Outlook

Re: Governance Concerns – June 11 Motion Lacked Transparency and Due Process

From Ryan Armstrong
Date Mon 2025-07-21 8:17 AM
To Julia Fraser <Julia.Fraser@sd23.bc.ca>
Cc All Trustees <All-Trustees@sd23.bc.ca>; Delta Carmichael <Delta.Carmichael@sd23.bc.ca>; Jon Rever <Jon.Rever@sd23.bc.ca>; Mona Essler <Mona.Essler@sd23.bc.ca>; Lise Bradshaw <Lise.Bradshaw@sd23.bc.ca>

Dear Superintendent/Chair,

Thank you for your response. I appreciate the time you took to address my concerns regarding the June 11, 2025 public board meeting and the related statement.

However, your reply raises several further questions about governance transparency, procedural fairness, and the Board's interpretation of public accountability.

1. In Camera Deliberations and Public Trust

While I recognize that In Camera sessions are permitted by law, invoking confidentiality should not be a shield against accountability - especially when used to craft public-facing political statements about elected officials. Referencing past precedents, such as support statements for other communities, doesn't negate the obligation to ensure full transparency, especially when responding directly to an MLA. The absence of disclosed votes, rationale, or debate prior to the June 11 motion is precisely what undermines public trust.

2. Public Statements as "Values" vs. Governance Decisions

To suggest that value-based statements require no consultation because they aren't "policy" is a distinction without a difference. When the Board speaks publicly on behalf of the community and responds to an MLA, that is a political act with real implications. The public has every right to expect

clarity on how such statements are developed, and to question why no consultation, notice, or engagement occurred beforehand.

3. The Role of the Chair

My concern was never about the Chair's right to vote or speak. It was and remains - about the optics and integrity of process when the Chair appears to shepherd a politically sensitive motion from a confidential meeting, to the public floor, to a media release, without meaningful deliberation visible to the public. In matters touching reconciliation and public accountability, optics matter. Governance is not only about what is lawful—but what is principled.

4. Lack of MLA Consultation

Thank you for confirming that MLA Armstrong was not consulted. That omission is disappointing. If reconciliation and dialogue are values the Board champions, surely it would have been appropriate - at minimum to notify or hear from the MLA before approving a motion that directly addresses her.

In Closing

You noted the importance of raising concerns based on an accurate understanding of Board processes. I would suggest that full transparency is the prerequisite for such understanding. When motions are debated behind closed doors, passed with no context, and paired with media releases as stand-ins for proper documentation, it becomes difficult for any engaged citizen to assess the facts fairly.

Public governance demands more than procedural compliance, it demands earned trust.

Sincerely,

Ryan T. Armstrong

> On Jul 18, 2025, at 4:49 PM, Julia Fraser <Julia.Fraser@sd23.bc.ca> wrote:
>
> Dear Mr. Armstrong,
>
> Thank you for your email regarding the Board of Education's June 11, 2025 public meeting and the statement issued in support of our Indigenous community.
>
> I would like to address your concerns directly and provide clarity on the process followed by the Board.

1. On the Development of the Motion

A Special In Camera Board Meeting was held to discuss whether the Board would respond to MLA Tara Armstrong's public comments, and if so, what the content of that response would be. All discussions during In Camera sessions are confidential by law, and individual trustee votes are not released publicly. The final decision to make a public statement was brought forward and passed at the public meeting on June 11, following established Board practice.

This process mirrors precedent-setting examples of Board statements issued in support of our 2SLGBTQIA+ students, staff, and families, which also originated from In Camera discussions and were brought forward in the same manner. These public statements reflect the Board's values and are made collectively by trustees.

2. On Public Input and Process

Public Board statements do not require public consultation. They are not operational decisions, policies, or strategic directions requiring stakeholder feedback. They are statements of values—developed, discussed, and adopted by trustees.

The news release that accompanied the motion was the statement itself. There was no separate text beyond what was made publicly available. Trustees received the proposed statement in advance and had opportunity to provide feedback and direction. The motion to approve the statement was publicly moved, seconded, and carried.

