



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Honourable Jennifer Whiteside
Minister of Education
Room 124, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V1V 1X4

January 18, 2021

Dear Minister Whiteside,

On behalf of the Official Opposition, as well as parents, educators, and students, I am writing to request the timely release of more information about your government's commitment to upgrade air ventilation systems in B.C. schools.

On September 3, 2020, the previous Education Minister announced the province had received a one-time grant of \$242.4 million from the federal government to support B.C.'s COVID-19 response for K-12 education for the 2020-21 school year.

As part of the announcement, your government indicated to British Columbians that the funding would be spent on the expansion of health and safety measures, including, "Improving air systems in schools, such as heating, ventilation and air conditioning improvements, portable air scrubbers and increased utility costs."

With B.C. now deep in the second wave of the pandemic amid reports of rising cases of in-school exposures and transmissions, people are growing increasingly concerned and the issue of improved ventilation in B.C. schools to protect the health and safety of students has never been more important. We also now have a better understanding of how the virus is spread and the importance of ventilating indoor air that may contain droplets or aerosols capable of transporting the virus.

While we understand the federal funding was allocated to school districts to spend according to the needs of their schools, we would like to know what direction was given from government to prioritize the expenditures.

With the onus on schools and school districts to fulfill these important health and safety measures, parents, educators, and students remain in the dark about when these vital ventilation system upgrades will take place.

Ensuring the health and safety of students is a responsibility that ultimately rests with your government and in the interest of transparency, we are requesting you provide the following information:

BC Liberal Official Opposition
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
T: 250-356-6171



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1. Public disclosure of how the \$242.4 million federal government grant has and will be allocated to improve health and safety standards in B.C. schools, including a financial breakdown and a summary of resources that have already been distributed.
2. A detailed breakdown of planned and completed ventilation systems upgrades in B.C. schools, including timelines, procedures, and desired outcomes with respect to improving health and safety standards for students and staff.
3. Clarification about which administrative bodies will be responsible for the allocation of these resources and details about how your government intends to ensure school districts adhere to clear and definitive timelines for the implementation of ventilation upgrades.

In the interest of the improved health and safety of our students, educators and support staff — both throughout the pandemic and beyond — we look forward to your timely response to our requests.

Regards,

Jackie Tegart
MLA, Fraser-Nicola
Official Opposition Critic for Education