

NEWS RELEASE

Public school spending in B.C. up 11.3% per student over past decade

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For immediate release

VANCOUVER—Spending on public schools in British Columbia has increased 11.3 per cent, on a per-student basis, over the past decade, finds a new study by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Contrary to what we often hear, spending is on the rise in B.C.’s public education system,” said Angela MacLeod, a senior policy analyst with the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Education Spending and Public School Enrolment in Canada, 2019*.

The study finds that per-student spending, after adjusting for inflation, increased in B.C. from \$11,059 in 2006/07 to \$11,656 in 2016/17, the most recent year of available Statistics Canada data.

Over the same 10-year period, nominal spending on the province’s public schools increased by about 12 per cent, from \$5.8 billion to \$6.5 billion.

Crucially, teacher and staff compensation (salaries, pensions and benefits) accounted for 90 per cent of that increased spending, rising from \$3.9 billion in 2006/07 to more than \$4.5 billion in 2015/16.

This spending increase occurred over a decade that saw a 7.2 per cent decline in B.C. public school enrolment. In fact, from 2006/07 to 2015/16, public school enrolment dropped by more than 25,000 students. This is part of the reason why per student spending is increasing; even small nominal increases in spending get amplified when the number of students decline.

“In critical policy discussions, especially those that affect our children’s education, it’s important to understand exactly what’s happening with public education spending—how much money is being spent and where it’s going,” MacLeod said.

“In B.C., the evidence is clear—education spending has increased substantially over the past 10 years.”

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