

Minister's statement on return to school

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Statement

Victoria
Tuesday, September 5, 2023 7:00 AM

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Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care, has released the following statement regarding the first day of school:

“This week, countless students across the province will be heading back to school, reuniting with old friends, making new friends, meeting their teachers and learning new things.

“As we start a new school year, I recognize that some students, teachers and staff may not be in their homes and communities due to the devastating wildfires happening throughout our province. Ministry staff are working with the school districts in these areas to support students and staff, and we will continue to do so for as long as help is needed.

“I want to thank the leadership and staff of school districts within wildfire-affected areas who are working tirelessly to support their communities by providing school buses to support evacuation efforts, securing student records, providing school facilities for evacuees and responders, and being available for families in need of supports. The staff at these schools and school districts have shown an incredible amount of resiliency and dedication to their students and communities. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and work directly with school districts to provide support.

“Now more than ever, our government is committed to providing the best education experience for all of B.C.’s K-12 students and their families. We are working to create an education system that builds greater equity with a focus on student success and well-being for all students throughout the province with safe, supportive and enriching spaces for learning.

“Global inflation and escalating prices have put extra pressure on families in our province. School food programs are one way to help alleviate this strain while tackling student hunger. This year, more children and youth will have access to healthy meals and snacks at school with the Province’s new Feeding Futures funding. The funding will provide \$214 million over three years to create or expand local school food programs in every school district throughout B.C., helping more students get the nutrition they need to focus on their education.

“We’re also helping with the cost of before- and after-school child care. We know child care costs don’t stop when children start school, which is why we have introduced this made-in-B.C. solution. As of Sept. 1, 2023, families with children in eligible child care programs will automatically save up to \$145 per child per month. These savings will help lighten the load for families as children head back to school.

“Every student in B.C. should have the support they need to learn and grow at school. We know there are children who continue to face barriers, and we are working to change that by ensuring they have access to qualified teachers. We’re investing \$12.5 million to boost the recruitment and retention of teachers in rural and northern districts, and to support the recruitment and retention of Indigenous teachers. This project will expand to other rural and remote areas across the province in the future through the StrongerBC Future Ready Action Plan.

“As students are facing an increasingly complex world, our government is prioritizing student mental health and well-being. At the end of the last school year, there were 890 teacher psychologists and counselors working in B.C. public schools throughout the province. We are also building and implementing new Integrated Child and Youth Teams in 12 school districts to provide wraparound supports for young people and connect them with services they need.

“I want to thank all our partners across the education sector for their dedication and collaboration, providing students across B.C. with the comprehensive support systems that they deserve. I wish everyone a safe and successful school year.”