



Submission to the Ministry of Education of
British Columbia Regarding K-12 Funding
Formula Review

Submission By:

The Canadian Union of Public Employees
British Columbia Division

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CUPE British Columbia

The Canadian Union of Public Employees British Columbia (CUPE BC) appreciates the opportunity to submit its views on the K-12 Funding Model Review.

CUPE BC represents approximately 88,000 workers in British Columbia, and of those, almost 27,000 work in the K-12 public education system. CUPE K-12 members provide clerical and IT support to ensure the effective running and administration of schools and school board offices across the province. Our bus drivers see that thousands of children get to and from school safely every day. Our custodial, trades and maintenance workers ensure safe, clean and healthy learning environments. Our educational assistants, cultural support workers, and aboriginal support workers provide instructional support, working directly with children with diverse and complex needs - making sure that education in British Columbia is truly inclusive.

Introduction

CUPE BC has long called for a review of the K-12 per-pupil funding formula in British Columbia, including most recently in our 2016 Submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services Budget Consultation. In so doing, we emphasized that such a review must include an examination of the fairness of the distribution formula, but also be charged with the responsibility of examining the issue of funding adequacy for our public schools.

We appreciate the need for the technical components of funding allocation to be reviewed – a necessary exercise for achieving fairness between districts and regions of the province, as well as efficiency, accountability and transparency. However, we also note that sufficiency of funding is a critical component of any discussion surrounding the funding of public education. No model of distribution, no matter how perfected, can ensure quality education in the context of funding inadequacy.

That investment in education improves the quality of education and student outcomes, and is a long-term sound investment in the economy, is a little contested view. A vital component to creating the educational environment that makes such outcomes possible, must include levels of investment that ensures quality, stable jobs for those who deliver education and those who provide all the vital work that makes K-12 schools run smoothly.

We wholeheartedly endorse the guiding principles for the new model outlined on the Ministry's website:

1. **Responsive:** Allocates available resources amongst Boards of Education in consideration of unique local and provincial operational requirements.

2. **Equitable:** Facilitates access to comparable levels of educational services and opportunities for individual students across the province.
3. **Stable and Predictable:** Supports strategic, multi-year planning for educational programming and school district operations.
4. **Flexible:** Respects the autonomy of, and does not unnecessarily restrict, individual Boards of Education in the spending of their allocations to further student success.
5. **Transparent:** Calculates funding using a clear and transparent methodology.
6. **Accountable:** Allocates resources to Boards of Education in the most efficient manner, and ensures that resources provided are being utilized as intended

A number of these principles necessitate the need to address core-funding adequacy. In order for a model to be truly responsive to operational requirements, and to ensure equitable and inclusive education for all of BC public school students, the K-12 system must be adequately resourced.

Recommendation 1: Funding education adequately, to ensure quality public education to all children in British Columbia must be a critical component of this funding formula review.

Responsive, Core-services, Need-based Funding

CUPE BC commends the work the province has done in prioritizing student safety by committing to accelerating seismic mitigation projects and building new seismically safe student spaces in numerous districts across the province. We are also pleased that the government has committed to fully funding the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) and has announced new investment in teacher education programs with the aim of addressing the teacher shortage plaguing many school districts in BC. While critical, these initiatives are only a start in addressing the chronic underfunding that has characterized K-12 education in BC.

As noted, even a perfect model of allocation cannot make up for a shortage of funds. Having said this, we do believe that the current funding formula, operating largely on a per-pupil basis, has served an agenda of austerity by the previous Liberal government, obscuring the actual needs-based costs of education and permitting an increasing number of unfunded costs to be downloaded onto districts.

The very introduction of the New Per Pupil Funding formula in 2002 was itself an attempt to hide the Liberal Government's decision to cut funding for public education.

