



February 24, 2025

***RE: Kamloops-Thompson Board of Education Meets with Local MLAs***

The Kamloops-Thompson Board of Education met with MLAs Lorne Doerkson, Tony Luck, Peter Milobar, Ward Stamer, and Rosalyn Bird on February 6, 2025 to review escalating relief costs, rural recruitment and retention challenges, inflationary pressures on operating funds, and capital advocacy priorities for new schools in Batchelor Heights and Aberdeen.

**1. Advocate for support staff:** The greatest cost pressure on school districts is staff who are away. This cost almost **doubled** provincially over 5 years. On any given day, 30% of Certified Education Assistants who work most closely with students who have complex needs are not replaced, which leaves students and staff who support them without enough help because we cannot recruit enough Certified Education Assistants provincially.

Over 3 years, there has been a steady increase in students with complex needs in K-12 classrooms in the Kamloops-Thompson School District and the Province:

	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>Difference 2022-2024</b>
<b>District</b>	1,100	1,191	1,256	<b>+156</b>
<b>Province</b>	39,901	42,892	43,511	<b>+3,610</b>

**Advocacy:** *We need Certified Education Assistants to have more hours and higher wages to recruit and retain them to increase support in classrooms and decrease staff absenteeism.*

**2. Advocate for rural staff:** There is a need to address and implement permanent measures to address rural recruitment needs. The District secured a one-time BCPSEA wage increase for a teacher in Vavenby (\$5,000) and Blue River (\$10,000). These incentives temporarily addressed the higher fuel and food costs in rural areas but more permanent measures are needed to address rural recruitment challenges.

**Advocacy:** *We need provincial negotiations between BCPSEA and employee unions and associations to differentiate pay for all school staff positions in rural areas.*

**3. Inflationary Pressures on Operating Funds:** There was no increase in the per student FTE rate for the 2024-2025 school year to pay for increased costs (fuel, maintenance supplies, computers, vehicle parts, employee benefits), which have increased by approximately 58-77% since 2020. These costs take away from student supplies and services.

**Advocacy:** *We need the Ministry of Education and Child Care to increase per student funding to keep pace with inflationary pressures.*

**4. New Elementary School in Batchelor Heights:** After a year and a half of aggressive advocacy, the Kamloops-Thompson School District has now received Crown Grant approval for the new elementary school in Batchelor Heights after having done two catchment changes to manage overcapacity in three schools in the last five years.

**Advocacy:** *We need the Ministry of Education and Child Care and Ministry of Infrastructure to fund this new school in Batchelor Heights.*

**5. New Secondary School in Aberdeen Advocacy:** The South West sector of Kamloops is significantly over capacity (116% to 158% capacity utilization), including Sa-Hali Secondary School (with 8 portables, this school is at 133% and projected to be 167% by 2033) and South Kamloops Secondary School (with 6 portables, this school is at 115% capacity utilization and projected to be at 129% by 2033).

**Advocacy:** *We urgently need a new secondary school in Aberdeen, as it is untenable for the District to rely on portables and catchment changes to solve these significant over-capacity issues.*

If you have any questions, please contact us:

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