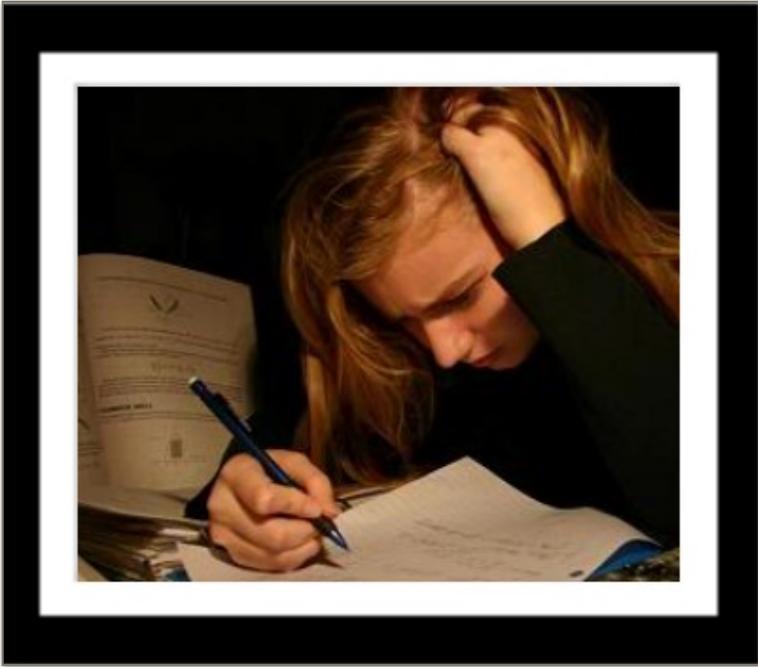


SCHOOL DISTRICT #44 LOADED DOWN WITH \$1.9M IN SPARE MONEY WHERE TO SPEND IT? THAT IS THE QUESTION

By: Kerry Morris - September 20, 2015

If you have, or have had, a child in the the SD#44 school system, then you're no stranger to the puts and takes of the system's finances. Barely a day goes by when someone doesn't have their hand in your pocket for a \$20 or a \$50 for this that or the other. Books, wood, field trips, sports, supplies, more books, etc., etc., etc.

So it was a shock when I discovered in December 2014 that our own John Lewis had retired and was now back on contract collecting a full pension in addition to his ongoing salary. Many of our school Trustee's were genuinely less interested in the 'Double-Dipping' activities of Mr. Lewis than they were concerned about the fact the information had reached the public domain. The excuse given: *'...we're growing, grooming and vetting replacements from within'*, and so a year long 'Double-Dipping' by Sir John was reasonable. The fact that we doubled his annual compensation to approximately \$500,000 per year while at the same time we put public school teachers on the picket line for a month, shortened my daughter's, and every other students, final year by a full month seemed lost on those



that agreed to this inappropriate decision. The fact that Lewis' 'Double-Dipping' contract was renewed for another year in 2015 suggests no one has learned anything from that initially bungled, short-sighted and inappropriate decision. <http://kerrymorris.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Double-Dipping.pdf>

We have ended another fiscal year, and despite the shortened 2014/15 term, or maybe because of it, SD#44 has a surplus \$1.9 million, and it's burning a hole in their pockets. The current subject at the Trustees table is what to spend it on. Under consideration is an increase for all exempt SD#44 staff. At first blush, this seems inappropriate, as the blue-bloods of the North Shore would undoubtedly like to download a little Harperman style fiscal responsibility on the education system, keeping the money for a rainy day. I confess it is an appealing idea. But as has been explained to me, unless we do something to retain our school Principals and Vice-Principals, and exempt staff, they're going to go elsewhere and the quality of public school education will decline further. So it may very well be that upping their wages is an appropriate use of the surplus. But with all due respect, they better not use these funds for that purpose and then ask us to endorse selling Cloverley and Lucas Centre Schools to fund anything, especially the outstanding loan left over from the rebuild of the Sutherland and Westview School's. **Those loans better be cleared first!**

It would also be wrong to increase these wages only to be short funds next year because of this decision. So... much thought better be spent before our trusted Trustees make this dangerous call. And if anyone renews Lewis' \$500,000 a year compensation package for a third term, I'm going to scream blue-bloody murder.

We're only 18 months from the next Provincial election, and I can't quite clear from my mind the site of our MLA Jane Thornthwaite standing in the legislature asking the City's voters to support municipal candidates who will sell our public school lands. The Mussatto 'Slate' bought a half page North Shore News ad during the election and told residents:

"Myth: Mr. Morris says I want to sell school lands for development."

"Fact: That is a lie..." [I think not. I think Darrell's been doing the lying]

Density Darrell and his 'Slate' promptly approved the sell-off of Ridgeway Annex. We now have trailers in the field at Ridgeway School because of our growing K-3 school population. Jane, the school system needs more money, and you better find it without selling our schools, or come May 2017, you may be looking for a new job!