In 2002, journalist Michael Smyth reported on cabinet documents he obtained that showed that the decision to move from what was then called “program-and-cost” funding to per pupil funding, was to shift responsibility, and thus blame, for funding cuts from the province to the local school board level. Smyth wrote:

The document, signed by Clark on Jan. 25, explains that the old formula obligated the government to "meet or manage each increase in cost or each new service offered by school boards."

But with total education funding now frozen -- or "protected" in the Liberals' language -- the document warns the cabinet: "Given government's direction that education funding will be flat over the next three years, the current program-and-cost funding formula will not work.

"The Ministry will be called upon to make decisions about which programs to cut or reduce in order to offset unavoidable cost increases. Responsibility for reductions will thus rest with the Ministry, not with the local school boards." ¹

Thus, from its inception, the current funding formula was designed as (or at least functioned as) an instrument to obscure the actual costs of programs and service delivery, rather than as one to provide effective and adequate funding. It also set the stage for an almost inherent tension between the school boards responsible for administering programs and delivering services, and the government responsible for funding them.

Although there are some built-in protections in the form of Enrolment Decline and Funding Protection supplementary grants, the current formula results in a system that is heavily dependent on enrolment. Clearly, an aspect of cost is related to enrolment, and enrolment should play some role in indexing funding. More students beyond a certain number will require more teachers, more EAs, more custodial and clerical support etc. With limits on class size it is likely not as difficult to come up with more objective criteria for determining teacher and EA requirements based on enrolment than it may be for determining the number of custodians or trades and maintenance staff required. The number of custodians (or custodial hours) required in any given school is obviously also affected by student population, but it is also subject to variation in school size, utilization of facilities, the contents of a given space, and the nature of activities - both school and community use. These latter considerations are much more difficult to capture in per pupil allocations, but could be more accurately determined by those familiar with programming, and models that are responsive to variations in these factors.

Even with teachers and EAs, the situation is more complicated than student counts and class size limits. Class composition is an increasingly complex feature of the

¹ Michael Smyth. Why the Liberals Switched to Per Student Funding. The Province, March 3, 2002, A4.

contemporary school system. In the past 10 years there has been a 60% increase in classrooms with 4 or more students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). However, this speaks only to those students that have been given special needs designations. We know there are thousands of children who have not been assessed, yet face special challenges. In the present model there is little or no way to allocate funding, and thus corresponding staff resources, to support children who do not have special needs funding designations.

Recommendation 2: The new funding formula must be able to respond to the growing complexity of classrooms by providing the necessary CUPE support staff and resources to facilitate truly inclusive education.

There are a whole host of costs that are not, or are very little, subject to enrolment. Schools need to be heated, lit, maintained and cleaned whether they are at 100% capacity or considerably less. Similarly, clerical and administration staff, and IT workers are required to keep a school functioning daily, no matter the enrolment level. Whether classrooms have reached their class size limit or not, teachers are required. Special needs children require educational support and resources no matter the enrolment level of their particular school.

Recommendation 3: Staffing levels that ensure functioning, clean, healthy, and well-operating school environments must be built into the model and fully funded.

Furthermore, funding based primarily on student enrolment does not take into account the differing needs of schools. Not only do we know that classrooms vary with respect to the complexity of student needs, but schools, and even districts, face varying challenges based on location, demographics and socioeconomic factors. Urban and rural and remote schools face unique challenges, for example, with respect to transportation. In addition, within urban settings significant differences and needs may exist between schools. Differences with respect to the latter context have been exacerbated over the past 16 years as a consequence of the introduction of *Bill 34, School Amendment Act, 2002*. For example, one aim of this Bill was to make schools more “competitive” and “entrepreneurial”. It did this by introducing the notion of ‘school choice’ wherein any student would be permitted to attend schools outside of their catchment. The rationale was that, “the creation of competitive arrangements between schools and school boards provides them with an incentive to improve and to be more responsive to their community of consumers”.²

² British Columbia Hansard Services 2002a, 6(14), 3025, cited in Gerald Fallon & Wendy Poole, (2013), The emergence of a market-driven funding mechanism in K-12 education in British Columbia: creeping privatization and the eclipse of equity, *Journal of Education Policy*, 29(3), 302-422.

