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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

### **Public input sought on rural education**

VICTORIA – The Province is seeking public input on rural education as part of a strategy being created by Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Education Linda Larson to better understand the needs of students, parents, schools and communities in rural B.C.

Until Jan. 9, 2017, British Columbians can join in the online discussion to share stories on rural education and thoughts around community development at:

<http://engage.gov.bc.ca/ruraleducation>

A draft discussion paper will then be developed and posted online for further public comment, followed by several regional meetings that will be hosted by Larson. Stakeholder groups may also submit formal submissions to government, which will be posted online.

All feedback received will help government shape a final report on an integrated rural education strategy, including recommendations for the future. The strategy will aim to find long-term solutions for the unique challenges facing rural school districts and communities, including looking at the important social, cultural and economic roles that schools play in small communities.

#### **Quotes:**

##### **Mike Bernier, Minister of Education –**

“We are looking at the role education and schools play in rural communities to create an education strategy that will better serve families and schools. We want to hear from all British Columbians on how to improve rural education services and create a full and integrated strategy that will help move our province forward.”

##### **Linda Larson, Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Education –**

“Families living in rural communities have different needs than those living in high-density areas. Over the next several months, I will be traveling to each region within the province, listening to families and educators and working on a new strategy for rural education that will help find long-term solutions for the unique challenges rural communities and schools face every day.”

##### **Donna Barnett, Minister of State for Rural Economic Development –**

“Schools are a lifeline in B.C. communities. This is especially evident in smaller towns where one elementary school may be used before and after class for childcare, on the weekends by a local theatre company and in the evenings for a local sports team. I encourage all citizens to

engage in this important conversation.”

**Quick Facts:**

- In British Columbia, approximately 32% of the students in the K-12 education system attend schools located outside of the greater Victoria, Lower Mainland and Kelowna areas – many in very small communities that use school facilities as a hub for community activities.

**Learn More:**

In June 2016, Premier Christy Clark announced the new Rural Education Enhancement Fund:  
<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016PREM0067-001044>

The Ministry of Education has also launched a new parent engagement process to better understand how parents want to be informed of their student’s success from kindergarten to Grade 9. Participate in this process by visiting: <http://engage.gov.bc.ca/yourkidsprogress>

**Media Contact:**

Government Communications and Public  
Engagement  
Ministry of Education  
250 356-5963

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