



British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

MEDIA RELEASE

BCSTA Response to the 2018 Provincial Budget

[Vancouver, B.C. – February 20, 2018] Today's provincial budget appears to have delivered a stable year ahead for British Columbia's sixty public school districts, along with some significant improvements in funding for future capital construction projects. The British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) recognizes the importance of balanced budgets for our province, but supports increased spending on K-12 public education as a wise investment on behalf of both taxpayers and families.

"Stable budgets, which allow boards of education to maintain current educational programs and services for students, are the key to success within the K-12 education system," noted BCSTA President Gordon Swan. "This budget should provide the improvements necessary for school districts to maintain educational programs in spite of increasing costs and student enrollment."

At present, forty of B.C.'s public school districts are seeing year over year growth in student numbers, which is a significant change from the years past. If we are to maintain our ranking as one of the best public education systems in the world, we must continue to invest in both school infrastructure and staffing to accommodate this student enrollment growth.

"When school trustees know there is the money in their budget to cover core expenses, they can then work to improve the quality of educational programs by focusing spending where it provides the greatest impact for students," stated Swan. "With the provincial education budget stabilizing, trustees will now be looking for the flexibility to direct those funds to educational priorities. Local decision making in the best interest of students is critical to the future success of our schools."

Although B.C.'s school districts have seen budgets and staffing levels rise significantly over the last two years, there has been little opportunity for school boards to direct those improvements to meet the local needs of students. A variety of provincial policies, collective agreements, and directives have tied the hands of school trustees in meeting the needs of their students and communities.

"BCSTA looks forward to working with government and our public education partners to implement the changes needed to ensure every education dollar provided in this budget is directed to the most effective uses possible. We cannot afford to see money wasted through imposed requirements that do not put students first," said President Swan.

The additional dollars provided in this budget to address the capital construction needs of school districts is appreciated. There are a large number of school additions and upgrades as well as new projects needed in all regions of the province. Constructing school and community infrastructure is a sound economic investment for our province.

Likewise, government's significant investment in quality childcare and early learning should have a positive impact on the readiness of children for successful entry into the school system. Boards of education are interested in hearing from the government as to how these new programs and facilities will integrate with K-12 schools in future years.

Further information about the impact of today's provincial budget announcement on B.C. school districts and the priorities of school boards can be obtained by contacting BCSTA.

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For additional information and to arrange an interview with BCSTA President Gordon Swan, 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.