



# News Release

September 6, 2006

## Settlement reached in human rights complaint

The Surrey school board and Kim Forster and Carol Pegura have achieved a resolution of the pair's human rights complaint. The parties agree issues between them are most appropriately resolved on a constructive, forward looking and consensual basis and in that spirit, have agreed to provide the following joint public statement:

*The parties have reached a mutually acceptable resolution to Kim Forster and Carol Pegura's human rights complaint against the Surrey school board filed with respect to the conduct of some of the delegations at the June 3 and 9, 2003 school board meetings.*

*The parties have agreed not to proceed to adjudication on the application of the British Columbia Human Rights Code and the scope of the freedom of expression under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in this particular case. Nevertheless, the school board recognizes that some of the attendees at the meeting were deeply offended by some of the presentations and the school board wishes to make changes to its policy governing delegations at board meetings to ensure that, within the parameters established by law, all members of the public feel equally welcome to participate in board meetings.*

*Accordingly, the school board will amend its policy #2400 (section 8) to provide direction to delegations on their presentations and to clarify the application of the principles espoused in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the British Columbia Human Rights Code. (The amendments are attached for reference).*

*In making this amendment to policy, the school board affirms its commitment to respecting the diversity of the community and the importance of demonstrating tolerance and understanding of differences, including recognition and respect for same-sex families in the school district. In that regard, the school board endorses the Ministry of Education's recently announced commitment to review curriculum and program delivery to incorporate consideration of equality and respect for all learners and specifically, to respect the principles of inclusion and respect for diversity with regard to sexual orientation and other grounds of discrimination.*

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For more information, please contact:  
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(Attachment)

## Policy Amendment

The Surrey school board will amend its procedural bylaws (Policy 2400) to clarify that:

- a. the school board expects all persons attending meetings of the school board to conduct themselves in a respectful manner;
- b. the school board supports and endorses the values and objectives of the Human Rights Code and specifically section 7 of the Code which prohibits persons from publishing statements which indicate an intention to discriminate against another person or group, or which are likely to expose a person or group of persons to hatred or contempt because of race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation or age of that person or group;
- c. the school board supports and endorses the values expressed in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and specifically the fundamental freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression guaranteed by section 2 of the Charter. These rights and freedoms, however, must be balanced with the school board's commitment to section 7 of the *Human Rights Code*;
- d. pursuant to those values and objectives, the school board expects all persons granted delegation status to provide a reasoned, meaningful presentation which addresses the subject matter of their application. Delegations are reminded that their presentations should not address other matters;
- e. a person who engages in improper conduct at a board meeting (e.g. disrespectful conduct, conduct which disrupts or interferes with the proceedings of the board) may be expelled from the meeting by the board chair or other member presiding at the meeting. Public statements which are contrary to section 7 of the *Human Rights Code* will not be tolerated and a person who engages in such discriminatory conduct may be subject to immediate expulsion (public statements include both oral statements made in public at a board meeting and written statements distributed to the public at a board meeting); and
- f. a person in attendance at a board meeting who has reason to believe there has been a contravention of subparagraph (e) above may bring their concern to the attention of the board chair or other member presiding by passing a note to any district staff member in attendance at the meeting. The staff member will then promptly bring the concern to the attention of the chair or the presiding board member.