



BC Confederation of  
Parent Advisory Councils

**BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC)**

Presentation to

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

**Public Hearing:**

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Submitted by

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**on behalf of BCCPAC**

## Introduction

The [BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils](#) (BCCPAC) is pleased to have the opportunity to present its recommendations on public education priorities for the 2018 provincial budget to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services.

BCCPAC, a non-partisan registered non-profit society, represents the parents of 565,000 children attending provincial public schools. Recognized by the provincial government and education partners, BCCPAC is the collective voice of parents on educational issues within the public system. We strive to foster a culture of acceptance, diversity and inclusion in our public schools and advocate both for systemic changes and individual parent advocacy. BCCPAC is governed by a volunteer board of nine directors elected annually by the membership; our District Parent Advisory Councils (DPAC) membership represents 90% of parents in public education and Parent Advisory Councils (PAC) from 56 districts across the province.

The [Select Standing Committee for Finance and Government Services](#) (2014/15, 2015/16, and 2016/17) affirmed that public education is not adequately supported by public funds. This Committee has [recommended](#) “that government ensure sufficient and timely capital funding to provide for facility improvements, seismic upgrades and also to facilitate the building of new schools in areas that are struggling to cope with increasing student numbers.” This Committee also “ascertained that additional funding is necessary to ensure the provision of quality public education and to properly meet the increased costs that schools are currently facing.” [BCCPAC fully supports the K-12 funding recommendations made in the previous three reports of this Committee.](#)

We applaud the [key priorities of the Ministry of Education](#) under this new government and their stated commitments to public education. We are hopeful that a fully developed plan for implementation and execution, and the associated funding to support this plan will be communicated shortly. Parents and families await long-overdue changes that will make needed supports and services more accessible to students across the province.

The [BC School Act](#) sets out the purpose of the provincial education system: to “enable all learners—regardless of race, gender, ability or economic means—to become literate, to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy”. Additionally, the [BC Statement of Education Policy Order](#) (Mandate for the School System) affirms government’s responsibility for the equitable provision of high quality education to encompass the full range of human development across intellectual, physical, moral and aesthetic spheres. The government’s own policy on diversity clearly articulates government responsibility to ensure that “differences among learners do not impede their participation in school, their mastery of learning outcomes, or their ability to become contributing members of society.”



The current provincial funding for K-12 public education has again proven inadequate to satisfy this mandate. As we stated in our September 19 [media release](#), “Increasing the Classroom Enhancement Fund (CEF) to restore language and hire more teachers is only a portion of the funding that is needed. In 15 years, many districts have made cuts in other areas to try and retain smaller classes and specialist teachers. District parent representatives from across the province tell us that their districts need additional flexible funding to fulfill other local needs such as more educational assistants, custodial services and occupational and physiotherapists.”

The [September Budget Update](#) pledged to boost education spending by \$681million over the next three years, however, the majority of this funding is allocated to the "Classroom Enhancement Fund" in order to restore language from the Supreme Court ruling on class size and composition. There was little lift in this year’s funding for other necessary operational expenditures and this Budget Update has not increased capital spending from the February 2017 budget, but rather it’s been reduced—\$635 million compared to the \$687 million pledged in February—and is not at all in-line with the NDP promises to build needed new schools, make necessary maintenance, and accelerate seismic upgrades.

While the new [Key Priorities](#) for the Ministry of Education state the Minister will “fast-track enhancement to K-12 education funding” and “make schools safer by accelerating the seismic upgrade program” and “work in partnership to build and upgrade schools in every region of the province”, there is little evidence in the Budget Update to support those priorities and there has been no announcements on action, timelines or project approvals taken to achieve these priorities.

In light of the Ministry of Education’s [Key Priorities](#), the [September Budget Update](#), the current state of the public education system and the long-standing issues that still require resolution, the **BCCPAC has identified four key recommendations that are critical for every student to have equitable access to public education with the supports and services they need to succeed according to the School Act.**

### **Recommendation 1: Provide Stable Funding**

That the provincial government act now on the recommendations from the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services of the past three years that have called for adequate, stable, and predictable funding for K-12 public education.

### **Recommendation 2: Revise the Funding Model**

That the provincial government with the Ministry of Education begin the process now to review the per-pupil funding formula and develop a new needs-based, stable and sustainable model for the K-12 public system for Budget 2019. Changes to the funding formula need to reflect the actual costs of operating schools, to provide the supports and resources needed to meet the diversity of educational needs and offer a comprehensive, quality education that includes the arts.

