



May 2, 2025

Ref: 305597

Steve Cardwell, PhD, Chairperson
Institute for Public Education BC
Email: info@publicedbc.ca

Dear Dr. Steve Cardwell:

Thank you for your emails of January 30, 2025, addressed to the Honourable Lisa Beare, Minister of Education and Child Care, and the Honourable David Eby, Premier, regarding your recommendations to support public education for consideration in the provincial budget. As Deputy Minister of Education and Child Care, I am pleased to respond and apologize for the delayed response.

I appreciate the time you have taken to write and advocate for the public education system in British Columbia. I have addressed each of your specific recommendations below.

1. Provide funding for increased staffing focused on education assistants and counselling, but also other supports in the classroom.

A key priority of the Ministry of Education and Child Care is to ensure that students have access to the resources and supports they need to learn and thrive. The training, recruitment, and retention of K-12 staff, including education assistants and counsellors, is a key component of this vision and is reflected in the Ministry's mandate letter commitments.

While delivering on these commitments is complex work that requires considering the current labour market dynamic, conducting extensive sector-engagement, as well as research and policy analysis, there is already plenty of work underway. More than 75 percent of K-3 classes throughout BC already have some support from an education assistant. The Ministry continues to allocate a total of \$25 million annually to school districts as part of the Learning Improvement Fund to support additional resources for students, which many school districts use to increase access to education assistants and support staff. The Ministry is also working to improve access to mental health supports for students, educators and families through the annual \$3 million Mental Health in School Grant.

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Provincial School Outreach teams include school counsellors, and a school psychologist, and are working to support where there are gaps in access to these specialists in rural and remote communities. As of late June 2024, there were nearly 1,000 psychologists and counsellors working throughout BC public schools, 270 more than in 2016.

The Ministry is also supporting local school communities with training for families, students, and educators through the [erase](#) website, opening new Foundry centers, and expanding Integrated Child and Youth mental health and substance use teams across the province in partnership with the Ministries of Health and Children and Family Development.

2. Support districts to have the resources so students with special needs are not excluded from the school.

The Ministry is working closely with K-12 partners and advocates to explore more ways to better support students with disabilities or diverse abilities. The Province has more than doubled funding for inclusive supports and services since 2017, with almost \$1 billion going to school districts this school year.

Two Provincial School Outreach teams with specialists such as speech-language pathologists, learning support teachers, behaviour analysts, school counsellors, and a school psychologist and occupational therapist are working with schools throughout BC to support students with disabilities or diverse abilities. To date, these teams have supported 48 schools in 25 districts, focusing on rural and remote communities as a result of more than \$9 million over 3 years in provincial funding.

The Ministry will be creating new guidelines for Individual Education Plans and a student-centred support planning tool to help schools identify their students' needs and respond with the right support. In addition, \$30 million in literacy supports continues to be rolled out, which, when in place, is expected to help schools and districts screen 150,000 K-3 students each year.

3. Fund post-secondary institutions to expand preparation of teachers to meet the teacher shortage and training programs for education assistants and fund school districts to support mentoring and apprenticeship for young and new teachers.

The Ministry is committed to working with K-12 partners to support a qualified, engaged and sustainable K-12 workforce. Since 2023, the Ministry has been working closely with the sector, including post-secondary institutions, on the development and implementation of a K-12 Workforce Plan.

As part of this Plan, the Province is investing over \$12.5 million over three years to support the training, recruitment, and retention of K-12 staff, with a focus on Indigenous teachers and teachers working in rural and remote areas. This school year alone, \$4 million is being provided to support a number of initiatives including supporting the creation and expansion of teacher education programs delivered partly online and establishing a provincial teacher mentorship program that will be coordinated by the University of British Columbia. The vision for this initiative is to create a supportive, inclusive, and flexible provincial mentorship program that empowers teachers across BC to thrive professionally, fosters a culture of lifelong learning, and enhances student success.

The Ministry is also working on the development of a competency framework for education assistants that will outline the key competencies education assistants need to be successful in their role. This framework will help ensure that newly trained education assistants are well-prepared to transition seamlessly into the workforce, strengthening their capacity to support student success and fostering a positive impact in educational settings.

4. Provide more funding for accelerating the construction of schools to anticipate and keep up with enrolment growth.

British Columbia's population has increased by approximately 500,000 over the past four years which has translated to roughly 36,000 new students. This has been a period of unprecedented enrolment growth in the province.

Since 2017, the Province has accelerated the investment of provincial capital funding in the public K-12 sector to respond to pressures such as enrolment growth. Specifically, the Province has approved the investment of over \$6 billion to create almost 43,000 new seats and over 38,000 seismically safe seats. In all, this investment is being felt around the province through 226 individual projects.

These initiatives include the removal of the concept plan requirement for straightforward projects, which effectively reduced the business case development period by at least a year, as well as the launching of the prefabricated classrooms program. With prefabricated classrooms, the Province has provided over \$475 million to create almost 7,900 new seats across 37 addition projects in high-growth communities like Surrey, Langley, Burnaby, and Langford. Many of the initial prefabricated projects that were approved in September 2023 are now occupied. The rest are anticipated to create new enrolling space within 12-18 months.

Budget 2025 includes \$4.2 billion of provincial capital funding (\$4.6 billion including school district contributions) over the next three years to continue to address the need for new schools, additions, seismic mitigation projects, and routine maintenance across the sector.

5. Provide specific funding to districts to cover the costs of portables so that they have the full funding to provide services.

Since September 2023, the Province has provided over \$475 million to create almost 7,900 new seats across 37 prefabricated addition projects in high-growth communities. This is a total of 317 prefabricated classrooms which will reduce the impact on school districts' operating budgets by offsetting their need to purchase new portables.

6. Increase post-secondary funding to make up for reduction in revenues from international students.

The Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills is in frequent contact with BC's public post-secondary institutions and is aware that broad economic factors, such as global inflation and general downward trends in international and domestic enrolment, are continuing to impact the post-secondary sector.

The Province acknowledges the difficult financial and operational decisions that many public post-secondary institutions are facing and the potential impacts to their communities. As such, the Province is committed to providing an affordable and sustainable education system for people living in BC that addresses the economic, training, and workforce needs of our province.

The Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills funds each public post-secondary institution through a combination of targeted and annual (block) funding. Targeted funding is for specific, priority educational programs, while annual operating grants can be used to fund programs the institution determines are important and fit the role of the institution.

Operating grants remain stable from year to year even when enrolment declines and are not adjusted where enrolments are lower than planned. Every year, roughly \$3 billion in operating grant funding is provided to public post-secondary institutions from the Province and helps to support post-secondary education and skills training in BC. Funding like this supports a wide range of educational services and programs.

Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,



Kaye Krishna
Deputy Minister

cc: Honourable David Eby, Premier
Honourable Anne Kang, Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills
Honourable Bowinn Ma, Minister of Infrastructure