Parents, public school advocates and community members have long argued that the result of 'school choice' in BC has meant a deterioration in resources and enrolment in many neighbourhood schools, as parents choose to send their children to schools outside of their catchment in areas that are more affluent. Not only does this result in decreased funding based on enrolment for certain schools, but advocates claim that notable disparity has arisen because of the differing abilities of parents to donate and/or fundraise for materials, services and programs that have been cut due to declining and insufficient levels of funding. The tendency has been a shift of students out of schools in lower income neighbourhoods. For example, there was a net migration of high school students from East to West in Vancouver. Ultimately, this means that schools with students from low-income families struggle to make ends meet, while schools in more affluent neighbourhoods benefit from additional resources from both increased enrolment and greater private fundraising capacity.

The current funding model co-produces such disparities. Schools that have a higher than average number of students that may face challenges to achievement, or who require specialized programming but do not fall into a specified funding category, are penalized in models based on a head counts rather than actual needs.

Recommendation 4: The new funding model must be responsive to the differing needs of schools based on location and other factors that affect school resources.

Concerned about significantly declining funding, and the alarm sounding from numerous school boards that were unable to balance their budgets, the Centre for Civic Governance initiated a study in 2008. They rolled out a survey asking every school district about budgetary challenges. The survey found that 32 of the 45 respondent boards reported that their expected costs would exceed the provincial funding they received.³ As an example of the challenges posed by predominately enrolment-driven funding, the report issued from this survey also noted that in 2008/09 the Saanich School District expected a loss of 197 students, which would result in a loss of \$1.73 million. Only \$588,144 of that loss would be made up for as a result of fewer students. Thus, highlighting the non-enrolment based costs of education.

Recommendation 5: A new funding model must provide stable and predictable funding and be responsive to needs that are not directly subject to enrolment levels.

A further problem with the current funding formula is that it has no way of taking into consideration the unique role schools play as community hubs, nor is there any incentive for these roles to be increased if they do not provide an independent revenue stream. Schools can and do serve as facilities for wide range of community activities.

³ Centre for Economic Governance (2009), *When More is Less: Education Funding in BC*. February 1, 2009. Available at: <http://www.civicgovernance.ca/when-more-is-less/>

The funding formula for public schools does nothing to encourage the development of increased community integration, even though there could be downstream cost-savings both for the Education Sector and other Public Sectors such as Health and Social Services.

The stakeholder analysis that informs the Funding Model Review Discussion Paper that was released by the province in March, points to another serious disparity between districts – that of the effectiveness of the current model in providing adequate, targeted funding for Aboriginal education programming. While many districts indicated that this funding was adequate, districts in the “Northern/Interior” region, and small districts with less than 1000 student FTEs, both of which have larger proportions of Indigenous students, “indicated that Targeted funding does not address development and delivery of Aboriginal programs”.⁴ While it is encouraging to see that achievement rates for Indigenous students in BC have improved significantly in recent years, there is still a troubling gap of almost 20% between completion rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.⁵

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada placed great emphasis on the role of education in helping to facilitate reconciliation:

Much of the current state of troubled relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians is attributable to educational institutions and what they have taught, or failed to teach, over many generations. Despite this history—or, perhaps more correctly, because of its potential—the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) believes that education is also the key to reconciliation.⁶

Recommendation 6: That funding formula be responsive in the aim of the educational mandate of the TRC, ensuring adequate and culturally appropriate programming for Indigenous students in British Columbia.

Privatization and Competition

The per-student model of funding has not been the only problem with education funding. After years of freezing funding in absolute terms, the former Liberal government

⁴ “BC Ministry of Education Funding Model Review: Stakeholder Perspectives”, prepared for: the BC Ministry of Education, by R.A. Malatest & Associates LTD. January 2018, p24. See also, “K-12 Public Education Funding in British Columbia: Funding Model Review Discussion Paper”, Ministry of Education, March 2018.