### **Recommendation 3: Increase Operational Funding**

That the provincial government increase K-12 public education operational funding in the February 2018 Budget to reflect the actual fixed operating costs of operating school facilities and cover all the downloaded costs to school districts, as well as inflationary costs including:

Per-pupil funding increase:

- Funding for high-incidence special needs and gifted students be significantly increased - within the per-pupil funding formula - now and ongoing to schools districts, to support the early identification and assessment required to obtain "designations" needed for intervention and support for students' academic, physical, behavioural, social and/or emotional challenges.

Supplemental Funding Increases:

- Special Needs—Funding for Special Needs Categories 1, 2 & 3 be significantly increased to meet the actual costs of delivering necessary service and supports to low-incidence special needs students.
- The implementation of a classroom resource fund similar in structure to the now dormant Learning Improvement Fund (LIF) to address unique classroom needs.
- Unique Geographic Factors—Funding be increased to implement a recruitment and retention strategy for rural and remote districts, and that transportation funding reflect actual costs.

Special Purpose Funding:

- Immediate [increased funding and resources](#) must be provided to address the backlog of students waiting for formal assessment.
- Supplemental Grant for the Implementation of the Education Plan be extended in the 2018 budget to provide the necessary resources and technology to effectively implement new curriculum



#### **Recommendation 4: Increase Capital Funding**

That the provincial government and Ministry of Education honour their commitment to replace high seismic risk schools by 2025/2030 by increasing the education capital budget now and again in February 2018.

That the Ministry of Education truly demonstrate the acceleration of SMP program by immediately approving all projects currently prioritized by school districts for SMP and move projects forward from the stage they are at with a comprehensive plan with deliverables and timelines.

That the Treasury fund portables, where necessary, for temporary accommodation during seismic upgrades.

That the Ministry of Education develop a plan and timelines to replace old schools where existing schools are close to or exceeding their life expectancy, to address the soaring deferred maintenance costs.

That the Ministry of Education and the provincial government develop a strategy to proactive fund new school construction in areas of current and anticipated population growth.

That the Ministry of Education examine and revise the current [Ministry Area Standards](#) as it is the basis for all upgrades and new school builds.



## Background and Context

In 2002 the Provincial government [introduced measures](#) that altered the funding for public education from a school and needs-based formula to [per-pupil based formula](#).

This Committee, in its [2002 report on the consultations](#), noted problems with the move to per-pupil funding:

*“During the public hearings, the Committee was struck forcibly by how much financial pressure educators working in the K-12 system seemed to be experiencing as they try to adjust to the new funding formula for school districts. We think the shortage of funds is reaching a critical stage for rural schools and schools-based programs in urban areas.”*

The [Task Force on Rural Education](#) echoed this Committee’s statement and in 2003 recommended the government undertake a review of rural school funding. Finally, in June 2016 the [government announced](#) the creation of the Rural Education Enhancement Fund to provide “provincial funding that recognizes the unique challenges faced in keeping schools open in rural communities.”

The per-pupil funding model also adversely affects urban and suburban school districts who repeatedly [report shortfalls](#) which cause them to eliminate programs and reduce services to students.

While annual funding dollars to education has increased, the allocation for public education has not kept up with inflation, increases in contract agreements or rising operational and maintenance expenses. In terms of per-pupil funding and percentage of GDP, [BC has fallen behind the rest of Canada](#). A 0.9% decline in the share of GDP dedicated to education funding [represents about \\$2 billion per year](#).

BC lags behind the rest of Canada in terms of spending per student, growth in education expenditures since 2008-2009 and student to educator ratio. In the five-year period [2008-2009 to 2012-2013](#), the average expenditure per student in Canada increased 14.1% whereas BC increased only by 6.5%. The average expenditure per student nationally for 2012-2013 was \$12,377 while BC remained at \$12,113. If BC matched the \$12,377 average national expenditure, it translates to \$143 million more in funding for the province’s 565,000 students.

Local communities and school boards are in the best position to discern what students and the community need yet there is no viable way for school boards to influence or control the total amount of money they receive. The current per-pupil funding model and the total amount of money for public education does not adequately meet the needs of all of our students. The principle that every student in the province should have an equal opportunity to be educated per the School Act is not the reality across BC; unequal opportunities to learn exist and reflect both economic and social inequalities and the impact of unequal capacity to raise funds through charity, student fees or parental fundraising to ameliorate the underfunding public education system.



