



British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

June 22, 2022

The Honourable Selina Robinson

*Minister of Finance and
Treasury Board Chair*
PO Box 9048, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2
fin.minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Jennifer Whiteside

Minister of Education and Child Care
PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2
educ.minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Robinson and Minister Whiteside,

Subject: Capital Cost Sharing

At the British Columbia School Trustees Association's most recent annual general meeting, our membership, representing all 60 boards of education in B.C., passed the following resolution:

"That the BCSTA request the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Treasury Board discontinue the practice of requiring Boards of Education to use operating funds towards supported capital projects that should be fully funded by the province (e.g. new schools, school expansion);

and further: that the BCSTA request that the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Treasury Board commit to respecting local decisions regarding strategic plan priorities, long term financial plans and financial risk management;

and further: that the BCSTA request that the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Treasury Board acknowledge that, similar to the provincial government, the Boards of Education policy of maintaining contingencies allocations/reserves is a prudent measure to provide for unforeseen and unbudgeted costs that may arise, and to fund local priority initiatives."

Our association's membership has raised concerns over current requirements surrounding capital cost-sharing. These requirements instruct boards of education to use operating funds towards supported capital projects, placing additional financial stress on districts. Budget 2022 has included an added expectation that \$0.45 billion of funding be provided by school districts for major capital projects. You will have also heard recent conversations in the media around the deferrals of previously committed funding for seismic upgrades and new builds. This uncertainty is causing further concern for boards of education. An additional issue for boards has also arisen with several school districts awaiting funding approvals for expansion projects being asked to commit to significant financial contributions that were not included in their initial submission.



The Framework for Enhancing Student Learning calls on boards of education to provide multi-year strategic and financial plans, and boards are also instructed to have a policy on accumulated surpluses to ensure appropriate reserves for future spending related to these priorities are maintained. Requiring school districts to contribute to capital projects contradicts these two asks and damages the ability of boards of education to enact plans dedicated to improving student learning.

As part of the solution, we ask that you support the role of boards of education in making local decisions and their authority to act with autonomy regarding strategic and financial planning, as well as associated risk management. We also request that government support boards in their capacity to manage contingency reserves, as they allow districts to respond to unplanned costs and emergent local needs.

Boards are informed on local issues and represent the needs of their constituents. Entrusting boards to do this important work is a crucial part of their role in our democracy. Thank you for taking the time to hear our concerns. I look forward to your reply as boards of education throughout the province continue to work alongside you as co-governors of the province's public education system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolyn Broady". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carolyn Broady

President

British Columbia School Trustees Association

Motion: A202217.1

Enclosure: Original motion rationale

CC: Christina Zacharuk, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Child Care
Chris Brown, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Child Care
BCSTA member boards of education
Suzanne Hoffman, CEO, BCSTA
BCSTA Board of Directors
Treasury Board members:
Honourable George Heyman (Vice Chair)
Honourable Katrine Conroy
Honourable Mitzi Dean
Honourable Adrian Dix
Honourable Anne Kang
Honourable Bowinn Ma
Honourable Josie Osborne
Honourable Bruce Ralston
Honourable Murray Rankin
MLA Brenda Bailey
MLA Bob D'Eith
MLA Niki Sharma

17.1.Capital Cost Sharing

Category:

Motion #:	17.1 : A202217.1	Sponsor:	SD 42 (Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows)
Meeting:	AGM 2022	Action:	<i>not specified</i>
Category:	<i>not specified</i>	Outcome:	Letter to be drafted (April 28)
Disposition:	Carried		

Motion as Adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the BCSTA request the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Treasury Board discontinue the practice of requiring Boards of Education to use operating funds towards supported capital projects that should be fully funded by the province (e.g. new schools, school expansion);

and further: that the BCSTA request that the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Treasury Board commit to respecting local decisions regarding strategic plan priorities, long term financial plans and financial risk management;

and further: that the BCSTA request that the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Treasury Board acknowledge that, similar to the provincial government, the Boards of Education policy of maintaining contingencies allocations/reserves is a prudent measure to provide for unforeseen and unbudgeted costs that may arise, and to fund local priority initiatives.

Motion as Presented:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the BCSTA request the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Treasury Board discontinue the practice of requiring Boards of Education to use operating funds towards supported capital projects that should be fully funded by the province (e.g. new schools, school expansion);

and further: that the BCSTA request that the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Treasury Board commit to respecting local decisions regarding strategic plan priorities, long term financial plans and financial risk management;

and further: that the BCSTA request that the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Treasury Board acknowledge that, similar to the provincial government, the Boards of Education policy of maintaining contingencies allocations/reserves is a prudent measure to provide for unforeseen and unbudgeted costs that may arise, and to fund local priority initiatives.

Rationale:

This qualifies as a late motion since the Provincial 2022/23 budget was tabled after the BCSTA motion deadline and it includes an expectation that \$0.45 billion of funding for major capital projects be provided by school districts.

In addition, multiple school districts who are awaiting funding approval for school expansion projects have been asked by Treasury Board staff and the Ministry of Education to amend their submissions and commit to make significant financial contributions which include potential future operating budget savings.

The Ministry Framework for Enhancing Student Learning requires boards to develop multi-year strategic plans and to develop budgets that are aligned with these strategic priorities. The Ministry also requires boards to establish a local

policy on accumulated surplus as a means of ensuring transparent and reasonable reserves for future spending related to these strategic priorities. Requiring Boards to contribute to capital projects contradicts these two policy positions and significantly confounds the ability of boards to meaningfully plan for and manage its organizational strategy to improve student learning.

Reference(s):

https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2022/pdf/2022_Budget_and_Fiscal_Plan.pdf

https://cdn.cyberimpact.com/clients/29367/public/cab73408-7860-4e5c-15a1-aa9217f3e704/files/Weekly/2022_Q1_Jan_Mar/BCSTA_2022_Provincial_Budget_Overview.pdf

<https://www.sd43.bc.ca/Board/MeetingsMinutes/Agendas/2022%2003%2001%20Public%20Board%20Meeting%20Agenda.pdf>

(page 16)

<https://www.sd42.ca/board-of-education/budget-process/2022-budget-process/> (page 53 and page 73

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

This motion relates to Policy Statement 8.1.6