



British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

September 16, 2024

The Honourable Rachna Singh
Minister of Education and Child Care
PO Box 9151 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria B.C. V8W9H1
ECC.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Singh,

Subject: Increase the Annual Facilities Grant to address Deferred Maintenance, Increased funding for Aging Infrastructure and Maintenance Funding for Aging Portables

At the British Columbia School Trustees Association's 2024 annual general meeting, our members representing all 60 boards of education in B.C. passed the following resolutions:

"That the BCSTA advocate to the Ministry of Finance to increase the Ministry of Education and Child Care's Annual Facilities Grant so school districts may address the accumulating costs of deferred maintenance in order to improve accessibility, ensure student safety, enhance learning environments, extend facility lifespan, and support long-term fiscal responsibility."

"That the BCSTA request the Provincial Government and the Ministry of Education and Child Care to equitably increase capital funding specifically to address the replacement and renovation needs of aging school facilities in regions that are remote, rural and located in areas at risk from a seasonal natural disaster."

"That the BCSTA advocates to the Ministry of Education and Child Care to provide maintenance funding to districts that rely on aging portables to manage enrolment growth."

On behalf of the BCSTA's membership, I want to draw your attention to the critical need for increased funding to address deferred maintenance, aging infrastructure and the upkeep of portables across B.C.'s school districts. We recognize that the province is facing unprecedented enrolment growth, and that funding is being allocated accordingly, but we must also advocate for a balanced response that incorporates these critical needs.

As noted in the enclosed rationale, the deferred maintenance backlog in school districts has reached unsustainable levels, posing risks to student safety and negatively impacting learning environments and overall operational efficiency. While increases to the Annual Facilities Grant (AFG), totalling nearly 30 million since 2022/23, have been valued by boards of education, additional investments to the grant would potentially address many outstanding concerns, including extending the lifespan of facilities and enhancing energy efficiency. These additional funds would contribute to long-term cost savings and improving learning conditions while preventing further deterioration and higher costs in the future.



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Although maintenance programs, including the School Enhancement Program, Carbon Neutral Capital Program and Playground Equipment Program, totalling \$102.2 million, are available alongside AFG to help maintain older facilities, concerns persist, especially in rural and remote areas. These districts regularly incur heightened costs due to environmental factors, and we urge the government to allocate additional capital funding more equitably to ensure that these vulnerable areas receive the necessary resources for renovations and replacements. The association's Rural and Remote Network has discussed specific weather-related needs, including the heating and cooling of buildings, as well as additional space requirements for items such as winter clothing gear.

While focusing on a future with more prefabricated modular builds to address a variety of concerns is a high priority for boards of education, many districts still continue to rely on portables as a response to enrolment growth. Unfortunately, many portables are deteriorating and require additional maintenance to ensure they remain safe and functional for students and staff. While AFG funding can be utilized to address these needs, the lack of added support in the way of additional funding to directly address these maintenance requirements leaves many districts managing inadequate facilities.

These resolutions reflect the pressing needs of school districts across the province. Addressing them aligns with our shared goal of providing safe, inclusive and sustainable learning environments of the highest quality for all students, a sentiment that was shared in meetings with Assistant Deputy Minister Chris Brown and Executive Director Damien Crowell.

The BCSTA understands that your teams regularly connect with school district staff regarding these and similar issues, and we thank you for your additional attention to our membership's requests. We are committed to continuing our collaboration with you and your staff to ensure every district is fully equipped to serve and support students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolyn Broady". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carolyn Broady

President

British Columbia School Trustees Association

Motion: A202428, A202429, & A202430

Enclosure: Motion rationales

CC: The Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Finance
Jennifer McCrea, Acting Deputy Minister of Education and Child Care
BCSTA member boards of education
Suzanne Hoffman, CEO, BCSTA
BCSTA Board of Directors

28. Increase the Annual Facilities Grant to address Deferred Maintenance

Category: School Premises, Facilities, Services

Motion #: 28 : A202428

Meeting: AGM 2024

Sponsor: Central Okanagan Public Schools

Action: *not specified*

- May 2024: Met with Ministry staff re: motions

Category:

Outcome:

- June 2024: CWG report released, media coverage (mix of print and radio) - 10

Disposition: Carried

Motion as Adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the BCSTA advocate to the Ministry of Finance to increase the Ministry of Education and Child Care's Annual Facilities Grant so school districts may address the accumulating costs of deferred maintenance in order to improve accessibility, ensure student safety, enhance learning environments, extend facility lifespan, and support long-term fiscal responsibility.

