



BCTF

British Columbia Teachers' Federation A Union of Professionals
100-550 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2 bctf.ca
604-871-2283 1-800-663-9163  

Executive Office fax: 604-871-2290

EDUCATION FUNDING

A Brief to the

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

from the

British Columbia Teachers' Federation

October 2017



President



Executive Director

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Education Funding Brief 2017

BC Teachers' Federation

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The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) is pleased to have the opportunity to present its views on priorities for the 2018 provincial budget to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (the Committee). The BCTF represents 43,000 members who are teachers and associated professionals in public schools across British Columbia. The BCTF very much anticipates and appreciates a new climate in the relationship between teachers and the provincial government. For the first time in many years, our brief to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services is focused on recommendations that will improve public education, rather than pleas to not allow the level of services to deteriorate further.

Reversing direction is not simple for an institution as large and diverse as public education. We have seen this in the first weeks of school in 2017–18, as school districts have been pressed to find an estimated more than 3,000 teachers and integrate them appropriately into schools that, in many cases, have been restructured to reflect austerity budgets. Good will on the part of everyone in the system will, we are sure, allow for the establishment of a new equilibrium in staffing and facilities and allow us to do an even better job of meeting student needs.

Summary of issues and recommendations

Provide support for implementing new curriculum

Recommendation 1

That the Ministry of Education fully and sustainably fund curriculum change. The multi-year curriculum implementation plan must make clear commitments to funding and support for curriculum change including teaching resources and equitable access to technological networks, supports, and tools that meet curricular demands.

Recommendation 2

That the Ministry of Education provide grants to school districts based on a minimum of \$1,500 per teacher per year (\$60 million) for each of three years to support time and learning resources needed for the implementation of the redesign of the entire curriculum from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Recommendation 3

That the Ministry of Education work with the BCTF to plan and fund a wide variety of in-service opportunities in all areas of the province to support the implementation of the new curriculum and the enhanced Aboriginal content.

Recommendation 4

That the Ministry of Education provide funding for an expanded TeachBC, a resource database of materials developed by teachers for the new curriculum.

Provide funding for teaching resources

Recommendation 5

That the Ministry of Education allocate funds for teacher-selected learning resources required to meet existing and new curricular demands.

Recommendation 6

That the Ministry of Education work with the BCTF and others to co-ordinate, develop, and make available the necessary teaching resources to address the enhanced Aboriginal content in

the revised curriculum and the sexual health components of the Physical and Health Education curriculum.

Provide the resources needed to support successful inclusion

Recommendation 7

That the Ministry of Education provide stable, predictable, and adequate funding to enable school districts to fulfill their responsibility to provide:

- early and timely identification and designation of students with special needs.
- adequate wrap-around services and supports, including full team complement staffing, services, and technology (e.g., learning support teachers, psychologists, special needs assistants, occupational therapists, Special Education Technology BC).

Recommendation 8

That the Ministry of Education increase availability of and access to professional development, in-service, and specialist training for both general and specialist teachers on inclusive education theory and practice.

Review and revise the education finance system

Recommendation 9

That the Ministry of Education carry out a public review of the public education finance system based on the principles of adequate, stable and predictable funding.

Accelerate capital funding for building and seismic upgrading of schools

Recommendation 10

That the Ministry of Education adopt an aggressive timetable for capital expenditures that meet the needs for more schools and for mitigating seismic dangers.

Support the recruitment, retention and mentorship of teachers

Recommendation 11

That the Ministry of Education work with the BCTF to initiate a series of recruitment and retention initiatives to address the immediate needs in school districts around the province in

filling both contract positions and in ensuring sufficient numbers of teachers teaching on call (TTOCs) are available.

Recommendation 12

That the Ministry of Education approve the funding to continue the BC New Teacher Mentorship Project to support teachers new to the profession or in new roles, such as inclusion support teachers.

Recommendation 13

That the Ministry of Education provide a significant funding increase and policy guidelines dedicated to teacher recruitment strategies and incentives for all BC public school districts.

