

-- PRESS RELEASE --

### School Noise Action Group (SNAG)

#### *If you are a hard of hearing student*

Do you have trouble hearing the teacher over the ventilation or projector in your classroom?

Do you feel that in some parts of the school your assistive device is not working as well as it should?

Do you feel left out of school activities with your fellow students because of your hearing loss?

#### *If you are a parent*

Does your hard of hearing child experience high noise levels or interference while using assistive listening devices in classrooms?

#### *If you are a teacher*

Are you stressed out and have a sore throat after a day of teaching?

Are you concerned about noise and poor acoustical conditions in educational settings, and think that classrooms should be designed to provide the best possible learning environment?

The School Noise Action Group (SNAG) shares your concerns, and would like to do something about it. SNAG is a group of concerned teachers, university professors/researchers and other hearing professionals. SNAG's mission is to increase awareness of noise and acoustical issues in educational settings at all levels. We aim to achieve better acoustical conditions for teachers and students, whether normal-hearing or hard of hearing.

#### SNAG members:

- John Beech, VSB (retired)
- Maureen Clarke, VSB CAEDHH
- Murray Hodgson, UBC
- Janet Jamieson, UBC CAEDHH
- Brian Johnson, Coastal Health
- Tom Tylka, VSB CAEDHH (retired)
- Charles Laszlo, UBC (retired)
- John Lane, UBC
- Maureen MacDonald, BCTF (retired)
- Bev McKenna, VSB CAEDHH (retired)
- Dan Paccioretti, Coastal Health

#### Initiatives:

- Investigate noise problems from fluorescent-light ballasts in schools
- Investigate interference with FM and other types of assistive listening devices

- Investigate noise complaints at University Hill Elementary School
- Study the prevalence of voice problems in BC school teachers
- Create a web site

Contact:

For further information about SNAG, or to share your opinions about noise and acoustical problems in educational settings, contact Murray Hodgson, UBC by e-mail, at [hodgson@mech.ubc.ca](mailto:hodgson@mech.ubc.ca) (deceased Summer 2017)

2007

February 5, 2007

Jeff Vasey  
Director, Building Policy Branch  
Office of Housing and Construction Standards  
PO Box 9844 Stn. Prov. Govt.  
Victoria, B.C.  
V8W 9T2

Dear Mr. Vasey,

I am writing on behalf of the Vancouver Speech Language Pathologists to support the efforts of our colleagues in the School Noise Action Group (SNAG) who are working to solve the noise problems in schools. Poor acoustics have an adverse effect on every child's ability to learn. Unlike adults, children have not developed the skill to isolate the important voice signal from the surrounding noise. They lack the language development and general knowledge to fill in the gaps when they miss part of a statement. This is particularly true for the children we work with who have added communication and language difficulties. These children need a quieter environment to hear and understand the spoken language in a classroom.

SNAG has assessed school noise problems and conducted solutions and alternatives to several classrooms in Vancouver. They are currently proposing amendments to the legislation to add acoustic standards to the B.C. building code. We sincerely hope that you can support these recommendations and ensure that changes can be made to improve the learning conditions for all students and teachers.

Sincerely,

*Barbara Burnet*

Barbara Burnet, Speech Language Pathologist  
On behalf of the Vancouver School Board Speech Language Pathologists

cc. Thomas Tylka, Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
Chairperson of the B.C. Legislation Committee School Noise Action Group (SNAG)  
814 Whitchurch Street  
North Vancouver, B.C. V7L 2A4

Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier  
Keith Miller, Director, Ministry of Education  
Funding Department  
PO Box 9151 Stn. Prov. Govt. Victoria, B.C. V8W 9H1

1.

Feb. 15, 2007

Supervisor @ VSB

2007

Hi Jennifer!

Just a quick note to say "Hello".

It was nice to see you at the Board office on Jan. 23rd while I was waiting for our SNAG Members meeting. I continue to do my best, advocating for acoustics in legislation in the B.C. School Building Code.

I've enclosed <sup>copies of</sup> some of my recent work.

I submitted an abstract to the "Call for Papers" CAEDHH Conference, Winnipeg, July 4-7th. I recently heard it was accepted. During my presentation I'm going to review "letters of support" to the B.C. Provincial Government etc requesting legislation for ANSI acoustic standards in our schools. Will you please ask our

OR I's to write a letter of support to Gordon Campbell + cc to Shirley Bond, Emory Dossall, Rick Davis, Jeff V.ey etc.? I have attached a copy of the original letter sent last June and a reply received in July. I've also enclosed a copy of an article from the Volta Review entitled "Advocating

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for Classroom Acoustics: Connecticut's Story  
 by John Filanders. This information  
 and our DRITs' collective experience with  
 background (classroom) noise should be  
 enough <sup>data</sup> for a convincing letter. Thank  
 you and my thanks to them for  
 helping us with lobbying at this time.  
 A timely letter will be appreciated.