Adequately funding public education is not about whether or not we have the funding, it is a choice in priorities and spending made by the government. Unpredictable funding and unfunded cost increases (all downloaded to school districts, many of which have increased over inflation) require school districts to spend time and resources on balancing budgets each year instead of strategically planning the most effective use of funding to support student success.

Successful implementation of the new curriculum requires sufficient funding to support in-service, collaboration time and learning resources. Public education and our children need funding that meets the true need and cost of delivering public education across the province, allowing for rural and urban uniqueness.

### **Funding Model & Funding Concerns: Operational**

The long-term cuts—both direct and indirect—to public education services and supports has impeded the ability of school districts to sustain the delivery of quality education programs and services to children while also maintaining a balanced budget as required by the School Act. Parents have asserted that a [flexible funding formula](#) that meets the varied needs of all school districts is required. Over the last two decades, [parent leaders have repeatedly voiced concerns](#) that funds allocated by the Ministry of Education do not fully meet the needs of BC students and have collectively called for more funding to public education through BCCPAC. Parents from across the province have [voiced the need for long term and stable financial support](#) for public schools with increased levels of funding to meet the actual costs of delivering necessary services to our students.

Despite recent funding to public education to comply with the Supreme Court ruling, there are other areas of support that still require funding to the per-pupil allocation to restore services that have been cut as school districts try to maintain smaller class sizes and specialist teacher ratios such as educational assistants, custodial services, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and English Language Learner (ELL) Services.

[Parent across the province ask](#) that downloaded cost pressures such as negotiated wage settlements and collective agreements, energy rate increases must be fully funded annually as additional increases to operating funding and that each year's per-pupil funding amount be adjusted for inflation.

One of the most significant changes, however, has had direct impact on the services and supports to students with special needs. The former model provided targeted funding for low-incidence/high-cost (low incidence) special needs, high-incidence/low cost (high incidence) special needs and gifted.



The current model—implemented in the 2002/03 school year—rolled funding for high-incidence special needs students (Designations K,Q,R) and gifted (Designation P) into the per-pupil funding allocation and separated supplementary funding for low-incidence special needs categories 1, 2 & 3 (Designations (A-H)):

**2017/18 Supplemental Funding Levels**

Supplemental Funding Level 1 (\$38,140):

- Physically Dependent (A)
- Deafblind (B)

Supplemental Funding Level 2 (\$19,070):

- Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability (C)
- Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment (D)
- Visual Impairment (E)
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing (F)
- Autism (G)

Supplemental Funding Level 3 (\$9,610):

- Intensive Behaviour Interventions or Serious Mental Illness (H)

No Supplemental Funding:

- Mild Intellectual Disability (K)
- Gifted (P)
- Learning Disabilities (Q)
- Students Requiring Behaviour Support of Students with Mental Illness (R)

In the [2001/02 school year](#), districts received \$20.72 per district student FTE for Identification/Planning—educational testing and IEP development. Districts received \$280,000 and \$3943 per school for core special education and \$132 per district student FTE and \$6,916 per school for Learning Assistance. Additionally, districts received \$3,132 per student with moderate disabilities (high incidence/low cost) and \$341 per student enrolled in a gifted program.

Other allocations that were rolled into the per-pupil funding include district & school based administration costs and operations & maintenance.

All these [targeted funds](#) were rolled into the per-pupil funding allocation in the [2002/03 school year](#).

<a href="#">2001/02 per pupil funding allocation</a>	<a href="#">2002/03 per pupil funding allocation</a>
\$3,465 for each K- Grade 3 FTE	\$5,308 for each school age FTE
\$3,042 for each Grade 4-7 FTE	
\$3,428 for each Grade 8-12 FTE	



According to the current [BC K-12 Funding Special Needs Policy](#) statement:

*"Students with special needs may require additional support and accommodations to enable them to access and participate in educational programs. The Basic [per-pupil] Allocation, a standard amount of money provided per school age student enrolled in a school district, includes funds to support the learning needs of students who are identified as having learning disabilities, mild intellectual disabilities, students requiring moderate behaviour supports and students who are gifted."*

Over the last fifteen years, many have forgotten that the original per-pupil funding was intended to cover all needs of high incidence special needs students such as early intervention, assessment, service and support for a range of students with varying diagnoses such as dyslexia, ADHD and students requiring behaviour support. The supplemental Funding for Special Needs was intended to cover the unique requirements of low incidence special needs students.

