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## INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release  
2022ECC0029-000644  
April 26, 2022

Ministry of Education and Child Care

### **B.C. makes changes to better support francophone students, families**

VICTORIA – The Province has introduced legislative amendments to the School Act that will expand access to and improve French-language schools for francophone British Columbians, to ensure students in B.C. have access to high-quality learning environments, in both of Canada’s official languages.

The Conseil scolaire francophone (CSF) is one of 60 public boards of education established under the School Act and has a unique and specific mandate to provide K-12 public education in French throughout the province. As British Columbia’s only francophone education authority, the CSF provides francophone educational programs primarily to students whose parents have constitutional rights under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to have their children receive education in the French language.

The legislative amendments introduced in Bill 22 are in support of a new, long-term capital strategy for the CSF that will uphold government’s commitments to fulfil the constitutional rights of francophone British Columbians to minority language education under the charter. The Province’s constitutional obligations in this area were clarified and defined in a 2020 decision of the Supreme Court of Canada. The capital strategy will explore establishing a capital project office dedicated to the CSF to support the development and delivery of capital projects in communities where new or improved francophone schools are needed. The strategy will also involve investigating opportunities to leverage Crown land for future francophone schools and continuing ongoing efforts to work in partnership with other public boards of education to accommodate current and forecasted CSF enrolment needs.

The School Act amendments in support of the capital strategy will permit the Minister of Education and Child Care to require all public boards of education, including the CSF, to report information to the minister on all lands that they own or lease. This will allow the ministry to create an inventory of all lands used for K-12 purposes, to support efforts to meet the CSF’s capital needs over the long term. The amendments also give the Province the ability to designate land held by a board and to transfer that land to the CSF. This power will only be used when all other avenues to fulfil the Province’s obligations to minority language education rights-holders have been exhausted, including but not limited to purchasing private land.

There are approximately 6,500 CSF students in 47 francophone schools throughout the province, with enrolment forecasted to increase over the coming decade.

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