

Ministry of Education Response to BCCPAC 2013 AGM Resolutions

2013.1 Access to Provincial Funds for School Playgrounds

Be it resolved that

The BCCPAC urge the BC Government to either reinstate the Community Gaming Grant for playground capital funding or to request that the annual facilities grant be increased sufficiently to provide for the ongoing replacement of playgrounds as required.

Ministry of Education Response

The Ministry of Finance, [Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch](#) is responsible for funding the Community Gaming Grants that are referred to in this resolution. However, administration of playground-related Community Gaming Grants falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development (CSCD). Please contact CSCD directly about this aspect of your organization's resolution.

The Annual Facility Grant (AFG) is intended to fund projects required to maintain capital assets through their anticipated economic life and to prevent any premature deterioration of these assets. There are 12 categories of eligible annual facility grant expenditures, including site upgrades. While AFG funding is typically allocated by school districts for school site improvements, such as drainage issues, and repairs to sidewalks, parking lots, playfields, some districts have indicated that AFG funding is used for the repair or replacement of existing playgrounds. The Ministry of Education does not currently have specific funding for the replacement of school playgrounds.

2013.2 Increased funding for Literacy Centres

Be it resolved that

The BCCPAC request additional targeted funding from the BC Government to increase the number of intensive reading intervention programs, maintaining a minimum ratio of one highly trained teacher to seven students, to meet eligible students' appropriate needs for this service in school districts.

Ministry of Education Response

Recognizing the importance of early reading success in the K-12 system, the Ministry of Education has invested over \$21 million implementing the Changing Results for Young Readers initiative, lead by the provincial Superintendent of Reading.

Since 2001, the BC Government has invested approximately \$1.5 billion in literacy and literacy-related initiatives for British Columbians. The Ministry of Education is addressing literacy initiatives through the formal K-12 education system and at the community level.

At the local level, school boards have the autonomy and responsibility of providing educational services, including reading intervention programs, throughout their district that best meets the needs of their students, within the funding available.

At the community level, in the spring of 2007, the government introduced legislation in the *School Act* that expanded the responsibilities of Boards of Education to include

collaboration with community partners to support literacy for all age groups including early learners.

2013.3 Change to Funding Formula for New School Construction

Be it resolved that

The BCCPAC lobby the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance to change the current funding formula when calculating the anticipated enrolment of a new or replacement school. It is requested that this new formula would utilize leading indicators like pre-school enrolment and birth rates, as well as current K-12 population, to predict appropriate school size requirements in the planning and funding process.

Ministry of Education Response

The Ministry develops ten-year enrolment projections based on the analysis and interpretation of data from BC Stats. School districts are required to provide projected enrolments for individual schools, such that the sum for the individual schools agrees with the Ministry projections. School districts may choose to develop their own ten-year projections based on local knowledge of future development and enrolment trends that can be presented to the Ministry in support of a capital plan submission. School districts are required to develop a capital plan based on a ten-year projection horizon to allow identification of future site acquisition needs.

2013.6 Support of Outdoor Schools

Be it resolved that

The BCCPAC support reaffirmation of the need for more outside school opportunities for students.

Ministry of Education Response

Provincial curriculum does not dictate the type of program or learning environment teachers must create. Districts and schools make decisions about the types of learning environments they want, based on the learning culture they wish to establish. These environments include such aspects as scheduling, timetables, course structures, and school organizations.

As you are aware, curriculum in BC is undergoing transformation. A goal of the renewed provincial curriculum is to provide teachers and schools with greater opportunity to exercise professional judgment in creating flexible learning environments.

The structure of the renewed provincial curriculum is flexible to enable educators to create the most appropriate learning environment for their students and community. Educators are encouraged to consider creative and flexible ways to unlock the learning potential of students in their charge. Renewed provincial curriculum provides learning standards that can be combined and integrated in various ways, to create courses or learning experiences that go beyond the borders of traditional learning areas to focus on students' needs, interests, and/or the local context. Outdoor schools are one example of a flexible learning environment.

See: https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdf/flexible_learning_environments.pdf

2013.7 Educational Electronic Device PST Tax Exemption and Tax Refund or Credit

Be it resolved that

The BCCPAC work with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Advanced Education and Ministry of Finance to eliminate the PST on electronic devices essential for the New Education Plan, as outlined in the Ministry of Education's 21st Century Learning Plan. Devices such as, but not limited to, laptops, I pads, tablets, computers, notebooks, E-readers, scientific and graphing calculators would be categorized as "school supplies" when being used educational purposes for children aged 5 to 19 years of age. In addition to the PST exemption we request that a tax credit or tax rebate be offered to offset the additional cost of technology.

Ministry of Finance Response

- The government is not at this time considering an expansion to the school supplies exemption or providing a personal income tax credit for purchase of electronic devices.
- Since 2001, this government has taken significant steps to improve the British Columbia tax system. We have significantly reduced personal income taxes to lower the tax burden on families.
- British Columbia currently has the lowest provincial personal income taxes in Canada for individuals earning up to \$122,000 a year.
- When all taxes are considered, British Columbians generally have one of the lowest tax burdens in the country.

2013.9 Legislation for District and School-based Emergency Preparedness Plans

Be it resolved that

The BCCPAC lobby the BC Government on behalf of all parents and BC students to enact provincial legislation which puts a legal requirement on boards of education and local governments to develop district and school-based emergency preparedness plans in cooperation with provincial authorities. Such legislation should require that schools have personnel with training and equipment as well as funding for emergency supplies and kiosks at school sites. The cost of this program should be shared between the participating local governments, Boards of Education and the appropriate Provincial Authorities.

Ministry of Education Response

The Ministry of Education has been working closely with school districts and emergency management personnel to develop draft emergency guidelines and templates. The Ministry of Education expects to release these guidelines, for school district and public input prior to finalizing. The Superintendent of Safe Schools will be in contact with BCCPAC directly to discuss this work in the near future.

2013.11 On/Off Switches for Wi-Fi Routers and Protocol for the Use of Wireless Devices

Be it resolved that

BCCPAC calls on Boards of Education:

1. To provide on/off switches to Wi-Fi routers; and
2. To establish a protocol of use that
 - (i) Wi-Fi routers and Wi-Fi/3G functions of computers/laptops/tablets are to be turned on only when they are needed for access to the internet via the wireless network; and

- (ii) Bluetooth function is to be turned on only if it is needed for accessing other Bluetooth-enabled devices.
- 3. To observe safety warnings and follow safety instructions in the user manual of I Pad by reducing the duration of use under wireless mode and keeping the I Pads away from the students' bodies.

Ministry of Education Response

At the district level, Boards of Education have the authority to develop policies addressing the use of wireless technology in schools and to implement the appropriate technology where it is deemed necessary to support the education needs of students.

Health Canada is responsible for reviewing and setting the safety standards on Wi-Fi in Canada. Energy levels from Wi-Fi equipment in all areas accessible to the general public, including school settings, are required to meet Health Canada's exposure guidelines.

Based on the current information and studies available, the typical levels of radiofrequency energy from Wi-Fi devices are thousands of times below the limits for public exposure. As long as exposure is below these established limits, there is no convincing scientific evidence that this equipment is dangerous to school children or to the public in general.

The Ministry of Education also follows the lead and recommendations of the Office of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) regarding public health concerns in British Columbia. The PHO website addresses current findings associated with cellular phones and Wi-Fi: <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/pho/issues.html>.

We will continue to share the most up-to-date information from public health authorities to ensure that students, parents and educators are aware of any potential risks to health.