



# British Columbia Teachers' Federation

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## Education funding: Highest needs ever

*A brief to the*

Select Standing Committee on Finance  
and Government Services

from the

British Columbia Teachers' Federation

September 16, 2010

President

Executive Director

# Education Funding Brief 2010

## BC Teachers' Federation

*bctf.ca/BriefsAndPositionPapers.aspx*

# Highest needs ever

If our students are to be prepared for the demands of the 21st century, we must find ways to meet their educational needs. These are some of those needs—the highest needs ever.

An objective that is universally supported in our society is that more of our students finish secondary school as graduates. Some 80% already do this, although Aboriginal students barely surpass the 50% mark, and we all want to increase that percentage. Those in the last 20% need the most support to help them reach the goal.

We have increasing numbers of students with special needs, in particular a dramatic increase in students identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder. In 2009–10 there were 2,548 more of these identified students than five years earlier.

This increasing number of students with special needs means that we need smaller classes if we are to meet the legislated goal of no more than three students with special needs in a classroom.

We have increasing numbers of students who are identified as English as a Second Language (ESL). There is double this number of students whose primary language spoken at home is other than English.

We have demands to upgrade outdated technology in schools that is often years behind what many students have available in their homes.

We have a range of costs downloaded onto school districts such as increases in medical service premiums, in pension contributions, and in BC Hydro rates, that all contribute to district budget shortfalls, as just a few examples.

Districts are required to pay a carbon offset, but it goes to private companies rather than districts being able to use it to modify buildings to reduce their carbon footprint. This practice amounts to diverting public funds to the benefit of private corporations.

The decline in enrolment that has been with us in the past has come to an end, according to the Ministry of Education *2009/10 Summary of Key Information*, available on the ministry website at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/docs/ski.pdf>.

The ministry report indicates that enrolment in public schools grew from 579,488 in 2008–09 to 580,486 in 2009–10, an increase of 0.2%.<sup>1</sup> Kindergarten enrolments are projected to increase every year from now on, adding more students to overall enrolments.

It is because we have the **highest needs ever** that the refrain “highest funding ever” does not satisfy. The reality is that every year in the last decade, the costs of providing quality educational service have grown faster than funding increases.

That is what we urge the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services to address: we recommend that, at minimum, funding increases in the second decade of the 21st century restore educational services that were lost in the first decade of the 21st century.

The minister of education has said that she is discouraged that the percentage of students completing graduation requirements has reached a plateau. It should not be surprising that this is happening, when the students moving to Grade 12 at this point have been educated during a time when there were fewer and fewer resources in the education system to support their learning. The system no longer has the resources that are needed to provide the level of support required to reach the individual needs of students who are having the most difficulty.

Our fundamental request is that you recommend a revision to the education funding system so that the real costs are reflected in the real value of the funding for this next budget year. Current levels of service are not adequate. Beyond maintaining current levels, we need to reclaim the services for the next decade that we lost in this last decade.

To support the case for this action, we want to show you the story in numbers.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

## 1. The number of students with high-support special needs has increased

The number of students with the highest special needs has increased, with those in the autism spectrum doubling in the past five years. The number of students with special needs that require support, but not as severe, has not decreased, even though the number officially identified has decreased.

### Change in the composition of special needs students: 2005–06 to 2009–10

Type of special need	2005–06	2009–10	Change
Increase in special needs students since 2005–06			
Autism Spectrum Disorder (G)	2,593	5,141	+2,548
Learning disabilities (Q)	16,702	17,887	+1,185
Physical disability/Chronic health impairment (D)	5,827	6,737	+910
Deafblind (B)	48	63	+15
Decrease in special needs students since 2005–06			
Gifted (P)	11,582	7,998	-3,584
Behaviour disabilities (H, R)	16,832	14,151	-2,681
Mild intellectual disability (K)	2,751	2,330	-421
Moderate to profound intellectual disability (C)	2,457	2,184	-273
Sensory disabilities (E, F)	1,797	1,599	-198
Physically dependent (A)	686	611	-75

