



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

May 8, 2018

School District 61 managing executive expenses well

VICTORIA – The Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia has released a new report: *An Independent Audit of Executive Expenses at School District 61*.

Overall, the Victoria School District 61 (SD61) is managing its executive's expenses well. The district's financial records were complete and accurate with no instances of inappropriate or non-business expenses.

“We are pleased with our findings at SD61,” said Auditor General Carol Bellringer. “With an eye to continuous improvement, we offered the district a few ways to enhance its policies and procedures. And, while payments were appropriate, we did find two variations from government expectations.”

First, SD61 gives its employees corporate purchasing cards for work-related expenses. The district pays the bills directly, rather than the employee paying the bill first and then getting reimbursed. This means SD61 is taking on the financial risk of its employees' expenses.

Second, SD61 didn't disclose all of the expenses it was required to because of its interpretation of the *Financial Information Act*. The district only disclosed expenses where an employee could be seen to have received personal benefit, such as attending a conference.

“We disagreed with this interpretation of the Act.” Bellringer stated. “The Ministry of Education confirmed our interpretation, specifically that all expenses should be disclosed.”

The difference in interpretation of the Act meant that for the six staff sampled, SD61 did not publically disclose approximately \$145,000 in expenses over two years, or almost 60% of the total expenses for this group.

“We encourage the other school districts in the province to read our report and ensure they're appropriately managing, and fully disclosing, their employees' expenses.” Bellringer added.

Payments for executive expenses need to be transparent and disclosed consistently across all school districts so that everyone is held equally accountable for funds entrusted and spent. The public should have confidence that district leaders are ethical and spending education dollars wisely.



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This is the first report from the new compliance, controls and research initiative at the Office of the Auditor General. The audits from this group will be very small and focus primarily on management controls and compliance.

The full report is available on the Office of the Auditor General website at www.bcauditor.com. Bellringer will answer questions pertaining to the report via a news conference.

News Conference Date: Tuesday May 8, 2018

Time: 12:30 p.m. (Pacific time)

Dial-in Information:

From Vancouver: 604 681-0260

From elsewhere in Canada and the USA: 1 877 353-9184

Participant Pass Code: 44848#

During question and answer period, to ask a question: Press 01

During question and answer period, to exit the question queue: Press #

About the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

The Auditor General is a non-partisan, independent Officer of the Legislature who reports directly to the Legislative Assembly. The *Auditor General Act* empowers the Auditor General and staff to conduct audits, report findings and make recommendations.

Contact us:

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For general questions, call Colleen Rose, Manager, Communications: 250-419-6207

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