

## **CUPE Background: Annual Facility Grants**

The Annual Facility Grant was created in 1988 to provide funding that would give districts the means to undertake routine maintenance intended to extend the useful life of school facilities.

Although much of the funding is directed by boards to repair roofs, projects also include work on mechanical, electrical and heating systems, and those which ensure future loss prevention in areas like fire or flood protection. Timely investment in building maintenance helps prevent future costs that can be much greater.

In the 21 year history of the grant, this is the first time the provincial government has reneged on payment. Normally districts receive word from the Ministry on AFG monies in the spring to enable the organization of necessary work during summer months when buildings are unoccupied.

Reaction to the AFG news has been swift. In an email sent to board chairs throughout the province, BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) President Connie Denesiuk commented “(t)his bad news puts boards in a very difficult position.”

In Nanaimo-Ladysmith, AFG-related layoffs of trades and maintenance staff have already been announced. In Richmond preparatory painting work initiated over the summer is likely to be put on hold, and planned roof repairs on a secondary school are being scuttled. Sizeable support staff layoffs are also anticipated in Surrey. More of this is likely to follow as districts mull the impact of the cut on budgets already battered by multi-million dollar shortfalls.

News of the AFG cut was also accompanied by word that the Ministry of Education is also discontinuing lease payments that fund facility use by the Francophone School Authority, amounting to some \$1.9 million and to claw back \$3.7 million in funding intended to soften the impact on boards of enrolment decline.

There are 12 specific categories of eligible annual facility grant expenditure:

1. Roof Replacements (including scheduled roof replacements and major roof repairs)
2. Mechanical System Upgrades (improvements, replacements or provision of heating, ventilation, air conditioning or plumbing systems)
3. Electrical System Upgrades (improvements or replacements of power supply and distribution systems)
4. Facility Upgrades (improvements to protect the fabric of the plant, including exterior painting, window and door replacement, building envelope repair and replacement, structural and nonstructural seismic mitigation)
5. Loss Prevention Projects (improvements, replacements or provision of fire protection system)
6. Functional Improvements (improvements of school facilities related to the provision of educational programming)
7. Technology Infrastructure Upgrades ("behind the wall" improvements to accommodate computer and telecommunications wiring and cabling)

8. Site Upgrades (site improvements including positive site drainage; repairs to sidewalks, parking lots, site access/egress, paved work areas, paved play areas, and play fields; perimeter safety fencing; contaminated soil remediation; underground storage tanks removal)
9. Disabled Access (improvements related to access for persons with physical disabilities)
10. Asbestos Abatement
11. Health and Safety Upgrades (improvements related to indoor air quality, seismic vulnerability, traffic safety, and structural upgrades)
12. Site Servicing (improvements, replacements or provision of sewer, drainage or water services; underground irrigation systems).”