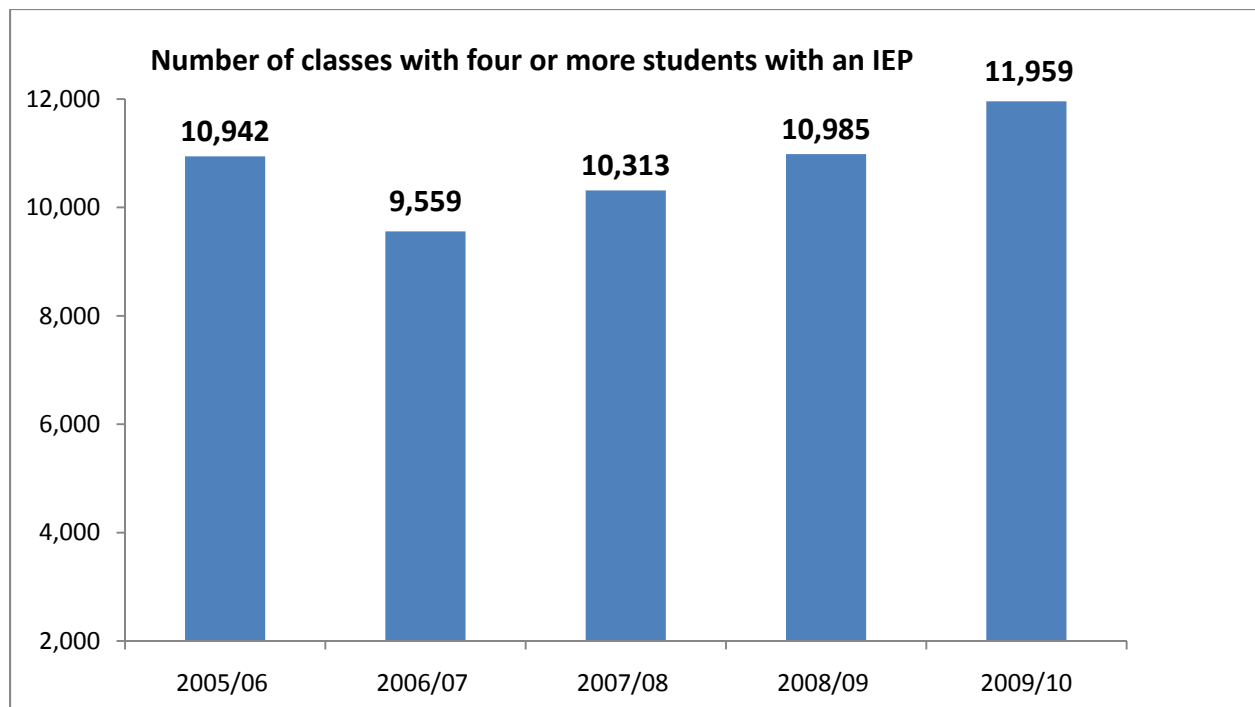
BCTF table created with data from BC Ministry of Education. Student Statistics—2009/10: Province, p.2, January 2010.

## 2. The number of classes with four or more students with an IEP is on the rise

The number of classes exceeding the legislated limit of three IEP students per class has increased steadily since 2006–07.

There were 2,400 more classes with four or more IEP students in 2009–10 than in 2006–07.

### Number of classes with four or more students with an IEP on the rise



BCTF Research calculations and table created with data from: Ministry of Education. *Overview of class size and composition in BC public schools: 2005/06, 2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10 reports*, p.3.

### 3. Loss of ESL and learning specialist teachers

#### English as a Second Language and primary language spoken at home other than English

Enrolment in English as a Second Language has increased steadily over the decade to 61,974 students in 2009–10, an increase of 2,492 students.

Almost double that number of students (130,338) live in families where the primary language spoken at home is other than English, an increase of 15,840 since 2000–01 and 3,480 since 2005–06.

#### Change in enrolment—student group/program except special needs (public only)

Student group	School year			Change	
	2000–01	2005–06	2009–10	Since 2000–01	Since 2005–06
ESL students	59,482	60,675	61,974	+2,492	+1,299
Primary language spoken at home is not English	114,498	126,858	130,338	+15,840	+3,480

BCTF table created with data from BC Ministry of Education. 2009–10 Summary of Key Information, pages 14–16, March 2010. BC Ministry of Education. Student Statistics—2009/10: Province, p.1, January 2010.

#### Loss of learning specialist teachers

The greatest loss of learning specialist teachers was in Special Education.

There has been a significant loss of ESL teachers, even though ESL student enrolment increased over the decade.

Proportionately, teacher-librarians have been hardest hit by cuts to specialist teachers.

