



28 June, 2024

Hon. Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care
Jennifer Whiteside, MLA for New Westminster
Aman Singh, MLA for Queensborough and Richmond

via email ECC.Minister@gov.bc.ca
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Dear Hon. Rachna Singh, and MLAs Ms. Whiteside, and Mr. Singh,

Subject: Urgent Addressal of Capacity Crisis and Funding Issues in Our Schools

As members of the New West District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC), Ecole Lord Tweedsmuir Elementary, Ecole Qayqayt Elementary, Connaught Heights Elementary and Fraser River Middle School Parent Advisory Councils (PAC), we are writing to express our deep concern regarding the capacity crisis affecting schools across the district. We are seeking your support in addressing these critical issues, which are significantly impacting the quality of education our children receive.

Severe Capacity Concerns and Impact on Quality of Education

A number of the schools in our district are facing severe overcrowding, which has necessitated the use of portables. While portables, and their new sibling modular classrooms, are a temporary solution, their increasing use to address enrollment growth is becoming a long-term issue. These structures are not conducive to an optimal learning environment, often lacking heating/cooling systems or drinking water and handwashing facilities, and don't increase other essential spaces like gymnasiums, libraries, resource rooms, and staff prep spaces. Portables and modular structures also reduce the amount of outdoor recreation and play space available when implemented on already over capacity school sites. Portables are temporary solutions to a lack of classroom space but do not alleviate the greater issue of overcrowding of school sites.

Financial Strain of Portables on Operating Funds

Furthermore, the cost of portables is being drawn from the school's operating funds. This reallocation of resources severely limits our ability to provide essential educational services and programs. As a result, the quality of education is directly compromised, with fewer funds available for instructional materials, extracurricular activities, and support staff. In districts facing

rapidly increasing student enrollment, this also causes inequity between districts with less funding available to deliver education as due to portable classroom costs.

Need for Transparency in Facility Funding Formula

We also request transparency regarding the formula used for facility funding. Understanding the criteria and decision-making process will help us as parents and community members to better engage in meaningful dialogue and advocate for our schools effectively. Clear communication about how funding decisions are made is crucial for building trust between education partners and community members and ensuring accountability for all.

Aligning School Budgets with Inflation and Historical Cuts

In addition, we urge an increase in district budgets to align with inflation and to counteract the effects of decades of cost-cutting measures. Many districts are struggling with deferred maintenance, outdated resources, insufficient staffing, and inadequate support services. Despite surging enrollment that should be providing adequate funding, many districts are still facing significant operating deficits. An adjusted budget that reflects current economic realities and past funding reductions is essential to maintaining and improving the standard of education in our province.

Call to Action

We implore you to:

1. Advocate for a comprehensive review and increase in facility funding to address capacity issues and deferred maintenance without compromising operating budgets.
2. Ensure transparency and community involvement in the development and implementation of funding formulas.
3. Support an adjustment of school budgets to reflect inflation and historical funding cuts, ensuring our schools are adequately funded.

Our children deserve to learn in environments that are safe, supportive, designed to modern educational standards, and conducive to their educational success. We look forward to your support and action on these critical issues, and welcome any response you are able to provide. Thank you for your time and consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

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cc Sylvia Russell, Superintendent SD40
SD40 Board of Education