

June 19, 2026

Select Standing Committee on Finance and
Government Services
c/o Parliamentary Committees Office
Room 224, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of the Richmond Board of Education (the Board), we are writing to advocate for investments in three critical priorities that will strengthen student success, address escalating infrastructure concerns, and ensure the long-term sustainability of public education in Richmond. As the District continues to experience sustained unfunded cost pressures, increasing classroom complexity, and aging infrastructure, stable and predictable funding has become essential to maintaining high-quality public education for all learners.

We appreciate the opportunity to present the Richmond Board of Education's priorities for the upcoming provincial budget. This submission reflects the collective voice of the Board and our education partners in the Richmond community, including the Richmond Teachers' Association, CUPE Local 716, Richmond District Parents Association, Richmond Association of School Administrators, and Richmond Management and Professional Staff. Together, we remain firmly aligned in our commitment to the success, well-being, and achievement of every student in the Richmond School District.

We acknowledge the Province's continued commitment to public education through investments in classroom enhancement funding, inclusive education, and capital infrastructure funding. These investments have meaningfully supported school districts across British Columbia in responding to evolving educational needs while advancing student achievement. We also recognize the significant fiscal constraints facing government and value the collaborative relationship between the Ministry of Education and Child Care, Ministry of Infrastructure and boards of education in advancing shared provincial priorities.

Despite these investments, school districts continue to face mounting financial pressures. Costs associated with compensation, inflation, utilities, insurance, technology, and essential support services continue to increase at a rate that exceeds available funding growth. At the same time, districts are responding to shifting enrolment patterns, increasing student mental health needs, and the growing demand for inclusive and increasingly complex learning environments.

Our priorities for Budget 2027 focus on the following three critical areas requiring immediate and sustained provincial attention.

Priority 1: Sustainable and Stable Education Funding

Public education represents one of the Province's most significant investments. A stable, predictable, and adequately funded education system is essential to ensuring consistent delivery of student supports,

effective long-term planning, and retention of a highly skilled workforce. While targeted funding streams serve important purposes, school districts require increased and sustainable non-targeted operating funding to respond to local circumstances and manage ongoing cost pressures.

The current provincial education funding framework does not fully account for the cumulative impact of inflation, statutory and non-statutory benefit increases, cyber security requirements, escalating operational costs, and the increasing complexity of student needs. In addition, districts are increasingly exposed to external policy, demographic, and economic shifts that can significantly affect revenue stability without corresponding adjustments in operating funding.

The Richmond School District is projecting a \$4.2 million operating shortfall for 2026/27, driven by reduced revenues resulting from federal immigration policy changes that have significantly affected international and funded student enrolment, as well as unfunded compensation obligations and inflationary pressures. To achieve a balanced budget, the District implemented difficult reductions across employee groups. While necessary under the circumstances, these reductions will affect the District's ability to maintain existing program and service levels.

This financial challenge reflects a broader vulnerability within the public education system. Without a funding model that adequately recognizes ongoing structural pressures, districts will continue to face increasing constraints in sustaining educational programs and responding to emerging needs.

The growing complexity of student needs further highlights the need for a funding framework that reflects realities of today's classrooms. In Richmond schools, the number of inclusive education students requiring additional supports has increased from 837 in 2018/19 to 1,382 in 2025/26, an increase of 545 students or 65 per cent, over seven years. This represents average annual growth of approximately 7 per cent, significantly outpacing overall enrolment growth and driving increased demand for specialized instruction, educational assistants, counselling services, behavioral supports, and other targeted interventions. As the District works to meet increasingly complex diverse student needs, funding mechanisms must evolve to recognize not only student enrolment, but also the intensity of supports required to ensure student success.

The Board respectfully requests that the Ministry of Education and Child Care:

- Increase per-student operating grant rates to address unfunded inflationary cost pressures affecting school districts;
- Establish a funding framework that recognizes ongoing unfunded structural cost pressures, including cyber security requirements, statutory and non-statutory benefit increases, and teacher salary grid increments;
- Enhance inclusive education funding to better reflect the significant growth in the number and complexity of students requiring specialized supports and services; and
- Strengthen funding sustainability to enable effective long-term planning and financial stability across school districts.

Sustainable operating funding will enable districts to maintain a consistent focus on teaching, learning, and student well-being while ensuring the flexibility to respond effectively to changing operational realities.

