

# **Years of underfunding underlie public schools' fiscal crisis**

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*March 2010*

A flawed provincial funding formula and the underfunding of provincially-mandated education costs have created an unprecedented budgetary crisis for local school boards trying to develop their budgets for the 2010-11 school year.

But this crisis has been many years in the making. For over a decade, school boards have been forced to absorb the impacts of the Province's failure to fund provincially-mandated costs, such as increases in staff compensation packages. Local Boards have also struggled with the Province's chronic failure to cover the true costs of delivering the public education mandate, e.g. maintaining small rural schools and delivering key services such as transportation and special education. The Education Ministry's attempts to "simplify" the provincial funding formula in 2002 compounded the challenges by eliminated a number of targeted grants that had formerly covered extraordinary costs.

These failures have created deep structural deficits for school boards that continue to grow every year, exacerbating the crises brought on by erratic fluctuations in what the province chooses to fund or not fund every year. In some cases, the problems have been compounded by management failures at the local level, but the systemic, province-wide nature of the funding crisis leaves no doubt as to the source of the core underlying problem.

Last fall, the bipartisan provincial Standing Committee for Finance and Government Services finally responded to the growing chorus of public concern by advising the Provincial government to review the provincial education funding formula. More recently, the Nanaimo-Ladysmith Board of Education proposed a Royal Commission to review public education funding in BC. Both calls reflect appeals that the province's Parent Advisory Committees have been voicing for many years.

## ***BCCPAC resolutions on provincial underfunding***

The following list of resolutions passed by the BCCPAC (BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils) in the last 15 years reflects the Province's failure over more than a decade to recognize and confront the growing fiscal crisis facing local school boards:

### **2009.25 Transportation and Busing**

That BCCPAC advocate that the Ministry of Education provide transportation funding that reflects the true costs of providing transportation to ensure that children have access to public education.

As such, that BCCPAC convey to the Minister of Education that:

- a) the solution to a shortfall in transportation funding is not user fees;
- b) transportation funding needs to be increased to reflect true costs within a consistent framework;

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- c) transportation funding needs to be allocated in ways that fairly reflect differences in circumstances between school districts; and
- d) the Minister should deliver the promised transportation funding review by no later than October 15, 2009, with implementation for the 2010/2011 budget year.

### **2009.16 Ministry Funding Formula**

That BCCPAC urge the Ministry of Education to re-examine, recalculate and rework the ministry funding formula to address and fully fund all structural deficits and new programs mandated by the government.

### **2009.15 PAC Playground Grants - Eligible Uses**

That BCCPAC urge the Minister of Education and BC Gaming Policy & Enforcement Branch to expand the eligible uses of PAC Playground grants in light of recent government initiatives regarding daily physical activity, healthy schools and BC area schools program to include sports courts and similar outdoor equipment and secure bicycle storage structures and installation. The existing criteria for ranking applicants that excludes sports courts and bicycle storage structures will be maintained.

### **2006.6 Funding for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Education/Behaviour Consultants**

That BCCPAC strongly urge the Ministry of Education to provide funding to establish and train a network of Regional FASD Education/Behavior Consultants who would be available to educate and support teaching professionals, administrators, and parents in their respective regions.

### **2005.13 Public Inquiry on Funding Formula for Public Education**

That BCCPAC urge the provincial government to conduct a public inquiry on the funding formula for public education and also on all related regulations. The inquiry must focus on the impact that declining enrollment, the level of per-pupil allocation of funds, and the elimination of base infrastructure funding, has had on the ability of school districts to sustain the delivery of quality educational programs and services to children while also maintaining a balanced budget. A flexible funding formula that meets the varied needs of all school districts is required.

### **2005.14 Review of Regulations Governing use of Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets**

That BCCPAC urge the provincial government to review the current regulations governing the use/disposal of surplus capital assets such as school and office buildings, as the current regulations limit the ability of school boards to use revenue generated by surplus assets for the protection and/or enhancement of program delivery. New regulations must allow school boards greater flexibility in using their assets to sustain quality program delivery, especially in an environment of declining enrollment, while protecting infrastructures for the future.

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### **2005.16 Equal Funding for all Aboriginal Public School Students**

That BCCPAC urge the Minister of Education to give the same amount of Aboriginal Education Funding to aboriginal students enrolled in Distributed Electronic Learning, as they give to all other public school aboriginal students.

