

April 10, 2025

Carolyn Broady
President, British Columbia School Trustees Association
4th floor – 1580 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC V6J 5K9

Re: Review of School Site Acquisition Charge Regulation

Dear Carolyn,

The Board of Education of School District No. 38 (Richmond) has submitted the following proposed motion for consideration at the 2025 British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) Annual General Meeting:

THAT BCSTA advocate to the Ministry of Infrastructure and Ministry of Municipal Affairs for a review of the School Site Acquisition Charge (SSAC) provisions within the Local Government Act and associated regulations to meet the rising costs of new school site acquisitions.

BACKGROUND

The *Local Government Act*, sections 571 to 581, enables the school site acquisition charges (SSAC) to be levied on residential development on a per-dwelling basis. These charges are collected by local governments and transferred to school boards quarterly. The funds collected help cover the cost of acquiring new school sites necessitated by residential development.

The SSAC is intended to fund up to 35% of site acquisition costs for new schools, with the provincial government covering the remaining 65%. However, in recent site acquisitions, school boards have been directed by the government to use their capital reserves to fund the balance of SSAC for site purchases.

The *School Site Acquisition Charge Regulation* (the *Regulation*, BC REG 17/00, 2000) prescribes the formula and maximum allowable SSAC rates for different categories of eligible developments. The table below outlines the maximum SSAC rate prescribed in the *Regulation*.

Residential Density	Maximum SSAC rate (BC REG 17/00)
Low Density (< 21 units per hectare)	\$1,000
Medium Low Density (21 - 50 units per hectare)	\$900
Medium Density (51 - 125 units per hectare)	\$800
Medium High Density (126 - 200 units per hectare)	\$700
High Density (> 200 units per hectare)	\$600

RATIONALE – INADEQUACY OF SSACS

The SSAC rates have been capped at no more than \$1,000 per single family residential unit since the introduction of the Regulation in 2000. SSACs have not kept up with appreciating land values and have no relationship with land values in different geographic areas of the province. The SSAC cap has severely limited school boards' ability to collect the necessary funds for new school site acquisitions, definitely not meeting the intended goal of funding 35% of the total acquisition costs. This has directly resulted in the inadequacy of SSACs and delays in land acquisition for schools.

In a BCSTA 2020 discussion paper, *School Site Land Acquisitions: Issues and Solutions*, it stated that “development should be covering close to if not 100% of the cost of land acquisition for the public services needed to support that development through much increased SSACs which are more frequently reviewed and adjusted to reflect current land values”. The paper highlighted the concerns related to SSACs and recommended legislative and regulatory changes for the provincial government’s consideration.

Since then, land values across British Columbia have continued to rise significantly, further exposing the inadequacy of current maximum allowable SSAC rates. Without immediate action to adjust SSACs to reflect actual land costs, school boards will face increasing difficulty in securing necessary school sites in rapidly growing areas. A timely review of the legislative and regulatory framework governing the SSAC is critical to ensure school infrastructure keeps pace with development in the growing areas of the province.

ANALYSIS

In contrast, municipal governments have access to more flexible development tools under the *Local Government Act*, including Development Cost Charges (DCC) and Amenity Cost Charges (ACC). The legislation and regulations governing these charges offer municipalities greater flexibility than the SSAC framework. Unlike SSACs, DCC and ACC rates can be set to reflect the cost of specific needs of each area and DCC rates are indexed to inflation to keep pace with rising costs.

Development Cost Charges (DCCs) help fund essential infrastructure such as water, sewer, roads and parkland to support the new development. Municipal governments have the flexibility to tailor DCCs to the cost of specific projects identified in their long-term capital plans, with rates based on unit, lot or floor space.

Amenity Cost Charges (ACCs), introduced in Fall 2023, allow municipal governments to collect funds from new developments to support community amenities like recreation centres, daycares and libraries. Municipalities can apply ACCs across their jurisdiction or tailor them to specific areas, with rates set per unit, lot or floor space, considering the costs and phasing of amenities.

CONCLUSION

In November 2023, the Provincial Government enacted Bill 44 and 47, triggering significant changes to housing policy by mandating increased density in most metropolitan areas. The new legislation is aimed at improving housing affordability through expanded supply, requiring municipalities to revise their Official Community Plans by the end of 2025 to reflect the new density requirements.

These changes will place significant pressure on public infrastructure, especially school facilities. There is an urgent need for the provincial government to review School Site Acquisition Charges (SSAC) to address the growing demand for school spaces and escalating land values, and to align the SSAC Regulation with these new regulations and market conditions.

The Board of Education of School District No. 38 (Richmond) strongly urges the BCSTA to advocate for an immediate review of the SSAC provisions within the *Local Government Act* and associated regulations, and to increase the maximum allowable SSAC rates to reflect the significant rising costs of land acquisition across British Columbia.

Sincerely,

Ken Hamaguchi, Board Chairperson
On Behalf of the Board of Education (Richmond)

cc: Trustees, Board of Education (Richmond)
Chief Executive Officer, British Columbia School Trustees Association
Deputy Chief Executive Officer, British Columbia School Trustees Association
Superintendent of Schools, Richmond School District No. 38
Secretary Treasurer, Richmond School District No. 38