⁵ K-12 Public Education Funding in British Columbia: Funding Model Review Discussion Paper”, Ministry of Education, March 2018.

⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Volume 6: Canada’s Residential Schools*. Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, p. 117.

effectively froze funding in real terms by failing to increase funding by more than the rate of inflation. This effective freeze occurred in the context of additional costs being downloaded onto schools, which meant that the education sector faced a decline in funding for all mandated programs, as existing dollars were spread over a wider swath of responsibilities. Furthermore, the previous Government's increases in funding to independent schools has diverted resources from the public system, undermining universality and quality. Chronic underfunding has also created an opening for increased privatization in the public system in numerous other ways, such as fundraising for necessary resources, private donations, and undersupplying specialized programming for special needs children.

Funding of independent/private schools is a drain of resources from the universally accessible public school system. The growth in funding for private schools has far exceeded that of public schools and is now at an all time high. In the last 10 years, funding for private schools has increased at a rate of more than 3 times that of public schools, representing a growth of 61.75% compared to public school's 19.7%.⁷ This disparity may be somewhat offset by the real increase in total operating grants per student, due to the MoA between the BCTF and the Provincial Government resulting from the BCTF Supreme Court decision. Even with this increase however, operating grants per FTE student represent a far smaller share of GDP than they did prior to 2002.

We know that funding for private schools is not under the purview of the current review, but is a critical component of any discussion of education funding in the province and is one we hope will be examined in the near future.

Privatization in public education takes many more forms than simply increasing the amount of money spent on independent schools, and many of them intersect directly with the funding allocation system. For example, teachers, support staff, parents and community members are all being called upon to contribute individually to aspects of education that should be funded collectively through public spending. For example, much public attention has been brought to the fact that many teachers spend considerable amounts of money buying supplies for students and classrooms.

Similarly, growing attention has been given to the amount of fundraising that parents are compelled to do. Raising large amounts of dollars to replace aging and potentially dangerous playground equipment is a notable example. We commend the government's decision to dedicate funding towards school playgrounds, but note that textbooks, technology, art supplies and music instruments – and even art and music instruction are some of the many things that parents across the province have had to raise funds for.

⁷ For analysis see both BCTF – How has independent schools funding changed. February 2015. <https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/ResearchReports/RR2015-02.pdf>., And Hemingway, Alex. What's the Real Story Behind BC's Funding Crisis? Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, August 2016. Available at: <http://www.policynote.ca/education-crisis/>

This shift from public to private funding has resulted in disparities between schools with respect to supplies and programming. Parents in some neighbourhoods have more capacity to raise funds than those in others. As mentioned earlier, this disparity has been exacerbated by 'school choice' when parents seek these resources for their children by enrolling them in better resourced schools outside of their own neighbourhood or school catchment. This has created an environment of competition between schools for enrolment and the accompanying per-pupil funding.

Competition also arises in the context of attracting an increasing amount of funding coming from international student tuition. International student tuition was \$242 million in 2016/17, but six districts accounted for over half of this revenue. Surrey, Vancouver and Coquitlam attract the most international students. Given the amenities offered in the Lower Mainland, and the greater capacity for larger districts to expend resources on recruiting international students, it is unreasonable to expect this trend change in the near future, representing one more way in which inequitable funding conditions manifest in the province.

Lastly, CUPE is hearing from a growing number of our members working in K-12 that they are performing increasing amounts of unpaid work in order to complete their duties. A 2014 survey of our K-12 clerical workers reported that 34% of them sometimes undertake unpaid work, while 23% often do. A 2017 survey of our custodial workers showed that 36% of them reported doing unpaid work with some regularity. The preliminary results of a survey currently in the field of all of our K-12 members shows that a staggering 61% are performing unpaid work. This, in addition to the volunteer hours parents report providing for tasks previously done by paid staff (or filling in for understaffing) is a clear mechanism in which private resources are supplanting the public provision of education.