#### Loss of specialist teachers, 2001–02 to 2009–10

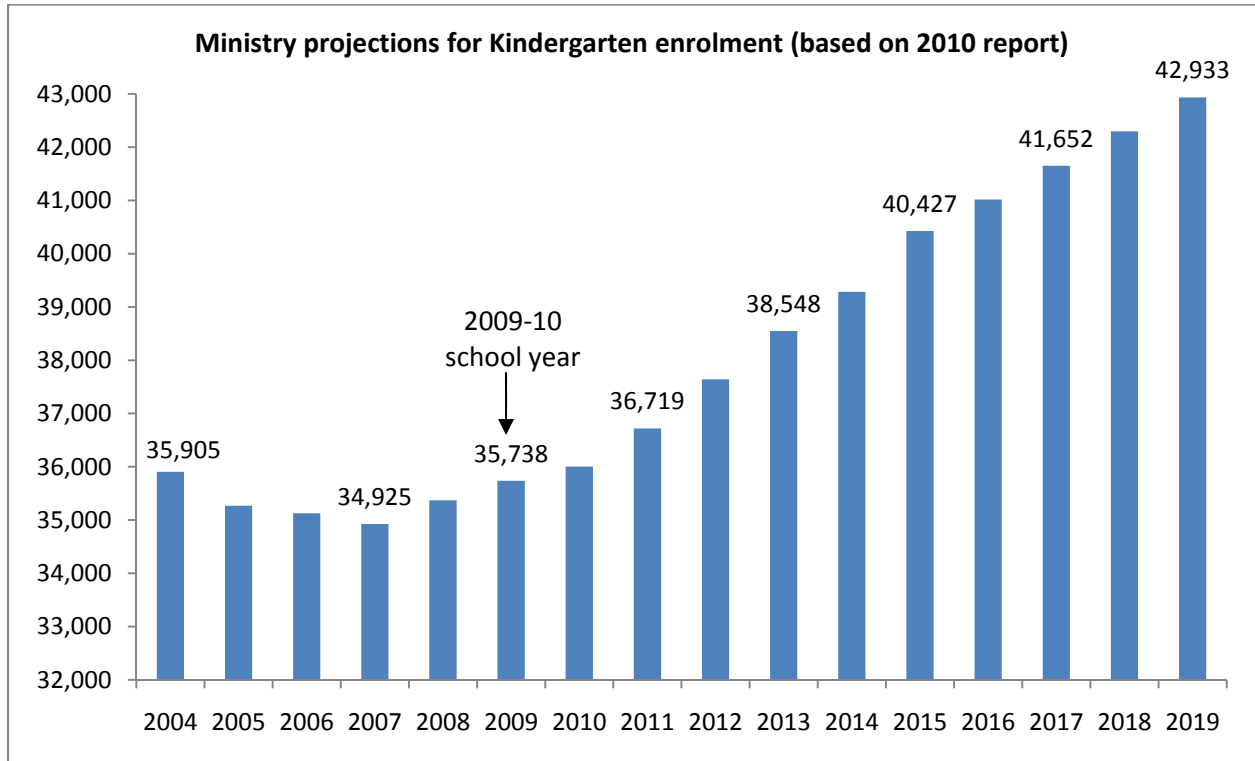
Specialty program	FTE specialist teachers			Difference, 2001–02 to 2009–10
	2001–02	2007–08	2009–10	
Library Services	921.79	729.96	685.81	-235.98
Counselling	990.92	915.80	909.88	-81.40
Special Education	4,051.47	3,446.50	3,403.37	-648.10
English as a Second Language	1,015.6	791.17	786.06	-229.54
Aboriginal Education	205.89	190.88	185.23	-20.66

BCTF Research chart with data from: Ministry of Education, *Staff by Year and Program Code* (Form 1530 data) for 2001–02 to 2009–10.

#### 4. Kindergarten enrolment is on the rise

Kindergarten enrolment turned around in 2008–09, and is projected to increase steadily over the next decade.

