, 4430 Happy Valley Rd. List of services and info: [CLICK HERE](#).

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wealthy paid for by BC families. This choice says it all about who this government represents. People already stretched to the limit will face more fee and rate hikes and continue to get less in services, while they pay for a tax cut for the highest paid British Columbians.

I hear every day from families that they are already struggling with costs going up and wages staying flat. Those families now face another four-per-cent hike to MSP premiums, a six-per-cent hike to hydro rates, an increase to ICBC premiums, ferry fare hikes, higher tolls, and expensive camping fees.

At the same time, wages to pay for our cost of living are not keeping up. In fact, BC wages are falling in real terms; from 2006 to 2012, BC's real wages fell while wages in most of the rest of Canada went up.

Last Thursday I rode the #61 bus from the Legislature to Sooke

in order to meet constituents and hear their concerns. Commuters always have ideas about how to make transportation improvements and other suggestions to make life a little easier. On the bus, and in my office, many of you have contacted me about health care, education or seniors' care. People tell me they cannot find a family doctor. Seniors are getting fewer hours of home care and standards in nursing homes are falling. Many seniors are unable to transition into care in a setting near home and are having to go further afield and a greater distance away from loved ones.

Please keep the suggestions coming and I will do my best to represent them in the Legislature. We can do better!

*John Horgan, MLA Juan de Fuca
Leader of the Official Opposition
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Touring the amazing new Belmont High School



COMMUNITY EVENTS



Mar 28 Grand Opening Sooke Bike Park. SEAPARC and its partners will be celebrating the opening of the new Sooke Bike Park and Hike & Bike Connector Trail, developed with input from the Sooke Bike Club, local youth, parents, bike park developers and the SEAPARC recreation team. The ribbon cutting will be held from 12pm to 2pm at SEAPARC Leisure Complex, 2168 Phillips Rd. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).



Mar 28 Film Night: Dark Side of Chocolate. In Africa, children are still forced to work on cocoa plantations. Ranging in age from 10 to 15, most are forced to do hard, often hazardous labor, are often beaten, and many are never paid. Most of them stay with the plantation until they die, never seeing their families again. Q&A facilitated by a guest speaker. Movie starts at 7pm and is 46 minutes in length. Metchosin Community House, 4430 Happy Valley Rd. Info: Ric at ricnic2@shaw.ca

Mar 28-29 BC SPCA Wild ARC's Annual Open House. Bring your family and friends to see what it takes to care for 2,500 injured and orphaned wild animals annually from our community. Reservations are required to ensure that all guests get a unique educational tour. This event fills up quickly as we can only accommodate 1000 guests during the two day event – so be sure to register soon. 12pm-4pm. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).

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← Pink Shirt Day at the Legislature with my Opposition Caucus Colleagues

↙ Speaking with protesters at the Resident Hunters Rally at the Legislature

↘ Lunar New Year at the Tian-jin Temple in Burnaby with Kathy Corrigan, MLA



COMMUNITY EVENTS

Apr 8 Awareness Film Night. AFN runs from October until May at 7 p.m., generally on the second Wednesday of every month. Films are followed by discussions and there are frequently guest speakers. Admission is by donation. Located at Edward Milne Community School, 6218 Sooke Rd. For listings of the films and precise dates please check their website for any changes. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).

Apr 18 Garage Sale and 9th Annual Family Arts Fair. Family activities including music, dance, crafts, visual arts. Interactive demos and workshops. Tables available for the garage sale. You can purchase toys, tools, collectables, art, books, clothes and more. Pre-register to reserve your table for the biggest garage sale in Sooke. From 9am-12:30pm at SEAPARC Leisure Centre, 2168 Phillips Rd. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).

Apr 18-19 World Rugby Women's Sevens Series. The world is set to descend upon Langford, B.C. in April 2015 where twelve nations will battle to qualify for the women's rugby sevens event at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. As the newest stop on the World Rugby Women's Sevens Series tour, Rugby Canada has been chosen to play host to the world's best as an annual stop on the international tour. The inaugural event will be hosted in Langford, B.C. at Westhills Stadium and the Canadian Rugby Centre of Excellence. Info: [CLICK HERE](#).



Do you have an upcoming community event?

Send full event information to John.Horgan.MLA@leg.bc.ca and we'll do our best to fit it in!