

BCSTA

British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

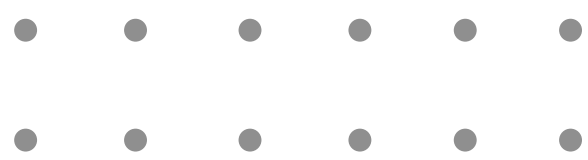


BCSTA

2027 Budget Submission



June 2026



Message from **BCSTA President**

As the president of the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA), I am pleased to share our 2027 Provincial Budget Submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services.

Public Education Matters to the BCSTA, and we know it matters to parents, caregivers, and trustees in communities across British Columbia. This document reflects the deep knowledge that locally and democratically elected trustees possess about matters that affect their communities and reverberate across our province. As BC's sole nonpartisan organization representing democratically elected boards of education, the BCSTA has been a steadfast champion of good, local governance in public education for more than 120 years.

Our world is changing by the day, with new challenges and opportunities around every corner, and we find ourselves at a critical juncture not only in public education but in our world. While economic uncertainty is part of these ever-changing challenges, we know that investments in students are stable investments in our future, offering a guaranteed return. These investments are how we protect our economy and secure our future. However, boards are still struggling with many ongoing challenges, including a decline in funding for public education from 15.49% of the provincial budget in 2001-2002 to a mere 7.97% in 2024-25. This trend has forced school boards to make painful decisions, sometimes sacrificing educational opportunities for students.

Today's students are tomorrow's parents, workers and leaders; and we rely on them to make our communities vibrant and our economy strong. Investing in this future through elected boards of education ensures communities have a direct say in shaping this vision.

From that community vision, boards create strategic plans that ignite passion and innovation within school districts, driving impactful change.

Through their unique role as governors of their local education system, boards foster collaboration and transparency, creating vibrant learning environments where students can thrive and reach their full potential.

BCSTA's 2027 Budget Submission is our provincial roadmap to ensure students have what they need to succeed. We know that by investing in these key areas, the provincial government can send a strong signal that Public Education Matters and help create a sustainable, robust and equitable education system.

The budget submission is built on the motions passed at BCSTA AGM 2026, which reflect the voices of the diverse communities across British Columbia. Each request has provincial ramifications and is submitted to address the pressing challenges of our current reality.

On behalf of school trustees from across the province and every student we represent and advocate for, we appreciate your consideration of our proposals and look forward to continued collaboration to create a sustainable educational system that will help every student in B.C. find success in a world of their making.

Tracy Loffler

President,
BC School Trustees Association

On behalf of the BCSTA Board of Directors

Bob Holmes - Vice President

Roxanne Gulick - Director

Erica McLean - Director

George Nelson - Director

David Swankey - Director

Catherine Zaitsoff - Director

Trevor Davies - CEO

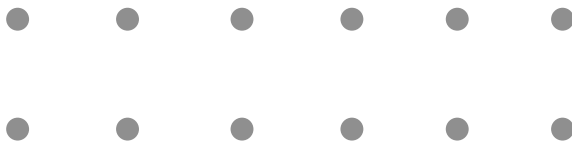


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PUBLIC EDUCATION MATTERS

*Increase non-targeted funding for the public
K-12 education system in British Columbia*

Why this matters:

By increasing the share of the provincial budget allocated to public education, we address the compounding funding gap that population and wage adjustments alone cannot close. Providing school boards with the non-targeted resources they need to serve every student, not merely maintain the status quo.

BC school districts are facing growing financial pressures because the cost of delivering K-12 programs is rising faster than provincial funding.

Summary of Four Key Financial Challenges:

1. Unfunded Inflationary Costs

Funding rate adjustments do not cover all inflationary pressures, including rising costs for employee benefits, technology, facility maintenance, equipment, and services and supplies.

2. Budget Rigidity

School districts have limited flexibility in their budgets to absorb unfunded inflationary costs without making budget reductions that negatively impact programs.

3. Enrolment Trends

Historically, enrolment growth has helped offset inflationary pressures, but provincial enrolment is stabilizing and expected to decline, removing this buffer.