Expand Adult Education

Recommendation 14

That the Ministry of Education increase the number of courses that are funded by government in Adult Education to reflect a range of educational needs and interests that help create an educationally enriched society as well as improved employment opportunities for individuals.

Recommendation 15

That the Ministry of Education provide funding to school districts for adult students on an equivalent basis to students in K–12.

Eliminate public funding for private schools

Recommendation 16

That the Ministry of Education adopt a schedule for the reduction of the level of funding of private schools over several years, beginning with the elite private schools in the Group 2 category that receive 35% funding.

Track changes in the relationship between funding and staff and educational services

Recommendation 17

That the Ministry of Education make data available on a timely basis to allow for the tracking of and reporting on how funding is related to staffing and educational services.

1. Provide support for implementing new curriculum

Much of the work that goes on in classrooms is framed by curriculum. Since 2013, the entire BC curriculum has been in a process of revision. A common belief of those who have studied curriculum change is that successful change is 10% in defining the curriculum and 90% in implementation.

If changing directions in staffing is challenging, a total change in curriculum is even more so. In the past, BC curriculum has changed only in one or two subject areas at a time. Never has there been a change in the entire K–12 system and all subject areas simultaneously. The decision to do so was initiated by the previous government. This curriculum change is not just updating materials or changing the scope and sequence. It is a conceptual change in several regards.

Rather than centrally determined content being the focus of the curriculum, it is “big ideas,” concepts that organize how a subject is understood and that should form the basis for making sense of new challenges the student will face in the future. It is also based on “competencies,” again, how learning takes place, not just on subject content. Further, the education system has taken up the mandate to incorporate Aboriginal content and Aboriginal ways of knowing throughout the curriculum, which is a key component toward commitments flowing from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s recommendations.

Professional learning is being used to encompass two types of activity. In-service is the training needed to carry out specific areas that governing authorities have identified, such as a new student information system, privacy requirements, or new areas of curriculum. Professional development is the teacher having the autonomy to determine what they need to learn to effectively provide high-quality education service. Both of these require funding, and a plan to ensure equity of access in all school districts around the province—including supporting the professional learning needs of teachers in rural and remote areas, for the betterment of the students in those regions.

We place curriculum at the beginning of our brief because it is the other major change, along with staffing, that is challenging throughout the BC school system. Teachers need time, resources, and a wide variety of professional learning opportunities to make a success of implementing new curriculum.

To give a comparison, when the Year 2000 program was in development from 1989 to 1992, a total of \$482 million was spent on implementation of the program—a combination of targeted funding and funding for school districts to use as they defined needs.¹ In contrast, the amount of additional funding directed specifically for curriculum change was \$1 million for targeted training in 2015 and \$7 million in 2016 for teaching coding and for curriculum change. The previous government claimed \$100 million was provided over three years—but that was in release time for days that had already been paid for.²

Teachers are working to address the changed curriculum, but they need real supports from government to make it work.

¹ Hagan, S. B. (September 1991). *Education Reform in British Columbia: Building a Sustainable School System—Cabinet Review of the Year 2000 Education Changes*. Victoria: Government of British Columbia.

² Office of the Premier. (2016, June 10). *\$6 million to help connect students with coding, new curriculum and computers*. Retrieved from: news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016PREM0065-000994.

Recommendation 1

That the Ministry of Education fully and sustainably fund curriculum change. The multi-year curriculum implementation plan must make clear commitments to funding and support for curriculum change including teaching resources and equitable access to technological networks, supports, and tools that meet curricular demands.

Recommendation 2

That the Ministry of Education provide grants to school districts based on a minimum of \$1,500 per teacher per year (\$60 million) for each of three years to support time and learning resources needed for the implementation of the redesign of the entire curriculum from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Recommendation 3

That the Ministry of Education work with the BCTF to plan and fund a wide variety of in-service opportunities in all areas of the province to support the implementation of the new curriculum and the enhanced Aboriginal content.

Recommendation 4:

That the Ministry of Education provide funding for an expanded TeachBC, a resource database of materials developed by teachers for the new curriculum.