### **2004.32 Clarification of Special Education Categories and Funding**

That BCCPAC implore the Minister of Education to: a) provide greater clarity for the interpretation of the special education categories, in consultation with school districts; and b) fund special education students based on the support required and currently provided to address the impact that medical conditions have on the student's education.

### **2004.33 Delay of Funding Withdrawal for Special Needs Students as a result of an Audit**

That BCCPAC request that the Minister of Education delay the funding withdrawal, until the next budget year, for special need students who have been denied funding as a result of an audit.

### **2004.5 Targeted Funding for Transportation**

That BCCPAC urge the Ministry of Education to provide school boards with targeted funding for student transportation.

### **2004.6 Reduction of the Ministry of Education "Walk Limits"**

That BCCPAC urge the Ministry of Education to adjust the walk limits used to determine the Ministry's share of the cost of transportation for children in grades K to 5 from 4.0/4.8 kilometres to 2.0 kilometres and students in Grades 6 to 12 from 4.8 kilometres to 4.0 kilometres, and that the Ministry use the actual travel distance between the home and school site when determining walk limits.

### **2004.10 Government Commitment to Successful Rural Education**

That BCCPAC urge the Ministry of Education to continue to supplement for unique geographic factors—small communities operating grants; and direct that those dollars be targeted to rural schools by the receiving school districts.

### **2004.12 Change Ministry Funding for Distance Education**

That BCCPAC urge the Ministry of Education to change the way that Distance Education is funded, to allow for a student to be registered in both a regular school and a Distance Education School simultaneously.

### **2004.15 Teacher – Librarian Staffing**

That BCCPAC urge the Ministry of Education to set requirements for Teacher-Librarian staffing at a minimum of .5 FTE for each elementary school effective in the budget year 2004/2005; a full 1.0 FTE for each elementary and middle school in the budget year 2005/2006; a minimum of

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1.0 FTE for each 702 students in high schools by the 2006/2007 budget year, which honours the agreement between the BCTF and the province.

### **2004.35 High Incidence Students**

That BCCPAC urge the Ministry of Education to provide the support and incentive needed for districts to report and account for high incidence students.

### **2003.12 Restore Funding for Education in BC to the 2001/2002 Level**

That BCCPAC urge the Minister of Education, the Minister of Finance and the Premier to restore funding to allow reinstatement of the full range of education services available in school districts in the 2001/2002 school year.

### **2003.13 Funding for Legislated Increases in Teacher Salaries and Benefits for 2002/2003 & 2003/2004 School Years**

That the BCCPAC appeal to the provincial government to provide the necessary funding to pay for the legislated increases in teacher salaries and benefits for the 2002/2003 and 2003/2004 school years which would otherwise fall to be met by school boards.

### **2003.14 Joint Strategy to Assess Impact of Underfunding**

That BCCPAC will invite all education partner groups and all interested advocacy groups to explore ways in which they can work together to document effects of education under-funding in an objective and credible manner, with the goal of producing a consensus report on the adequacy of current funding levels and formulas.

### **2003.15 Funding to Support Special Needs Programs**

That BCCPAC urge the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance to provide the actual funding cost of providing early identification, classroom teacher training, specialist training and extra support programs for children with special needs, so they have the opportunity to experience success.

### **2003.16 Under-funding of Special Education**

That BCCPAC will strongly reiterate the need to increase provincial funding to cover the true costs of meeting the requirements of designated and non-designated students with special needs in accordance with Ministry of Education guidelines for special education and inclusion.

### **2003.17 Funding for Gifted Students**

That BCCPAC petition the Ministry of Education to fund the testing for and special education needs of gifted children.

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## **2003.18 Maintain Current Levels for MCFD School-Based Funding**

That BCCPAC will strongly urge the BC government to maintain current (2002-03) funding levels for all School-Based programs that are currently funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

## **2003.28 Raising Public Awareness of Cuts to Education**

That the BCCPAC recognize that the fulfillment of its mandate as the collective voice of parents for the best possible education of children in BC requires that it raise public awareness of cuts in educational funding by the provincial government.

## **2002.20 Service Reductions in Rural Communities**

That BCCAC urge the Premier to reconsider funding cuts to rural community, social, medical, health, legal and other services that are devastating our communities and compromising the ability of school boards to maintain and improve student achievement.

