



**February 26, 2018**

## **PAN's Response to BC Budget 2018**

**VANCOUVER**—The Parent Advocacy Network is relieved to see a budget that emphasizes childcare and early childhood education and that doesn't explicitly cut education funding. However, we are disappointed that K–12 education funding seems to be only sufficient to maintain the status quo. There are some savings that the boards will be able to keep and spend at their discretion, such as savings from the Next Generation Network implementation and pension over-contributions, but these do not amount to enough to reverse the losses of the last several years. Districts may see some relief through the 50% MSP cut, but how their portion of the new employers' health tax will be funded is yet to be seen.

This means that boards don't have much, if any, new/increased funding to restore programs and services (such as fine arts programs, gifted programs, and custodial services) that they have cut in previous years due to the need to balance budgets. It also means that children with special needs will continue to go without the level of Education Assistant time and other services that they deserve in order to fully access the public education system, which is their right, and long waitlists for assessments will continue to delay diagnoses for children who are struggling to keep up.

On the capital side, the playground fund is much appreciated, but it is important to recognize that parents fundraise for much more than just playgrounds: PAN did a survey in 2016 that showed that parents are fundraising for necessities such as fine arts programming, books, and sex education. The budget introduced last week will not reduce schools' need to rely on parents to raise supplemental funds for these items, and it does not address the inequities that result from this situation.

In terms of seismic replacement schools, new schools, and getting children out of portables, we are glad to hear that the government is committed to speeding up its work in these areas; we look forward to not just announcements, but shovels in the ground and children in safe schools.

-30-

### **Media Contacts**

Jennifer Stewart, 604-790-9929, [jenniferjoanstewart@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferjoanstewart@gmail.com)

### **About the Parent Advocacy Network**

The Parent Advocacy Network for Public Education (PAN), is a non-partisan grassroots collective of parents and community members who share a commitment to public education. We are working to address the chronic underfunding and devaluing of public education in Vancouver and across British Columbia by creating a strong network of parents who support one another in advocacy.