



November 25, 2016

The Honourable Mike de Jong
Minister of Finance
Room 153, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC, V8V 1X4

Re: Expectations for funding continuation and outstanding requests in Budget 2017

Dear Minister de Jong,

Knowing you and your colleagues are currently preparing for the release of the 2017 provincial budget in February, I wanted to take this opportunity to provide you with the recommendations and expectations of the BC School Trustees Association.

Let me first begin by recognizing the substantial amount of additional funding that you have directed to BC's public school districts since the original 2016 budget was announced. This money has been invaluable in ensuring boards of education can continue with many important, but at-risk programs and initiatives through the current school year. The additional funding has also allowed school boards to address some of their most pressing local community issues, including keeping some rural schools open and reducing bussing costs for many parents. How such supplementary funding announcements can be transformed into predictable, ongoing budget allocations for school districts is, however, of significant concern to our members.

In terms of specific expectations for the continuation of funding to school districts, BCSTA would want to see all of the past year's \$48 million in supplementary funding announcements carried forward for the 2017 budget and have them confirmed as ongoing commitments. This would specifically include:

- The \$25 million added to the provincial education budget in March 2016.
- The \$2 million provided to specific school districts to help ensure rural schools could be kept open and viable.
- The \$15 million provided to specific school districts to defer parent fees for bussing.
- The \$6 million provided to school districts to assist with the implementation of new educational programs regarding coding.

Beyond the retention of these specific funding allocations in future years, BCSTA has seven (7) specific policy change recommendations that we believe would strengthen the financial health and accountability of school districts:

1. Sustainable, stable and predictable funding of our K-12 public education system.
2. Clear policy guidelines and reporting measures regarding appropriate financial reserves for school districts.
3. Implementation of common financial management measurements and terminology across the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education and school districts.

4. Resourcing of a professional learning program for school trustees and senior management officials to address areas of focus identified by the Office of the Auditor General, as well as other K-12 system audits.
5. Appropriate funding for exempt staff compensation increases.
6. The immediate dissolution of the public administrator position overseeing the BC Public School Employers' Association and the return of a co-governance model with school trustees overseeing their own employers' association.
7. A review of the current Ministry of Education funding formula with specific attention to the distribution model for school districts in funding protection.

These seven recommendations were previously provided to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services on October 3, 2016, and are intended to both ensure the future of a world class public education system, and to improve financial management practices and policies within the K-12 sector. We also want to acknowledge the substantial efforts of the Ministry of Education in working with us to begin to address some of these issues.

In terms of the overall provincial education budget, BCSTA, in consultation with the BC Association of School Business Officials (BCASBO), estimates that government will need to provide an additional \$207 million to the public education budget for the 2017/2018 school year in order to meet current and anticipated cost pressures as well as student enrollment increases for school districts. This estimate is based on the following:

- Unfunded cost pressures in the 2016/2017 school year for school districts:	\$43 m
- Enrollment growth for 2016/2017 and 2017/2018:	\$63 m
- Additional cost pressures in the 2017/2018 school year:	\$53 m
- Continuation of current year one time' grants (as noted above):	<u>\$48 m</u>
	\$207 m total

While we appreciate that this is a substantial amount of money for the province and taxpayers alike, it is also a realistic estimate of what it will cost school districts to maintain the current levels of service and programs for students. It is also a relatively small percentage increase to the overall K-12 education budget when considering that it covers costs over two school years as well as significant increases in student enrollment.

Once again, thank you for considering our input as you construct the province's 2017 budget. We look forward to any opportunity to discuss our recommendations directly with you and your staff. BCSTA remains committed to working with government in the best interest of our students and the public as a whole. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time if further information or discussion would be of benefit to you in your deliberations.

Yours truly,



Teresa Rezansoff
President – BCSTA

cc: The Honourable Mike Bernier, Minister of Education
Dave Byng, Deputy Minister of Education