##### Kindergarten enrolment on the rise...



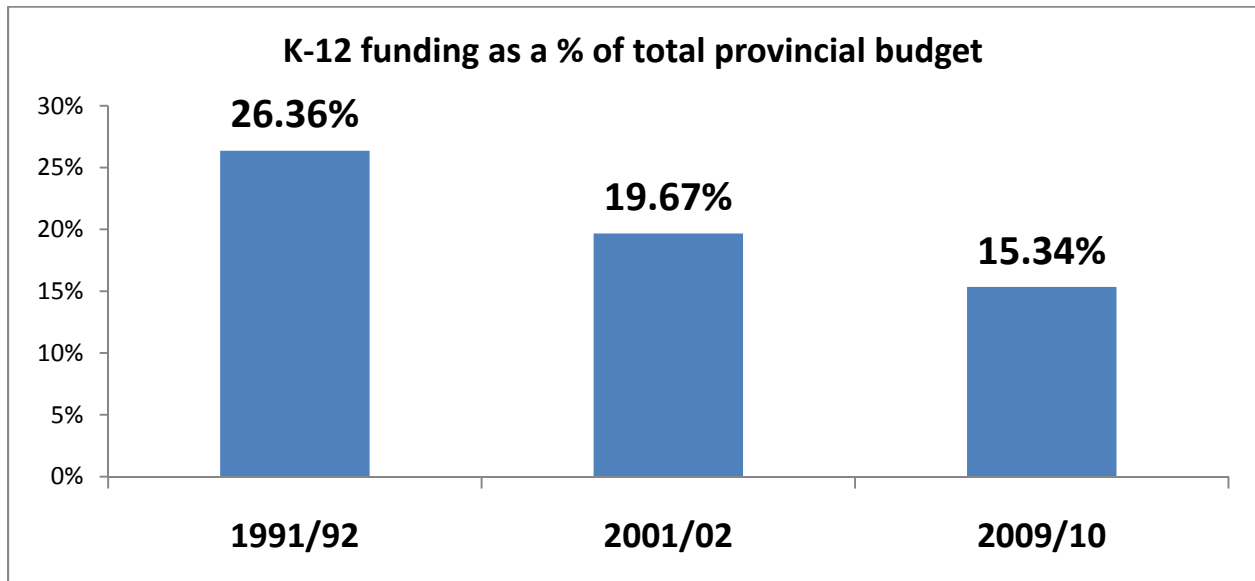
BCTF Research chart with data from the BC Ministry of Education. Provincial totals in *Projection Report for Public School Aged Headcount Enrolments (excludes adults) 2009/10 District and Provincial Report*. March 2010, p. 2.

## 5. BC relative spending on K–12 education falls steadily

K–12 education has received a diminishing share of the provincial budget. If public education received today the same percentage of the provincial budget as in 1991–92, many of the goals to improve learning conditions could be attained, such as:

- smaller classes
- increased support for students with special needs and grey-area students
- fully resourced libraries
- programs to fully meet the needs of all vulnerable students.

### BC relative spending on K–12 education falls steadily



BCTF Research chart with data from: Saanich School District. *Public Education Funding: Learning from the Past*, Presentation to VISTA, February 27, 2010 (available at [www.sd63.bc.ca](http://www.sd63.bc.ca), from Departments—Finance/Secretary-Treasurer). Figures are based on budget estimates for Ministry of Education expenses as a percentage of Consolidated Revenue Fund total expenditure in the table Estimated Expense by Organization, *British Columbia Estimate*, fiscal year ending March 31 for each of the fiscal years.