2. Provide funding for teaching resources

An important element of success in the implementation of new curriculum is the availability of teaching resources—including books, science equipment, fine arts supplies, musical instruments, trades and technology equipment, and appropriate resources for all other subject areas. For too many years, public schools around the province have been making do with broken equipment, incomplete sets of books for language arts classes, out-dated (and sometimes racist and historically inaccurate) textbooks, and antiquated equipment in shops and lab classes. Teachers cannot be left on their own to develop these new resources. Parents should not have to fundraise for these resources. Schools must have direct access to funding to purchase resources. All new funds should be allocated to school districts in such a way that they must be spent—in their entirety—in schools. These funds should not be siphoned at the district level for other initiatives. A priority is to procure (and develop where necessary) a wide range of accurate, up-to-date, and culturally appropriate teaching resources that reflect the diversity of First Nations in BC and Indigenous peoples across Canada. Translation of such materials into French and other languages taught in the province is also important for learners in languages other than English. The BCTF believes there is an important role for the Ministry of Education to play in the co-ordination of addressing this specific.

The revised sexual health curriculum incorporated into the Physical and Health Education curriculum requires new resources that have accurate, up-to-date, and LGBTQ-inclusive teaching resources. These should be developed in conjunction with the BCTF, the ministries of education and health, and others to ensure that the materials are appropriate and are widely available, because the need is significant and of potential great consequence for youth if such materials are not available.

Schools have fallen far behind in having funding available to maintain resources and materials, even before identifying new needs for a new curriculum. As shown in Appendix 1, in inflation-indexed terms, funding spent on supplies dropped about 24% between 2007–08 and 2016–17.³

³ BC Ministry of Education. (2008–2016). *BC School District Revenue and Expenditure Tables*. Victoria: Government of British Columbia.
Statistics Canada. (2017). *Table 326-0021 Consumer Price Index—annual (2002=100)*. Ottawa: CANSIM. Retrieved from: www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?id=3260021.

Recommendation 5

That the Ministry of Education allocate funds for teacher-selected learning resources required to meet existing and new curricular demands.

Recommendation 6

That the Ministry of Education work with the BCTF and others to co-ordinate, develop, and make available the necessary teaching resources to address the enhanced Aboriginal content in the revised curriculum, and the sexual health components of the Physical and Health Education curriculum.

3. Provide the resources needed to support successful inclusion

BC's inclusive public education system is based on the principle that all students, including those with diverse physical, cognitive, cultural, and linguistic needs, are “fully participating members of a community of learners.”⁴ As such, all BC children and youth are fully entitled to “equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs.”⁵

The pursuit of an equitable, inclusive public education system has been thwarted, however, by a myriad of provincial policy, funding, and staffing challenges since 2002, when the then newly elected BC Liberal government removed class-size and composition language from the collective agreement. While ultimately rectified by the restorative Supreme Court of Canada ruling in November 2016, that policy decision—along with chronic systemic underfunding—has resulted in a generation of students with significant and diverse needs going without timely assessment and identification; without sufficient integrated classroom, school, and clinical supports; and without equitable access to quality public education opportunities.

Recommendation 7

That the Ministry of Education provide stable, predictable, and adequate funding to enable school districts to fulfill their responsibility to provide:

- early and timely identification and designation of students with special needs.
- adequate wrap-around services and supports, including full team complement staffing, services, and technology (e.g., learning support teachers, psychologists, special needs assistants, occupational therapists, Special Education Technology BC).

Recommendation 8

That the Ministry of Education increase availability of and access to professional development, in-service, and specialist training for both general and specialist teachers on inclusive education theory and practice.

⁴ Government of British Columbia. (2016, April). *Special education services: A manual of policies, procedures and guidelines*. BC Ministry of Education: Victoria, Canada. (p. 2). Retrieved from www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/inclusive/special_ed_policy_manual.pdf.

⁵ Ibid.

