

February 23, 2016

Minister@cic.gc.ca

The Honourable John McCallum, P.C., 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.

Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) currently funds the district's SWIS program 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 when an 18-month agreement was signed. In the second year of the 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 program. IRCC has offered the school district a one-year extension of this contract and is cutting another 8.5% of the overall budget. This translates to another \$95K and further staff reductions for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. In the three years that IRCC has directly funded the SWIS program in Richmond the budget has been cut by almost \$200K and the staff team has been reduced from 15 staff in 2013 to 12 in 2015 and will be reduced further by 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:**

Debbie Tablotney - Chairperson  
Donna Sargent - Vice Chairperson  
Ken Hamaguchi Jonathan Ho Sandra Nixon  
Eric Yung Alice Wong

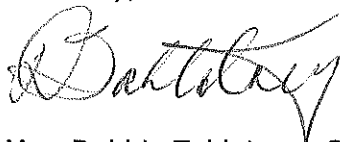
At the public board meeting on February 1, 2016, the Richmond Board of Education passed the following resolution:

038/2016 **THAT** the Board of Education write to the federal government and request that funding for the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program be increased and ongoing;

**AND FURTHER THAT** the Board of Education (Richmond) meet with local MPs to discuss this further. 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 2017-2018 fiscal year and beyond, and create a plan for addressing sustainable and consistent funding requirements in subsequent years.

Sincerely,



Mrs. Debbie Tablotney, Chairperson  
On Behalf of the Board of Education (Richmond)

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