In addition, parents of [gifted students](#) are concerned that diagnosis and assessment of gifted students, and subsequent programs has declined since targeted funding for gifted education has been eliminated. Designated Gifted students has dropped from 2.5% of students in 2002 to [0.9% of students in 2016/17](#).

Unfortunately, many families of students with learning differences report to BCCPAC that they are told that unless they have a designation that qualifies for funding they will receive no additional supports. The current per-pupil [funding formula does not address](#) the actual costs of delivering necessary services and supports to [individual students](#) or complex classrooms that present challenging learning conditions.

Significant increases to the per-pupil funding allocation are required for high-incidence students to receive the additional supports and services they require.

### **Funding to Address Formal Assessment Wait Times and Delays**

Exacerbating the current inadequate levels of special needs supports, is the long wait time for formal assessments of students who have been identified as having a learning difference. According to BCCPAC members, wait lists of three and four years are sadly common. As a result, many frustrated parents opt to have their children assessed privately in order to hasten the implementation of supports and intervention for their children. This has created an inequity in the public education system, as costs of psycho-educational assessments are borne by parents who are financially able, and other students wait years for intervention and assessment. All students—regardless of their family economic situation—deserve timely early intervention and assessment.

Immediate [increased funding and resources](#) must be provided to address the backlog of students waiting for assessment. Additionally, ongoing funding must be increased in the per-pupil funding to schools districts, to support the early identification and assessment required to obtain "designations" needed for intervention and support for students' academic, physical, behavioural, social and/or emotional challenges.



## **Increase to Supplemental Special Needs Funding**

[Parents have strongly reiterated](#) the need to increase provincial funding to cover the true cost of meeting the requirements of designated and non-designated students with special needs in accordance with Ministry of Education guidelines for special education and inclusion.

Funding to low-incidence special needs students went from supplemental targeted funding to individual students with special needs to supplemental district funding in 2005. The current level of funding for Level 1, 2 & 3 special needs funding (\$38,140, \$19,070, \$9,610) is inadequate to meet the resources and supports of our most vulnerable learners.

For example, Level 2 funding is inadequate for the average necessary supports and services for a student with autism or visual impairment. The current level of funding would not be able to even cover the full costs of a half-time educational assistant and the adaptive equipment that would make these students thrive. Our students deserve better.

An immediate significant increase is needed to bring supplemental special needs funding in-line with the actual costs of services and supports that our special needs students require. All students deserve access to a full day of school. The lack of educational assistant coverage when a regularly assigned educational assistant is absent, is of grave concern to parents of special needs students.

According to a survey conducted by BCCPAC in September 2017, a startling number of students are not receiving a full day of educational instruction. Many parents of special needs students reported that due to lack of supports, special needs students were regularly not scheduled for a full day at school, parents were asked to keep their children at home when their supports were cancelled for the day due to illness or absence, and parents were asked to pick up their children from school when they had a behavioural incident.

## **Addition of New Supplemental Funding—Classroom Resource Fund**

Often, the dynamics of a classroom (i.e. the particular combination of students and staff) create some unique needs that require extra supports and resources that would not fall within one of the current funding categories. As such, BCCPAC [members recommend](#) an additional supplementary funding envelope to specifically address classroom resources and needs. Classroom needs are unique to the grouping of students and staff within that classroom. There are factors besides numbers that influence the dynamics and level of support and intervention required by classroom students: environment, demographics, social, emotional & communication skills, English language proficiency and age are only some of the factors that influence the dynamics of a group. This is especially [true in Metro Vancouver areas](#) where some districts have over 25% ELL students. Classroom needs include learning needs in addition to classroom management needs and are unique to the grouping of children in the class.

With the recent Supreme Court ruling, parents and the public are more aware of the variable factors that affect the learning conditions of our classrooms and the need for more appropriate resource and support levels in many of our classrooms.



### **Increase to Supplemental funding for Unique Geographic Factors**

At the 2017 BCCPAC AGM, parent representatives from rural and remote districts voiced dire need for the funding and implementation of a recruitment and retention strategy. With some districts losing 50% of new teachers after one year, this problem will only worsen in the coming year as districts restore contract language to fulfill the requirements of the Supreme Court ruling.

Another area of concern for parents in rural and remote areas is a need for transportation funding that reflects the true [costs of providing transportation](#) to ensure that children have equitable access to education.