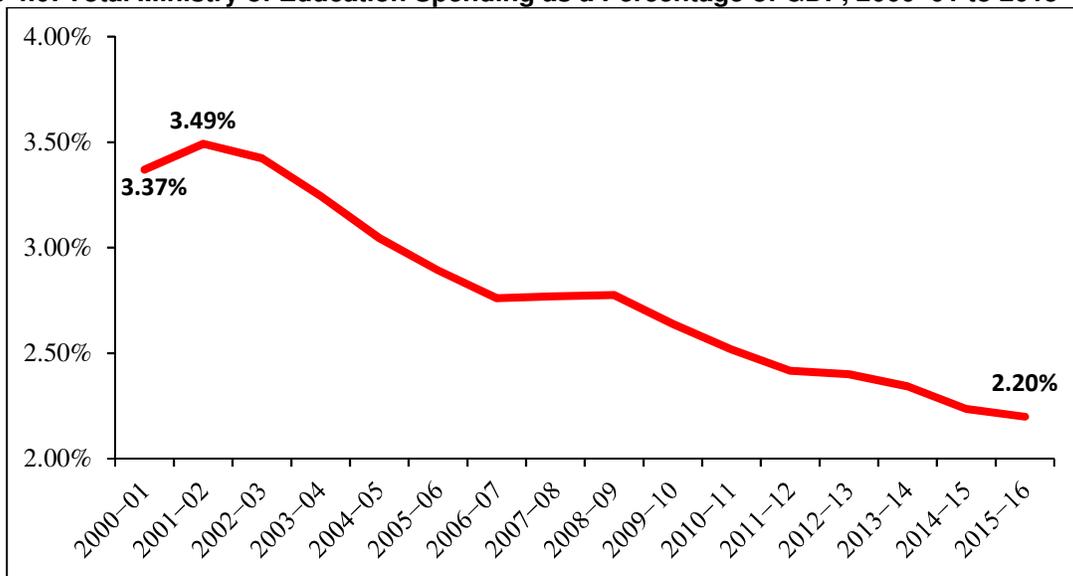
4. Review and revise the education finance system

While restoration of teaching positions and funding for existing needs for curriculum implementation are immediate issues, changes to the education finance system are required to have adequate, stable, and predictable funding on an ongoing basis.

Public education funding has been declining over the past 16 years as both a proportion of total public spending and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It has also varied with piecemeal changes reflecting a particular political priority of the day, without predictable spending so school districts can plan appropriately.

The funding system should be based on first identifying the mandates of the public education system and then identifying what resources are required to meet the mandates.

Figure 4.0: Total Ministry of Education Spending as a Percentage of GDP, 2000–01 to 2015–16



Sources: Ministry of Education. (Various Years). *Service Plan*. Victoria: Government of British Columbia.
Ministry of Finance. (2001). *Budget Estimates Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2002*. Victoria: Government of British Columbia. Retrieved from www.fin.gov.bc.ca/archive/budget01/Estimates2001.pdf.
Statistics Canada. (2016). *Table 384-0038 Gross domestic product, expenditure-based, provincial and territorial*. Ottawa: CANSIM. Retrieved from www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&id=3840038.

Recommendation 9:

That the Ministry of Education carry out a public review of the public education finance system based on the principles of adequate, stable, and predictable funding.

5. Accelerate capital funding for building and seismic upgrading of schools

Not much has to be said in identifying the significant gaps in school buildings—the companies supplying portables have had a huge market, especially in rapidly growing districts like Surrey, Sooke, and other suburban districts, although in other areas as well.

Under the previous government, the province fell very far behind its own timelines in building schools in areas with growing needs, as well as in ensuring that all our students are learning in schools that are safe. As of August of 2017, only 165 of 346 schools in the Seismic Mitigation Program have completed their upgrades, and 155 schools have not even finished their business case development.⁶ As we have seen in Mexico City and elsewhere over the past year, the seismic risk along the Pacific Rim must be taken seriously, particularly when it comes to schools. In addition to providing quality facilities for our students, catching up on building schools provides vital employment for those building the schools.