4. Targeted Funding Limitations

While targeted funding has grown significantly in recent years, it cannot be used to address core program cost pressures.

- BC Association of School Business Officials in [Responsiveness of Provincial Funding to Cost Pressures in BC School Districts](#) (2026)

PUBLIC EDUCATION MATTERS

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“Even with the \$9.8 million covered, Burnaby school district is still projecting a \$3-million deficit by 2028/29 if no additional revenue comes in... this shouldn't be a yearly crisis that parents have to mobilize around. We need the government to look at the forecast data across districts now and build that into next year's budget submission process.”



Nicole Gladish, a Burnaby parent and advocate, in [Freshet News](#) (May 2026).

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“School districts are experiencing increased student complexity, including growing needs for mental health support, inclusive education services, and support for diverse learners. These factors require sustained and predictable investments to ensure all students can succeed.

Sustainable and predictable funding is essential to enable school districts to plan responsibly, maintain programs and services, and continue supporting positive outcomes for students.”



Valene Johnson, Board Chair, Central Okanagan School District, in [Capital News](#) (May 2026)

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE

BCSTA AGM 2026 - Motion 21

Motion:

That the British Columbia School Trustees Association urge the Ministry of Education and Childcare, in collaboration with relevant provincial ministries, to develop a clear, coordinated and financially sustainable provincial framework for early learning services, including childcare, delivered through public school districts.

Why this matters:

Boards are already delivering the early learning and childcare services that BC families depend on; what they lack is a funding framework that treats those services as permanent rather than provisional. That gap is a provincial policy problem with a provincial policy solution.

Reasoning:

School districts across BC are increasingly providing early years education and childcare services that yield positive outcomes for children and families. However, many districts face mounting financial and operational pressures due to insufficient, inconsistent, and short-term funding that does not reflect the true cost of sustained delivery.

A central challenge is fragmentation. Responsibility for early years education and childcare is distributed across multiple provincial ministries, leading to unclear accountability, inequitable access for families, and difficulty sustaining programs within the public school system. Several initiatives rely on grant-based or time-limited funding that does not adequately cover ongoing operational and staffing costs.

A coordinated provincial framework is the necessary foundation for change, reducing fragmentation, supporting equitable access across BC, and providing the funding certainty districts need to plan and deliver these essential services responsibly and sustainably.

“As we know with many things in our communities, we are challenged with economies of scale, being in dispersed and remote areas. And it’s the same in providing the best educational support we can.”



Susan Chew, Board Chair, Kootenay Lake School District in [ChildCareCanada.org](https://www.childcarecanada.org) (March 2026) on behalf of the Kootenay Lake Board of Education.

CAPITAL POLICY CHANGES TO EXPAND BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE CAPACITY IN NEW SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND EXISTING SPACES

BCSTA AGM 2026 - Motion 24

Motion:

That the British Columbia School Trustees Association advocate to the Ministry of Education and Child Care and the Ministry of Infrastructure to provide and fully fund additional flexible spaces for childcare in all school construction projects as well as in existing schools.


Why this matters:

By updating capital policy to require flexible childcare spaces in all new school construction and existing facilities, we remove a design and funding barrier entirely within the province's control and ensure that every new school is built to meet the full needs of its community from day one.

Reasoning:

Demand for before- and after-school care far exceeds available spaces across BC, affecting children's well-being and the employment stability of families who rely on reliable school-age care. School districts are well-positioned to help address this need, but current capital funding criteria and design standards prevent them from incorporating flexible or dual-use childcare spaces into new school construction and existing facilities.

The solution is practical and cost-effective: updating capital policies to require flexible childcare spaces in all school construction projects enables districts to expand school-age care capacity when it is least expensive to do so. Every new school built in BC should be designed to meet the full needs of the families in its community.



The media landscape in 2026 shows a government that has acknowledged schools as the right venue for childcare expansion, issued ministerial orders to identify space, and made targeted investments, but has not committed to mandatory, fully funded childcare space in all new school construction or systematic retrofit funding for existing schools.