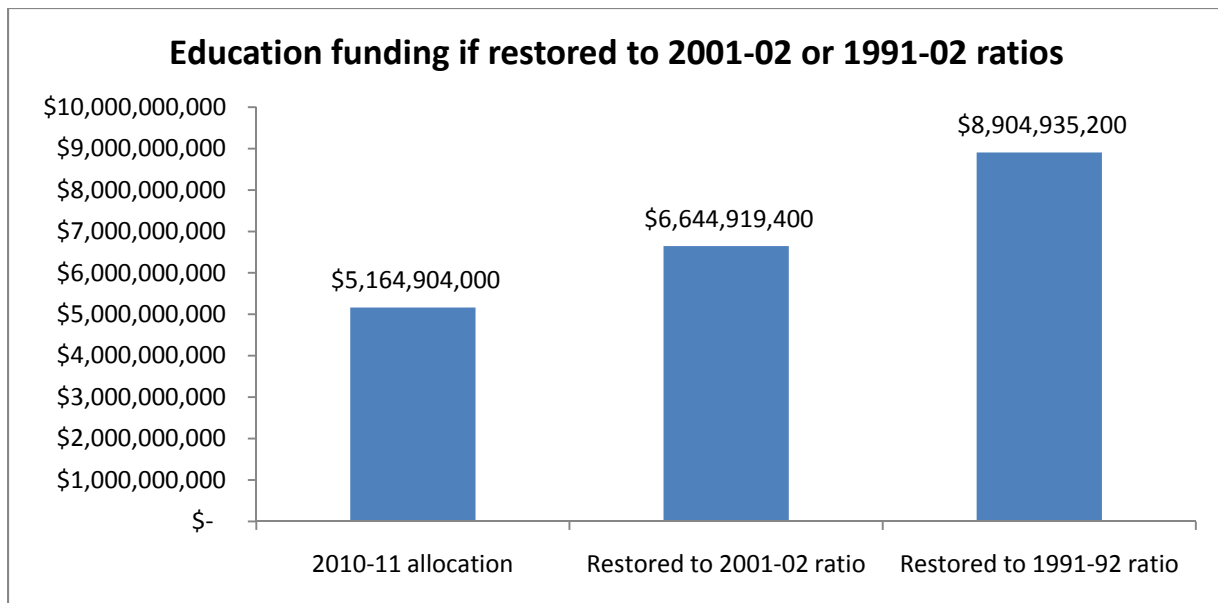


## 6. Restoring funding to prior ratios

The falling funding ratio has resulted in a significant loss of funding to public education.

If 2010–11 funding for K–12 education were restored to the 2001–02 percentage of the provincial budget, an additional \$1.5 billion would be available for public education.

If restored to 1991–92 ratios, an additional \$3.7 billion would be available to meet the unmet needs of students and resolve the outstanding issues facing public education in the coming years.



Figures are based on budget estimates for Ministry of Education expenses as a percentage of Consolidated Revenue Fund total expenditure in the table Estimated Expense by Organization, *British Columbia Estimate, fiscal year ending March 31* for each of the fiscal years.

## 7. Percentage change in educators and student enrolment— higher percentage of loss of teachers than other provinces

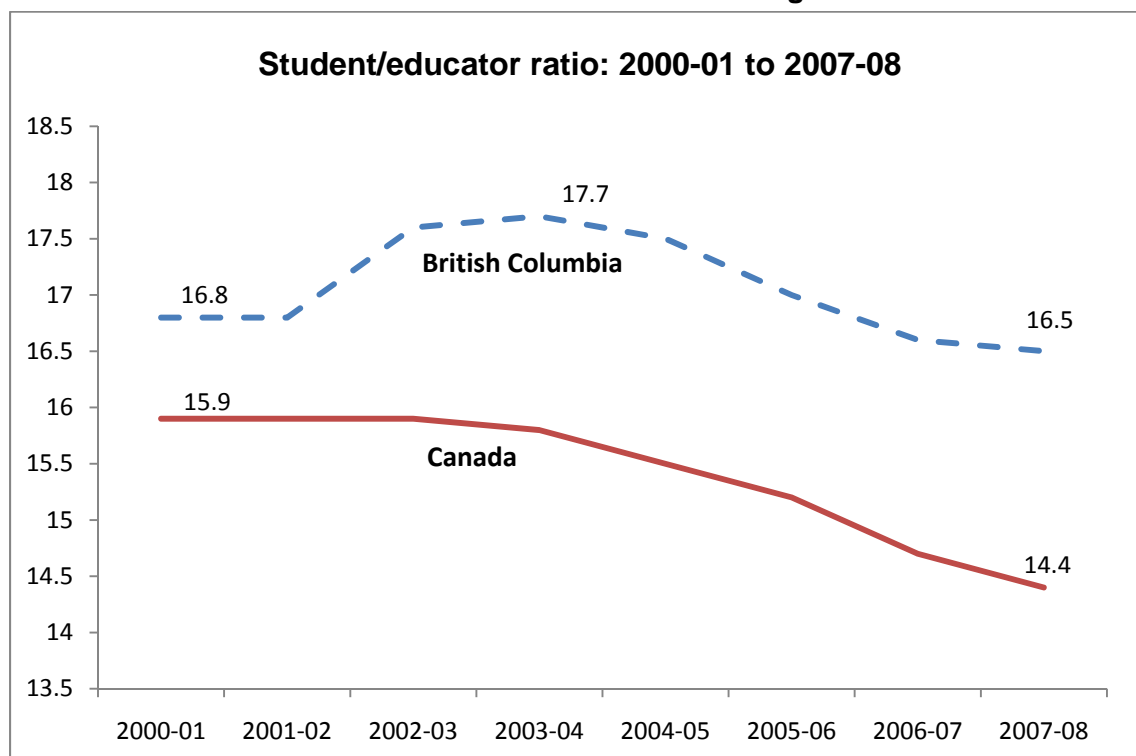
To give some perspective on what has happened in BC, we want to compare it to what is happening in other provinces and in Canada as a whole.