Recommendation 10

That the Ministry of Education adopt an aggressive timetable for capital expenditures that meet the needs for more schools and for mitigating seismic dangers.

⁶ Government of British Columbia. (2017, August). *Progress Report – Seismic Mitigation Program*. BC Ministry of Education: Victoria, Canada. Retrieved from www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/resource-management/capital-planning/seismic-mitigation/progress_report.pdf.

6. Support the recruitment, retention, and mentorship of teachers

BC's public education system is experiencing a major demographic shift, creating an increasing demand for teachers—and critical personnel shortages. According to provincial labour market projections, BC schools will require 24,900 new teaching positions by 2022, because of a combination of projected student population increases and teacher retirements, and the recent restoration of collective agreement language for class-size and composition levels. Numerous BC school districts are already reporting significant, chronic shortages for teachers teaching on call (TTOCs), as well as general and specialist teachers across the province's K–12 schools.

Initiatives to address these needs could include shortening of the salary grid (by removing the lowest three or four steps on the grid) to bring starting wages more in line with other provinces. Other initiatives could include student loan forgiveness programs, assisting new hires with moving expenses, making available more unpaid mid-year leaves, assisting with housing, reducing rents on teacherages, addressing gaps in classroom conditions in some school districts, and greater access to in-service.

This school year, like the last one, we have seen students in numerous school districts have their special education or English language learner programs disrupted because of the district's inadequate supply of TTOCs. No child should be going without their small group, one-on-one, or other accommodation because of recruitment and retention difficulties in a school district. Denying children and youth the accommodations they need because of human resources problems cannot be allowed to become the norm—and proactive steps, with the support of the province, must be taken to address this. Special education and ELL services should not be seen as dispensable luxuries—or as services that can be regularly cancelled at a moment's notice.

The BC New Teacher Mentorship Project (a collaboration between the University of British Columbia, the BC School Superintendents Association, and the BCTF) ran for five years, providing support to school districts across the province in establishing mentorship programs for new teachers and teachers new to their role. The project also helped revitalize existing programs where they existed. Unfortunately, funding for the project ended in June 2017. Given the thousands of new hires around the province, it is crucial that funding for mentorship supports be re-established to support success in classrooms.

Recommendation 11

That the Ministry of Education work with the BCTF to initiate a series of recruitment and retention initiatives to address the immediate needs in school districts around the province in filling both contract positions and in ensuring sufficient numbers of teachers teaching on call (TTOCs) are available.

Recommendation 12

That the Ministry of Education approve the funding to continue the BC New Teacher Mentorship Project to support teachers new to the profession or in new roles, such as inclusion support teachers.

Recommendation 13

That the Ministry of Education provide a significant funding increase and policy guidelines dedicated to teacher recruitment strategies and incentives for all BC public school districts.

7. Expand Adult Education

Adult Education is particularly important for those who need to develop their language skills and/or enhance skills for employment and further education. It should also open opportunities for lifelong learning for all, a requirement for full participation in a rapidly changing society and economy. Adult Education offers additional chances for individuals to contribute more fully to all aspects of society.

The BCTF very much appreciates the decision made by the new government to restore the access to programs that had been reduced because of tuition fees imposed by the previous government. This access is an excellent beginning, but more needs to be done to create a learning society that is accessible to all.

For the longer term, the basis of funding, as well as the amount of funding, should ensure that school districts have the resources to offer a wide range of adult education offerings.

Recommendation 14

That the Ministry of Education increase the number of courses that are funded by government in Adult Education to reflect a range of educational needs and interests that help create an educationally enriched society as well as improved employment opportunities for individuals.

Recommendation 15

That the Ministry of Education provide funding to school districts for adult students on an equivalent basis to students in K–12.

8. Eliminate public funding for private schools

The BCTF is opposed to public funding of private schools. This opposition is not to parents having the right to send their children to private schools, but to the public funding of these schools, particularly the elite private schools.

