

Select Standing Committee

Budget 2018 Consultation Submission

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I write to you today to discuss the importance of public education and why I believe it should be a top priority in the 2018 B.C. budget.

“The cornerstone of democracy rests on the foundation of an education electorate”- Thomas Jefferson

Public education was created to ensure every child has access to a quality education regardless of where they live or their parent's income level. Unfortunately, after 16 years of funding cuts, court battles and neglect under the BC Liberals our public education system has become one made up of have and have-not schools where a child's education is largely dependant on how much their parents and community can fundraise.

Some of the issues currently facing public schools across BC:

- Funding shortfalls across the province- some more dire than others
- Lack of basic equipment such as text books.
- Lack of technology to implement new curriculum
- Unsafe structures and playground equipment
- Lack of support for special needs students
- Lack of space- even more so after the implementing of new class sizes creating the need for high number of portables
- Lack of basic maintenance and cleaning leading to unkept school grounds and lowered standards of cleanliness in schools and classrooms
- Crowded, overcapacity schools leading to a lack of course choices available to students which has contributed to:
- An increased dependency on utilizing online courses instead of students learning in a classroom with necessary support

- Schools depending heavily on parent fundraising to cover the most basic components and supplies which contributes to:
- Lack of consistency from one school to another: some schools have full libraries- some half full; some schools have 1 test book for every child others share 1 text book every 3 or 4 children; some schools have little to no technology others have Ipads in every classroom and so on

Although not a complete list this gives a general overview of the dire circumstances facing our schools and paints a bleak picture of the conditions most children in BC face every day in their education.

Since 2002 we have seen an entire generation of children robbed of a quality education which continues today for those children still in the public education system. Today there are still special needs students getting little to no support, parents are still fundraising endlessly to fill in the funding shortfalls, schools are still struggling to maintain the basic necessities, school boards are still grappling with shortfalls, teachers are still overworked and we still have thousands of students who are learning in unsafe buildings. This is unacceptable and not accurately reflective of the prosperity and wealth of our province.

I do recognize that after 16 years of neglect in many of our public services there is much work to be done and there are many areas in our province that require attention and increased funding right now. However, the longer our public education system is left in its current state the longer children will continue to fall through the cracks and lose out on their basic right to a quality education which negatively effects our society.

“It is easier to build up a child than it is to repair a broken adult”

I believe when we look at issues facing our province such as the increased drug epidemic, homelessness, the growing wealth inequality along with the shortage of skilled workers what we are largely seeing is the long-term effects of losing those basic services and supports in our schools and until we make public education a top priority these issues will continue to plague our communities and province.

With that I call on the BC government to put BC children first and make public education a top priority in the 2018 budget by implementing measures and funding that will ensure:

1. Every child in BC has access to the same quality of education regardless of where they live or the income level of their parents or community.
2. Every child has access to the resources and support needed to fully participate in their education.
3. Every school has funding for basic supplies needed to ensure a quality education- not reliant on parent fundraising
4. Every child has the same access to a variety of courses where the courses and materials needed are not dependant on parent fundraising
5. Implementing a realistic timeframe for completing seismic and non-seismic upgrades to ensure student safety

Thank you for your consideration in this matter and for your voiced commitment to improving our public education system.

Sarah Miller

