

North Vancouver Parents' Advisory Council

Schools Fees Survey Report

February 19, 2007

NVPAC will be distributing this report to the following:

- NVPAC Executive
- NVSD#44 School Fees Task Force / Bryn Roberts
- NVSD#44 Superintendent John Lewis
- NVSD #44 Executive Committee
- NVSD#44 Trustees
- NVPAC Members via General Meeting, Email, & Website
- Ministry of Education
- DPAC Survey Group
- BCCPAC

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North Vancouver PAC - School Fees Survey Report - February 2007

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NVPAC School Fees Survey – January 2007 Final Report

February 19, 2007

The North Vancouver Parent Advisory Council (NVPAC) is pleased to report on the results of its school fees survey. The following analysis of local results is based on interpretation by NVPAC Executive members. Some analysis of provincial trends is included, prepared in consultation with our DPAC colleagues who also administered this survey in their districts. (See appendix “A” for a list of participating DPACs, referred to as “DPAC Survey Group” for purposes of this report.)

The North Vancouver Parent Advisory would like to acknowledge the help of the Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils and other collaborating DPACs who wrote the Survey. Province wide results will be compiled and released when available. NVPAC learned a great deal from conducting this survey and analyzing the results. We look forward to using surveys as a communication tool in the future. NVPAC works to represent the views of SD #44 PACs and parents on matters of district-wide interest.

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SYNOPSIS OF RESULTS

North Vancouver PAC - School Fees Survey **Synopsis of Results from Detailed Report**

Who answered the survey?

- 680 responses
- 207 responses included additional comments
- 72.6% reported a family income over \$70,000 annually. Included in this number is 60.7% with an income of over \$90,000 annually
- 10.2% reported incomes less than \$45,000
- 86.7% two parent families
- Of the 254 people who answered the question about PAC/SPC involvement, 37% had served on Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) and/or School Planning Councils (SPCs).
- 80.4% indicate they volunteer at their children's school a few times a year or more
- 19.5% said they were unable to volunteer

Broad Trends in Responses: Summary

96% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement **"The public education system should provide every student with the opportunity to develop his/her full potential."**

94% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement **"Our schools should be places where every child has access to opportunities regardless of family income or capacity."**

87% of respondents strongly disagree or disagree with the statement **"Public Education's primary responsibility is to teach literacy and numeracy. Anything else is extra."**

72% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement **"If it is worth doing, it is worth funding."**

55% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement **"As a parent, I expect to pay for enhancements to my child(ren)'s public education experience."** 32% disagree/strongly disagree, 12% express no firm opinion.

71% of respondents from North Vancouver agreed or strongly agreed with the statement **“The Ministry of Education should provide funds to cover the fees that can no longer be charged due to the Supreme Court Ruling”**. **11% disagreed, 18% undecided.**

WHAT DO PARENTS SAY ABOUT...?:

...Core Education:

96% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement **“It is appropriate for the government to fully fund core public education.”**

52% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement **“It is appropriate to charge school fees to provide educational opportunities beyond core education.”** 33% disagree or strongly disagree and another 14% have no firm opinion.

The definition of “core” or “basics” or “extras” is addressed within a number of written responses. There was a tendency for parents to have a broad view of what was considered “core” education.

...Extra Curricular Activities:

Respondents are split on their views of the statement, **“Schools should be fully funded, including extra-curricular activities.”** 42% agree, while 41% disagree and 16% have no firm opinion.

...Programs of Choice:

Respondents are split on their views of the statement, **“It is appropriate for the government to fully fund programs of choice.”** 51% agree, while 31% disagree and 18% have no firm opinion.

82% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement, **“Specialty programs such as sports academies and apprenticeships are critical to keeping some students in school.”**

We note that the North Vancouver School District’s recently completed Ipsos Reid Survey on Programs of Choice, along with the Community Forum held in Jan’07 on the same topic, showed strong community support for Programs of Choice

WHAT DO PARENTS SAY ABOUT...? (cont'd):

...Parents role in funding?:

69% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, **“Parent fundraising should be increased to replace the money previously collected as school fees.”**

Respondents are split on their views of the statement, **“Parent fundraising is an acceptable alternative to paying school fees.”** 40% disagree, while 47% agree and 13% have no firm opinion.

64% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement, **“A voluntary fee system will not work because some people who can afford it simply will not pay.”**

39% of respondents agree with the statement, **“Corporate sponsorship is an appropriate way to raise funds for a school.”** 37% disagree with the statement and 24% have no firm opinion.

88% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement, **“All school fees should be accounted for and parents should have access to financial information related to the resulting expenditures.”**

...Funding Priorities:

Summary of Funding Priorities Highlighted in this Section:

(reported the majority response in each category).

	<u>CORE</u>	<u>FEES</u>	<u>PAC</u>
Textbooks	96% agree	94% disagree	81% disagree
Workbooks	90% agree	87% disagree	80% disagree
Lockers	56% agree	56% disagree	80% disagree
Deposits	54% disagree	58% agree	81% disagree

...Hardship Provisions with Respect to Fees:

62% of respondents agree with the statement, **“The existing practice of waiving fees for those who can't afford them ensures equity for all students.”**

26% of North Vancouver respondents agree with the statement **“I would feel comfortable approaching my school principal to request a fee waiver”**, while 54% disagree, and 19% have no opinion.

North Van responses show that only 23% agree/strongly agree with the statement **“Some students avoid going to school or cut classes because they can’t afford the cost of the scheduled activity”** while 35% strongly disagree and a full 42% have no firm opinion

Conclusions:

- Core Education should be fully funded by the Ministry of Education.
- There needs to be a better definition of what “Core Education” includes. Parents definition tends to be broader than that of the Ministry of Education
- Programs of Choice and Extra-curricular activities must be included in our schools
- PAC fundraising shouldn’t replace appropriate funding by the Ministry of Education
- Full funding of all aspects of the education system - Core, Extra-curricular and Programs of Choice, is preferable but recognize this isn’t likely
- Parents would rather pay some fees than have programs cut
- The current financial hardship provisions are necessary but need to be revised to address the shame felt by parents accessing the waivers

We thank all the parents who took the time to respond to our survey. It is our hope this report will be helpful in guiding the Ministry of Education as they revisit the issue of school fees.

If you have additional comments and suggestions please email nvpacquestion@shaw.ca . NVPAC encourages parents and other community members to continue to make their views known on this and other subjects.

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END OF REPORT SYNOPSIS – Detailed Report Follows – This summary may be circulated on its own

Who answered the survey?

North Vancouver had an excellent response with 680 parents filling out the survey and almost one third (207) adding written comments. .

This survey is not scientific, meaning the responses were not gathered from a random sample of parents. However, those who responded did so because they have an interest in the issue of school fees. We believe this is a significant response rate. The Survey, as administered by the participating Districts, has received close to 10,000 responses at this date. We have been advised that this is a statistically significant number, regardless of whether there may be areas of over-representation . We hope to draw some meaningful conclusions from the array of results as the consolidated survey analysis is finalized in the coming days and weeks.

The North Vancouver respondents provided a good sample of parents with children across the grades, with a range between 7% and 17.9% at each grade level.

Of parents responding, 72.6% indicated a family income of over \$70,000, (included in this figure were 60.7% of responding households indicating income over \$90,000). Family incomes between \$45,000 and \$60,000 made up just 17.1% of responses, while incomes less than \$45,000 were indicated by 10.2% of respondents. *(As a point of reference, according to StatsCan 2001 Census information, the median family income for 2000 (all census families) was \$56,482 in North Van City, and \$76,525 in North Van District. These figures breakdown to "couple" families as \$62,891 City and \$81,889 District and for lone-parent families are \$38,474 City and \$43,423 District. (A family is defined as a single parent or couple with or without never-married children)*

Over 86% of responses were from two parent families. Respondents were 97.8% from families with students in public school; only 7 responses (1%) were received from those with home-schooling arrangements; and a further 15 (2.2%) reported children in private school.

