

## BC school funding not keeping up with rest of Canada

For every teacher the school year begins with getting to know every child in the class, their strengths and their challenges. Next we work on figuring out what each student needs to learn to their fullest potential. Then comes the greatest challenge: how can we meet these needs?

For the past several years, actually being able to meet the needs of our students has become more and more difficult. When we look at the classroom conditions that other provinces offer to their students and teachers, we see that British Columbia is simply not keeping up with the educational commitment that is standard elsewhere in the country.

How can we keep our leading position internationally when we rank near the bottom in terms of expenditures by provincial governments on K-12 education?

That is the message we were asking the government and our employers to listen to when we started this school year with a difference. We are offering what we can for our students, despite the difficult current conditions, but we are also sending a message that things have to improve. Here is why:

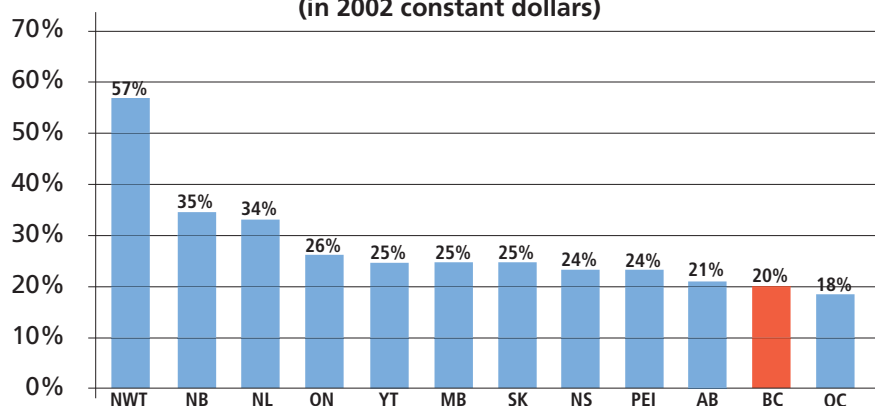
- More and more students have special needs—those who are officially documented and many more who are not identified formally.
- More and more students are English language learners.
- More and more changes in our culture, society, and economy mean that teaching and learning is a more complex and constantly changing process.

You can see it in the statistics, but most of all, we see it in our classrooms, with the students we teach and come to care about in our daily working lives.

We want and need more resources to offer the best we can. And we also want to influence the conditions of our work with students. It is recognition of the *Charter* right of freedom of association through collective bargaining that provides that influence.

Madam Justice Griffin of the BC Supreme Court, in her decision on Bills 27 and 28, said that arbitrary legislation, rather than good faith collective bargaining, was seen by teachers as a message that “the government did not respect them or consider them to be valued contributors to the education system.”

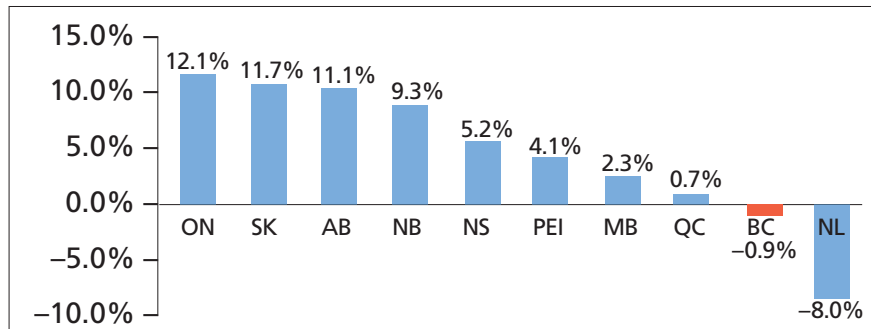
Percentage change in total K-12 expenditures per student  
Public schools: 2002-03 to 2008-09  
(in 2002 constant dollars)



Source: BCTF chart with data from Statistics Canada. Summary Public School Indicators for Canada, the Provinces and Territories, 2002/2003 to 2008/2009, Table A.20.2 Total expenditures per student in public elementary and secondary schools, Canada, provinces and territories, 2002/2003 to 2008/2009 (in 2002 constant dollars), p. 29.

Being at the bottom of the expenditures chart inevitably creates more difficult teaching conditions, as shown by this comparison of the student/educator ratio in BC compared to Canada as a whole.

### Percentage change in full-time equivalent educators: 2002–03 to 2008–09



Source: BCTF Research chart with data from Statistics Canada. *Summary Public School Indicators for Canada, the Provinces and Territories, 2002/04 to 2008/09*. Table A.13, Full-time equivalent educators in public elementary and secondary schools, Canada, provinces and territories, 2002/03 to 2008/09, p. 21

Low levels of funding and fewer teachers create the conditions that make it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of children and youth.

- The number of classes with four or more students with special needs has increased to 12,240 across BC.
- Libraries are being closed altogether or run without teacher-librarians, despite clear evidence that they play a crucial role in the development of literacy.
- Counselling services have been reduced, despite increasing stress among students growing up in our fast-paced society.
- English as an additional language and special needs experts have been cut, despite an increase in students identified as needing assistance.

So that's the reality in BC schools. We want to do an excellent job in our classrooms. We believe that our students, their parents, and our communities deserve a top quality education. The international comparisons indicate that ours is among the best. Otherwise, why would so many people from other countries send their children, at great expense, to come and study in our elementary and secondary schools? But, now teachers are stretched to, and beyond, the limit.

Teachers are committed to providing the very best public education possible, but we need sufficient learning resources and good classroom conditions to accomplish our best. We also need recognition as professionals who are partners in setting those conditions through the collective bargaining system.

**The BCTF Education Funding Brief 2011 can be found on the BCTF website at:**  
<http://tinyurl.com/3e9qokr>