Thanks again!

Cheers,

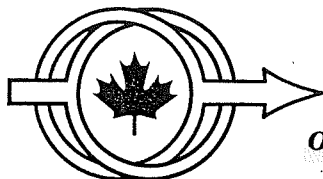
Tom

P.S. I'm planning on sharing the DRIT-DHH letter  
 with our colleagues at the CAEDHH National  
 Conference in July.

cc Diane Little et. al. (Letter writing team) 😊

No  
 response!

2007



*Canadian Association of Educators  
of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – British Columbia*

CAEDHH-BC

Mr. T. Tylka  
814 Whitchurch St.  
North Vancouver, B.C. V7L 2A4  
February 20, 2007

Dear Tom:

We are writing on behalf of the CAEDHH – B.C. Executive as we wish to commend you for your tireless work on advocating for improved classroom acoustics for the students of British Columbia. The CAEDHH – B.C. Executive wishes to thank you most whole-heartedly for writing Gordon Campbell, the Premier of B.C. to inform him of the efforts that the School Noise Action Committee has taken to address classroom acoustic issues. We applaud you for attempting to raise the awareness of the government about the importance of adding acoustic standards to the British Columbia School Building Code and updating present legislation.

The CAEDHH – B.C. Executive would also like to praise you for your continued efforts in raising the issue of the importance of classroom acoustics to different audiences. Your participation at the B.C.T.F. Summer Institute in August 2006 was very highly regarded as many participants remarked on your wonderful presentation on the effectiveness of using tennis balls for noise abatement. We would also like to commend you in your continued efforts to eliminate the use of fluorescent lighting ballasts by urging School Boards to upgrade to using electronic ballasts in their schools.

CAEDHH – B.C. is very proud to count you as one of its members! We are extremely fortunate that you have continued to work so hard to improve the learning conditions for deaf and hard of hearing students. Indeed your efforts, if adopted, would lead to improved acoustical conditions in B.C. classrooms for all students. The CAEDHH – B.C. Executive would like to express their sincere thanks and congratulations for all your hard work.

Yours truly,

Ms. S. Casselton, Ms. B. McKenna  
Recording Secretaries, CAEDHH – B.C.

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March 1, 2007

To: Karin B., SNAG Representative (Ad Hoc)  
Carleton Elementary School

From: Tom Tylka  
(604) 988-9227



Mr Thomas Anthony Tylka  
814 Whitchurch St  
North Vancouver BC V7L 2A4

Re.: Copies of Acoustical Barriers to Learning  
and American National Standard  
Acoustical Performance Criteria,  
Design Requirements, and Guidelines  
for Schools.

Hi Karin!


Thank you for taking the  
initiative to support the Coquitlam  
Teacher's Resolution at the BCTF ABM  
I hope you are successful in  
including these ASA standards on  
acoustics into this resolution so  
our workplaces are healthier environments  
for teachers in B.C.

I have indicated on the cover of these documents that they are SNAG Loaned Library Copies. I'm trying not to offend Murray Hodgson and technically keeping him "out of trouble" <sup>with the ASA</sup> for sharing this document with me (us).

I waited for almost five years to see these documents. They should be readily available (in my opinion) to us, the BCTF, Ministry of Education, Districts and staff responsible for new school construction. How can we build schools to these ANSI standards if we don't know what these standards are? If you (us)(we) need interpretation of these documents, perhaps an acoustical engineer or architect can help us.



Also, I am personally grateful to you Karin for your work with SNAG. As you have witnessed the decline in my personal health, I'm not sure how long I will be able to continue helping SNAG. When I am unable to continue, I hope you will be able to, and support our dream of getting acoustics into legislation so our schools will be better working environments for staff and better learning environments for our students. Best wishes to you!

Cheers,   
Tom

To: Les King @ VSB  
Facilities Director

March 2, 2007

Hi Les!

2007

Please find enclosed some current information on classroom acoustics (school acoustics). I included copies of data from our SNAG Library. These ANSI Standards are considered the "Holy Grail". I waited five years to obtain these documents. I hope you will be able to include the criteria on acoustic treatment in new school construction and renovations in VSB.