Of the 680 total respondents, there were 254 people who answered the question indicating that 37% had served on Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) and/or School Planning Councils (SPCs). This leaves 426 of the total respondents (63%) who appear to have had no direct involvement in PAC or SPCs but still took the time to answer the survey. We believe this to be a significant number as it is

Who answered the survey? (cont'd)

often only the parents who are directly involved on a day to day basis who would hear about, and then respond to, surveys such as this one. A majority (80.4%) of respondents indicate they volunteer at their children's school a few times a year or more, and of the total, 41.8% might be considered "regulars" who volunteer once a month or more. Only 19.5% said they were unable to volunteer at all.

Interpretive Note: We acknowledge the possible overrepresentation of higher income families in the survey and guide our conclusions accordingly, although it must be noted that the measure of household income alone is not an indication of discretionary income and does not allow for the cost of living in a particular District. It must be acknowledged that North Vancouver's cost of living, for instance, would likely be significantly higher than another community where the real estate prices, in particular, could be much lower.

How results were analyzed

What follows is a general summary of the North Vancouver responses highlighting areas where very clear trends have emerged from the data. Percentages quoted refer to the percentage of those respondents answering the question. Where a significant number of responses indicated “no firm opinion”, we have made note of it. We have grouped “Strongly Disagree/Disagree and Agree/Strongly Agree responses together and reported aggregate percentages/responses.

There was considerable discussion about the merits of filtering results by demographic indicators, particularly by income levels. There is still analysis being done to break down both District and broader provincial results by low, medium, and high income levels, possibly with the number of children per household factored in: this analysis is not yet complete. An initial look at this breakdown did indicate there may be some significant differences in the responses to particular questions. Other areas did not seem as affected by income level. We have made specific reference to noticeable trends affected by income throughout this report, but more detailed figures will take more time to analyze.

While it is possible to filter results by demographic characteristics, NVPAC feels all responses are equally valuable and has chosen to report overall results in this first version of our survey analysis. Based on some of the concerns expressed in the written comments submitted, parents obviously feel strongly about this issue and they have diverse views, perspectives and ideas about solutions based on differing family characteristics. We will address this more in-depth analysis in a subsequent report if necessary, and potentially in the context of the broader provincial results when they are available.

Unless noted, the results from North Vancouver survey respondents appear to track very closely with the preliminary data received from the DPAC Survey Group’s overall results. We have noted where North Vancouver responses indicate significant differences from the broader survey data.

(Illustrative quotes from written comments are inserted in italic in each section below.)

See appendix “B” and “C” for the full survey results..

Broad Trends in Responses

96% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement **“The public education system should provide every student with the opportunity to develop his/her full potential.”**

“In a “high standard of living” country fully funded education is the right for each human being, not just for the privileged one.....”

“Countries that support their population with educational choice and monies, support a population that is honoured and gives everyone a chance to be a fully engaged, contributing citizen”

94% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement **“Our schools should be places where every child has access to opportunities regardless of family income or capacity.”**

“ poorer neighbourhoods are more likely to be populated by single parent families who must work longer hours to support their families and don’t have the same availability to serve as volunteers, to do fundraising, to join advisory councils, which leaves middle class folk making the bulk of the decisions on priorities, fees and funding. You have one question saying that volunteering “takes away from time spent with family” – no mention of “takes time away from survival – level employment”, which is far more often the reality.”

87% of respondents strongly disagree or disagree with the statement **“Public Education’s primary responsibility is to teach literacy and numeracy. Anything else is extra.”**

“Field trips and fine arts programs are hugely valuable learning tools and should not be seen as less deserving of funding than textbooks for “literacy and numeracy”.”

72% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement **“If it is worth doing, it is worth funding.”**

“I would hate to see programs cut because of lack of funding”

Broad Trends in Responses (cont'd)

"The government should make it possible for ALL school boards to fund a well –rounded (i.e. not just 3 R's) education for ALL students regardless of their ability to pay"

On the other hand, the opinion seems mixed on the point of how we fund things "worth doing" as there seems to be an acceptance of parents needing to pay extra for some enhancements:

55% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement "**As a parent, I expect to pay for enhancements to my child(ren)'s public education experience.**" 32% disagree/strongly disagree, 12% express no firm opinion.

"I have no problem with paying costs incurred by my children with "extra" activities. I feel it's important to provide variety."

"It would be great if the public system could fund everything but I simply don't think that is realistic in the current times."

Interpretive note: As we attempted to split families of Elementary (K-7) children apart from those families with Secondary experience (8-12), there are indications that secondary parents may have a higher level of expectation that they will have to pay school fees. 68% agree or strongly agree at the Secondary level, while 59% would agree at the Elementary level.

71% of respondents from North Vancouver agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "**The Ministry of Education should provide funds to cover the fees that can no longer be charged due to the Supreme Court Ruling**" 11% disagreed, 18% undecided.

"I believe that the provincial government needs to fully fund the cost of public education rather than relying on parents through school fees and parent advisory councils to raise funds to fund basics."

"I object to the Ministry of Education not being the central resource for adequately funding all our school and student requirements."

"The court ruling on fees should not be used as a basis for reducing choice and closing down band programs, etc"

What do parents say about Core Education?

96% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement **“It is appropriate for the government to fully fund core public education.”**

“We think the government should be properly funding the education system. The same core opportunities should be available to all children across the province.”

“I don’t believe that parents should through fees have to subsidize so many core educational activities.”

At the same time, 52% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement **“It is appropriate to charge school fees to provide educational opportunities beyond core education.”** 33% disagree or strongly disagree and another 14% have no firm opinion.

“I am very concerned that music and other specialty programs may be adversely affected if schools were not allowed to charge fees”

Interpretive Note 1: *Based on these comments and various discussions in the process of analyzing our data, it becomes apparent that respondents may have been conflicted in whether to answer the questions philosophically (ie. in a “perfect world”) or with a dose of reality (ie. “what we are used to” or “what we think is most likely”).*

For example:

Philosophical View: *““The same core opportunities should be available to all children across the province”.*

Practical View: *“I would rather pay a school fee so that my children can participate in certain activities rather than not have those activities offered due to funding constraints.*

Interpretive Note 2: *The preceding survey questions and responses also highlight the need for a stronger, clearer definition of exactly what the “core” elements of education are or should be. Portions of this survey have attempted to clarify this, but the DPAC group, strongly believes that there is more work that needs to be done, by all education partners, to come up with an appropriate definition of “core” education.*

What do parents say about Core Education? (cont'd)

The definition of “core” or “basics” or “extras” is addressed within a number of written responses. There was a tendency for parents to have a broad view of what was considered “core” education.

“There needs to be a clearer definition of what “Core Education” is. I think my definition is broader than that of the government. I think PE and music are core components.”

“I expect my school to provide the basics of education, which I expect will include computers and computer education, drama, band, art and physical education”

What do parents say about Extracurricular Activities?

Respondents are also split on their views of the statement, “**Schools should be fully funded, including extra-curricular activities.**” 42% agree, while 41% disagree and 16% have no firm opinion.

“Public education should not be, and never has been, only focused on math, reading and writing. Extra curricular activities are essential for all children’s growth.....The school should provide an introduction to these activities for all kids. “

“I believe the government should fund public education adequately so that there is money for school field trips and electives.”

“I am strongly against parents being charged for supplies that are part of public education including extras such as fine arts.”

Interpretive note: Based on the comments above, it is likely there is confusion about the definition of “extracurricular” versus “enhancements” when we refer to non-core activities in schools; it is likely that this terminology also needs to be further defined.

What do parents say about Programs of Choice?

Respondents are split on their views of the statement, **“It is appropriate for the government to fully fund programs of choice.”** 51% agree, while 31% disagree and 18% have no firm opinion.

