



March 16, 2018

Ref: 200907

Kristin Schnider
Burnaby District Parent Advisory Council
Email: chair@burnabydpac.com

Dear Ms. Schnider:

Thank you for your letter dated January 28, 2018, expressing your concerns on budgetary constraints in the Burnaby School District, and voicing your support for the recommendations from the Select Standing Committee in Finance and Government Services.

Regarding your concerns connected to the operational funding of school districts, the Ministry of Education continues to make significant development and changes. For example, a K–12 Public Education Funding Review was announced in October 2017. The members of an independent review panel were also recently announced, and tasked with making recommendations how best to structure a new funding model. Furthermore, in recognition all levels of government must work together to ensure the success of the education system, I announced the principles the BC government developed in partnership with the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) to guide the new model.

The new model will be guided by the following principles:

1. **Responsive:** Allocate available resources among boards of education in consideration of unique local and provincial operational requirements.
2. **Equitable:** Facilitate access to comparable levels of educational services and opportunities for individual students throughout the province.
3. **Stable and Predictable:** Support strategic, multi-year planning for educational programming and school district operations.
4. **Flexible:** Respect the autonomy of, and not unnecessarily restrict, individual boards of education in the spending of their funding allocations to further student success.
5. **Transparent:** Calculate funding using a clear and transparent methodology.
6. **Accountable:** Allocate resources to boards of education in the most efficient manner and ensure that resources provided are being utilized as intended.

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One of the key goals of the review is to find a better way to provide equitable and predictable funding to boards of education. The review will address not only rural and remote school districts, but also those with fast-growing areas, like Burnaby. I share your concern about needing to better support students with special and/or diverse learning needs. Government also believes stable and predictable funding must also be able to better support vulnerable students, including, for example: children in care, children with special needs, and Indigenous students. As such, the funding and services provided to vulnerable students, as well as to students with special and diverse learning needs is in scope of the review.

With regard to your concern about funding for the new curriculum, it is important to consider a number of factors, including how funding can help support the transition to a personalized, flexible approach to learning for each and every student. School curriculums will continue to change and evolve well into the future. Right now, the current course-based funding model is not always flexible enough to meet the learning needs of students, and may not align well with the changes underway in terms of how educational services are being delivered in the classroom. I can assure you, the panel will be looking at this as part of their review.

Furthermore, capital programs, the mandate of the Seismic Mitigation Program (SMP) is to address the seismic risk of BC public schools in the most cost effective manner. The Ministry is committed to accelerating the SMP in order to make all high-risk schools safe for students and staff. In fact, the BC Government has committed to completing all high-risk schools in the SMP that are located in Vancouver by 2030 and all high-risk schools outside of Vancouver by 2025.

As of November 2017, there are 346 schools in the SMP, with 168 schools completed, 13 under construction, 15 proceeding to construction (in design and/or tender stage), and 59 in business case development (in preliminary project analysis stage), leaving 91 schools remaining as future priorities.

It is important to understand, the Ministry is working closely with school districts to accelerate approximately 50 of the schools in business case development to proceed to construction within the next 18 months. At the same time, ministry staff are analyzing the remaining schools to determine the next suite of priorities, in order to successfully plan the completion of all high-risk schools by the above mentioned target dates.

The Ministry is aware many communities are growing faster than we can accommodate. School districts work hard to forecast growth across their region. They utilize a number of forecasting tools and inputs, such as historic growth patterns and rates, birth registry, Statistics Canada migration forecasts, and municipal Official Community Plans among other inputs. This information is used to prioritize and plan future schools. Even with best practices in student forecasting, more space is needed in many fast-growing communities. I can assure you, the Ministry works closely with school districts to undertake the capital planning work necessary to inform future decisions for additional space.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact Reg Bawa, Assistant Deputy Minister, Resource Management and Executive Financial Office Division by email at Reg.Bawa@gov.bc.ca or by phone at (250) 356-1883. I also encourage your members to work with your umbrella organization (BCCPAC) to develop a submission for the K-12 Public Education Funding Review. Your perspective is important as we revitalize the funding model.

Again, thank you for writing and sharing your concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Fleming". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rob" being more prominent than the last name "Fleming".

Rob Fleming
Minister

pc: Honourable Carole James, Minister of Finance