Best wishes,

Cheers,

Tom

(604) 988-9227

2007



Canadian Association of Educators  
of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - British Columbia

CAEDHH-BC

CAEDHH - B.C.  
Box 1125, 141 6200 McKay Ave.  
Burnaby, B.C. V5H 4M9

March 6, 2007

Mr. J. Vasey  
Director, Building Policy Branch  
Office of Housing and Construction Standards  
PO Box 9844 Station Provincial Government  
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9T2

Dear Mr. Vasey,

I am writing on behalf of the Canadian Association of Educators of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - B.C. to support the efforts of the School Noise Action Group (SNAG). Their efforts in lobbying to solve noise problems in schools is very strongly supported by our membership. As teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing working with students with a hearing loss we are extremely aware of the effect that poor acoustics have on our students' ability to learn. Recent research from Prof. Lance Roberts of the University of Manitoba found that students' academic performance was adversely affected ten to fifteen percent in facilities with poor acoustics and lighting conditions. Children with a hearing loss have even less ability to isolate the important voice signal from the surrounding noise. They also lack the language structures and background knowledge to fill in the information they miss. They are severely affected by poor acoustic conditions in their classrooms. Hard of hearing students need to work in classrooms that have been acoustically treated so that they can listen optimally and understand the speech signal.

SNAG has assessed school noise problems and conducted solutions and alternatives to several classrooms in Vancouver. They are currently proposing amendments to the current legislation to adopt American National Standards Institute (ANSI) acoustic standards to the B.C. School Building Code for all schools in B.C. We fully support their recommendations and sincerely hope that you will propose that these changes be made in order to improve the learning conditions for all students and teachers in B.C.

Yours truly,

Beverley McKenna, Corresponding Secretary  
Canadian Association of Educators of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - B.C.

cc. Thomas Tylka, Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
Chairperson of the B.C. Legislation Committee, School Noise Action Group (SNAG)  
814 Whitchurch Street  
North Vancouver, B.C. V7L 2A4  
Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier  
Keith Miller, Director, Ministry of Education  
Funding Department  
P.O. Box 9151 Station Provincial Government, Victoria, B.C. V8W 9H1

Shirley Bond, Minister of Education

Emory Rosedale, Deputy Minister  
of Education  
George Abbott, Minister of Health  
Katherine Whithed, M.P.A. (North-  
Vancouver - Lonsdale)

Reminder cc's  
Oct. 1, 2007

2007

Honourable Shirley Bond  
Minister of Education and Deputy Premier  
Government of British Columbia  
PO Box 9045, Station Provincial Government  
Victoria, British Columbia V8W 9V1

SNAG BC Legislation Committee  
814 Whitchurch Street  
North Vancouver, BC V7L 2A4  
March 20, 2007

Dear Ms. Bond,

I am writing to bring your attention to a serious matter negatively affecting the learning of our students in all schools throughout BC and to request your leadership to rectify the problem. The issue is legislating acoustic treatment into the BC School Building Code to reduce competing background noise in schools. This essential action will support your government's number one goal to make BC the best educated and most literate jurisdiction on the continent.

I am an educator and have been a proponent of optimal acoustics in schools for many, many years. I was instrumental in starting the School Noise Action Group as a way to bring the issue of school noise abatement to the attention of educators, architects and government officials. The School Noise Action Group is composed of a group of professionals (including teachers of the deaf, acoustical engineers, University professors, speech pathologists, audiologists, Health and Safety officers of the BCTF and school administrators) who are very concerned about the issue of school noise. We have been working diligently over the past 6 years, researching noise in schools both locally nationally and internationally, and bringing the issue to the attention of those who can help to support the necessary changes.

We have found that in some jurisdictions, government leaders have ultimately become change agents by proposing action plans which resulted in guidelines and recommendations for school noise abatement measures. We understand Emory Dosdale has previously demonstrated his leadership and expertise in noise abatement in Edmonton, Alberta. Also, a few political shining stars, notably in the state of Connecticut, continued to work further until legislation was proposed and laws were written to solve the problems at the source, which is in the building construction. Without this type of legislation, schools will continue to be buildings with poor acoustics which in turn seriously impacts students' abilities to hear classroom instruction and discussions, and therefore impair their ability to listen and learn.

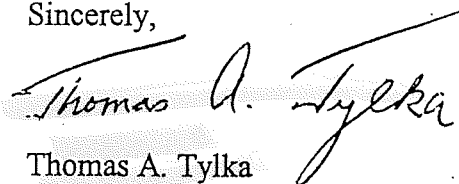
I have previously written to our Premier Gordon Campbell on behalf of the School Noise Action Group (SNAG) on June 5, 2006, but have not heard about any provincial action in regard to school noise abatement. The issue of poor acoustics in schools and other government buildings is often considered the result of a lack of funding. While acoustic treatments are expensive, at the time of initial construction, research has found it can cost as little as one-half of 1%. When acoustic treatment is done as a follow-up to construction, the costs rise and can exceed 20%. When acoustics are poor, it becomes challenging to hear. The legislative building in Victoria is a good example of this. The legislative assembly had to have acoustic treatment 2 months after construction when the members of parliament were not able to hear each other. This same consideration must be given to our BC schools.

