



MEDIA RELEASE

BCSTA pleased BC budget speaks to the importance of public education

Now looking to Province to complete commitments on bargaining and student enrollment

[VICTORIA, B.C. – February 21, 2017] The announcement today of \$740 million additional dollars for K-12 education over the next three years is a significant step toward meeting the overall needs of B.C.'s students and schools. BCSTA was pleased to hear from Minister of Finance Mike de Jong that education is "the single most important service government operates or funds," and will look for government to translate his statement into stable, sustainable and predictable funding for B.C. school districts.

BCSTA president Teresa Rezansoff responded by saying, "I am pleased to see that government has recognized the need for significant further investments in public education. A robust and effective K-12 education system is critical to the health and prosperity of the province. The funds needed to deliver quality programs and services to students must be provided each and every year."

An area of the budget not directly addressed today will be the full cost implications of the current bargaining between government and the teachers' union. Beyond funding additional teachers, school trustees will be looking for government to meet their commitment to funding such key needs as additional classrooms, corresponding support staff increases and school district operational budgets. The increased overall funding announced today is a significant step in the right direction, but school districts will be expecting substantially more money to address the full costs of the Supreme Court of Canada decision.

"We will be looking to government to fulfill their commitment to ensure ALL of the costs of the Supreme Court of Canada decision are met by the province," confirmed President Rezansoff. "While we realize it would be inappropriate for government to predetermine the outcome of bargaining, it is our expectation that the conclusion of the process will include funding of all the resulting costs."

The commitment of \$228 million to fund anticipated enrollment growth in B.C. schools will assist Boards of Education toward balancing their 2017/2018 budgets. Other government budget announcements, such as the reduction and eventual elimination of PST on electricity and the reduction of MSP costs will also help school districts by reducing costs.

BCSTA will be monitoring both the growth in student numbers during the coming school year and government's commitment to corresponding further funding for K-12 education over the coming months. While today's provincial budget provides a base on which school districts can plan for next year, additional funds to meet growing student numbers may still be required. This will be particularly important knowing this is an interim budget that must be reintroduced within 90 days following the May provincial election.

President Rezansoff concluded by saying, "We understand that government is not in a position to address the final costs of bargaining and anticipated student population growth at this time, but it is critical to our students and schools that their commitment to fully fund public education is fulfilled."

BCSTA will be providing further analysis of Budget 2017 and the implications for public education in the coming days. Translating today's government fiscal year budget into local school district budget numbers for the coming school year will be our initial focus.

For additional information and to arrange an interview with BCSTA President Teresa Rezansoff, please contact:

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The British Columbia School Trustees Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting Boards of Education in their work. Boards of Education locally represent the interests of their communities in the public education system in British Columbia. For more information about our Association and work, please visit www.bcsta.org.