



British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

August 18, 2023

The Honourable Katrine Conroy

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

The Honourable Rachna Singh

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

Dear Minister Conroy and Minister Singh,

Subject: Accounting for Increased Operational Costs and Portable Classrooms Funding

At the British Columbia School Trustees Association's 2023 annual general meeting, our members, representing all 60 boards of education in B.C., passed the following two resolutions:

"That BCSTA urge the Ministry of Education and Child Care to assess and fund the actual operational costs in the post-COVID environment; specifically, the higher Teacher Teaching on Call (TTOC) and staff replacement costs for increased staff absences and staff shortages as well as additional mental health support requirements for staff and students relative to pre-pandemic requirements."

"That BCSTA request the Ministry of Education and Child Care and the Ministry of Finance fully fund the purchase, moving, and installation costs of portable classrooms required for enrolment growth."

Both of these resolutions highlight ongoing funding concerns expressed by our membership, and we ask that your ministries consider additional funding to address these important areas of need, which are detailed below.

Accounting for Increased Operational Costs in the 'New Normal'

With respect to the increased teacher teaching on call (TTOC) and staff replacement costs, many lessons were learned in responding to the pandemic, such as staying home when feeling unwell. This shift in thinking and behaviour has caused increased strain on districts that now utilize TTOCs and other temporary replacement staff at higher rates than in the past. BCSTA's membership is seeking assistance in covering the increased costs.

While having staff stay home when unwell is an essential part of keeping classrooms safe, boards of education have directly inherited the financial impacts of supporting this practice. BCSTA is asking the Ministry of Education and Child Care to revise the levels of funding support related to encouraging staff who are ill to stay home in order to ensure the long-term financial stability of districts. While a permanent solution is awaited, districts are often utilizing other staff to fill these vacancies, where possible, which removes them from the duties they have been hired to perform, and can have negative impacts on students.



Neither the financial pressures on districts nor the strain experienced by staff are reasonable as a permanent practice. Further costs also arise in supplying additional mental health support requirements to aid staff working beyond their normal limits. Recruitment and retention are also affected negatively by these issues, especially in districts that already face challenges with attracting personnel. We appreciate the work that the ministry is currently undertaking with various provincial K-12 partners to address the staffing issues that districts are currently facing and look forward to supporting these efforts.

Current per-pupil funding does not factor in how we have had to adapt to living with COVID-19. Our members have requested that funding be updated and modernized to address additional costs associated with operating schools appropriately in the 'new normal' and that the Ministry of Education and Child Care fund this difference.

Portable Classrooms Funding

On the subject of increased funding, current levels of enrolment growth are putting immense pressure on districts. These costs draw deeply on operating funds, and our membership has strongly advocated that the Ministry of Education and Child Care and the Ministry of Finance establish dedicated funding for portable classrooms so that operating funds can be used to support student programs and educational resources. Boards of education ask that portables be considered capital expenses and added to the capital planning and funding process so that boards can focus their often limited resources on enriching learning experiences.

I had the pleasure of sharing these resolutions on May 31 as part of a series of meetings with Assistant Deputy Minister Chris Brown, during which it was shared that the Ministry of Education and Child Care has been actively focused on leveraging limited financial allocations to develop longer term solutions. It was further communicated to us that the ministry would continue to seek out innovative ways to address growth needs and that this concern is understood and appreciated by government. It is our hope that you will consider the requests above as part of this work.



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I look forward to hearing about your plans and offer the support of our board of directors should you require assistance in pursuing a solution.

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: A202326 + A202329

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
Cloe Nicholls, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Child Care
BCSTA member boards of education
Suzanne Hoffman, CEO, BCSTA
BCSTA Board of Directors