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MEDIA RELEASE

Budget funds K-12 enrollment growth but lacks increases to support education costs

VICTORIA – Today’s provincial budget continues to fund enrollment growth in the K-12 sector but falls short of covering increased education costs for districts.

“We are grateful to see a commitment to covering enrollment growth across the province, but disappointed by the lack of investment necessary to support the full costs associated with educating K-12 students, including capital and educational programming costs,” said Stephanie Higginson, president of the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA).

This year’s budget acknowledges that many districts are seeing rapid population growth but doesn’t offer the capital investment necessary to support increased space requirements resulting from growing enrollment.

“BCSTA has called on the province to fund the cost of portable classrooms for some time, and we are disappointed to see this request ignored,” said Higginson. “BCSTA has also asked for assistance with the cost of maintaining aging buildings and are concerned that this cost pressure remains for boards of education.”

This year’s budget does not give districts the necessary funding to allow boards to evolve educational programming. Between 85 to 90 per cent of local budgets are directed to staffing costs, leaving little for districts to invest in learning programs addressing achievement gaps students may face.

"Boards of education recognize the positive impact that the government’s investment in childcare and other social programs will have for students as they enter into the K-12 system, helping more students come to school prepared to learn,” said Higginson. “We appreciate increased CleanBC funding to help lower local carbon footprints, but without a recognition of the cost pressures faced by school districts we will have to make difficult decisions at the board table instead of investing in the innovative educational programs students deserve.”

Boards of education continue to work hard to support evolving student needs in a complex educational landscape as the province moves into a pandemic recovery stage.

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BCSTA 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 visit www.bcsta.org.