Motion as Presented:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the BCSTA advocate to the Ministry of Finance to increase the Ministry of Education and Child Care's Annual Facilities Grant so school districts may address the accumulating costs of deferred maintenance in order to improve accessibility, ensure student safety, enhance learning environments, extend facility lifespan, and support long-term fiscal responsibility.

Rationale:

Increasing the Annual Facilities Grant is a crucial step for boards of education when school districts are burdened with millions (billions provincially) in deferred maintenance. This investment would allow boards of education to allocate funds specifically to tackle this backlog. Here are several considerations for the necessity of investing in this fund.

Ensuring Student Safety and Well-Being: Deferred maintenance often involves critical repairs related to safety, such as fixing electrical systems, addressing structural issues, or dealing with health hazards. A well-maintained school environment is essential for the safety and well-being of students, teachers, and staff

Enhancing Learning Environments: Adequate funding for maintenance and facilities improvement contributes to a better learning environment. Updated and well-maintained facilities can positively impact student engagement, motivation, and overall academic performance.

Extending Facility Lifespan: Regular maintenance and timely repairs extend the lifespan of facilities and infrastructure. By addressing deferred maintenance, the district can prevent further deterioration and ultimately reduce long-term costs associated with major repairs or replacements.

Increasing Energy Efficiency: Investing in facility improvements can include implementing energy-efficient upgrades. These upgrades not only reduce the environmental footprint but also lead to cost savings in the long run, thus optimizing resource allocation.

Enhancing Community Relations: Having well-maintained and modern school facilities positively impacts the community's perception of the district. It demonstrates a commitment to providing a quality education and a safe environment for students, fostering a positive relationship between the district and the community.

Attracting and Retaining Staff: Upgraded facilities can help in attracting and retaining staff. A positive work environment can be a deciding factor for educators considering employment in the district, ultimately benefiting the quality of education provided.

Meeting Regulatory Standards: Adequate funding for facilities is essential to ensure compliance with local, provincial, and national building codes and regulations. Noncompliance can result in legal and financial consequences, making it imperative to allocate sufficient funds for maintenance and upgrades

Long-Term Fiscal Responsibility: Addressing deferred maintenance and investing in facility improvements now can result in substantial cost savings over time. Proactive maintenance is often more cost-effective than addressing larger issues that arise from neglect.

Environmental Standards: Addressing the need for fire-hardening of our schools.

Cost Efficiency: The future costs do not include inflation. The increased costs of supply, transportation, labour, etc could end up doubling the original estimate of work. It is a better use of tax dollars and more prudent to do the work immediately instead of deferring it to the future.

29. Increased funding for Aging Infrastructure

Category: School Premises, Facilities, Services

Motion #:	29 : A202429	Sponsor:	Kootenay Boundary Branch <i>and</i> Southeast Kootenay
Meeting:	AGM 2024	Action:	<i>not specified</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May 2024: Met with Ministry staff re: motions
Category:		Outcome:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• June 2024: CWG report released, media coverage (mix of print and radio) - 10
Disposition:	Carried		

Motion as Adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the BCSTA request the Provincial Government and the Ministry of Education and Child Care to equitably increase capital funding specifically to address the replacement and renovation needs of aging school facilities in regions that are remote, rural and located in areas at risk from a seasonal natural disaster.

Motion as Presented:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the BCSTA request the Provincial Government and the Ministry of Education and Child Care to equitably increase capital funding specifically to address the replacement and renovation needs of aging school facilities in regions that are remote, rural and located in areas at risk from a seasonal natural disaster.

Rationale:

Funding needs to be provided equitably across the province, ensuring that aging facilities in northern, remote and/or rural districts are approved for renovation or replacement proportional with aging facilities in larger, urban districts. Many districts are now prone to massive, seasonal forest fire occurrences and need to receive priority when considering which schools across the province need to receive ventilation and filtration upgrades.