DEDICATED FUNDING FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT HOUSING ACCOMMODATION

BCSTA AGM 2026 - Motion 22

Motion:

That the British Columbia School Trustees Association urge the provincial government to establish dedicated funding programs to support the development, replacement, and maintenance of school district-owned housing accommodations in British Columbia.

Why this matters:

When potential teachers can't find housing and boards are managing a growing maintenance backlog amid insufficient funding, recruitment and retention strategies can only go so far. Dedicated provincial investment in staff housing and infrastructure is the missing foundation that makes everything else work.

Reasoning:

High housing costs, rental shortages, and limited suitable accommodation are making it increasingly difficult for school districts to recruit and retain qualified staff, particularly in rural, remote, and high-cost communities. There is currently no dedicated provincial funding mechanism to support the development, replacement, or maintenance of school district-owned staff housing, leaving boards without one of the most effective tools to address this challenge.

Compounding the challenge is that rural and remote school districts, which are predominantly the providers of staff housing, face a growing backlog of deferred capital maintenance that cannot be sustainably addressed by current Annual Facility Grant funding alone. Districts are responsibly prioritizing AFG for essential life-cycle repairs, but the scale and cost of aging infrastructure now exceed available resources, increasing operational risk and long-term cost pressures.

Together, these pressures undermine districts' ability to provide stable, well-staffed learning environments. Dedicated provincial funding for staff housing and meaningful investment in deferred maintenance are essential to ensuring that students, regardless of where they live, have access to qualified educators in safe, functional schools.



DEDICATED FUNDING FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT HOUSING ACCOMMODATION

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Summary of Staff Recruitment Issue and Structural Deficit Masking

- A growing issue – particularly in rural and remote districts – is the inability to recruit staff needed to fill all positions.
- Vacancy savings generate accumulated surplus often used to fund future inflationary pressures.
- This masks a growing structural deficit: the gap between budgeted expenditures and available revenues continues to widen even when short-term reductions are avoided.
- BC Association of School Business Officials in [Responsiveness of Provincial Funding to Cost Pressures in BC School Districts](#) (2026)

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“Budget 2026 cut nearly \$1.4 billion from housing development province-wide, with critics warning this will exacerbate an already severe shortage and cost BC residents stability and opportunity. For rural school districts that rely on affordable housing availability to attract and retain staff, this broader retreat from housing investment makes the case for a dedicated school district housing program even more urgent.”



BC Budget 2026: A slow retreat from public services that leaves people to fend for themselves - bcpolicy.ca (February 2026)

REVIEW OF MODULAR PLAN AND COSTING TO MEET AREA STANDARDS FOR MODULAR ADDITIONS

BCSTA AGM 2026 - Motion 29

Motion:

That the British Columbia School Trustees Association request the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Education and Child Care to complete a review of the current modular plan and costing, to ensure sufficient funding is available to apply the same area standards to modular additions with respect to both classroom and ancillary areas as is standard in new school construction;

And that the review gives particular consideration to alternate learning spaces and support spaces required for diverse learners.

Why this matters:

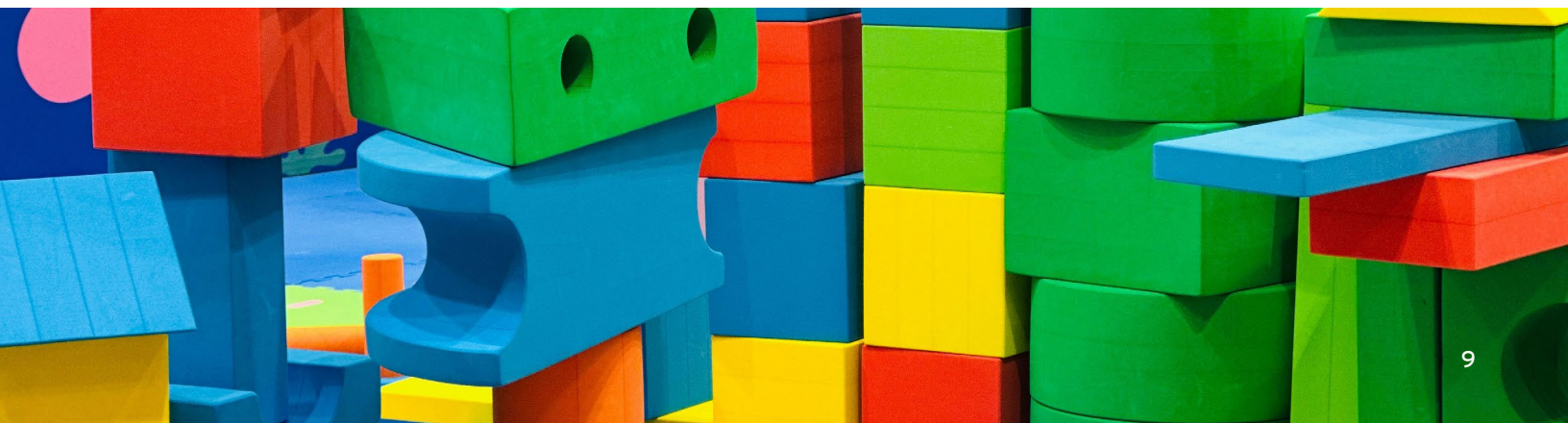
By conducting a comprehensive review of modular plans and costing standards, with diverse learners at the centre, we close the gap between what current funding provides and what today's students need to be safe, supported, and successful.

Reasoning:

BCSTA welcomed the province's investments in modular classrooms as a practical response to urgent capacity pressures across BC. However, the current funding model does not reflect students' actual needs. Today's school population is far more diverse than when the current design standards were established, and not all students can be safe and successful in a standard classroom.

Alternate learning spaces, sensory rooms, areas for support staff, Indigenous programming, English Language Learner instruction, Strong Start, and school food programs are essential to a functional school. Current modular funding does not adequately address these needs and does not meet the requirements of the Accessibility BC Act, which has been in force since September 2022. Inflation, tariffs, and project delays are further increasing cost pressures.

A thorough review of the modular plan and costing is required to ensure that area standards, including ancillary spaces, are consistent with new school construction and that the needs of diverse learners are central to those standards.



REVIEW OF MODULAR PLAN AND COSTING TO MEET AREA STANDARDS FOR MODULAR ADDITIONS

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“Some growing districts face added pressure from operating-funded portable classroom purchases when capital funding does not cover needed expansion.”

“With 89% of our budget basically out of our control because it goes to salaries & benefits, and years of whittling away at services & supplies to find savings wherever possible, we will have no choice but to make cuts that impact the classroom and defer necessary maintenance and investments down the road.”



[BC Association of School Business Officials in Responsiveness of Provincial Funding to Cost Pressures in BC School Districts \(2026\) p.16](#)

EMPHASIZING ARTS EDUCATION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

BCSTA AGM 2026 - Motion 15

Motion:

That the British Columbia School Trustees Association urge the Ministry of Education and Childcare to emphasize arts, music, drama along with Indigenous arts and culture as core components of public education, and to provide stable funding, reporting mechanisms and equitable access for all students.

Why this matters:

When arts, music, drama, and Indigenous arts and culture are funded only when budgets allow, they are not part of the core curriculum; they become a privilege. Equitable public education does not leave one of the most humanizing aspects of learning to chance.

Reasoning:

Arts education is not supplementary to student success; it is foundational to it. Participation in the arts, including music and drama, supports well-being, engagement, social development, creativity, and cultural understanding. These outcomes are central to holistic education that prepares young people to be full participants in their communities and in life.

Yet school districts across BC consistently face barriers to delivering quality arts programming, including staffing, facilities, funding, scheduling, and access to specialized resources. Participation and access are not consistently captured in provincial reporting or accountability frameworks, making gaps difficult to measure and harder to address.

A coordinated provincial approach, with stable funding, clear reporting mechanisms, and equitable access for all students, would improve data collection, ensure the inclusion of Indigenous arts and culture, and identify the investments needed to sustain high-quality programming. Arts, music, drama, and Indigenous arts and culture must be treated as core components of public education, not as discretionary items funded only when district budgets allow.



