



British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

June 15, 2018

The Honourable Judy Darcy
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
PO Box 9672, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9P6

SUBJECT: Creation of a student centered mental health strategy

Dear Minister Darcy,

At the most recent Annual General Meeting of the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA), our membership passed the following two resolutions directly related to child and youth mental health:

*That BCSTA publicly support the recommendations contained in the Report of the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth entitled **Child and Youth Mental Health in British Columbia: Concrete Actions for Systemic Change**.*

That BCSTA request the Ministries of Education, Children and Family Development, Mental Health and Addictions, and Health, along with boards of education and stakeholders from the K-12 education sector, develop a student-centred mental health strategy that will guide and support the delivery of mental health promotion, mental illness prevention and early intervention in BC schools.

A key focus for our member boards of education, as well as your government, is the mental health and well-being of children and youth across BC. We are all aware of the growing problem of mental health concerns, as well as addictions, arising from a lack of early intervention. For this reason, BCSTA has endorsed the findings and recommendations of the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth.

We are also encouraged by the emphasis you have put on finding solutions to this problem, and the initial steps taken to build a multi-sector approach to the rising crisis. Our recent meeting with Ministry of Education staff also emphasized the positive work being lead by them in the K-12 sector, as well as the keen interest of Minister Fleming in developing a coordinated community-based approach to future interventions. That being said, we strongly encourage you and your colleagues to redouble your efforts to immediately develop a provincewide, multi-sector formal strategy to guide all of our efforts. The well-meaning efforts of many groups, including boards of education, need an overarching guiding strategic plan if we are to be successful.

If we are to be successful in making a meaningful difference in the lives of children and youth who face mental health challenges, the time for real action is now.

Thank you for considering our request and we look forward to any future dialogue on this important issue that you might consider. We certainly recognize our responsibility to be part of the solution and to work with you in this endeavor. Your support for bringing the various

provincial government ministries together in support of this important initiative is critical to any future success.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G B Swan', written in a cursive style.

Gordon Swan

President

British Columbia School Trustees Association

Cc: Hon. Rob Fleming, *BC Minister of Education*

13. Support for Mental Health

Submitted by: *Thompson Okanagan Branch*

BE IT RESOLVED:

That BCSTA publicly support the recommendations contained in the Report of the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth entitled *Child and Youth Mental Health in British Columbia: Concrete Actions for Systemic Change*.

Rationale:

This motion is needed because concrete actions to improve child and youth mental health services must be undertaken in a holistic (cross-governmental) way by government as a matter of high priority. As indicated in the Report:

“The Ministry of Health has seen an average 2.9% increase per year in the number of children and youth with mental health diagnoses accessing a broad range of Ministry of Health funded services. Between 2009 and 2013, BC has seen a 43% increase in the number of children, youth, and young adults aged 0-24 presenting to hospitals to seek mental health and substance use services ... those aged 15-19 have the greatest rate of increase (73 % increase between 2009 and 2013).” (Report, page five.)

“The all-party Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth (the Committee) was established in 2006 to implement the second recommendation of the Honourable Ted Hughes in his 2006 *BC Children and Youth Review* to ‘encourage Government and the Opposition to work together to address the challenges facing the (children and youth) system.’” (Report, page one.)

Youth in care are particularly affected by mental health challenges. The time to act is now to improve the life chances of youth in care. The process of addressing mental health services for children and youth in care has been long and remains ongoing. The mental health needs of our children in care are well known and these mental health issues negatively impact their education.

Reference:

- Report of the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth entitled *Child and Youth Mental Health in British Columbia: Concrete Actions for Systemic Change*

This is an action motion and does not change or contradict any existing Foundational or Policy Statement.

This motion relates to Foundational Statements 1.1FS (Mission), 1.2FS (Values), 4.6FS (Services for Students) and 8.3 (Special Education).

This motion relates to Policy Statements 2.1.2P (Roles and Responsibilities), 4.2.2P (Health-Promoting Schools), 4.2.4P (Substance Misuse Prevention) 4.6.1P (Coordination of Services) 6.1.2P and (Teacher Training for Special Needs Students).