

November 3, 2017

The Honourable Carole James
Minister of Finance
PO Box 9048, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

The Honourable Rob Fleming
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8V 9E2

Re: Request of the K-12 Education Management Partners to discuss the February 2018 Provincial and Education budgets

Dear Minister James and Minister Fleming;

As leaders of our province's four key management partner associations in K-12 public education, we understand and appreciate both the complexities and limitations of government funding. Likewise, we share your long standing commitment and enthusiasm for further improving our public education system so that it might meet both the needs and aspirations of all students. It is in this context that we request the opportunity to meet with you both this month.

In February 2018, the first full budget of your government will be tabled in the Legislature. That overall provincial budget will translate into funding announcements for individual school districts in mid-March. By meeting in the near future, we hope that we can proactively contribute to your vision, deliberations, and final planning far enough in advance of those dates to positively impact the final product and subsequent supports for student outcomes.

We do have a number of suggestions as to how funding to public education might be more effectively and efficiently allocated to improve student outcomes. Our first premise is that school districts be provided greater flexibility as to how current and future funding is spent. Over recent years, there has been a trend toward far more targeted grants, contract stipulations, and restrictions on how school district funding may be utilized. The result is two-fold: funding may not be used in the most effective ways to support student learning, and there is minimal opportunity for local decision making to address community needs and direction. A policy change that would increase the ability of local boards of education, senior district staff, and principals to allocate resources according to need rather than through stipulated requirements could increase student outcomes and services significantly.

There is much research that indicates that quality and empowered leadership will improve student outcomes. Reversing current requirements for administrative savings would allow school districts to address the current leadership deficit at both the school and school district levels. It has always been our opinion that the imposed reductions in leadership staffing combined with excessive compensation restrictions have hampered our ability to effectively lead and manage the public school system, and recruit and retain dynamic leaders. It is somewhat ironic that at a time when we have added approximately 3500 additional teachers to classrooms and specialty programs, we continue to impose arbitrary restrictions on the key positions needed to lead our schools effectively and efficiently.

With student numbers growing in many communities across the province, it is time to increase support for leadership development programs and opportunities. Our school districts are once again growing in both size and complexity. We have common objectives such as speeding the pace of school construction, preparing for collective bargaining, increasing supports to our most vulnerable students, and refining policy to ensure both effective and efficient allocation of resources. All of these will, however, require additional staff resources, commitment and leadership in addition to the greater flexibility noted above.

In reviewing the mandate letters for your ministries, we were able to identify many outcomes that match with each of our associations' goals. We see opportunities to invest in student mental health initiatives, improve academic outcomes for all students regardless of their location, background or personal attributes, early childhood education, streamlined regulatory frameworks that encourage efficiency and innovation, and development of a motivated and well-educated work force.

While the K-12 education sector saw a substantial increase in overall funding this fall, additional, but much smaller, increases to funding that would allow school districts to directly address student needs and programs would be a wise investment.

Our request is to meet with you in the near future to discuss how best we collectively might move forward. For our conversations to have a positive impact on the upcoming February provincial budget, we know that they must happen in the next few weeks. We hope that you will be able to meet with us within that timeline and begin a strategic discussion of details and next steps.

Thank you for considering our joint request as well as the initial suggestions that we have brought forward. We believe there is a real opportunity to not only add to, but to further improve the K-12 public education system for ALL students.

Yours truly,



Gordon Swan
President
BCSTA



Tom Longridge
President
BCSSA



Patti Dundas
President
BCASBO



Kevin Reimer
President
BCPVPA

cc: Scott MacDonald, Deputy Minister of Education
Lori Wanamaker, Deputy Minister of Finance