

February 11, 2015

The Honourable Chris Alexander, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1L1

Email: Chris.Alexander@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Alexander:

Settlement Services Funding Changes

The Richmond Board of Education is writing to express its concerns regarding changes to Settlement Services funding and the impact that these changes have brought to the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) Program.

On April 12, 2012, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney, announced that the Federal Government would be resuming management of settlement programs in British Columbia (BC) and Manitoba. It was stated that this would allow immigrants to have access to a consistent level of services across the country.

Previously, BC and Manitoba had immigration agreements with the Federal government which allowed the provinces to administer their settlement programs to best address provincially specified needs. As a result of the Federal Government resuming management of settlement programs in BC, there has been a decrease in service to a variety of groups new to the country. Under the new Federally administered Settlement Services funding, the following groups of newcomers are no longer eligible for service from the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program: refugee applicants, temporary foreign workers, Study Permit holders, and new Canadian citizens. These changes have resulted in decreased support for families new to Canada and the loss of 2.8 full time equivalent staff under the contract that the Richmond School Board administers.

In British Columbia and in the Richmond School District, the Settlement Workers in Schools has provided seamless support for new families to Canada, and their work is successful because schools are often the first services accessed by newcomers. As well, when families are confident in the support their children are receiving at school they are better equipped to cope with settling in a new country. Unfortunately with the changes in the funding guidelines it is difficult provide consistent levels of service to all newcomers to Richmond.

Board of Education:
Eric Yung - Chairperson
Debbie Tablotney – Vice Chairperson
Ken Hamaguchi Jonathan Ho Sandra Nixon
Donna Sargent Alice Wong

The Richmond Board of Education values its government and community partners and hopes that both the Provincial Government and Federal Government will revise their current levels of support for settlement services in order to ensure that newcomers to Canada are able to settle with dignity and confidence which in turn will make it easier for them to contribute to the health and well being of our country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Yung", written in a cursive style.

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

cc Richmond Board of Education
 Superintendent of Schools
 Secretary Treasurer
 Richmond MPs
 Richmond MLAs
 City of Richmond
 Kwantlen Polytechnic University