Recommendation 7: The new funding model must be sensitive to the differing income-generating capacities of schools and school districts, aiming to create equitable funding for districts across the province.

Inclusive Education, Privatization and the Funding Formula

A further, and particularly alarming instance of privatization, is occurring in the form of parents of special needs children turning away from the public system due to an inability to obtain adequate supports for their children. CUPE BC believes that all children are entitled to equitable access to education, in regular classrooms, in a fully public system. We have serious concerns that this statutory commitment is not being met for many children across the province.

In 2015, the Liberal government formally designated 9 new segregated, independent schools for special education. These schools were entitled to an additional FTE funding grant, above the specified funding categories for designated special needs children in

inclusive public schools. This has happened in the context of massive cuts to special resource teachers and educational assistant staffing levels and hours that are not keeping pace with the needs of diverse classrooms. Not only is this one more way in which privatization of education has increased in the recent past, but segregated schooling also represents a considerable break with the policy of inclusive education.

Disability rights and advocacy groups are bringing increasing attention to the lack of supports available for providing special needs children in BC with meaningfully inclusive education. They claim that many parents feel they are being “forced out” of the public system, turning to special needs schools only because they cannot get the programming and supports they need in the public system. In a 2016 survey conducted by BC Parents of Special Needs Kids, 51% of parents of special needs children said that they had removed their children from the public system, 31% of respondents said they felt forced out.⁸ A further 39% said they were considering removing their children from public school. While this was just a small sample of the number of special needs families in the province, this snapshot echoes what we hear from other public education and disability rights advocacy groups, and from our members working directly with special needs children.

An inability to get individualized support, specialized programming such as Applied Behavioural Analyses (ABA), special resources such as assistive speech technology and staff trained to work with such technology, are just some of the many issues parents point to for their reasons for leaving, or contemplating leaving the public system.

Many parents who stay in the public system end up paying for such resources privately, either supplying their children in the classroom, or providing additional therapies and supports privately in their own home. When forced to turn to independent specialized schools, parents frequently pay high tuition rates. In both of these cases, such options are clearly not available to all parents due to financial pressure, thus creating a pernicious disparity in access to education for children with special needs.

Enrolment in bricks and mortar private schools is not the only way in which special needs children are leaving the public school. Many parents are turning to independent schools offering distributed learning (DL) to obtain the programming they believe necessary for their children’s education. At present, there are 16 independent schools offering this online modality of education for children with special needs. Growth in private school DL education has been increasing dramatically year over year. From

⁸ Are BC Public Schools Forcing Students with Special Needs Out? Full Report – April 2015 Survey. BCEdAccess – BC Parents of Children with Special Needs. <https://equitableaccesstoeducation.wordpress.com/full-forced-out-survey-report/> See also “Parents resort to pulling special-needs children from resource-starved schools”. Globe and Mail, Feb 5, 2017. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/education/parents-resort-to-pulling-special-needs-children-from-resource-starved-schools/article28541670/>

2010-11 to 2014-15 there has been a 191% increase in Group 1 Special Education Grants going to private online DL schools.⁹

With the DL model of delivery, the funding level associated with a particular student's designation is given directly to the private school. A portion of that money is used to pay for the special resource teacher, online platform, development of the IEP etc. The majority of the funding is used to hire an EA, or related specialist, to assist with implementing the IEP, as well as other third-party service providers. We are told that in many of the cases parents pay out of pocket for additional training, such as ABA or, in the use of assistive communication technologies, for the EA. In addition, because the funding provided is far from enough to cover a full time EA position, many parents pay out of pocket to provide support hours for their children's education.