BC's student/educator ratio was higher than the SER for Canada as a whole in 2001–02.

The SER in BC worsened significantly in 2002–03, widening the gap between BC and the rest of Canada.

The gap between BC and the rest of Canada persists in 2007–08.

### BC student/educator ratio worse than the national average



Source: BCTF Research chart with data from Statistics Canada.

For 2001–02 to 2007–08 figures, see page 34 of the 2010 report *Summary Public School Indicators for Canada, the Provinces and Territories, 2001/2002 to 2007/2008*—Table A.14. Student-educator ratio in public elementary and secondary schools, Canada, provinces and territories, 2001/2002 to 2007/2008.

For 2000–01 figures, see page 29 of the 2009 report *Summary Public School Indicators for the Provinces and Territories, 2000/2001 to 2006/2007*—Table A.11. Student-educator ratio in public elementary and secondary schools, Canada, provinces and territories, 2000/2001 to 2006/2007.

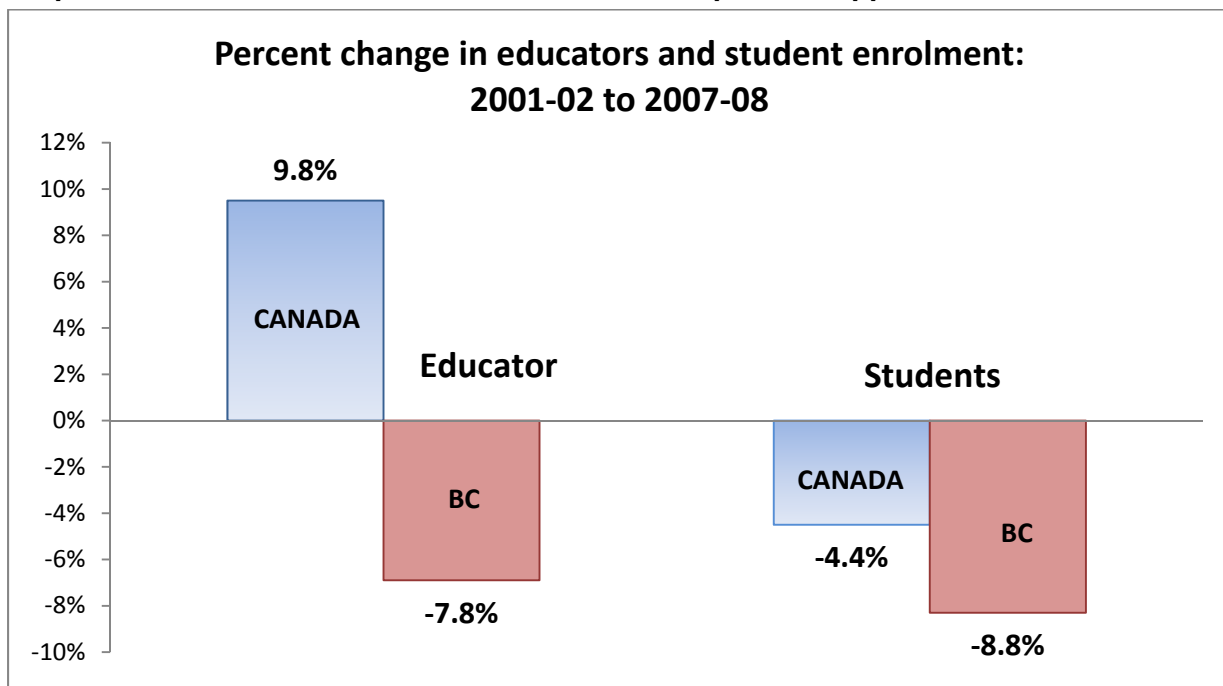
## 8. BC public schools lose educators while Canada improves support for students

Student enrolment has declined in BC and Canada since 2001–02, but more so in BC.