3. On the Role of the Board Chair

The Chair has one vote and one voice—equal to all other trustees. While I chair and facilitate meetings, I participate fully and equally in all Board deliberations and decisions. My role is to ensure that meetings are conducted fairly and in accordance with governance procedures, and to represent the will of the Board once a decision has been made.

Your suggestion that this dual role is inappropriate misunderstands the function of a Board Chair in the BC public education system. The Chair does not forfeit the right to contribute to discussions or shape motions by virtue of their facilitative role.

4. On MLA Consultation

No, the Board did not consult MLA Tara Armstrong prior to this motion being brought forward. The Board was responding to public statements already made by the MLA and determined that a response was warranted to uphold our values and commitment to reconciliation.

The Board of Education takes its responsibility to govern transparently and fairly very seriously. While we welcome questions and feedback from the public, it's equally important that concerns raised are based on an accurate understanding of our processes.

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,
Julia Fraser
Chair, Board of Education
Central Okanagan Public Schools

Warmest Regards,
Julia Fraser
Board Chair & Ex-Officio of All Committees,
Central Okanagan Board of Education
Resolutions Committee Chair,
BCSTA Thompson-Okanagan Branch
Cell: 250-681-0269
Email: Julia.Fraser@sd23.bc.ca

I respectfully acknowledge that I live, work & play on the ancestral, traditional and unceded territory of the Okanagan People.

From: Lise Bradshaw <Lise.Bradshaw@sd23.bc.ca>
Sent: Friday, July 18, 2025 3:15:56 PM
To: All Trustees <All-Trustees@sd23.bc.ca>; Delta Carmichael <Delta.Carmichael@sd23.bc.ca>; Jon Rever <Jon.Rever@sd23.bc.ca>; Mona Essler <Mona.Essler@sd23.bc.ca>
Subject: Fw: Governance Concerns – June 11 Motion Lacked Transparency and Due Process

please see board correspondence below.

From: R. Armstrong
Sent: Friday, July 18, 2025 1:41 PM
To: Kevin Kaardal <Kevin.Kaardal@sd23.bc.ca>

Cc: Board of Education <Boardof.Education@sd23.bc.ca>
Subject: Governance Concerns – June 11 Motion Lacked Transparency and Due Process

Dear Superintendent,

I'm writing to raise serious concerns regarding the June 11, 2025, public board meeting and the manner in which Chair Julia Fraser facilitated the reconciliation motion (Item 13.1).

While the motion was technically listed on the agenda, the only attachment provided was a news release - not the full motion text or a supporting rationale. For a matter of this significance, this approach falls well short of basic governance transparency.

Key Concerns:

1. Incomplete Disclosure:
   The agenda item (13.1) referenced a motion but failed to include the actual text or relevant background documentation. A news release is not a substitute for a full motion. Stakeholders, trustees, media, and the public - had no way to review or assess the content before the vote.
2. Bypassing Public Deliberation:
   This motion originated in-camera. There is no record of it being publicly reintroduced or debated before the final vote. Moving directly from closed-door discussion to public passage undermines open process and community trust.
3. Chair's Role Raises Questions:
   If Chair Fraser was involved in developing the motion, and then used her position to guide it through, this blurs the line between impartial facilitation and advocacy — an unacceptable dual role under best governance standards.

In summary: This motion was procedurally weak, substantively opaque, and improperly facilitated.

I respectfully request that the Board:

• Release the full text of the motion passed on June 11

• Explain why only a news release was included in the agenda materials

• Clarify when trustees received the motion and supporting details

• Review and publicly share the procedural policies governing how in-camera items are brought forward for public decision

Strong governance depends on transparency, fairness, and accountability. This process fell short on all three.

One final question: Given the significance of this motion, was MLA Armstrong consulted by you or the chair prior to the vote or anytime before? In matters of public interest, especially those tied to reconciliation, open dialogue with elected representatives isn't just advisable — it's a hallmark of good governance.

Sincerely,

Ryan T. Armstrong