

Voice New Westminster

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For Immediate Release

**Voice New Westminster school trustee candidates Cook and Goring
release Biz Co FOI results**

New Westminster, BC -- Voice New Westminster school trustee candidates Casey Cook and Jim Goring are releasing the results of a Freedom of Information request they filed as Trustees of the New Westminster School District seeking financial, and other, information from the School District Business Company.

The two trustees feel compelled to do so at this time because of disinformation contained in a recent letter.

A motion was duly passed by the New Westminster School Board on January 16, 2009 requesting the Business Company to make available to the board certain financial information. Unfortunately, the Business Company refused to comply with the board's motion and continued to withhold the requested financial information -- something that the letter failed to note.

In response to the Business Company's refusal to provide the requested information, Trustees Cook and Goring made an application for the information under the Freedom of Information Act on April 14, 2009.

Some of the information requested by Cook and Goring in their Freedom of information request included:

- The School District Business Company business plan
- The School District Business Company risk profile or risk assessment
- All contracts with entities, educational and otherwise, in China, entered into by School District No. 40 or the School District Business Company
- All contracts entered into, in the conducting of the affairs of the Business Company, in Canada, or locations other than China.
- A listing of resources, staff, time, services and supplies, provided by the School District to the School District Business Company, for each year of operation, along with a listing of the costs of these and the total amount of money paid for these by the School District Business Company.

In June 2009, shortly after Cook and Goring submitted their Freedom of Information request, the Business Company requested a \$100,000 short term loan from the school district in order to provide working capital so that the business company could survive until tuition fees from China were received in late October.

In absence of the requested financial information about the Business Company, as per the board's January 16, 2009 motion, the fiduciary duty of the New Westminster school trustees demanded that the loan request be denied pending receipt of the requested financial information.

On July 6, 2009, the Business Company responded to Cook and Goring's Freedom of Information request with a half-page, handwritten response outlining the Business Company's business plan.

The handwritten text read as follows:

"The School District Business Company Plan is to focus its activities on offshore schools for both Pace program (ESL) and B.C. School Curriculum resulting in students graduating with BC Dogwood Diploma. The goal is to recover the investment the School District has made in research and development approximately one million dollars and to generate additional revenue for the school district. Our plan is to increase enrolment in both PACE and BC Program as soon as possible."

Appended to the handwritten response was an additional note from the Freedom of Information Commissioner's office noting that the Commissioner's office has been advised by the Business Company "that a risk profile and risk assessment did not exist."

The text of this note reads as follows:

"This Document was provided by the Business Company July 6, 2009 in response to a request made April 14, 2009 under a Freedom of Information Request by Jim Goring and Casey Cook for a copy of "The School District Business Company business plan". We were advised that a risk profile and risk assessment did not exist."

Subsequent to Cook and Goring filing their Freedom of Information request, Jim Goring attended two consecutive Business Company AGM's (which are open to the public) and requested that the Business Company take some time to develop a business plan and risk analysis profile.

The School District Business Company now has a proper business plan and risk profile in place by which future requests for short term loans can be measured and assessed.

Cook and Goring want to recognize the hard work of the volunteer board members of School District Business Company -- Carmelita Tapia, Les King, Henry Tanaka and Bill Lewis -- as well as Cindy Tang and Brian Sommerfeldt who, in addition to Brent Atkinson, deserve credit for turning the Business Company around and have received little public acknowledgement.

A copy of the April 2009 Freedom of Information request filed by Trustees Cook and Goring, as well as a copy of the July 2009 response from the Business company, are available as PDF documents in the Media section of the Voice New Westminster website at www.voicenewwestminster.org.

Voice New Westminster is a broadly-based, non-partisan civic electors organization comprised of city residents who share common concerns about the future of our community, its neighbourhoods, its sustainability, and the integrity and transparency of public processes carried out by local government bodies.

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