

# Class size issue off to committee

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Record Staff

Comox District Teachers' Association (CDTA) president Steve Stanley is disappointed with the Board of Education's decision surrounding class size in School District 71.

A motion was passed unanimously Tuesday to send a CDTA letter about district class sizes exceeding limits to the board's finance committee. The committee will review it and is expected to make recommendations to the board.

Stanley said he wanted something to happen sooner.

"We were disappointed with that because we believe that will delay the process, or take longer for any kids to get help," Stanley told the *Record*.

"Any delays right now would slow things down and we were hoping for a quicker response."

The letter was sent in October and the class size numbers outlined in it are from the end of September. However, because of the November municipal elections, the board deferred a decision until a new board was elected.

Tuesday's board meeting was the first public meeting where the issue could be dealt with, as December's meeting was the inaugural meeting.

The letter states that dozens of classes exceed class size limits — defined in the School Act — and hundreds of classes exceed the limit of three students with special needs in them.

According to the letter, 71 classes had more than the limit of 30 students in junior and senior high schools in the district.

It also says 35 elementary classes have more than three students with special needs per class, including one class with eight. In the secondary schools, over 240 classes were over the limit for students with special needs, including 71 classes with five, 37 with six and 31 with seven.

"The challenges of supporting the diverse learning needs of these large numbers of students, at

the same time as teach, assess and evaluate progress through challenging academic curricula are dramatic and are taking a toll on the health and well-being of many teachers," said Stanley's letter.

Stanley noted that a new semester will start Tuesday, and he doesn't know what the

numbers will be like for the second half of the school year.

Trustee Rick Grinham, who sits on the finance committee, pointed out that the district's budget surplus is lower than in past years — about \$.5 million currently — but the committee plans try to get the budget closer to balanced.

"We don't want a deficit but we don't want a surplus," said Grinham. "We want to make sure that the funds that are allocated by the Ministry of Education for public education, are spent on public education for that year."

"I don't think it's the intent of the finance committee of the board to squirrel away any money."

The next board of education regular meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Feb. 28 at the school board office at 607 Cumberland Rd.

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**Rick Grinham**

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