Aging facilities have increased maintenance costs and contribute to unacceptable levels of greenhouse gas emissions; increased flooding and fire activities have become "the norm" in BC. As facilities await government approval for renovation/replacement, costs for capital projects continue to escalate as material and labour costs increase with inflation.

In July 2022, the Vancouver Sun noted that 250 schools in B.C. have yet to be upgraded for earthquake safety. In addition to aging and seismic infrastructure concerns there are a number of schools requiring additional classrooms to service growing student populations.

BC's 2021-22 fiscal year finished with a \$1.3-billion surplus. Despite this one-time surplus and the apparent need for capital spending in education, no additional surplus monies were provided to the MECC to assist with this infrastructure "crisis" and the province's ageing school facilities continue to be chronically underfunded.

In the 2022/23 school year a total of eight (8) additions to existing schools, four (4) new school projects, one (1) replacement school and seventeen (17) seismic projects were funded. In this same budget year, government delayed funding for seven (7) previously promised K - 12 capital funding projects — two (2) new schools and five (5) seismic upgrades for existing schools— due to the " financial impacts of COVID-19 and last year's flooding".

According to the Province's Fact Sheet, *Budget 2023* commits \$3.4 billion in capital projects over the next three (3) years. For the 2023/24 budget year, \$865 million is slated for new and expanded schools, seismic upgrades, maintenance, playgrounds and property purchases for future schools and \$41 million will be spent to upgrade heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems at 101 schools throughout the province. It is unclear whether these upgraded systems have also been prioritized for those districts, like the Central Okanagan and East and West Kootenays where extreme smoke conditions now exist yearly due to climate change and pose a significant risk to students in poorly ventilated, aging facilities.

Over the three year budget period, \$763 million has been earmarked for seismic upgrades which, according to "*Table 1.8, Capital Expenditure Projects Greater Than \$50 million*", page 75 of the *Budget & Fiscal Plan*, has a completion date of 2030.

We cannot delay any longer. Aside from providing safe, comfortable learning environments for students, continued delay adds an undue economic burden to taxpayers by way of money wasted on temporary maintenance fixes to aging facilities, unnecessary carbon emissions that are costly to districts and further harm the environment, contributing to extreme weather conditions, and a higher renovation/replacement price tag down the road, as construction costs continue to rise.

Reference(s):

[Vancouver Sun Article quoting BCSTA President](#)

[Gov.bc finance](#)

[Gov.bc school maintenance](#)

[Gov.bc fact sheet](#)

[BC Budget 2022/23 - 2024/25 \(pages 63 - 65, 75\)](#)

30. Maintenance Funding for Aging Portables

Category: School Premises, Facilities, Services

Motion #: 30 : A202430

Sponsor: Kamloops/Thompson

Meeting: AGM 2024

Action: *not specified*

- May 2024: Met with Ministry staff re: motions

Category:

Outcome:

- June 2024: CWG report released, media coverage (mix of print and radio) - 10

Disposition: Carried

Motion as Adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the BCSTA advocates to the Ministry of Education and Child Care to provide maintenance funding to districts that rely on aging portables to manage enrolment growth.

Motion as Presented:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the BCSTA advocates to the Ministry of Education and Child Care to provide maintenance funding to districts that rely on aging portables to manage enrolment growth.

Rationale:

Some BC school districts have been waiting for new schools and managing enrolment growth by relying on portables that are now aging and requiring the following kinds of maintenance (outside railings, stairs, decks, ramps, roofing upgrades, flooring upgrades, and mechanical system upgrades). While it is understood that the Ministry of Education and Child Care may not be able to provide additional funding for portables, it would be important for the Ministry to consider the costs of aging portables in providing funding to school districts, acknowledging the maintenance costs. The 2023 AGM approved a motion that requested funding for new portables for enrolment growth, this motion reflects the need to maintain the existing ones in school districts while awaiting capital builds or the delivery of new portables.

In review of the [Report on 2024 Budget Consultation](#), challenges with K-12 education operational and capital funding, including growth and maintenance, were highlighted. However, it is timely to share that portables become long-term rather than short-term solutions for districts to manage overcrowding in schools, so consideration ought to be given for the age of the portables and the numbers that districts are having to manage and to provide funding to address the costs



of maintaining portables.

Reference(s):

[Report on BC Budget Consultation](#)