



June 20, 2018

The Honourable Carole James

Minister of Health

PO Box 9048, Stn Prov Govt

Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

SUBJECT: Requested changes to capital construction policy and funding for schools

Dear Minister James,

At the most recent Annual General Meeting of the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA), our membership passed the following four resolutions regarding capital construction policy and funding for schools in BC:

That BCSTA request that the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance provide multi-year capital plan approvals and funding that enable districts to minimize the number of portables required for enrolment growth.

That BCSTA request the Ministries of Education and Finance eliminate the current requirement as outlined in the Capital Plan Instructions for school districts to contribute a cost share on all major new space capital projects.

That BCSTA advocate to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance for increased and stable funding to hasten and facilitate the timely repair, renovation and/or replacement of aging school facilities.

That BCSTA request that the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance provide capital project funding for portable classrooms, including furniture and supplies, required for enrolment growth.

Although we have already had productive discussions with the Ministry of Education on this topic, I wanted to bring these resolutions as well as the general underlying concern to your attention.

As you are aware, the overall need for new school construction as well as facility upgrades (both seismic mitigation and building rejuvenation) across our province is very high. With the majority of school districts now seeing their student population increasing, we can no longer rely on school closures as a means of addressing aging infrastructure. The time has come for a more fundamental change in the way we address school district capital construction needs.

While any move to address the current situation will require additional government funding, there are also a number of policy considerations that can be considered to help address the overall problem. This would include:

- Separating the capital construction budget for school districts from their operating budget. The current requirement for districts to self fund large percentages of capital

construction projects is helping to drive up local financial reserves at a time when government is looking to keep funds in active use. School districts should not be required to build up large fiscal reserves to support capital construction projects.

- The Ministry of Education, school districts and local municipalities should continue to strongly pursue initiatives to reduce project approval process red tape. In many cases, local project approval processes and requirements are unnecessarily delaying school construction projects which drives up the cost. Your support to make these processes much more efficient is critical to bringing about needed change.
- Long-range capital project planning and approval is required across the K-12 system. As we try to deal with such positive initiatives as the inclusion of day care facilities in schools, there must be a realistic opportunity for school districts to plan their capital projects years in advance with reasonable certainty as to timing and resourcing.
- Significant amounts of school operating budgets in growing districts are being redirected to buy and locate portable classrooms. This money would be more appropriately spent on programs and resources for students, rather than temporary accommodation. A more robust capital construction program would allow this money to be spent where it was originally intended.

BCSTA does appreciate the significant financial resources that have already been committed to school capital construction projects as well as the efforts of the Ministry of Education to streamline and accelerate the project approval process. That being said, most school districts in BC have facility needs that will not be addressed within a reasonable time frame. Our association and member boards are committed to working with you and the Minister of Education to find reasonable solutions to the current situation. I'm happy to meet with you in Victoria and look forward to any joint discussions or opportunities for information sharing that you might consider.

Thank you for considering our request and we look forward to any future dialogue on this important issue that you might consider.

Yours truly,



Gordon Swan

President

British Columbia School Trustees Association

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



35. Funding for Portable Classrooms

Submitted by: *SD42 (Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows)*

BE IT RESOLVED:

That BCSTA request that the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance provide capital project funding for portable classrooms required for enrolment growth.

Rationale:

The Ministry of Education does not provide funding for portables required for enrolment growth. School districts are required to allocate about \$200,000 of operating funding for each portable that is acquired.

The purchase of portable classrooms is capital in nature and should be funded through the Ministry of Education's capital planning and funding process.

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



36. Multi-Year Capital Plan Approval

Submitted by: *SD42 (Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows)*

BE IT RESOLVED:

That BCSTA request that the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance provide multi-year capital plan approvals and funding that enable districts to minimize the number of portables required for enrolment growth.

Rationale:

The Ministry of Education approves one year of capital funding at a time. Funding for new schools and school expansions is only approved after the majority of the students required for a new school are housed in portables. Multi-year approvals would support better planning at the local level.

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

This motion relates to Foundational Statement 8.1FS (Government Support for Education).

37. Aging Infrastructure in British Columbia

Submitted by: *Northern Interior Branch, SD39 (Vancouver) and SD68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith)*

BE IT RESOLVED:

That BCSTA advocate to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance for increased and stable funding to hasten and facilitate the timely repair, renovation and/or replacement of aging school facilities.

Rationale:

With the Ministry of Education's focus on improving student achievement, it is difficult for districts to focus on student achievement when faced with aging facilities.

Each year, our annual facility grant funding is needed to ensure the safety of our buildings rather than enhancing our facilities to meet the needs of 21st Century Learning. The cost of repairing our facilities is greater than our annual facility grant. This means needed repairs are pushed off year after year. As a result, many districts are unable to maintain stable Facility Condition Indexes (FCI). A school's FCI is calculated by dividing Deferred Maintenance by Replacement Value. For example, based on values derived from the VFA Canada Corp. report, the Vancouver Board of Education currently receives only 1/10th of the AFG funds required to maintain a stable FCI.

In order to address this, there needs to be an increase to both the Annual Facility Grant and the School Enhancement Fund.

Moreover, districts require stable and predictable funding for facility enhancements and capital projects to assist with short-term and long-term facilities planning.

There is a need to address the ongoing maintenance of new builds or renovations and this should be included as part of the capital announcement as an ongoing commitment from the Ministry.

Reference:

- Ministry of Education, Capital Planning for Kindergarten to Grade 12

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

This motion relates to Foundational Statement 9.1FS (Safe Environment).



42. Elimination of Requirement for District Contribution to Capital Projects

Submitted by: *SD36 (Surrey)*

BE IT RESOLVED:

That BCSTA request the Ministries of Education and Finance eliminate the current requirement as outlined in the Capital Plan Instructions for school districts to contribute a cost share on all major new space capital projects.

Rationale:

It is illegal for school districts in British Columbia to run deficits. In the "operating budget" of any district, at year-end there is, as a requirement of law, a balance remaining. This balance is referred to in many places as a "surplus." The term surplus is misleading in that districts across BC place these funds toward their coming year's budget to service children.

For those districts that are in need of capital, any capital priority, no matter how urgent, is first met with a negotiation about how much money a district can contribute. The size of the contribution, based on Ministry announcements, appears to vary widely.

This contribution requirement forces districts to directly reduce programs and services to children in the interest of obtaining approval for the capital they so need.

There is also an inequity between those districts needing expansion which requires a contribution, and those needing seismic mitigation which requires no contribution.

This is a policy that pits school districts against school districts and reduces programs to children as a means to secure capital expansion.

Reference:

- [Ministry of Education, March 2017, Capital Plan Instructions for 2018/19 Five-Year Capital Plan Submissions](#)

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

This motion relates to Foundational Statements 4.6FS (Services for Students), 5.1FS (Educational Program Objectives) and 8.1FS (Government Support for Education).

This motion relates to Policy Statement 8.1.6P (Cost Sharing of Capital Projects).