



June 17, 2019

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Dear BCSTA Colleagues:

Another school year is coming to an end—and what a great year it has been for education in British Columbia.

It has been a pleasure to work with so many of you personally, and through the BC School Trustees Association. I would like to thank all of you—both new trustees and those who were re-elected last fall—for your hard work and dedication to supporting public education in your communities.

Before you head out on summer holidays, I want to reflect on some of our accomplishments over the past year, as well as the work underway.

This year we continued to focus all efforts on improving educational outcomes for students. Graduation rates continue to increase, particularly for Indigenous students, who are now completing secondary school at the highest rate in history. We all know there is more work to do as we continue to improve opportunities for all students, and students are depending on your leadership to set clear direction and priorities to support their success. I appreciate your continued effort to set high expectations for student achievement, make evidence-based decisions that are in students' best interest, and engage your communities along the way.

Together we are well underway on a review of British Columbia's education funding model, and I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your input so far. The BCSTA and its members have been a crucial partner in the funding model review since day one and are currently taking part in working groups to look at the implications of the review panel's recommendations. The working groups will report back to the Ministry of Education by fall 2019, and I look forward to their assessments. I am pleased to share with you today a [Progress Report](#) funding model review, which provides some additional information on what has been discussed in the working groups to date and next steps.

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This school year we continued to heavily invest in school capital to build new schools, carry out badly needed seismic upgrades and buy property for future schools to meet growing enrolment. We hit a major milestone in April, surpassing \$1 billion in school capital approvals since forming government. Our government has now approved \$625.5 million in seismic projects that will make more than 20,000 student spaces safer, added 8,225 new student spaces in growing communities with \$516.4 million in expansion projects, and funded new playgrounds at 101 schools benefiting 25,000 children throughout the province.

In January, I had the honour of joining representatives from the First Nations Education Steering Committee and the federal government to sign the BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA), making British Columbia the only jurisdiction in Canada with an agreement that ensures an equitable education for First Nations students, no matter where they live. This is an important step in honouring the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 10 Principles that Guide BC's relationship with Indigenous Peoples. We should all be proud of the work we have done—and will continue to do—to better support Indigenous students.

We have made great strides this year to support vulnerable students, expanding our provincial ERASE strategy to be a more comprehensive resource. It now focusses on gang prevention, mental health and wellness, substance use, social media and supporting students of all sexual orientations and gender identities. We held the second annual Mental Health Forum in February, bringing together representatives of public, independent and First Nations schools, police, health authorities, and child and youth mental health workers to focus on how to promote mental-well-being for all BC students. Students are already benefitting from a \$3-million investment to help all 60 school districts enhance existing mental wellness programs and launch new ones.

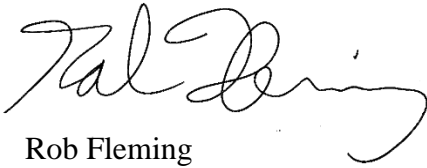
As part of our continued focus on supporting vulnerable students, we proudly became one of the first jurisdictions to require public schools to provide students with stigma-free access to free menstrual products in washrooms. We and the Ministry of Health are grateful for your districts' support of the measles immunization catch-up program in schools—we will keep you up to date as we continue working with the Ministry of Health to implement mandatory immunization status reporting for BC's students.

British Columbia's world-class education system drew international attention this year, hosting top education policy-makers in Vancouver for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s Future of Education and Skills 2030 Project meeting in May. This was the first time the conference was held in North America, and it was an honour to host delegates from dozens of different countries. I also thank BCSTA members for participating in this event and helping us showcase our education system and student accomplishments.

There have been many more successes in education this year through strong partnerships with the BCSTA and its members, to support teachers and students in the classroom. I look forward to continuing to work with you next school year as we move forward on our priorities, including working collaboratively to develop and implement the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning. Together, we will keep delivering results so that all students can get the quality education they deserve in safe, healthy and welcoming schools.

Thank you for your hard work this year to support BC students. I hope you enjoy a safe and restful summer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Fleming". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "F".

Rob Fleming
Minister