

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, February 5, 2009

Investment in public education key to economic stimulus, poll shows

An overwhelming majority (86 percent) of British Columbians believe investment in public education should be a key part of any economic stimulus plan in the upcoming provincial budget, said a poll released today by the BC Coalition for Public Education.

"British Columbians are saying loud and clear government needs to invest in our public education system—including students, workers, programs, services, technology, grounds and buildings—so that when we emerge from this economic mess, we're well-prepared to seize the opportunities of tomorrow," said Coalition spokesperson Shamus Reid, who also chairs the BC division of the Canadian Federation of Students.

The coalition warned against any plans by the Campbell government to freeze or cut education funding, saying starving schools and post-secondary institutions will create a "false economy" that will seriously impact an already underfunded, beleaguered education system.

"Our poll shows the public is worried about the current state of our education system," Reid said. "Since 2002, 177 schools have closed. Others need seismic upgrading. ESL and special needs programs are inadequate. Tuition fees have skyrocketed, massively increasing student debt. Cash-strapped colleges and universities have had to limit enrolment and cut programs. Trades, technology and apprenticeship programs lack funds to meet industry needs and to make BC a world-class centre for research and innovation."

Along with its poll, the coalition released a five-point plan calling for new and renewed investment to improve the quality and accessibility of elementary, secondary and post-secondary education.

"We challenge the Campbell government to take immediate steps to implement this plan," Reid said. "Government needs to ensure our citizens are educated and skilled if we are to come out of this economic crisis intact. Our economic future and prosperity depend on it."

The telephone poll was conducted between January 14-21, 2009, by the Mustel Group on behalf of the Coalition for Public Education. A total of 500 randomly selected BC adults were interviewed.

The Coalition for Public Education supports and promotes universally accessible, quality public education and includes students, civil society organizations, and the people who teach and work in BC's schools, colleges, institutes and universities.

- 30 -

Contact: Phillip Legg, cellular (604) 788-2877



BC Teachers' Federation
B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union
Canadian Federation of Students
Charter for Public Education Network
Confederation of University Faculty Associations of BC
B.C. Division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees
Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC



www.bccpe.ca