### **Continuation of the Supplemental Grant for the Education Plan**

[Parents have asserted](#) the need for necessary resources and technology to effectively implement new curriculum. BCCPAC asks for the continuation of the Supplemental Grant for the Education plan of \$20/per student (minimum \$10,000 per district) to assist districts with the implementation of the Education Plan.



## Funding Model & Funding Concerns: Capital

While the recently released [Budget Update](#) is an interim measure until February 2018, this Budget has not increased capital spending from the February 2017 budget, but rather it's been reduced—\$635 million compared to the \$687 million pledged in February—and is not at all in-line with the NDP promises to build needed new schools, make necessary maintenance, and accelerate seismic upgrades.

This Budget update did not contain any new capital spending to accelerate school construction (new and seismic); there was no promise to build any new schools even though there have been repeated statements to accelerate construction.

## Seismic & New Builds

The provincial government initiated its [Seismic Mitigation Plan](#) (SMP) in 2004 and identified 342 High Risk schools across the province. Buildings that are designated “High Risk” are likely to suffer structural failure (collapse) during even a moderate earthquake and be unusable afterwards. In 2005, the government promised British Columbians that “all at-risk schools in BC would be seismically upgraded by 2020.” In 2013, the provincial government stated it would be up to school districts to “confirm the scope, schedule, budget and risks” associated with individual seismic projects before they will receive approval to move to the design and construction phase. In 2015, delays were caused by disagreements over the scope of the projects. The initial 2020 completion date for 346 upgrades was pushed back to 2025, and for Vancouver as late as 2030.

As of [September 2017](#), 165 upgrades have been completed, 12 are “proceeding to construction” (but work not begun), 14 are “under construction” (but many have not yet broken ground), and 155 are at the “business-case” stage; curiously this changed recently and now includes those who truly are at “business case” stage (not all 155) and all those which weren't at any stage prior to September 2017 change. Additionally the categorizations of H1, H2 and H3 have also been removed from this report. There continues to be a lack of transparency in the SMP process compounded by lack of stated priorities and timelines.

Of those 155 at “business case” stage, the overwhelming majority have not even begun the process yet. With the government's existing revised target date of 2025/2030 fast approaching, there remain >115 schools which have not truly even begun the seismic approval process; the majority of these are in Vancouver, Richmond, and Surrey—resulting in 35 percent of “High Risk” schools that have not even been discussed after >13 years. Currently thousands of BC students—28,000 in Vancouver and 7,000 in Richmond, in addition to thousands of teachers, administrators, and support staff—spend their days in “High Risk” schools. The Vancouver School Board has over 50% of its 110 schools in need of seismic replacement.



In 2008, the [BC Auditor General](#) reported “Southwestern BC is an earthquake environment similar to that of the coasts of Japan, Alaska, and Central and South America.” The [Great BC Shakeout](#) will again take place on October 19<sup>th</sup> in schools across the province; regrettably this activity will not save students and staff in buildings that cannot withstand a major earthquake.

In 2005, [the government stipulated](#) as part of the SMP that due to the age and poor quality of many of the schools at risk throughout the province and the expense required to bring and maintain these buildings to acceptable health and safety standards, replacement schools should be built instead of upgrading existing structures, if the cost of seismically upgrading was more than 70% of the cost of building a new school.

Retrofitting or upgrading an existing school building such that it can hopefully withstand an earthquake and allow students and staff to exit and survive is often the lowest-cost choice, as opposed to replacing it with a new building. However, retrofitted buildings are designed only to meet the standard of letting occupants get out alive—unlikely to be achievable in a major earthquake—they are not designed to be usable afterwards. Replacement/new buildings are designed to be usable the next day. It’s short-sighted to save a small amount of money and risk countless lives by doing retrofits when it will be much more expensive later when we need to rebuild these schools after an earthquake. Schools are the heart of the community and will be required as emergency shelters and to help return to normalcy.

Replacing an old school will also eliminate millions in deferred maintenance costs—Vancouver alone has over \$700 million in deferred maintenance. These are buildings that, in addition to being seismically unsafe, contain lead pipes, lead paint, and asbestos, are not easily accessible, lack sufficient facilities like washrooms, and aren’t designed to enable 21st-century learning and the new curriculum. These issues are not necessarily addressed during a seismic retrofit. Retrofitting will reduce (but not greatly) the chances of children being crushed by their schools, but they might still have to run through clouds of asbestos dust to get to safety.

