

January 30, 2018

Minister@cic.gc.ca

The Honourable Ahmed D. Hussen, Lib, M.P.
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1L1

Dear Honourable Minister,

The Richmond Board of Education is writing to express its concerns regarding funding for Settlement Services which provides important programs and services for newcomer children and families.

Richmond School District was one of two school districts to pilot the delivery of settlement services in schools through the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program in 2007. The pilot was a success and SWIS programs are now available across the province.

As part of the SWIS program, Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) currently funds the district to provide settlement services to children, families and adults. These services include, but are not limited to, information and orientation, needs assessment and referrals, group or one-to-one sessions, community connections through Parent Conversation Circles and networking opportunities. A unique service provided by SWIS is support for children and families navigating the education system. This support is vital because education is the key for children and their families to become contributing residents of Canada.

The SWIS program has been funded directly by IRCC since August of 2014. In the second year of this agreement IRCC implemented an 8% cut across the program, which resulted in over \$100K in reductions and the loss of 2.8 FTE positions. In the 2016-2017 fiscal year IRCC granted the school district a one-year extension of this contract with a further reduction of 8.5% to the budget. The current contribution agreement spans from 2017 through March 2020 with reductions of 6%-8% in Years 2 and 3. In the time that IRCC has directly funded the SWIS program in Richmond the budget has been cut by approximately \$335K and the staff team has been reduced from 15 staff to 11 and will be reduced further next school year. The school district provides over \$90K in-kind towards this contract in the form of office/rental space. To continue providing quality service, the SWIS need to be funded in a model that sustains the program without drawing upon K-12 educational funds.

Board of Education:

Eric Yung - Chairperson

Sandra Nixon - Vice Chairperson

Ken Hamaguchi Jonathan Ho Donna Sargent

Debbie Tablotney Alice Wong

At its meeting held January 10, 2018 the Richmond Board of Education passed the following resolution:

*011/2018 **THAT** the Board of Education (Richmond) write a letter to the federal government reiterating the need for SWIS funding based on our recommendation of the February 23, 2016 letter including any additional information that may be pertinent for 2018. CARRIED*

The Richmond Board of Education values its government and community partners and hopes that the Federal government will revise its current levels of support for settlement services in order to ensure that newcomers to Canada are able to settle with dignity and confidence. We also request that Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada consult directly with school districts in order to determine the level of increased funding required to operate SWIS programs in 2018-2019 fiscal year and beyond, and create a plan for addressing sustainable and consistent funding requirements in subsequent years.

Sincerely,



Dr. Eric Yung, Chairperson
On Behalf of the Board of Education (Richmond)

Cc Board of Education (Richmond)
 Superintendent of Schools
 Hon. A. Wong, MP (Richmond Centre)
 J. Peschisolido, MP (Steveston-Richmond East)
 J. Johal, MLA (Richmond-Queensborough)
 L. Reid, MLA (Richmond East)
 T. Wat, MLA (Richmond Centre)
 J. Yap, MLA (Richmond-Steveston)
 Richmond Stakeholder Group Presidents