



The Board of Education of School District No. 83

341 Shuswap Street SW, Box 129, Salmon Arm, BC, V1E 4N2

PHONE 250-832-2157 FAX 250-832-9428

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Honourable Rachna Singh
Minister of Education and Child Care
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Delivery Method: ecc.minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Singh:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Education of School District No. 83 to address several pressing issues concerning operational and capital funding, which significantly impact our ability to deliver quality education and maintain our facilities.

Operational Funding:

1. **Inadequate Funding for Learners:** Our district, along with many others, has faced substantial reductions in education assistants, specialty teachers, and alternative programming due to insufficient operational funding. The current funding model does not align with the Ministry's stated priorities, particularly in supporting students with diverse needs. Additionally, the rolled forward labour settlement funding from previous rounds of collective agreement negotiations have been rolled forward into the per-pupil amount which does not fully cover our actual costs, and the roughly 30% increase in benefits was not funded at all in the per-pupil amount. Lastly, the Level 1, 2, and 3 funds we receive does not reflect the actual prevalence rates of students requiring additional support. We are continually supplementing these costs through the operational funding which impacts other areas.
2. **Special Purpose Funding Deficiencies:** There has been no increase in special purpose funding for programs like Strong Start for an extended period. This stagnation, coupled with rising salary costs, forces us to reduce staffing levels, undermining our capacity to offer and develop early childhood programs. If there is an expectation to continue running and expanding these vital programs, it is crucial that both special purpose and operational funding are adjusted accordingly. Ancillary administrative costs puts a large burden on smaller school districts making it difficult to maintain these vital programs.

Facility Funding:

1. **Aging Infrastructure:** The funding provided through the Annual Facility Grant (AFG) is insufficient to address the aging infrastructure and mechanical needs essential for a safe and healthy learning environment. For example, the roof at Salmon Arm Secondary (Sullivan) has surpassed its life expectancy, and due to budget constraints, we will be forced to plan a replacement over a five-year

period. Such extended timelines are inadequate for addressing urgent facility needs resulting in many projects being deferred well beyond their expected serviceable life.

2. **Capital Funding Challenges:** Access to capital funding for new construction or school extensions has been problematic. Since at least 2018, we have consistently submitted requests for three major capital projects each year, but we have received no support except for the emergency addition of the PVSS gym due to fire damage. This year, the majority of our trustees decided to submit only one capital request, hoping it might be approved. However, this does not accurately reflect our district's needs. We face pressing decisions about whether to extend schools that are over 50 years old or invest in new builds, which would offer a more sustainable solution in the long term. Unfortunately, the lack of capital funds restricts our options and complicates our ability to plan effectively for future needs.

Substitute Costs and Labor Market Adjustments:

Finally, substitute costs have not kept pace with labor market adjustments. We know this is a problem with other school districts throughout the province and nationally. Instead of each school district trying to tackle this on our own, perhaps this could be researched and managed on a higher level to find tangible solutions and put less pressure on our already stretched operating budgets.

We applaud the Ministry in their announcements regarding improvements to supports for our students, and our District is in complete support of those objectives. However, we urgently request your support in addressing these funding shortfalls and challenges. Enhanced operational and capital funding is critical to ensuring we can continue to provide a high-quality education, maintain our facilities, and support our students effectively.

Yours sincerely,



Amanda Krebs
Board Chairperson
School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)
akrebs@sd83.bc.ca

cc Jennifer McCrae, Acting Deputy Minister of Education and Child Care
Greg Kylo, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Shuswap
Suzanne Hoffman, CEO, British Columbia School Trustees Association