“I would like the Ministry of Education to consider changing the legislation to protect school districts to continue to offer programs of choice which are fee paying”

“In principal I believe all students should have free access to the same academic and enhanced programs offered.”

82% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement, **“Specialty programs such as sports academies and apprenticeships are critical to keeping some students in school.”**

“For many students the chance to take courses in fine arts, or industrial arts or take part in field trips can make the difference between staying in school and quitting.”

“I have a son in grade 9 in (Windsor’s hockey program)I think it is a great program and it is usually the motivation for my son to go to school.”

“It is important to have art, band, dance, sports, tech etc. because that’s what keeps a lot of kids in school enthusiastically.”

Interpretive note: Support for Programs of Choice will not, by definition, be as broadly based as issues regarding core education priorities as they will not affect every student. As a result, it is important to look at the finite numbers of individuals interested and/or supportive of particular Programs of Choice, rather than requiring a very high majority (%age) of respondents to necessarily choose these “enhanced” programs.

We note that the North Vancouver School District’s recently completed Ipsos Reid Survey on Programs of Choice, along with the Community Forum held in Jan’07 on the same topic, showed strong community support for Programs of Choice.

What do parents say about their role in funding?

69% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, **“Parent fundraising should be increased to replace the money previously collected as school fees.”**

“I do not want to see additional parent (PAC) fundraising as I strongly believe that will lead to greater inequalities between schools and socioeconomic areas of the city”

“There is already too much fundraising (by parents)”

Interpretive note: However, based on some income filters applied at the provincial level, there is some indication lower income families may be more comfortable raising money as a group (ie. PAC funding choices) than they are with having to pay individually assessed fees (ie. School Fees). By contrast, there is some anecdotal evidence that higher income earners may prefer to just write the cheque.

Respondents are split on their views of the statement, **“Parent fundraising is an acceptable alternative to paying school fees.”** 40% disagree, while 47% agree and 13% have no firm opinion.

“Since not all schools lie within an equal socio-economic area, each school must be evaluated individually. PACs can be of more help with fundraising, only when there is enough support within the PAC membership”

“I don’t feel PACs should control or supply any funds to schools and feel that they are a large part of the problem with our funding systems. I feel our taxes and governments should pay all school related costs and no child or parent should ever have to ask for fee waivers!”

64% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement, **“A voluntary fee system will not work because some people who can afford it simply will not pay.”**

“Unfortunately, when fees are voluntary, frequently it is the same small group of people who contribute and end up ‘subsidizing’ many others”

Again, a split where 39% of respondents agree with the statement, **“Corporate sponsorship is an appropriate way to raise funds for a school.”** 37% disagree with the statement and 24% have no firm opinion.

“...if we have corporate sponsorships, then the corporation will want to receive a return on their investment...”

What do parents say about their role in funding? (cont'd)

88% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement, “**All school fees should be accounted for and parents should have access to financial information related to the resulting expenditures.**”

“Any money that a PAC gets/raises should be spent at their discretion with input from parent...Fees should be spread out over the school year, 10 months, so that they can be more easily budgeted for and be transparent. A balance sheet, funding record, should be sent home at the end of the school year.”

See appendix “B” for a full report of all of the quantitative survey data received.

See appendix “C” for a list of all the comments submitted by parents, excerpts of which are included in this report.

FUNDING PRIORITIES:

The survey asked for people's opinions on the appropriate funding mechanism for a variety of items. A list of items was included in three categories for this feedback: Core Education, School Fees, PAC Expenditures.

***Interpretive note:** Within each category respondents indicated their willingness to fund items from that source of revenue. Respondents, depending upon whether they were answering the questions philosophically or practically, could choose one or all three sources of revenue for each item. For example, one respondent could say computers should only be funded as core education, whereas another could say that, while they would prefer core funding, they were willing to pay fees or fundraise if that is the only way to get the equipment into the classrooms. Consequently, the combined responses below, across the three surveyed funding categories, may show a funding approval rating in excess of 100%.*

What do Parents think should be included in Core Education?