EMPHASIZING ARTS EDUCATION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

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“The district’s multi-year financial plan projects that funding growth will continue to fall short of expenditure growth (due to unfunded inflationary pressures) in each of the next three years. This continually growing structural deficit will necessitate significant program reductions in the years ahead.”



BC Association of School Business Officials in [Responsiveness of Provincial Funding to Cost Pressures in BC School Districts](#) (2026) p.15

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“It’s really a chance for kids to explore and expand their possibilities,” said a Grade 11 student who sings in the choir and plays clarinet and tenor sax in different ensembles. “By reducing the amount of possibilities they have, they won’t have enough exposure to all the music things they could join in secondary school.”



Unnamed student - [CBC Radio](#) (April 2026)

REINSTATING FUNDING FOR GRADUATED STUDENTS UNDER THE AGE OF 19 WHO ARE CONTINUING THE SECOND YEAR OF THEIR TRADES TRAINING PROGRAM WITH SCHOOL DISTRICTS

BCSTA AGM 2026 - Motion 8

Motion:

That the British Columbia School Trustees Association write to the Minister of Education and Child Care and the Minister of Finance asking them to reinstate funding for graduated students under the age of 19 who are continuing the second year of their trades training program with school districts.

Why this matters:

Enrollment in BC's trades training is at a critical juncture. Projected job shortages won't be solved by leaving a funding gap for students who are continuing to pursue their credentials. Funding for second-year apprentices is a low-cost, high-impact investment in the workforce our economy can't afford to lose.

Reasoning:

British Columbia faces a well-documented shortage of skilled trades workers, and school districts are uniquely positioned to help address this issue. Students who begin their apprenticeship journey in high school currently encounter a funding gap when they graduate and transition into year two of their program, an unnecessary barrier at the moment they are closest to completing their credentials.

Removing this barrier is both a matter of educational equity and sound economic policy. Interest in the trades among young people, including students from groups historically underrepresented in the skilled trades, is growing. Supporting these students in completing their credentials strengthens BC's workforce pipeline and helps communities address labour shortages in sectors essential to our economy.



ACADEMIC DUAL CREDIT

BCSTA AGM 2026 - Motion 16

Motion:

That the British Columbia School Trustees Association advocate to the Ministry of Education and Childcare and the Ministry of Post Secondary Education to expand and properly fund academic dual credit programs that are accessible to every student in British Columbia, including dual credit pathways for students interested in becoming certified teachers.

Why this matters:

By expanding academic dual credit, including pathways to teacher certification, and fixing funding criteria that perpetuate inequities in smaller schools, we close a geography-based equity gap and build the teacher pipeline that BC's classrooms urgently need.

Reasoning:

WorkBC identifies elementary and secondary teachers as high-demand occupations, and the shortage is growing. Dual credit programs offer a proven, cost-effective way to accelerate workforce development, enabling secondary students to begin post-secondary coursework while still enrolled in the K-12 system, enter post-secondary better prepared, and complete certification requirements more efficiently.

BCSTA recognizes the Dual Credit Program Expansion grant as a meaningful step forward. However, the current eligibility criteria risk creating inequities for students in rural and remote communities, where smaller enrolment numbers already pose structural challenges to program viability. Expanding and properly funding academic dual credit, including pathways for students pursuing teacher certification, is essential to equitably addressing the province's teacher shortage at the required scale.



EMERGENCY ANAPHYLAXIS PREPAREDNESS IN SCHOOLS

BCSTA AGM 2026 - Motion 12

Motion:

That the British Columbia School Trustees Association advocate to the Ministry of Education and Child Care and relevant health authorities to develop and fully fund a program to provide unassigned epinephrine auto-injectors for emergency use in school districts.

Why this matters:

By providing dedicated provincial funding for unassigned EpiPens in every school, we eliminate a preventable gap in emergency preparedness and ensure that every school in BC can respond to a life-or-death moment with action.

Reasoning:

Schools have a fundamental duty of care to provide a safe environment for every student, staff member, and visitor. Anaphylaxis can occur without warning, even in individuals with no prior diagnosis or known history of allergies. The lack of unassigned epinephrine auto-injectors in schools creates a preventable and serious gap in that duty of care.

