

School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)
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Chair: Jordan Watters, Vice-Chair: Elaine Leonard
Trustees: Nicole Duncan, Tom Ferris, Angie Hentze,
Diane McNally, Ryan Painter, Rob Paynter, Ann Whiteaker

February 25, 2021

Minister of Education
PO Box 9045
STN PROV GOVT
Victoria BC V8W 9E2
BY E-MAIL: EDUC.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister of Finance
PO Box 9417
STN PROV GOVT
Victoria BC V8W 9V1
BY E-MAIL: FIN.Minister@gov.bc.ca

ATTENTION: Minister Whiteside

ATTENTION: Minister Robinson

Dear Ministers:

RE: **Net Zero Capital Project Funding**

On February 22nd, 2021, the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) passed the following motion:

That the Board of Education of School District No. 6 (Greater Victoria) direct the Chair to write to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance, urging them to fully fund net zero capital upgrade and replacement projects, effective immediately.

The BC government recognizes the vital importance of clean energy, and the CleanBC initiative provides a pathway for achieving the Province's legislated climate targets. CleanBC sets out the following key goal: "By 2032, all new building in B.C. will have an ultra-efficient, net-zero energy

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ready design.” Net-zero energy ready building is one that is designed and constructed to achieve net-zero energy performance, which means it produces as much energy as it consumes.

The CleanBC website sets out the following, which our Board of Education lauds as a critically important approach to achieving its climate action goals:

Cleaner public-sector buildings

New schools, hospitals and other facilities continue to be built in B.C. to achieve high levels of environmental performance, meeting Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification or equivalent. On average, these facilities have been designed to perform 40 per cent better than LEED’s reference energy standard.

With this strategy we’re also taking steps to make our existing stock of buildings cleaner, smarter and more energy efficient by taking advantage of the latest proven technologies. Early analysis of net-zero construction shows that savings more than make up for any added costs. As we retrofit older public buildings in communities throughout B.C. we’ll create opportunities for local businesses, Indigenous peoples, professions and trades to develop the new energy step code skills and expertise to retrofit other buildings in their communities. For every one per cent improvement in its energy efficiency, including buildings and vehicles, B.C.’s public sector reduces its energy costs by an estimated \$4 million a year.

The Ministry of Education funds major capital projects through districts’ annual 5-year capital plans. Major capital upgrade or replacement projects are funded by government.

Given the current climate emergency, and SD61’s June 2019 climate emergency resolution, it is incumbent on Boards of Education to build major capital projects to a “net zero” standard. Currently “net zero” is at each Board’s cost. For example: In the case of upcoming replacement project in SD61, the cost to bridge the Ministry’s funding to net zero is \$2.5 million. This cost is untenable for school districts, and may require diverting funds from classrooms to capital, or further delaying other vital capital projects and repairs.

Throughout the province, districts struggle to finance climate change action. All upgrade and replacement school projects should be net zero ready, regardless of the ability of the district to fund them. It is incumbent upon the province to prioritize schools, as important public sector buildings, to receive these important upgrades.

If we want our students to grow up ready and able to fight the climate battle that they are inheriting, we need to provide them with educational institutions that they are proud to learn in, and prove to them that our generation is willing to put our money where our mouth is. Let’s do something right, and start funding these projects across the province, starting immediately.

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Yours sincerely,



Jordan Watters
Chair, Board of Education

Cc: Board of Education, School District No. 61
Shelley Green, Superintendent, School District No. 61
Kim Morris, Secretary-Treasurer, School District No. 61
Chuck Morris, Director of Facilities Services, School District No. 61
BC School Districts, via BCSTA

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One *Learning* Community