If we start from the "Core Education" question, a few trends arise. Parents feel core education costs should be covered by public funds. Items with a high priority (>85%) according to survey respondents, such as textbooks, course workbooks, library books, computers, technology, physical education, audio/visual equipment, small capital items and safety items are clearly considered the responsibility of the government/taxpayer to fund.

The next level priority (85% to 75%) for agreement of "core" areas includes fine arts, industrial arts, home economics, small capital expenditures, and playground equipment (but see note below regarding playground equipment).

Who do parents think should pay for Core Education?

As reported previously in this survey, 96% of survey respondents agree that **"It is appropriate for the government to fully fund core public education"**

***Interpretive note:** We reviewed key items using the following method & assumptions:*

- *If you take away Fees there are only two immediate sources of revenue- the MofE or PACs*
- *If you have to choose between these two sources, which should be the first in line to pay?*
- *If you then add fees back into the picture, what items is it ok to fund from that revenue stream?*

FUNDING PRIORITIES (cont'd):

Very few items, core or otherwise, are considered generally acceptable for the PAC to fund.

In fact, playground equipment is the only category that received a majority of “agrees” over “disagrees” with 49% agreeing and 39% disagreeing that PACs should be funding them; not an overwhelming majority. But even at that, when asked if playgrounds should be considered core, there was a 78% agree/strongly agree response. This would indicate that, although parents may be willing to fundraise for playgrounds, they would prefer to see them included in core education.

Computer equipment was another item where opinion seems split. Where 87% of respondents agreed that this was definitely “core” education, there were still 35% who agreed PAC Expenditures were appropriate. Conversely, School Fees were definitely not an option for funding computer technology with an 83% of respondents disagreeing with this funding option.

Who is currently paying? And If PAC shouldn't pay, then who should?

Once we'd established that parents considered PAC funding as an inappropriate source of funding for core items, we reversed the analysis to see where parents thought funding should come from. In other words, if PACS definitely shouldn't pay for some items, then were these items considered core or could fees somehow apply? On this basis, we identified four items that had the highest level of response in the disagree/strongly disagree category for PAC Expenditures.

The four items that stood out most significantly as items that PACS should NOT fund with > 80% disagree/strongly disagree:

- Textbooks (81%)
- Course Workbooks (80%)
- Locker Rentals (80%)
- Deposits (locker, textbooks,etc) (81%)

FUNDING PRIORITIES (cont'd)

Several other items ranked close behind these top four, (70-80% agreed) such as Supplies (pens, pencils, papers, etc.) (79%); Student Agendas (73%); and Language immersion programs (73%).

When we looked at these same four items items that respondents thought should NOT be funded by PACs, in terms of where they ranked on the "Core" funding responses, two of the items above were at the top of the list:

- Textbooks 96% - an overwhelming response for "core"
- Course Workbooks 90% - again, a clear response for "core"
- Locker Rentals 56% agreed - less clear, 33% disagreed that they were core
- Deposits 33% agreed - 54% actually disagreed

Now that we've established that at least two of these four items are considered core and should not be funded by PAC, we added school fees back into the picture. How then, did parents feel about funding these items from school fees?

- Textbooks - 94% disagreed, consistent with the strong response for core funding
- Course Workbooks - 87% disagreed, again, consistent with core funding support
- Locker Rentals – 56% disagreed that school fees should apply, 36% agreed that school fees were appropriate – very similar split to the "core" question, but leaning more in favour of locker rentals being a "core" item
- Deposits - 32% disagreed, but 58% agreed that deposits were appropriate for school fees – again similar split in opinion to the "core" option, but this time leaning in favour of using a Fees approach.

SUMMARY of FUNDING PRIORITIES HIGHLIGHTED IN THIS SECTION:

(reported the majority response in each category).

	<u>CORE</u>	<u>FEES</u>	<u>PAC</u>
Textbooks	96% agree	94% disagree	81% disagree
Workbooks	90% agree	87% disagree	80% disagree
Lockers	56% agree	56% disagree	80% disagree
Deposits	54% disagree	58% agree	81% disagree

Hardship Provisions with respect to fees:

While, in concept, a hardship provision may be a good one, in practice, it seems uncertain as to whether, in its current form, it is effective.

