



December 18, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

I value the cooperative work that your government has undertaken with British Columbia to protect the health of our citizens and effectively manage the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic. More needs to be done, but we have built solid foundations that will allow us to pursue a safe relaunch and strengthening of the economy as we start a new year.

As part of these ongoing collaborative efforts, I am pleased that your government provided us \$121.18 million as B.C.'s first tranche of the Safe Return to Class (SRTC) fund. This letter outlines how this initial funding was used to support K-12 schools in British Columbia during the first part of the school year during the pandemic. This letter also outlines how the second tranche of \$121.18 million in additional federal funding will be used to build upon the existing initiatives and support keeping schools safe for the remaining of 2020-21 school year.

In order to ensure the continued success of B.C.'s K-12 restart plans and our continued efforts keeping students and staff safe for the second half of the school year, I confirm that the full second payment of \$121.18 million is required to cover additional costs. We look forward to receiving this funding in early 2021.

1. Federal Safe Return to Class Fund (Phase I Funding Use)

- B.C. used the first installment of the federal funding to create the Safe Return to Class Fund to support schools in B.C. with the costs of providing a safe learning environment for the 2020/2021 school year.
- Our 60 public school districts and 360 independent schools used the Safe Return to Class Fund to support adapted learning spaces for students, improve air ventilation in schools and increase hand sanitation and hygiene for students and school staff, and additional health and safety measures.

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- The 2020/21 K-12 restart plans were based on local needs of school districts and independent schools and focused on the needs of Indigenous students, students with disabilities and diverse abilities as well as vulnerable students.
- Over 1,800 additional staff were hired within the K-12 sector to support the restart plans. Most of the funding support went directly to increased staff costs of approximately \$63.3 million in phase 1.
- \$21.5 million was used to implement online and remote learning options, including staffing and supplying technology.
- Other initiatives supported by the funding included mental health supports for students and staff, improving air circulation systems in schools, support for increased hand hygiene, installing plexiglass and other barriers, PPE, transportation supports (e.g. lower bus capacity, additional routes), and before and after school childcare.

2. Outline of the additional need (Phase II Funding Use)

- The first phase supported the initial 4 months of the K-12 restart plans; the second payment is required to continue this support throughout the remaining 6 months of the school year.
- The majority of the second payment will continue to cover the annualized cost of increased staffing which will ensure education is delivered safely to all students in B.C. through online, in class and blended learning methods and increased cleaning can continue to ensure COVID-19 transmission is minimized in schools.
- A portion of the second payment is needed to reduce the learning loss for those students most impacted by the pandemic. BC will take steps over the next six months, in conjunction with Indigenous rightsholders, to deliver strategies to address this issue.
- The second phase of the Federal SRTC Fund is critical to supporting the maximum number of students to stay in full-time in-person instruction for the school year. This will improve academic and mental health outcomes, ensure students stay connected to supports such as food programs, and allow parents to return to the workforce and contribute to the economy.

Canadians have been well served by the strong, collaborative efforts demonstrated by First Ministers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. I remain committed to this approach as we continue to address our top shared priority, the well-being and safety of all Canadians.

I look forward to our continued collaboration.

Sincerely,



John Horgan
Premier

cc: Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister
Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada
and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
Honourable Selina Robinson, Minister of Finance
Honourable Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Education