Since 2001–02, educator employment grew by 9.8% in Canada and fell by 7.8% in BC.

Most provinces in Canada took an opposite path to BC in the hiring of educators. Rather than reducing educational staff during a period of declining enrolment, most provinces increased teaching and administrative support for students.

### BC public schools lose educators while Canada improves support for students



BCTF Research chart with data from Statistics Canada. *Summary Public School Indicators for Canada, the Provinces and Territories, 2001/2002 to 2007/2008*.

Table A.12 Educators\* headcount in public elementary and secondary schools, Canada, provinces and territories, 2001/2002 to 2007/2008, p. 32.

Table A.1 Headcount enrolments in public elementary and secondary schools, Canada, provinces and territories, 2001/2002 to 2007/2008, p.21.

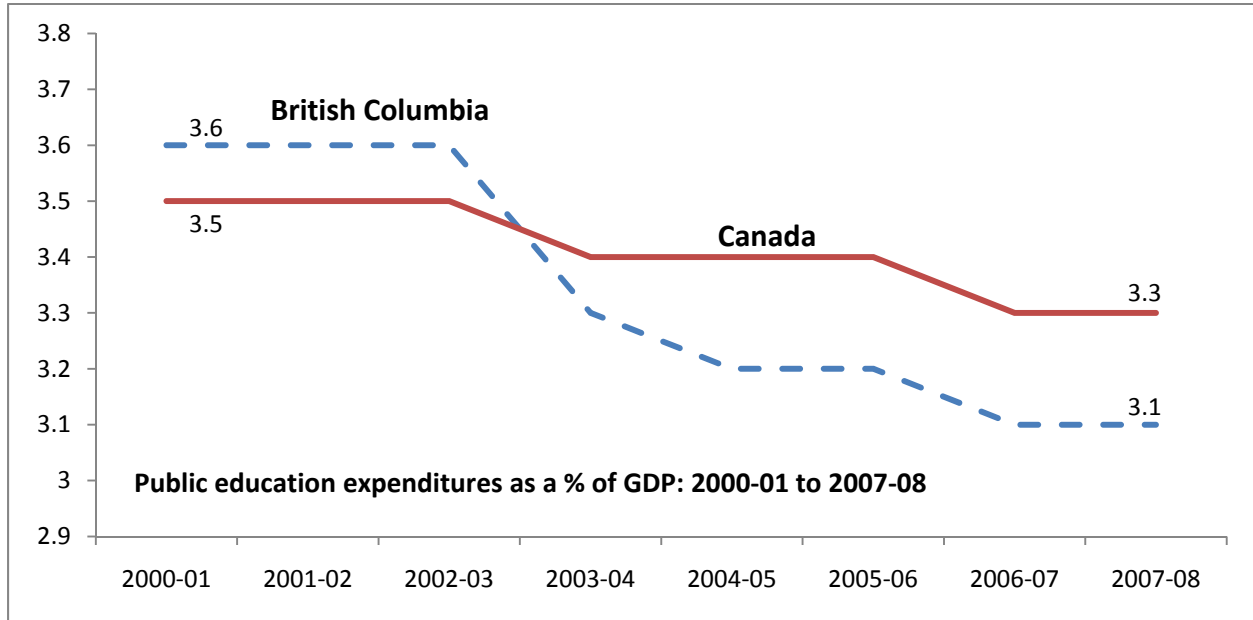
\* Statistics Canada defines educators as “all employees in the public school system (either school-based or district-based), who belong to one of the three following categories: teachers, school administrators, and pedagogical support.”

## 9. BC falls behind in education spending as percentage of GDP

BC spent a higher percent of gross domestic product on public education up to 2002–03, when BC fell behind the rest of Canada.

The gaps widened over the last five years, with BC public schools relatively worse off than the rest of the country.

### BC falls behind in education spending as percentage of GDP



Source: BCTF Research chart with data from Statistics Canada.

For 2001–02 to 2007–08 figures, see page 49 of the 2010 report *Summary Public School Indicators for Canada, the Provinces and Territories, 2001/2002 to 2007/2008*—Table A.27. Total expenditures in public elementary and secondary schools as a percentage of GDP, Canada, provinces and territories, 2001/2002 to 2007/2008.

