



MEDIA RELEASE

BC School Trustees Respond to the 2019 Provincial Budget

[Vancouver B.C. – February 19, 2019] Today's provincial budget has once again delivered a stable year ahead for British Columbia's 60 public school districts by funding growing student enrollment as well as the school buildings needed to house them. The British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) supports this significantly increased spending on K-12 public education as a wise investment on behalf of both families and taxpayers within the important context of a balanced provincial budget.

"Stable, predictable budgets, which allow boards of education to maintain current educational programs and services for students, are critically important to the K-12 education system," said BCSTA President Gordon Swan. "This budget should provide the additional funding necessary for school districts to maintain current educational programming during a time of increasing student enrollment."

At present, 45 of B.C.'s public school districts are seeing year over year growth in student numbers; a trend which is expected to continue over the decade ahead. If we are to maintain B.C.'s goal of being one of the best public education systems in the world, we must continue to invest in school infrastructure, support programs and staffing to accommodate student enrollment growth.

President Swan added, "With a stable provincial education budget in place, trustees will now be looking for two key items: 1) the flexibility to direct more of those funds to local educational priorities, and 2) a long-range plan to connect new provincial initiatives around childcare, mental health, and poverty reduction directly with children and youth in local schools. We look forward to working with government as soon as possible to ensure the required policy changes are implemented to ensure our growing education budget can be fully spent in the best interest of the students it is intended to serve."

Although B.C.'s school districts have seen budgets and staffing levels rise significantly over the last three years, there has been very little opportunity for school boards to direct any of this additional money to meet the local needs of students or to implement new initiatives. Policies, collective agreements, and directed spending requirements have tied the hands of school trustees in terms of providing the fullest range of new opportunities for their students and communities. Increased flexibility on how education budgets may be spent is key to the future success of B.C.'s 558,000 K-12 students.

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



Additional dollars provided in this budget for school capital construction is also appreciated. A large number of school additions and upgrades, as well as new buildings, are needed in all regions of our province. Constructing school and community infrastructure is a sound economic investment for our province. School districts, along with the provincial government and local municipalities, will all need to do their part to ensure needed school projects can be completed in a timely manner.

Provincial initiatives in such areas as quality child care, early learning, youth mental health services, poverty reduction and integrated health services will provide opportunities for shared initiatives and new embedded programs in our schools. Supporting children and youth ultimately serves our schools and communities well. BCSTA looks forward to exploring options to bring these initiatives into our schools.

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:

Mark W. Regier, *Technical Writer and Website Specialist*, BCSTA
mregier@bcsta.org | mobile: (604) 783-4432

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.