

September 4, 2019

The Honourable Rob Fleming

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

Dear Minister Rob Fleming,

Subject: Ministry Review of Area Standards for School Construction

At the most recent Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA), our membership passed the following resolution requesting that the Ministry of Education consider a review of currently restrictive Ministry Area Standards.

That BCSTA request that in consultation with BCSTA, the Ministry of Education undertake a review of currently restrictive Ministry Area Standards to ensure that we are investing in and building school facilities that support the revised curriculum and fully support and promote the development of educated citizens.

The BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) has also recently passed a resolution regarding similar Area Standards concerns, highlighting this concern. Additionally, the new curriculum has been rolling out with successful feedback and our members wish to ensure that learning environments that are supportive of the curriculum be considered a high priority.

As mentioned in the resolution, our members request that BCSTA be involved in a consultative role during the current process. We are pleased to hear that the Ministry of Education has already initiated a technical review of area standards for schools.

Our members noted current standards were last revised in 2004, and the limitations are becoming quite apparent. Their examples include, but are not limited to, a lack of space for visual and performing arts, minimal considerations for childcare programming, and insufficient gymnasium space.

We also request that this review not only apply to new school design but also to the calculations of capacity in existing facilities as it relates to making decisions on the need for additional schools.

In 2018, BCSTA created a Capital Construction Working Group who are giving consideration to this subject. We are happy to be involved in this review but ask that a detailed consultative process be established that will engage all boards of education as well as BCASBO, BCSSA and BCPVPA.

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

Sincerely,



Stephanie Higginson
President
British Columbia School Trustees Association

CC: Scott MacDonald, Deputy Minister of Education
Reg Bawa, Assistant Deputy Minister

Enclosure: Original motion rationale

26. Ministry Review of Area Standards for School Construction

Category: School Premises, Facilities, Services

Motion #:	26	Sponsor:	SD 39 (Vancouver)
Meeting:	AGM 2019	Action:	<i>not specified</i>
Category:		Outcome:	<i>not specified</i>
Disposition:	Carried		

Motion as Adopted:**BE IT RESOLVED:**

That BCSTA request that in consultation with BCSTA, the Ministry of Education undertake a review of currently restrictive Ministry Area Standards to ensure that we are investing in and building school facilities that support the revised curriculum and fully support and promote the development of educated citizens.

Motion as Presented:**BE IT RESOLVED:**

That BCSTA request that in consultation with BCSTA, the Ministry of Education undertake a review of currently restrictive Ministry Area Standards to ensure that we are investing in and building school facilities that support the revised curriculum and fully support and promote the development of educated citizens.

Rationale:

The current Ministry of Education's Area Standards were last revised in 2004. Parents and employee stakeholder representatives have expressed deep concerns regarding limitations that Ministry Area Standards place upon the ability of the school district to design and build new and replacement schools to meet the needs of today's learners. Ministry Area Standards generally result in newer and/or replacement facilities that are significantly smaller than older school buildings. These smaller school buildings do not provide optimal space for the delivery of educational programming. Specific areas of concern with the Ministry Area Standards include:

- lack of dedicated space for Visual and Performing Arts instruction;
- lack of dedicated space for theatre space and auditorium space in secondary schools;
- lack of dedicated space for before and after school childcare programming;
- insufficient space for indoor play and for students to eat lunch;
- insufficient gymnasium space within larger secondary schools;
- no allocation for covered outdoor play space; and,
- insufficient storage allocation to support school programming.

Currently in SD39, replacement schools are built approximately 30% smaller than the existing school for the same number of students.

The BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) has passed a resolution regarding similar Area Standards concerns.

Our understanding is that the Ministry of Education is requiring that Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC) space must be dedicated to childcare only, making it restrictive for school usage.

According to the Parent Advocacy Network (PAN), British Columbia's Area Standards for schools are smaller than the other provinces in Canada.

Reference(s):

[Ministry of Education – Area Standards](#)

[2018 BCSTA AGM Motion 43 – Increase Area Standards for Capital Projects to Reflect Inclusive Learning Environments](#)

[2018 BCCPAC Resolution Number 2018.5 – Advocacy for Revision of Area Standards](#)

[Parent Advisory Network Area Standards Fact Sheet](#)

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