For 2000–01 figures, see page 44 of the 2009 report *Summary Public School Indicators for the Provinces and Territories, 2000/2001 to 2006/2007*—Table A.24. Total expenditures in public elementary and secondary schools as a percentage of GDP, Canada, provinces and territories, 2000/2001 to 2006/2007.

## 10. School closures

The cumulative loss in number of schools from September 30, 2001 to June 30, 2010, is 174; expressed as a percentage, the number of schools decreased over the last decade by 9.78%. More schools are being closed or are threatened with closure in the near future.

### Change in number of schools, 2001–02 to 2010–11

	2001–02 (Sept 30)	2005–06 (Sept 30)	2009–10 (Sept 30)	June 30, 2010	Cumulative change 2001 to 2010
Number of schools	1,779	1,663	1,631	1,605	
Change		- 116	- 32	- 26	<b>- 174</b>
% change		- 6.52%	- 1.92%	- 1.59%	<b>- 9.78%</b>

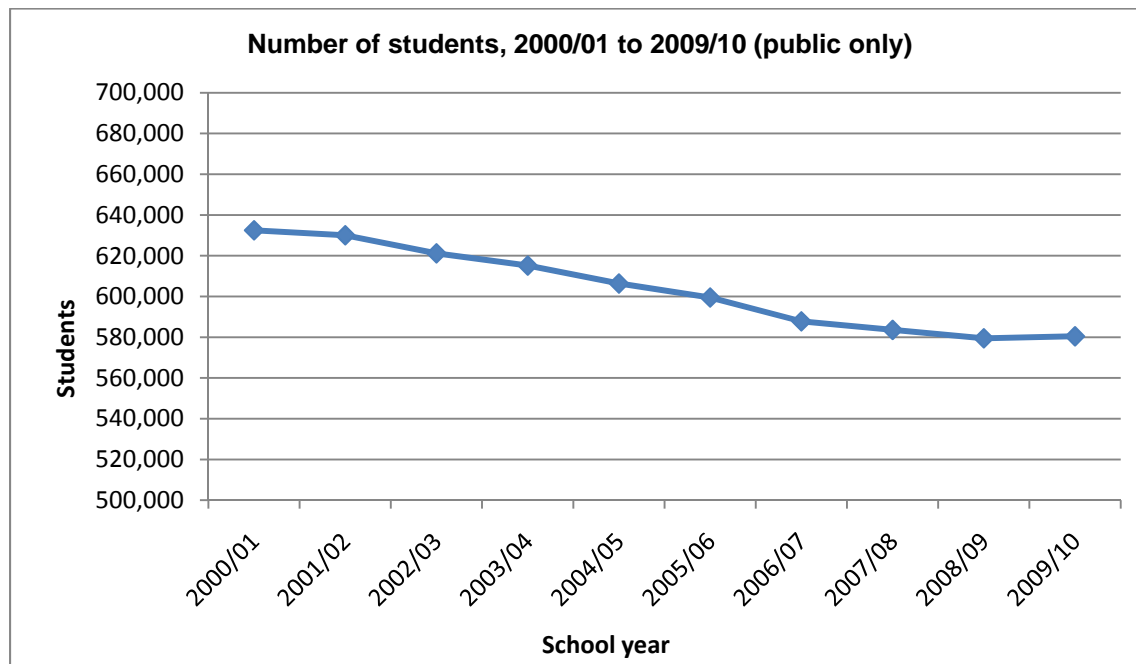
Sources: Ministry of Education, *2009/10 Summary of Key Information*, Number of Public Schools, 2000–01 to 2009–10, p. 32. Data as of June 30, 2010, gathered by BCTF from school district websites, September 2010.

## Conclusion

We urge you to reverse the downward direction of support for public education that has characterized this last decade in British Columbia. Provide the financial support that the public schools require to meet the **highest needs ever**.

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**Number of students, 2000–01 to 2009–10  
(Public only)**



School year	# of Students	%change from previous year
2000/01	632,505	
2001/02	630,049	-0.4
2002/03	621,200	-1.4
2003/04	615,183	-1.0
2004/05	606,383	-1.4
2005/06	599,492	-1.1
2006/07	587,818	-1.9
2007/08	583,623	-0.7
2008/09	579,488	-0.7
2009/10	580,486	0.2

**Notes:**

- (1) Includes all enrolled school-age students (5–19 inclusive) and adult students (20 or older) as of September 30.
- (2) Excludes all registered homeschooled children.
- (3) Student populations are calculated by headcount.