

NEWS RELEASE

Eliminating funding for independent schools would likely further strain public school resources in B.C.

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For immediate release

VANCOUVER—Defunding independent schools in British Columbia is likely to further strain resources for public schools and lead to increased costs for taxpayers, finds a new study by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“If independent schools were defunded, tuitions would increase, and many B.C. parents would likely be forced to move their kids to public schools where the provincial government pays the full cost,” said Deani Van Pelt, director of the Barbara Mitchell Centre for Improvement in Education at the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Independent Schools in British Columbia: Myths and Realities*.

The B.C. government partially funds independent schools (although funding levels vary). The study finds average government spending of \$3,911 per student in independent schools compared to \$8,288 per student in public schools. And that figure doesn’t include capital costs for public schools, such as building maintenance.

Clearly, independent schools require substantially fewer public dollars per student. Subsequently, as independent school enrolment increases, the government pays fewer and fewer dollars for students in independent schools, the majority of which receive 35 per cent or 50 per cent of comparable public school per student funding.

And that is exactly the trend in B.C.—public school enrolment has declined 8.5 per cent between 2004/2005 and 2013/2014 while independent school enrolment increased nearly 18 per cent over the same period.

Yet some claim that independent school funding reduces resources available to the public system.

But according to the study, if government funding of independent schools was eliminated, and 37,464 students (or 47.2 per cent of full-time-equivalent independent school students) migrated to public schools as a result, any savings to the province would be negated by the increased cost of having those former independent school students in public schools.

“Independent schools do not take away resources from public schools, and in fact, eliminating the partial funding independent schools currently receive would likely increase the strain on government finances and increase costs for B.C. taxpayers,” Van Pelt said.

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