



International Union of Operating Engineers

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10 Things Wrong With Vancouver School Board Management's Plan To Cut The Culinary Arts Program, Cafeterias & Food For Students In Need

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1. The Food Services Working Group plan created by VSB management only and presented today represents the most serious loss of educational opportunities for Vancouver students we have ever seen. Planned drastic cuts to the **Culinary Arts Program** would mean tens of thousands of Vancouver students in the years ahead would lose any chance of participating and learning skills from Red Seal chefs for a trade that could last a lifetime.

Closure of non-teaching **VSB-operated cafeterias** would put long-time workers out of a job and deprive students of healthy, nutritious meals in their schools, leaving them to nearby fast food outlets.

Privatization and contracting out of the extremely important breakfast and lunch programs would end **hot meals in schools** and the "delivery" model would stigmatize students receiving those cold meals at their schools. The management plan would also eliminate and privatize VSB Site Production Kitchens, where many students learn from VSB chefs and staff.

2. The proposed cuts to the Culinary Arts Program come at a time when the BC restaurant, food service and hospitality industry estimates it currently needs 20,000 skilled workers by 2021 and thousands more after that – and that labour shortage is so desperate it seeks workers in foreign countries to meet the need.
3. Our union has been working cooperatively with the **BC Restaurant and Food Services Association**, which strongly supports the need to increase enrolment in the Culinary Arts Program and expand it – not cut it. Currently and astonishingly, the VSB has no teaching cafeterias west of Oak Street – these changes would make a bad situation far worse for even more students citywide.
4. Not only do Culinary Arts Program students gain invaluable training in kitchen, restaurant and food service, many go on to make a good living in the industry.
5. Students with special needs particularly benefit from the Culinary Arts Program, which teaches them the kind of basics of food service that allow them to get jobs in fast food and other restaurants, often their first jobs, giving them income, independence and the self-worth of being employed.

6. The Food Service Working Group members consist entirely of VSB managers and did not seek any input from key VSB stakeholders: not from students, parents, teachers, Culinary Arts Program chefs, nor any of the VSB's unions who represent those teachers and staff. This is solely a management plan.
7. Our union's reasonable attempts to gain basic information about the Culinary Arts Program and cafeteria operations to improve the program have been completely rejected by VSB management, to the degree we are now appealing Freedom Of Information requests made of the VSB that have been refused.
8. The Food Service Working Group admits that VSB management have no capital replacement or maintenance plan for either teaching or non-teaching cafeterias, which has resulted in a now urgent need for extensive equipment replacement that is unbudgeted.
9. Existing private cafeterias in some VSB schools would continue to be subsidized by taxpayers while not following Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools for healthy nutrition – guidelines that VSB operated cafeterias must follow. That means sugary drinks, deep fried food, bottled water and other products will continue to be sold for profit and against the guidelines that VSB is supposed to uphold.
10. Our union recently completed local bargaining with the VSB and ratified a new collective agreement, yet during that entire process, VSB management and its bargaining team never once even mentioned the possibility of significant job cuts to our bargaining unit and substantial changes to job descriptions. As a result, we will pursue a bad faith bargaining complaint to the BC Labour Relations Board to protect those members' jobs if this plan is implemented.

In Conclusion: The Food Working Group management plan lacks any vision for a better system instead proposing punishing cuts and a dramatic reduction in student opportunities ; it was developed intentionally in a complete vacuum without input from students, parents, staff, teachers or the food service industry and public; it recommends fundamental and negative changes that would deprive students of learning and employment through Culinary Arts Program training that can last a lifetime; it would put out of work dozens of valued employees at the same time; it ignores completely its own VSB-commissioned reports of 2012 and 2016 that recommended positive changes to improve cafeterias and student learning.

We urge VSB Trustees to reject this unacceptable report entirely; to work cooperatively with students and parents, with our union, teachers, other staff, the restaurant and food service industry to find creative and collaborative ways to expand, not contract the Culinary Arts Program; to improve our cafeterias, not close them; and to feed more hungry students with better food, not fewer with worse.