Once again, an enormous inequity is created by this scenario. Many parents cannot pay for the out-of-pocket expenditures necessary to supplement this service delivery. Even more costly is the fact that DL learning, most of which takes place in the home, requires a parent or custodian to be present at all times. This means that for the overwhelming majority of families accessing this kind of education, one parent must be out of workforce during school days. The 2016 survey conducted by BC Parents of Special Needs Kids reported that for those parents who were keeping their children in public school despite feeling that their education requirements were not being sufficiently met, the overwhelming reason was "financial considerations".

In 2016-17 there were 59,254 children designated as special needs in the public K-12 system. Of these, only 28,194 had designations that triggered funding grants (categories A-H), and of these, only 560 were designated as Level 1, the highest grant designation at \$38,140¹⁰ per student. Given that in recent years the costs of provincially negotiated settlements were downloaded onto school districts, it seems safe to assume that the funding attached to special needs designations would have to comprise a part of the wage cost for those delivering special needs programming – the development and assessment of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and the daily implementation of those programs. Presumably, costs for specialized resource materials, assistive technologies and software not covered by other grants, physical supports, speech and physical therapies, and nursing, to name but some of the necessary implements to accessible education, would be need to be covered, at least in part, by special education grants.

It is difficult to imagine that \$38,140 would cover such costs. Level 2 funding at \$19,070 per student includes children designated in categories as follows: Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability; Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment; Visual

⁹ Sherri Brown, BCTF (2017). The Future of Inclusion: Education Funding and Supports. BCTF presentation to Inclusion BC, March 16, 2017.

¹⁰ Government of BC, Education and Training. Special Education Programs and Funding – Independent Schools. Available at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/administration/legislation-policy/independent-schools/special-education-programs-and-funding-independent-schools>

Impairment; Deaf or Hard of Hearing; Autism Spectrum Disorder. In 2016-17 there were 19,659 students that fell into this category, and 7,975 students that were designated as Level 3 – Category H: Intensive Behavioural Intervention or Serious Mental Illness, with an associated funding level of \$9,610 per FTE student.¹¹ Again, it is hard to imagine that either of these grants would come close to covering the supports these children require to access education.

There were a further 31,060 children designated as special needs who fall into the categories K, P, Q and R, for which there is no special education funding. Children with these designations fall into the following categories: “Mild Intellectual Disability, Gifted, Learning Disability, Moderate Behaviour Support/Mental Illness”. We know that CUPE EAs are working with all of these children, no matter the designation or level of funding. We also know that there are thousands of children in the system who have not received psychological assessments, many of whom have been waiting months and even years to receive an assessment, and therefore have not been designated, but for whom support is required. We hear from many of our EA’s that they routinely work with children that are both ‘designated’ and who are not. This means that there are well over 59,254 students receiving EA support.

There are approximately 16,174 EA contracts in BC. CUPE represents approximately 14,800 EAs that provide support for regular and special needs instruction (this does not include other student support workers such as ELL and Aboriginal Education workers). The provincial average FTE for an EA is only .64, as most EAs across the province are working 5-hour days (hours range from 4 to 7-hour days between districts). This means that there are approximately 10,356 FTE EAs to work with the over 59,254 special needs students in British Columbia’s K-12 public schools.¹² That is the same as 5.72 students per 1 FTE EA. While it is true that many of these children may require much less support than others, we also believe that there are potentially thousands of children who are either on waitlists to receive psychoeducational assessments, or who will never receive one, but who require considerable support from educational assistants. Moreover, as is voiced by advocacy groups, parents and our EAs, there are many students who are not receiving enough individualized time with EAs, or who are not receiving bell-to-bell support, though they require it.

All of this is taking place in the context of a system-wide shortage of EAs for already existing positions. Recruitment and retention is a significant problem in districts across the province. Our EA’s tell us that the number one reason for this is the lack of fulltime hours available for EAs. Working 4 to 6 hours a day means that many EAs are not earning a living wage, and high numbers of them report that they are working 2 or more jobs.

¹¹ IBID.

