

June 6, 2023

Honourable Rachna Singh  
Minister of Education and Childcare

Dear Minister Singh,

**Re: Temperatures in Schools**

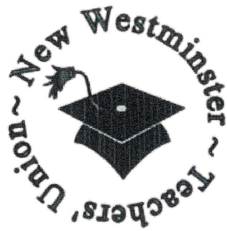
As you know, temperatures in New Westminster and surrounding areas rose dramatically last week. This change in weather has resulted in high classroom temperatures in schools around the New Westminster School District, with some classrooms recording temperatures between 28 and 30 degrees Celsius. Our two newest schools and the numerous portables around the district have been hardest hit.

New Westminster Secondary School (NWSS) opened January 2021 and Skwo:wech Elementary opened the following March. Each of these schools were designed with large exterior windows and floor to ceiling glass walls in the interior. The predominance of glass has created a terrarium effect in each school, with the sun's heat concentrated through windows and held by the glass interior. Further, the schools were designed with small windows that only open a few inches each. This makes it incredibly difficult to allow cooler external air to enter the building. The result is high temperatures in these schools, even when external temperatures are modest. Portables around the district, and some classrooms in older schools, are similarly prone to extreme temperatures, with high temperatures recorded regularly when the weather outside turns warm.

Recently, the New Westminster School District posted an article to their website addressing the heat in schools which states in part,

*The reality we've had to face at those two schools (NWSS and Skwo:wech) is that the approved scope of work and funding that was provided by government did not include cooling systems. However, given the rapid climate changes we've all experienced over the last couple years, we're optimistic that cooling systems and possible retrofits may be considered and funded by our government partners, where required, as we continue our ongoing conversations with them.*

We find it difficult to understand why the funding provided wasn't enough to cover cooling systems, especially since a design featuring a large amount of glass is one used primarily by buildings that



plan to employ air conditioning. Recently, you were quoted by CityNews as stating that, “We have... air conditioning part of the system...with all the new schools that are being approved...”

We appreciate your government’s commitment to providing all new schools with cooling systems. Unfortunately, this leaves out a significant portion of schools throughout the province. New Westminister students and staff need a solution to the heat, too, and they need it now. We ask that you work with the provincial government and New Westminister School District to secure funding for cooling systems in all New Westminister schools. Further, we ask that our two newest schools are prioritized for cooling system retrofitting, with funding provided immediately and work completed during July and August 2023. For our portables, we ask that funding for portable air conditioning units or similar air-cooling systems, as well as any necessary electrical system upgrades, be provided immediately so that we are prepared for future heat waves. Further, we ask that you work with the provincial government to develop a provincial framework for extreme temperatures, one that clearly states minimum and maximum temperature and air quality standards for schools.

We look forward to your response and a solution for our students.

Yours truly,

Dave Bollen  
President, Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 409

Laura Kwong  
Chair, SD40 Parents' Advisory Council

Kristie Oxley  
President, New Westminister Teachers' Union

cc: Jennifer Whiteside, New Westminister MLA and Minister of Mental Health and Addictions  
Amandeep Singh, Richmond-Queensborough MLA & Parliamentary Secretary for Environment  
David Eby, British Columbia Premier  
Karim Hachlaf, Superintendent, School District 40  
Darryl Schelp, First Vice-President, New Westminister Teachers' Union  
Sarah Wethered, Second Vice-President, New Westminister Teachers' Union