



British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

March 19, 2019

The Honourable Rob Fleming

Minister of Education

PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

**Re: BC School Trustees Association support of
the Funding Model Review**

Dear Minister Fleming,

With Boards of Education providing their reviews of the independent review panel recommendations, and the working group review processes now underway, I wanted to reiterate BCSTA's support for the review and redevelopment of the funding distribution model for K-12 public education. As Boards of Education are charged with oversight of the local budget allocation, we welcome the current process underway to create a more effective and efficient funding model. Certainly, the greater flexibility many of the recommendations would provide to Boards of Education as to how funding is spent would be welcomed, and improve the ability of boards to better direct funding towards enhanced educational services for students.

Our members previously passed no less than 12 motions calling for the current formula to be reviewed or for specific components of the formula to be changed, so we are pleased to see the current review process steadily progressing. We also appreciate the additional time and steps you have provided so that this important decision can be made with full consideration of the proposed options and opportunities. BCSTA remains committed to our previous statement on the funding model review process:

We support the need for the current funding model to be reviewed toward identifying and implementing a more modern alternative reflective of the current provincial context.

Our Association also continues to support the jointly developed guiding principles put forward in the fall of 2018 by BCSTA and the Ministry of Education. These guiding principles remain valid and should continue to direct any new funding model.

Responsive - *Allocates available resources amongst Boards of Education in consideration of unique local and provincial operational requirements.*

Equitable - *Facilitates access to comparable levels of educational services and opportunities for individual students across the province.*

Stable and Predictable - *Supports strategic multi-year planning for educational programming and school district operations.*



Flexible - *Respects the autonomy of, and does not unnecessarily restrict, individual Boards of Education in the spending of their allocations to further student success.*

Transparent - *Calculates funding using a clear and transparent methodology.*

Accountable - *Allocates resources to Boards of Education in the most efficient manner, and ensures that resources provided are being utilized as intended.*

In short, the changes implemented should prioritize the needs of students, support the continued implementation of educational program reform, and provide an equitable balance of funding for all school districts. As change may be difficult in some circumstances, a phased implementation that minimizes any negative impact of transition will be important. For this reason, BCSTA continues to recommend the following:

The implementation of any new funding model should be phased in over time and in such a way as to 'do no harm' to any school district. While we recognize any change has to have an impact, every effort should be made to minimize the short-term consequences on individual school districts.

That no school district should see a reduction in funding as a direct result of the implementation of any new funding model.

The days ahead will provide us with the opportunity to receive more input from our members as to their priorities and suggestions regarding any new funding model for K-12 education in our province. This information will be shared with you and your staff as soon as possible.

At this time, however, our Board of Directors would like to express initial support for the following recommendations of the independent review panel. This does not mean, however, that we are opposed to the other recommendations, but will seek further input from our member boards and clarifications through the working groups before responding further.

#2 The Ministry should retain targeted funding for self-identified Indigenous learners and maintain a minimum level of spending.

#3 The Ministry of Education should work with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (*as well as other partner groups representing Indigenous students*) to support the continuous improvement of outcomes for Indigenous learners,

It is recommended that other partner groups representing Indigenous students also be included under this recommendation should it be implemented.

#4 The Ministry should consolidate and simplify existing geographic supplements, the Supplement for Salary Differential, and relevant special grants outside the block into a single supplement,

#5 The Ministry should replace all current supplements for enrolment decline and funding protection with a new, transitional mechanism that allows school districts to manage the impact of enrollment decline over a three year rolling time period.

- #7 The Ministry working with the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (CSF), should develop a unique school district factor that recognizes the special characteristics of this province-wide school district....
- #8 The Ministry should eliminate the Classroom Enhancement Fund and allocate this funding as part of school district operating grants.
- #12 The Ministry should establish a provincial accountability and reporting framework for the K-12 public education sector, including common principles and templates.

The establishment of the provincial accountabilities and reporting framework to be co-created with Boards of Education.

- #14 As a critical component of good operational practice, Boards of Education should be required to strengthen their planning processes.....

The establishment of any required components to be co-created with Boards of Education.

- #15 The Ministry of Education should shift the focus of the Compliance Audit Program from purely financial to have a quality assurance emphasis that incorporates best practices-based recommendations regarding student outcomes, structure of programs and services, and overall management of school district operations.

The establishment of all components to be co-created with Boards of Education.

- #16 The Ministry should provide ongoing provincial leadership and support to help strengthen governance and management capacity at all leadership levels in school districts.

The establishment of all components to be co-created with BCSTA and other management partner groups, including BCSSA, BCASBO and BCPVPA.

- #18 The Ministry should identify (*through consultation with boards of education*) net cost pressures and new program expenditures and, as part of the annual provincial budgeting process, bring them forward to Treasury Board for consideration when the total quantum of public education funding is being set.

Consultation with Boards of Education should be a component of this recommendation should it be implemented.

- #19 To support multi-year financial planning: Government should issue three-year operating funding to Boards of Education, based on available funding and projected student enrolment; and school districts should be required to develop three-year financial plans.

The establishment of all components to be co-created with BCSTA and other management partner groups, including BCSSA and BCASBO.



- #21 There should be no change in the way that locally-generated revenues are treated by the Ministry of when calculating operating funding for school districts.
- #22 In the current absence of dedicated funding for some capital expenditures, the Ministry should either: Provide capital funding for expenditures that are currently not reflected in the capital program; or clarify which items are ineligible for capital program funding and ensure that school districts are permitted to establish appropriate reserves that allow them to save for these purchases on their own.

It remains our intent to submit a more fulsome response to all of the independent panel recommendations once we have heard more from our members. This will include specific commentary regarding all of the independent panel recommendations, but at this time we feel we need more detailed information from Boards of Education, and from the working group process, in order to determine our final response. We hope, however, that this initial response from our Board of Directors will be helpful to both you and the working groups as you determine how best to move forward. A critical component of our support is, however, the opportunity to co-create many of the key components that will be necessary if the recommendations are to be implemented.

Thank you once again for addressing the points previously raised by BCSTA in the early phases of the funding model review process, and for the extremely hard work of your staff in facilitating this work. We look forward to jointly developing a new funding model that will better serve the students of BC over the decades to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "G B Swan". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Gordon Swan
President
British Columbia School Trustees Association

cc Scott MacDonald – Deputy Minister of Education
BCSTA Member Boards of Education