



April 17, 2024

Ref: 297169

Carolyn Broady, President
BC School Trustees Association
Email: cbroady@bcsta.org

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of November 21, 2023, regarding the resolution passed by the BC School Trustees Association about the need to hire more children and youth mental health clinicians in rural and remote areas of the province. I would like to apologize for the delay in responding, especially since you indicated in your letter your interest in conducting some work prior to the tabling of the 2024 provincial budget.

As you know from the regular conversations we've shared, our government is committed to ensuring students have access to high-quality education and that they receive the resources and supports they need to thrive. I know a tight labour market is a reality for many sectors across British Columbia, including for the K-12 education system, and recruitment challenges are exacerbated in rural and remote areas. As you know, since spring of 2023, the Ministry of Education and Child Care has been working collaboratively with sector partners, including your organization, to develop a comprehensive K-12 workforce strategy (Strategy).

The Strategy, which is meant to consider the workforce broadly (teachers, support staff, and administrators), will aim at supporting and sustaining a stable qualified and engaged K-12 workforce now and into the future. Ministry staff have heard from education partners about the importance of ensuring a focus on the needs of rural and remote schools. As such, as part of the development of the Strategy, a specific emphasis is being given to rural and remote areas for equity purposes. The Strategy is currently in development and Ministry staff are continuing to engage with sector partners, including the BC School Trustees Association, to support the creation of an action plan. I have asked Ministry staff to take this resolution into consideration as part of this work.

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As we work to address workforce needs, I also want to highlight our mental health in school strategies (MHIS), which provides a vision and a pathway for mental health promotion in the K-12 school system, focusing on three main elements: Compassionate Systems Leadership (CSL), capacity building, and mental health in the classrooms. The Strategy is an approach to embedding positive mental health and well-being in all aspects of the education system, including culture, leadership, curriculum, and learning environments. To support the MHIS Strategy, the Ministry invests \$5 million per year to support mental health and well-being with \$3.66 million allocated to school districts and FISA BC in the form of mental health grant funds and \$1.34 million allocated to mental health and well-being initiatives in schools.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, contact Linda Beddouche, Director of the Workforce Development Branch, by email at Linda.Beddouche@gov.bc.ca.

Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Singh', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Rachna Singh
Minister