Dear Parents, Caregivers, Guardians, and Families:

As we head into the holiday season, I want to extend my sincere thanks to every parent, caregiver, and guardian for your enthusiastic participation in your school community. I hope you enjoy this break with your families as our students look forward to more opportunities for growth and adventure in the new year.

My goal is to ensure schools are trusted community hubs, where you can feel confident your child is getting a world-class education while being treated with care and respect. Safe and inclusive classrooms are a huge part of that work, because everything we do is rooted in one thing: helping children thrive.

Our government has acted on the issues that matter to you. Whether it is increasing early literacy screening, expanding Automated External Defibrillator (AED) and CPR learning or bringing back the access zones that keep protesters away from school grounds, my commitment to you is to continue to listen to your concerns and take action.

One resounding theme I have heard from parents is the negative impact cell phone use and social media is having on kids. In addition to empowering school districts to ban cell phones in class, we continue to work closely with experts to ensure students, teachers and families have access to resources that help navigate complex issues, like low self-esteem, bullying or substance use. Our erase website is a wide-ranging tool where everyone can access information and resources, including free training to protect your child's safety online and find helpful tips to support important conversations to have with your kids.

I know the price of groceries is a constant worry and kids cannot achieve success if they come to school hungry. Thanks to the provincial Feeding Futures program, almost 90 percent of schools now have a school food program, offering stigma-free food to anyone who wants it.

Schools are where kids learn, play, and grow. They have incredible potential to help fulfil the child care needs of B.C. families. Recently, we changed the School Act to make it easier for boards of education to offer child care on school grounds, all year. Access to high quality, inclusive and affordable child care is a game changer for families, early learners and school communities, and I will continue to support the expansion of this critical service.

As the calendar year comes to an end, I hope you and the students in your life reflect on how much growth, excitement, and learning you have been a part of this school year. On behalf of the Ministry of Education and Child Care and the Government of B.C., I wish you a restful holiday season, filled with joy, family, and friends.

With gratitude,

Lisa Beare

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