### **Ministry Area Standards**

But there are issues when building new schools (brand new and replacement of old). The government created the [Ministry Area Standards](#) in 2004. Under this provision, [new schools are on average 30% smaller](#) than those built for previous generations and serving equivalent (or larger) population sizes. Classrooms of 75 square meters that must also accommodate a cloakroom, storage areas, teacher area, and desks for up to 28 students, do not provide adequate space for arts-based learning. Outside the square footage maximums allocated for classrooms, office, resource and gym space, the extra 'design space' allocation based on population size is taken up in hallways and washrooms and sometimes a single multipurpose room used for before/after school care and as a lunch room. There are no specific space allocations for non-enrolling classrooms within elementary schools; these include specialty rooms for core curricular subjects like music and art, or supplementary resource rooms such as sensory rooms or reading recovery spaces.

The current [Area Standards](#) does not allow sufficient space for school facilities that reflect best educational practices or the aspired educational goals of the new curriculum. Investments in new schools should reflect best practices in education research and support the new BC curriculum; there should be guidelines for optimal sizes for student populations that prevent the creation of mega schools in urban centres for purely cost ‘efficiencies’. It is imperative that this guiding document be examined and revised as it is the basis for all upgrades and new school builds.

### **Neighbourhood Learning Centres**

In 2008 the government introduced [Neighbourhood Learning Centres](#) (NLC) that granted an additional 15% space to eligible schools. Even with this concession, the total square footage is not sufficient to cover the deficit in educational spaces, and where granted, has largely been used to augment the small classrooms, narrow hallways and multipurpose spaces. In 2011 the [BC School Trustees Association](#) made recommendations to the provincial government to help cover capital costs associated with providing NLC spaces. They asked government to use capital funding from the appropriate compatible ministries to cover costs of adapting surplus space and sharing ongoing facilities costs in older schools. The recommendation was never endorsed.

This government must now quickly advance the pace of seismically safe replacement schools and commit the capital funding required to do so to ensure the safety of students and staff and ensure the sustainability of school buildings in the case of a significant seismic event.

### **Portables within Capital Budget**

The Ministry of Education has not historically paid for students to be accommodated in portables while their schools were being upgraded; portables are not covered within capital budget but is a cost downloaded to school districts within their operational budgets. Between the actual physical portable, to moving it, placing it, wiring it, and the carbon tax associated, funding portables is a significant drain on the operational budget. This lessens, by millions of dollars per year, funding that was intended for student resources; we should not take away from student resources because the government is inadequately funding school capital infrastructure.

The government needs to increase funding for ongoing maintenance and upgrades to address the needs of aging school facilities—until they are rebuilt—and should employ industry maintenance standards as a guide. Funding for school building maintenance is only 25% of industry standards (Building Owner and Managers Association) and within Vancouver, the districts’ aging school buildings are at risk of accelerated deterioration due to insufficient maintenance levels.

[Capital funding for brand new schools is urgently needed.](#) In Surrey, thousands of children have spent years in portable classrooms due to a lack of school space. Similar situations exist in Langley, Chilliwack, and parts of Vancouver, among others. Where there is large-scale development and increasing numbers of families and children, school infrastructure is needed to support them and it must be a consideration from the beginning not an afterthought at the end.

The Minister's own published [key priorities](#) state: “make schools safer by accelerating the seismic upgrade program” and “work in partnership to build and upgrade schools in every region of the province”. Words are not enough. Parents now demand to see a fully developed plan for implementation and execution and the required funding to support this plan.

## Conclusion

We strongly urge this Committee to once again recommend that the government increase both operational and capital education funding to a level adequate for school districts to meet their mandate to provide quality public education to all learners in safe buildings.

We strongly urge the Minister of Education to act on his [key priorities](#) and stated commitments to public education. We are hopeful that a fully developed plan for implementation and execution, and the associated funding to support this plan will be communicated shortly. Parents and families await long-overdue changes that will make needed supports and services more accessible to students across the province.

The BCCPAC fervently hopes the February 2018 budget will contain a more robust spend on capital projects for public education and a clear plan to achieve the related outcomes. The February Budget needs to fully fund the Supreme Court of Canada ruling and implementation of class size and composition, the necessary resources and supports for our most vulnerable learners, seismic and the building of new safe schools, funding that meets true operational costs, and last but not least, address the huge issue of deferred maintenance in older/larger districts.

We ask this committee to consider the BCCPAC's four key recommendations that are critical for every student to have equitable access to public education with the supports and services they need to succeed according to the School Act.

We simply cannot continue to not invest in our children and their future.

Thank you.