



ITEM 10

To: **Board of Education**

From: Trustee
Kim Dumore

Re: **TRUSTEE MOTION: FUNDING FOR
STRONGSTART BC PROGRAMS**

Date: January 17, 2024
(Public Board Meeting)

Decision

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

School Districts across the province have consistently demonstrated unwavering support for Early Learning initiatives with StrongStart Centres serving as models for early learning best practices. These programs play a pivotal role in providing invaluable support to young families, offering play-based learning experiences for children aged birth to five¹. Moreover, they create opportunities for facilitators to engage in positive and supportive conversations with parents and caregivers. These interactions address the importance and value of play-based early learning activities, social-emotional wellness, and child development and connect families with valuable community resources.

Since the Province began expanding StrongStart BC programs in BC in 2006/07², StrongStart has proven to be a cornerstone in fostering the growth of our youngest learners. Regrettably, the program's funding from the Ministry of Education and Child Care has remained stagnant since 2012/13. For School District No. 42 this represents \$256,000 of funding for the operation of eight programs.

This outdated funding model is woefully insufficient to cover the increasing operational expenses incurred by StrongStart Centres impacted by inflation on salaries, benefits, and supplies. While the funding has remained stagnant, the 12-month average consumer price index for BC has increased more than 26% from June 2013 to June 2023³. Without a corresponding increase in funding, school districts have needed to subsidize these Special Purpose Fund programs from Operating Fund budgets; however, this is unfair and not sustainable.

In light of the invaluable contributions these programs make to the overall well-being and development of our community's youngest members, immediate action is necessary to address the funding shortfall and ensure the sustained success of StrongStart programs throughout British Columbia.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Board approve the following motion for submission to the 2024 B.C. School Trustees Association Annual General Meeting:

"THAT BCSTA urge the Minister of Education and Child Care to address the critical funding shortfalls experienced by School Districts in operating StrongStart BC centres by fully funding the StrongStart programs."

¹ [StrongStart BC - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education/strongstart/)

² [New StrongStart BC Centre opens doors to young learners | BC Gov News](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education/strongstart/new-strongstart-bc-centre-opens-doors-to-young-learners/)

³ [Consumer Price Index \(CPI\) - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/finance/consumer-price-index/)

21. Funding for StrongStart BC Programs

Category: Education Finance

Motion #:	21 : A202421	Sponsor:	Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows <i>and</i> Pacific Rim <i>and</i> Vancouver Island Branch
Meeting:	AGM 2024	Action:	<i>not specified</i>
Category:		Outcome:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May 2024: Met with Ministry staff re: motion
Disposition:	Carried as amended		

Motion as Adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the BCSTA request that the Minister of Education and Child Care fully fund StrongStart BC programs including Franc départ to address the critical funding shortfalls experienced by school districts in operating these early learning opportunities.

Motion as Presented:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the BCSTA request that the Minister of Education and Child Care fully fund StrongStart BC programs to address the critical funding shortfalls experienced by school districts in operating these early learning opportunities.

Rationale:

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

School Districts across the province continue to support early learning initiatives with StrongStart Centres serving as models for early learning best practices. These programs play a pivotal role in providing invaluable support to young families, offering play-based learning experiences for children aged birth to five^[1]. Moreover, they create opportunities for facilitators to engage in positive and supportive conversations with parents and caregivers. These interactions address the importance and value of play-based early learning activities, social-emotional wellness, and child development and connect families with valuable community resources.

Since the Province began expanding StrongStart BC programs in BC in 2006/07^[2], StrongStart has proven to be a cornerstone in fostering the growth of our youngest learners. Regrettably, the program's funding from the Ministry of Education and Child Care has remained stagnant since 2012/13.



This outdated funding model is insufficient to cover the increasing operational expenses incurred by StrongStart Centres impacted by inflation on salaries, benefits, and supplies. While the funding has remained stagnant, the 12-month average consumer price index for BC has increased more than 26% from June 2013 to June 2023^[3]. Without a corresponding increase in funding, school districts have needed to subsidize these Special Purpose Fund programs from Operating Fund budgets; however, this is unfair and not sustainable.

In light of the invaluable contributions these programs make to the overall well-being and development of our community's youngest members, immediate action is necessary to address the funding shortfall and ensure the sustained success of StrongStart programs throughout British Columbia.

Reference(s):

[1] [StrongStart BC - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

[2] [New StrongStart BC Centre opens doors to young learners | BC Gov News](#)

[3] [Consumer Price Index \(CPI\) - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)