Priority 2: Accelerated Investment in the School Seismic Mitigation Program

The safety of students and staff is a top priority shared by boards of education and government. In 2004, the Ministry of Education and Child Care launched the School Seismic Mitigation Program (SMP) to identify and address structural vulnerabilities in schools at risk during a major seismic event. In Richmond, 37 schools were identified with at least one high-risk building component requiring mitigation. The District is located in a region characterized by unstable soil conditions and elevated liquefaction risk, further heightening seismic vulnerability.

In response to the scale and urgency of this challenge, the Ministry of Education and Child Care and the Richmond Board of Education entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in 2018, establishing the Richmond Project Team (RPT) and Executive Project Board (EPB). This partnership was designed to accelerate delivery of seismic mitigation projects and maximize the creation of seismic-resistant student spaces, with an overarching objective of completing all seismic upgrades by 2030.

The partnership has demonstrated strong results. Through coordinated efforts between the Ministry and the Richmond Project Team (RPT), approximately \$177 million in seismic mitigation funding has been approved, supporting upgrades at 15 high-risk schools. The RPT model has become widely recognized as an effective and efficient approach to capital project delivery, consistently achieving strong outcomes in cost control, schedule performance, and overall project execution.

Despite this success, the pace of new project approvals has slowed in recent years. While meaningful progress has been made, a substantial portion of high-risk facilities in Richmond remain unaddressed. Without a sustained and predictable flow of project approvals and associated funding, achieving the 2030 objective will become increasingly challenging.

Delays in advancing seismic mitigation projects carry material consequences. Students and staff will continue to occupy facilities with elevated seismic risk. Deferred projects will be subject to escalating construction inflation, increasing total lifecycle costs, and reduced momentum for capital project execution and completion. There is a risk of losing the highly skilled and experienced staff within the Richmond Project Team, if a consistent volume of work is not maintained.

The Board respectfully requests that the Ministry of Infrastructure:

- Continue and accelerate investment in the School Seismic Mitigation Program;
- Provide regular and predictable approval of projects identified within the District's Long Range Facilities Plan and Five-Year Capital Plan;
- Support completion of all remaining high-risk seismic mitigation projects in Richmond by 2030; and
- Sustain the Richmond Project Team model as an effective and high-performing capital delivery framework.

Accelerating seismic mitigation investments will enhance student safety, reduce long-term public costs, protect public assets, and ensure that school communities are appropriately safeguarded in the event of a major seismic event.

Priority 3: Capital Funding for a New City Centre School

Richmond's City Centre is experiencing sustained long-term population growth driven by urban densification and residential development in the area. The District's Long-Range Facilities Plan identifies Richmond City Centre as a primary growth hub, where increasing residential density will continue to drive rising enrolment and persistent pressure on local school capacity over the coming decades.

At present, elementary schools in the City Centre are operating at or near design capacity, and enrolment pressures are expected to intensify further. Forecasts indicate a sustained and widening gap between available seats and student demand over the next decade and beyond. These projections are consistent with municipal planning frameworks and reflect the long-term trajectory of urban growth in this part of Richmond.

To address this structural capacity challenge, the Board has identified the need for a new elementary school to serve the City Centre community. A new school requires provincial support for site acquisition.

The Board respectfully requests that the Ministry of Infrastructure:

- Approve capital funding to support acquisition of a new elementary school site in Richmond's City Centre;
- Prioritize planning and delivery of a new City Centre elementary school within the provincial capital plan; and
- Align capital investment decisions with long-term population growth in high-density urban centres.

Investment in a new City Centre school will ensure that educational infrastructure keeps pace with planned urban densification and enables students to attend neighbourhood schools within a rapidly evolving urban environment.

Conclusion

The Richmond Board of Education remains committed to working in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Child Care and the Ministry of Infrastructure to ensure that every student has access to high-quality public education in safe and inclusive learning environments. Strategic investment in sustainable operating funding, seismic mitigation, and new school capacity will address immediate pressures while strengthening the long-term resilience of the public education system.

We respectfully request that these priorities be considered in the development of budget 2027. We would welcome the opportunity to engage further and provide any additional information that may support your deliberations.

Thank you for your continued commitment to public education in British Columbia.

Sincerely,

Ken Hamaguchi, Chairperson
On behalf of the Board of Education

Liz Baverstock, President
Richmond Teachers Association

Stacey Robinson, President
CUPE Local 716

Nicole Widdess, President
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Connie Huang, President
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Kelly Gibson, Chair
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cc: Hon. Lisa Beare, Minister of Education and Child Care
Hon. Bowinn Ma, Minister of Infrastructure
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