Our knowledge about noise abatement is light years away from our current construction standards. New school construction in BC is being built to the same standards as schools in developing countries in terms of acoustic standards. Acoustic tiles and tack boards as acoustic treatments are woefully inadequate. Older schools are no less problematic.

My colleagues and I would be happy to meet with you to discuss this issue further. We would be more than happy to share with you the evidence we accumulated over the years that supports the concept that acoustics be legislated into the building code. Your leadership in moving this legislation forward would be greatly appreciated. May we have your assurance that you will become the change agent we need in BC to spearhead this initiative? We would be delighted to help you make BC become the first jurisdiction in Canada to have model schools that have been built according to ANSI (American National Standards Institute) S12.60-2002 acoustic Standards. It is quite possible as a direct result of your action the BC high school graduation rate will improve dramatically reducing the number of our lost students. Thank you for your consideration.

I look forward to your timely reply to my letter. I can also be reached by phone at 604-988-9227.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Tylka  
Chairman, SNAG  
BC Legislation Committee

Bev McKenna & Maureen Clarke,  
Hearing Resource Teachers & SNAG BC Legislation Committee

cc. Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier  
Emery Dosdale, Deputy Minister of Education  
Jeff Vasey, Director, Building Policy Branch  
Keith Miller, Director

2007

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



PVCRP

Provincial Voice Care Resource Program, Linda Rammage, PhD, Director  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Gordon & Leslie Diamond Health Care Centre, 2775 Laurel St, Vancouver, BC, V5Z 1M9  
Tel: 604-875-4204; Fax: 604-875-5382; Email: Linda.Rammage@vch.ca

March 28, 2007

The Honorable Shirley Bond  
Minister of Education  
Government of British Columbia  
Station Provincial Government  
Victoria, BC, V8W 9V1

mindler  
copy

Dear Ms. Bond;

In June, 2006, members of the School Noise Action Group (SNAG) corresponded with Premier Gordon Campbell to inform him of problems related to poor acoustics in BC public school that are having negative impacts on students' learning and teachers' voices. As an interdisciplinary group of professionals concerned about both the educational and health sequelae of teaching in poor acoustic environments, we requested that consideration be given to improving BC legislation by mandating minimum acoustic standards for classrooms. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) has established such standards for classroom acoustics and precedent has been set to implement these in some jurisdictions in Canada and internationally with uniformly positive results.

As voice specialists, we are aware of large numbers of teachers who have compromised voice quality due to voice strain in poor acoustic environments. Teachers with compromised voices not only cost society money in the form of sick leave, cost of teachers-on-call, and rehabilitation, but they place a significant burden on the educational system. Teachers with impaired voices present a poorer acoustic signal to children, who require more distinct speech signals to learn than do adults. Students with learning, hearing and behavioural challenges rely even more heavily on clear voice signals to process speech. Research reveals that working in noisy environments causes emotional stress, which reduces attention and productivity. The disruption in teaching continuity that results from teachers on sick leave with occupational voice problems is a further burden on the educational system.

We sincerely hope that you will facilitate the introduction of legislation that could ameliorate the common problem of poor acoustical conditions for learning in BC schools. We would be pleased to provide further information on your request. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Yours Sincerely;

Linda Rammage, PhD, S-LP(C)  
Registered Speech-Language Pathologist

Murray Morrison, MD, FRCS  
Otolaryngologist

- cc: Honourable Gordon Campbell
- cc: Honourable George Abbott, Min. of Health
- cc: Emory Dosdale, Deputy Min. of Education
- cc: Katherine Whitford, MLA (North Van - Torisdale)



Mr. Thomas A Tylka  
814 Whitchurch St  
North Vancouver, BC V7L 2A4

2007



BRITISH COLUMBIA

March 30, 2007

Tom Tylka  
814 Whitchurch Street  
North Vancouver BC V7L 2A4

Dear Tom Tylka:

Thank you for the articles and information school acoustics. You should be able to obtain the Edmonton Public regulations from Mr. Bob Holt, Acting Superintendent at Edmonton Public Schools.

Yours truly,

*E. Harney*

*E* Emery Dossdall, EdD  
Deputy Minister

*What a shame !!*  
*No response.*

*a feeble  
response !!  
What a shame !!*