¹² 5,447 of these students are designated as gifted, thus possibly requiring less EA support. However, many gifted children also have multiple exceptionalities, but can only fall into one category in the current funding model. Moreover, as there are many children awaiting assessments, or who are not assessed but require EA support, using the total 59,254 headcount including the 5,447 gifted students, is probably the most accurate figure for the purpose of this analysis.

Given the .64 FTE average for EA positions across the province, an acute recruitment and retention problem, a 1:5.7 ratio of EAs to special needs children, and a high number of children not receiving psychoeducational assessments, it is little wonder that parents of special needs children are complaining that they simply cannot get the supports needed for their children to receive a truly inclusive education.

Added to this, we are hearing increasing calls from our EA's about the need for more, and better training to deal with increasingly complex challenges in the classrooms. Training and qualification standards vary noticeably from district to district. While training in a Public Post-Secondary Institute Program generally ranges from 1-2 years, several districts are offering their own training programs that range from 491 to 617 hours of study, or approximately 3 to 4 months of full time study.

There are a number of particularly alarming aspects to both the lack of training for increasingly complex classrooms, and the problem of insufficient hours and staffing shortages for EAs. Many parents of special needs children report that their children frequently miss school due to lack of supports. The earlier mentioned report produced by BC Parents of Children with Special Needs found that:

...20% of parents reported their child was regularly sent home from school early due to lack of adequate support, [and] that 22% of parents reported their child was placed on modified days (less than full day of school) due to lack of support to address his/her needs.¹³

From discussions with our members it appears that these situations arise from both a lack of staffing resources (one parent in the report claimed that if their son's EA was away their son has to stay home¹⁴), and the need for more training to deal with challenging behaviours. A further dimension to these problems is the increasing level of workplace violence that EAs and other K-12 staff are experiencing. Our EAs and bus drivers are those that are most affected, but we are hearing from clerical and custodial staff that it is a growing concern for them too. Of the approximately 2000 members that have responded to a survey we have in the field, 46% report they have seen an increase in violence in their workplace.

Recommendation 8: The new funding formula must ensure that staffing levels and training are sufficient to ensure safe working and learning conditions for all staff and students in BC schools.

¹³ Are BC Public Schools Forcing Students with Special Needs Out? Full Report – April 2015 Survey. BCEdAccess – BC Parents of Children with Special Needs. <https://equitableaccessstoeducation.wordpress.com/full-forced-out-survey-report/>

¹⁴ BC Parents of Children With Special Needs, 2016. Action for Equitable Access to Education – Survey Results. May 2016. <https://equitableaccessstoeducation.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/provincial.pdf>

Recommendation 9: The new funding formula must ensure that staffing levels and training are sufficient to ensure student and staff safety during the transport of children to and from school, and in any other context involving the transportation of children.

Recommendation 10: That the new funding model must ensure that children receive psychoeducational assessments in a timely manner, with the aim of facilitating early intervention for learning and behavioural supports.

Recommendation 11: The new funding model must ensure that students with special needs are properly designated, including where appropriate, with dual or multiple exceptionalities.

Recommendation 12: That the new funding model provide targeted funding for special needs education to ensure that children in the province have access to the education they are legally entitled to. This must include funding for specialized teachers and adequate staffing levels of appropriately trained educational assistants.

Recommendation 13: That funding levels be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure adequacy.

Recommendation 14: Regular consultation with education workers and other stakeholders to ensure that targeted funding envelopes are meeting all needs and are sufficiently resourced.

Summary:

The current model of education funding, based primarily on per-student allocations, is profoundly flawed. It was designed by a government that was more concerned with cost containment than providing a quality, accessible and equitable education system. That the new Government is making a high priority of redesigning education funding is a good sign for everyone who cares about public education. A model of education funding based on the principles of adequacy of funding, equity, responsiveness, transparency, flexibility, accountability, predictability, and stability will enhance the teaching and learning environment for all. Including allocations for core, needs-based and targeted funding and ensuring that funding is adjusted annually to cover all inflationary costs will meet the regular and ongoing needs of schools.