

VSB

Submission to:

**Select Standing Committee on Finance and
Government Services**

Budget 2018 Consultation

Submitted by:

**Board of Education of School District No. 39
(Vancouver)**

October 13, 2017

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services
Room 224, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C., V8V 1X4

Dear Committee Members:

The Vancouver Board of Education (“VBE”) is happy to provide this submission for consideration by the committee as it recommends funding and investment strategies to the Ministry of Finance for the development of the Government’s 2018-2019 fiscal framework. The VBE is one of the most diverse public school systems in Canada with an annual enrolment of 49,000 students in Kindergarten to grade 12. In addition, the VBE provides educational programs and services to 500 adult students and 1,750 international students. The VSB invests significant resources in a broad range of programs to meet our learners’ diverse needs in fulfillment of our vision to “inspire student success by providing an innovative, caring and responsive learning environment”.

Student Achievement

The district directs all its efforts on improving student achievement by focusing on the Board’s VSB 2021 Strategic Plan goals of:

- Engaging our learners through innovative teaching and learning practices;
- Building capacity in our community through strengthening collective leadership;
- Creating a culture of care and shared social responsibility; and,
- Providing effective leadership, governance and stewardship.

To ensure that all students are included and have the opportunity to succeed VBE has a broad offering of specialty programs to support learners in a variety of ways, addressing a range of needs. There is a clear focus on improving the graduation rates for all students, and in particular Aboriginal learners. This begins with an emphasis on providing supportive learning experiences and interventions as children transition from pre-Kindergarten into Kindergarten, through to Grade 12, and then on to post-secondary life.

The provincial education mandate has expressly prioritized 21st Century Learning, supporting early learners and sustainability. It has also consistently stressed the importance of parental involvement in student learning and school communities. These priorities, coupled with the completion of the implementation of the new curriculum and the restoration of collective agreement language, exemplify the challenges we face in delivering upon the mandate. From a financial perspective, it is essential that these areas receive dedicated, consistent and adequate funding if they are to become cornerstones of our education system. Accordingly, the VBE is making the following recommendations to the Committee.

Recommendations

The VSB recommends that the provincial government:

- 1. Support the Ministry of Education in its promised review of the funding formula for school districts in order to provide stable, predictable and adequate funding to enable districts to fulfill their responsibility to assist all students to achieve their potential.**

In order to have a funding formula that provides stable and predictable funding the resources necessary to support all students need to be identified. This will require supplying advisory and technical support to the Ministry to ensure the new funding formula provides the adequate funding needed to support students.

- 2. Provide sufficient funding to fully implement the Memorandum of Agreement resulting from the Supreme Court Ruling.**

As the 2017-2018 school year is the first year of the implementation of the MOA the exact cost of the implementation is still being determined. The recruitment and retention of teachers, the shortage of teachers teaching on call, the cost of remedy provisions, and the need for facility renovations are challenges that will place pressure on the initial funding that has been provided and will need to be addressed to ensure the implementation fully complies with the MOA. In addition, funding is required for professional development of teachers new to the teaching profession, particularly for mentorship and induction programs for the hundreds of new teachers that are coming into the system.

- 3. Provide funding to ensure the new curriculum implementation is complete and successful.**

A commitment to provide professional development for educators and educational leaders is necessary to ensure successful implementation of the new curriculum and the restored collective agreement. With the pending changes to the Graduation Program completing the transformation agenda for K through 12, there also needs to be sufficient funding to enable the acquisition of resources to implement the changes. The restored collective agreement language provides for increased teacher librarian staffing and school libraries will play an increasingly important role in the personalized learning agenda and need to be supported.

4. Fully fund cost pressures to sustain current services to students, including past unfunded cost pressures.

School districts have experienced erosion in their budgets over the years due to the province not providing funding for cost increases in the areas of exempt compensation, employee benefits, utility costs and inflation. BCASBO estimates the past unfunded cost pressures to be \$418 million. Unfunded cost increases require school districts to spend significant time and resources on balancing budgets each year instead of strategically planning the most effective use of funding to support student success.

5. Review and increase supplemental funding grants for students with special needs.

The VBE, like most school districts, spends more in supporting students with special needs than is provided by the province in special needs supplemental grants. The increase in the numbers of students in recent years with complex and diverse needs is putting increased pressure on districts' budgets. There needs to be a recognition of the full costs of providing an inclusive education for all students with special and unique needs.

6. Provide funding for increased maintenance and upgrades to address needs of aging school facilities.

The Government has made a commitment to providing funding to improve infrastructure in school districts. Deferred maintenance has become a problem that is eroding districts' ability to maximize support for classrooms by diverting funds to emergent repairs to school buildings. The VBE has between \$700 million and \$800 million in estimated deferred maintenance costs due to the age of many of the school buildings. The province needs to increase funding for ongoing maintenance, and should employ industry maintenance standards as a guide. The current Annual Facilities Grant allocations are not adequate to provide the maintenance required.

7. Provide sufficient capital funding to honour the provincial government's commitment to upgrade or replace high seismic risk schools.

In keeping with the Government's commitment to invest in new school facilities, sufficient capital funding is required to seismically upgrade or replace schools, particularly in Vancouver. The VBE has over 60 of its 110 schools in need of seismic upgrading or replacement. All of these schools are high seismic risk buildings (i.e. H1, H2 or H3). The province needs to advance the pace of approval for seismic capital projects in order to ensure the safety of students and staff in the event of a significant seismic episode.

8. Increase funding to school districts to support Aboriginal Learners.

While significant improvement in educational outcomes for Aboriginal students have been achieved over the past few years, more needs to be done to continue the progress. The six-year completion rate for Aboriginal students in Vancouver is significantly lower than the Provincial rate, a reality that exists in many districts. Funding needs to be provided at a provincial level to identify the best practices that exist in some districts where the opposite reality exists so that the pedagogy used in those districts can be shared with others and be funded. This strategy would speak volumes to the Ministry of Education's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

9. Ensure Adult Education is consistent with the new 10-12 curriculum

With the recent announcement for funding for adult education there needs to be a commitment of full funding for all courses taken by adult students.

Respectfully,



Dianne Turner
Official Trustee



J. David Green, CPA, CA
Secretary Treasurer