Medical guidance supports this position. Consultation with a local medical health officer confirmed that the benefit of administering epinephrine to someone experiencing a suspected anaphylactic reaction far outweighs any potential risk. Any administration would be accompanied by an immediate 911 call, ensuring that trained emergency responders are en route without delay.

BCSTA acknowledges that this program has a cost, which is why this motion specifically requests dedicated provincial funding. The question that prompted this motion is straightforward: What is the value of a student's life compared with the cost of one or two EpiPens? Every school in BC should have the means to answer that question with action.



PROVINCIAL LOAN FORGIVENESS

BCSTA AGM 2026 - Motion 20

Motion:

That the British Columbia School Trustees Association advocate for provincial student loan forgiveness as a workforce recruitment and retention strategy for public education sector roles, with a focus on addressing shortages in rural and remote areas.

Why this matters:

By creating a provincial student loan forgiveness program that mirrors the existing federal framework, we close a policy gap that has left rural and remote school districts without an effective recruitment lever to bring workforce stability to the communities that need it most.

Reasoning:

Boards of Education across BC, particularly in rural and remote regions, face persistent challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers and other school-connected professionals. These shortages affect program continuity, student support services, and the boards' ability to meet students' learning and well-being needs.

The federal government already recognizes student loan forgiveness as an effective recruitment and retention strategy, offering eligible professionals in underserved rural and remote communities up to \$30,000 over five years. This program applies only to the federal portion of student loans. BC currently has no complementary provincial program.

That gap matters. Without a provincial counterpart, boards in high-need communities lack a proven policy tool. A provincial student loan forgiveness program would strengthen workforce stability, support equitable access to qualified staff across BC, and align provincial policy with an existing federal framework, ensuring that students in every corner of the province have access to the educators they need.



CONTINUED PROVINCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENT AND FAMILY AFFORDABILITY FUND

BCSTA AGM 2026 - Motion 25

Motion:

That the British Columbia School Trustees Association urges the Ministry of Education and Child Care and Province of British Columbia to permanently reinstate and fund the Student and Family Affordability Fund.

Why this matters:

Feeding Futures is a meaningful investment in student nutrition, but it doesn't cover the supplies, fees, and activities that determine whether a student feels like a full participant in their education. Permanently reinstating the Student and Family Affordability Fund is how BC closes that gap and upholds its commitment to every child's potential.

Reasoning:

The Student and Family Affordability Fund, established in 2022, helped families cover everyday school-related costs, including supplies, fees, field trips, sports teams, music programs, and expanded meal programs. Between September 2022 and June 2025, \$80 million was distributed to school districts. The province did not renew the Fund for 2025/26.

The province's \$214 million Feeding Futures investment is meaningful, but it does not replace what the Fund provided. A gap now exists for families struggling with broader school-related expenses, and school districts cannot absorb it.

Family circumstances should not limit a student's educational experience. The School Act commits BC's public education system to developing every child's potential. Meeting that commitment requires that all students have what they need to fully and equitably participate in school. BCSTA urges the Ministry to permanently reinstate the Student and Family Affordability Fund on a sustainable basis, alongside the Feeding Futures Fund.





Conclusion & **Thank you**

The BCSTA knows that increased funding for K-12 public education is essential to securing a thriving future for every student and every community in this province. The challenges school boards face today are not new, but they are deepening. Systemic budget shortfalls, aging infrastructure, enrollment pressures, and the increasing complexity of student needs demand more than incremental responses; they demand meaningful action.

On behalf of school trustees across British Columbia and the students they serve, BCSTA urges the provincial government to prioritize the requests in this submission. Together, let us build a public education system that reflects our collective commitment to equity, inclusion, and excellence and gives every child in B.C. the opportunity to succeed in a world of their choosing.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the BCSTA 2027 Budget Submission. We are grateful to the member boards and trustees across British Columbia who champion public education in their communities every day. Their advocacy and dedication to students form the backbone of this document. We also acknowledge the BCSTA staff whose commitment made this submission possible, and the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for the important work you do in shaping this province's fiscal priorities.








BCSTA

2027 Budget Submission

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