## **2001.9 To Better Serve Requirements of Students with Special Needs**

That BCCPAC lobby to have increased funding allocated by the Ministry of Education to better serve the requirements of students with special needs. This additional funding would be directed towards: a) increasing specialized itinerant support for classroom teachers and teacher assistants who have mainstreamed students to consistent standards across BC; and b) promoting programs and the instructional strategies which enable the development of best practices for the creation of Individual Educational Plans (IEP), and ensuring consistency and better communication of the best practices among the students' support teams.

## **2001.10 Wilderness Funding**

That BCCPAC lobby the Ministry of Education to give special funding recognition to wilderness schools by assigning them an independent funding formula designed to recognize their unique needs. Wilderness schools are defined as rural schools that are at least a one-hour bus ride away from the nearest school.

## **2000.3 Middle School Funding**

That BCCPAC lobby the Ministry of Education to adjust the block funding formula for middle schools in recognition of the unique educational needs of the configuration beyond that which is available in the elementary school setting.

## **2000.12 Funding for All-Day Kindergarten**

That BCCPAC request the Minister of Education to amend its policy regarding funding of all-day kindergarten to ensure that wherever 70% of kindergarten students are eligible for all-day kindergarten funding, i.e. First Nations, English as a Second Language or students with special needs, all kindergarten students will be funded for all-day kindergarten classes.

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### **2000.16 Increased Non-academic Support Services for Students in Grades 6 - 12**

That BCCPAC urge the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Attorney General, and Ministry of Children and Families to work together to ensure that every student, especially in grades 6 to 12, has access to nonacademic support services in their school building.

### **2000.20 Education Funding Review**

That BCCPAC urge: the Ministry of Education to undertake a comprehensive review of education funding with the goal of providing long term and stable financial support for public schools; the Ministry of Education to increase the level of funding for public education to meet the actual costs of delivering the services to our students; and that BCCPAC support the Provincial government in demanding that Federal "transfer funding" to the province for public school education be substantially increased.

### **2000.29C Rural Schools**

That Canadian Home and School Federation through their provincial federations urge the provincial Ministers of Education to give special consideration to maintaining and encouraging the development of schools in rural areas.

### **1999.11 Funding for Special Needs Children**

That BCCPAC call on the provincial government to ensure that the funding for students with special needs is adjusted to reflect the full costs of meeting the requirements of those students according to Ministry of Education guidelines.

### **1999.7 Adequate Funding for New Curriculum Implementation**

That BCCPAC lobby the Ministry of Education to ensure that there are sufficient government funds in place so that schools have the necessary resources and technology in place to allow them to effectively implement new curriculum.

### **1999.10 Under-Funding of Education**

That BCCPAC call on the provincial government to increase the funding for K-12 education to ensure: all collective agreements negotiated by the province will be fully-funded; the costs of legal and labour relations arising from grievances and arbitrations and implementation of remedies to grievances will be fully-funded; each year's per student funding amount is adjusted for inflation.

### **1999.12 Funding for All-Day Kindergarten**

That BCCPAC call on the provincial government to ensure that in all schools where all-day kindergarten classes are mandated that every kindergarten student in that school will be funded for all-day kindergarten classes.

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### **1999.14 Universal Elementary Music**

That BCCPAC urges the Ministry of Education to provide ongoing funds specifically designated to ensure quality, specialized delivery of elementary music programs to all students as a right for every child in the province.

### **1998.10 Oppose the Elimination of Target Funding for Special Needs**

That the BCCPAC lobby the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training to retain the Special Education Targeted Funding.

### **1998.11 Small Community-Based Schools**

That the BCCPAC actively lobby the BCSTA and the MoE to recognize the importance and encourage the retention of existing small (community) based schools, recognizing that they too provide a significant educational environment.

### **1997.6 Teacher-Librarian Funding**

That the British Columbia Minister of Education, Skills and Training, the Ministry of Education's Treasury Branch, and the Premier of the Province of BC increase funding for education, in the amount required to provide a minimum of .4 FTE Teacher-Librarians in all schools in BC, and that those funds be specifically targeted to Librarian services.

### **1997.7 Funding to Support Information Technology**

That the British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training provide districts with the funds necessary to properly implement the Information Technology K-7 and 8-12 curricula.

### **1995.7 Funding for Identification of Learning Disabled Students**

That there be an increase to the funding available to hire additional school psychometrists for the identification of, and diagnostic services for, learning disabled children in our school system.