It is particularly disturbing to see students with special needs being sent to independent school distributed learning programs because public education lacks the resources to provide the support students need. The impact of this situation is segregation of students with special needs, which contradicts the principle of inclusion.

Recommendation 16

That the Ministry of Education adopt a schedule for the reduction of the level of funding of private schools over several years, beginning with the elite private schools in the Group 2 category that receive 35% funding.

9. Track changes in the relationship between funding and staff and educational services

One of several ways of evaluating funding is to determine how it has continued or changed the staffing and classroom ratios—the basis of how service is provided to students.

In the short term, when data from September 2017 staffing ratios is reported it will be possible to make a comparison with September 2016 that will identify the impact of funding put in place to comply with the Supreme Court of Canada restoration of the provisions of the collective agreement. This will also provide a base on which to measure the future impact of funding decisions on staffing.

Appendix 2 provides ratios from 2016–17 (based on data from the Ministry of Education) as a baseline to track improvements in the 2017–18 and further years of improvements.

Recommendation 17

That the Ministry of Education make data available on a timely basis to allow for the tracking of and reporting on how funding is related to staffing and educational services.

Appendix 1

Spending on supplies

Spending on supplies is defined as the entry “Supplies” of the table “Provincial Summary of Actual Operating Expenses by Object” in the *BC School District Revenue and Expenditure Tables*. Nominally, this spending has decreased by over \$41 million between 2007–08 and 2015–16. When adjusted for inflation, the gap widens to close to \$62 million in 2016 dollars. When calculated as a percent of the total operating expenses, the spending on supplies falls by 1.3% in this period.

Table A1.0: Total School District Spending on Supplies, 2007–08 to 2015–16

School Year	Nominal Spending	Inflation Adjusted Spending (2016 Dollars)	Percent of Total Spending
2007–08	231,260,528	252,059,560	4.96%
2008–09	229,793,126	250,460,184	4.76%
2009–10	214,144,743	230,327,913	4.41%
2010–11	195,710,663	205,622,190	4.00%
2011–12	205,433,390	213,455,407	4.16%
2012–13	201,570,750	209,619,879	4.06%
2013–14	192,033,697	197,686,497	3.99%
2014–15	193,409,969	196,949,919	3.93%
2015–16	190,220,594	190,220,594	3.66%

Source: BC Ministry of Education. (2008–2016). *BC School District Revenue and Expenditure Tables*. Victoria: Government of British Columbia.

Statistics Canada. (2017). *Table 326-0021 Consumer Price Index—annual (2002=100)*. Ottawa: CANSIM. Retrieved from: www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?id=3260021.

Appendix 2

2016–17 Baseline for comparison of student and staff numbers

Average Class Size

Kindergarten	19.1
Grade 1–3.....	20.4
Grade 4–7.....	24.5
Grade 8–12.....	22.9

Number of Reported Classes with Assigned Education Assistants: 21,153
Number of Reported Schools in Province (Standard Facility): 1,367
Number of Reported Classes in Province: 70,620
Number of Reported Classes in Province with more than 30 students: 1,385

Class Composition:

17,309 classes (24.51%) with four or more students with IEP
11,108 classes (15.73%) with four or more students in ELL programs.

Source:

BC Ministry of Education. (2016). *Overview of Class Size and Composition in British Columbia Public Schools—Provincial Overview 2016/17*. Victoria: Government of British Columbia.

Students: Teacher Ratios

All Students: Regular Instruction Teachers	22.5
All Students: Career Programs Teachers	2,926.8
All Students: Library Services Teachers.....	954.3
All Students: Counselling Teachers.....	603.8
Special Needs: Special Education Teachers	17.8
ELL Students: ELL Teachers.....	85.7
Aboriginal Students: Aboriginal Education Teachers	289.1

Source:

BC Ministry of Education. (2016). *Student Statistics - 2016/17 - Province - Public and Independent Schools Combined*. Victoria: Government of British Columbia.
BC Ministry of Education. (2017). *Staff by Year, 2016/17 (source: Form 1530)*. Victoria: Government of British Columbia, Data BC Operations.