Although 62% of respondents agree with the statement, **“The existing practice of waiving fees for those who can't afford them ensures equity for all students.”** the parent comments didn't generally support this belief.

“Many parents that cannot afford to pay the fees will be reluctant to ask for a waiver. It is about pride. I know because I am one of those parents and I know others who feel the same. It is humiliating to have our children's report cards held hostage until we pay the fees and for our children to be shamed by the teachers because they haven't yet paid their fees.”

Only 26% of North Vancouver respondents agree with the statement **“I would feel comfortable approaching my school principal to request a fee waiver”**, while 54% disagree, and 19% have no opinion.

“I have endured the humiliating experience of having to ask to have fees waived for an outdoor school field trip and was terrified that someone would find out...”

North Van responses show that only 23% agree/strongly agree with the statement **“Some students avoid going to school or cut classes because they can't afford the cost of the scheduled activity”** while 35% strongly disagree and a full 42% have no firm opinion

“I was a child of a single parent living with little financial resources.....I was however one of two students left behind while everyone else went to the ski program. Let's just say I hate ski season to this day.”

Interpretive Note: *With some preliminary filtering of results by income level, some interesting trends emerge. It appears families with a very low (less than \$25,000) income group are generally more accepting/comfortable with asking for assistance. Those in a much higher income bracket also indicate some comfort in doing so. The question becomes: Have low-income earners become resigned to the need to ask for financial help*

Hardship Provisions with respect to fees (cont'd):

due to the personal experience of having gone through it? Conversely, are higher income earners merely projecting their thoughts about whether they could ask for help if they ever found themselves in the circumstances of financial hardship. Perhaps these results are inconclusive.

One unsolicited comment that was expressed several times was the request for monthly payments with respect to school fees. Having to pay a lump sum was found to be onerous, even by families not in financial hardship.

See further comments in Appendix "C" Survey Comments data.

Trends & Conclusions: What did we really learn?

As stated at the start of this report, this was not a scientific survey. While we cannot draw any firm conclusions from the data, it is fair to say that definite trends emerged.

The response rate indicated a definite interest and concern from parents with respect to the appropriate funding of education.

Parents believe that:

- Core Education should be fully funded by the Ministry of Education.
- There needs to be a better definition of what “Core Education” includes. Parents definition tends to be broader than that of the Ministry of Education
- Programs of Choice and Extra-curricular activities must be included in our schools
- PAC fundraising shouldn't replace appropriate funding by the Ministry of Education
- Full funding of all aspects of the education system - Core, Extra-curricular and Programs of Choice, is preferable but recognize this isn't likely
- Parents would rather pay some fees than have programs cut
- The current financial hardship provisions are necessary but need to be revised to address the shame felt by parents accessing the waivers

We thank all the parents who took the time to respond to our survey. It is our hope this report will be helpful in guiding the Ministry of Education as they revisit the issue of school fees.

If you have additional comments and suggestions please email nvpacquestion@shaw.ca . NVPAC encourages parents and other community members to continue to make their views known on this and other subjects.

Contact: NVPAC Chair Franci Stratton, franci@nemetz.com

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Appendix A

DPAC Survey Group - List of DPACs participating in the School Fees Survey Jan'2007

- **Abbotsford**
- **Burnaby**
- **Comox Valley**
- **Coquitlam**
- **Delta**
- **Fort Nelson**
- **Howe Sound**
- **Kamloops-Thompson**
- **Kootenay Lake**
- **Langley**
- **Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows**
- **North Vancouver**
- **North Okanagan-Shuswap**
- **Richmond**
- **Saanich**
- **Sooke**
- **Vancouver**
- **Victoria**

Appendix B

North Vancouver PAC Survey Results – raw data (excluding comments)

Appendix C

Survey Comments from Respondents –

still to be edited for purposes of anonymity – to come soon!

Appendix D

Blank “School Fees Survey” form