



Board of Education

School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)
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January 20, 2025

Premier David Eby
Office of the Premier
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ATTENTION: Premier David Eby
Honourable Lisa Beare, Minister of Education and Child Care
Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Energy and Climate Solutions
Honourable Bowinn Ma, Minister of Infrastructure

Dear Premier Eby, Minister Beare, Minister Dix, and Minister Ma:

RE: Climate Action Advocacy

The Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) passed the following motion:

That the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) write to the Provincial Government advocating for increased funding for climate action initiatives, including funding for facilities upgrades to adapt to a changing climate, nutrition programming and other initiatives.

For school districts to meet the 2030 greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets set by B.C.'s Climate Change Accountability Act we require significant increases in provincial investment and coordinated regional planning which includes school districts. Partnerships between school districts, municipal and provincial governments are key to achieving the necessary GHG emission reductions while making best use of finite public resources.

While we recognize the over \$13 million increase in provincial funding from the Ministry of Education and Child Care over the 2023-24 school year for the Bus Acquisition and Carbon Neutral Capital programs and locally the \$650,000 for Oaklands Elementary HVAC in the 2024-25 school year, significantly more investment is needed to support targeted measures to reduce GHG emissions and to adapt to a changing climate. School districts are in a unique position to implement targeted measures to reduce GHG emissions and to implement adaptations to support community resilience.

Our most recent Climate Change Accountability Report highlights that 90% of GHG emissions from our school district come from our buildings. Provincial funding to allow school districts to address maintenance and repairs represents a significant opportunity to invest in measures aimed at reducing GHG emissions. However, in 2024-25 the Annual Facilities Grant (AFG) which is intended to cover the cost of maintenance and repairs for all 60 school districts only increased by 3.1 million. This increase does not even keep pace with the annual inflation rate.

In Greater Victoria over the last two school years our school district received a total AFG of \$5,179,861 (2024/25) and \$5,072,953 (2023/24), and School Enhancement funding of \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 respectively. While these funds can be utilized to address energy efficiency concerns in existing buildings, the reality is that to address outstanding maintenance and repair of our aging infrastructure alone will cost well beyond \$325 million. In light of these facts, it is clear that to meet legally required GHG reductions without compromising student services, school districts urgently need targeted provincial funding for retrofitting projects.

We ask that the province consider the immense opportunity available to target increased capital funding to support retrofitting of existing school buildings in order to ensure school districts are able to meet our 2030 GHG emission reduction targets as required by BC's Climate Change Accountability Act. We must invest in new high efficiency condensing boilers, additional window and roofing upgrades and focus capital funding on electrification and the addition of photovoltaic generation systems. We wish to emphasize our concerns about the lost opportunity costs associated with failing to invest more now in capital funding to support retrofitting of existing school buildings. We know that in most cases, we won't get the opportunity again for decades to make smart investments such as the electrification of our infrastructure and new high efficiency condensing boilers.

Funding specifically for facilities upgrades to adapt to a changing climate is essential to allow students, staff and community members to adapt to more frequent weather events, including severe heat related events. School buildings and grounds continue to be critical infrastructure for the entire community and could be used as cooling centers by creating shade, introducing drought resistant plants, and supporting opportunities to green school and district grounds. Our school district is committed to addressing these goals. We appreciate your attention to this pressing issue and look forward to your support in helping school districts meet these requirements.

We also ask the provincial government to urgently consider the need for funds to support nutrition programming for K-12 students. We appreciate the recent Feeding Futures funding committed in fall 2023, to be provided to school districts throughout BC over three years to create or expand local school food programs. There are many opportunities to support both land-based education and traditional ecological learning with a focus on Lekwungen and Coast Salish culture. However, we need ongoing targeted provincial funding to support sustainability initiatives such as greening and shading our school sites, and promoting school gardens and food programs that provide students with access to healthy, locally produced food which also supports much needed local food security.

Other initiatives such as supporting accessible and affordable transit for staff and students travelling to school, active transportation routes, and introducing electric charging infrastructure present us with yet further opportunities to co-plan with municipal and provincial governments in

order to maximize public investments in public sites. We are confident that collaborative and cooperative approaches will yield many productive solutions to the challenges we face.

There can be no doubt that we urgently need additional provincial resources and engagement to support the measures outlined above. We appreciate your attention to these urgent matters and look forward to working in partnership toward meaningful progress.

Yours sincerely,



Nicole Duncan
Chair, Board of Education
School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)

cc: Board of Education, School District No. 61
Deb Whitten, Superintendent, School District No. 61
Katrina Stride, Secretary-Treasurer, School District No. 61
Darren Reed, President, CUPE 382, School District No. 61
Shawna Abbott, President, CUPE 947, School District No. 61
Carolyn Howe, President, Greater Victoria Teachers' Association
Braden Hutchins, President, Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils,
School District No. 61
Sarah Winkler, President, Victoria Principals and Vice-Principals Association,
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