

May 11, 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,

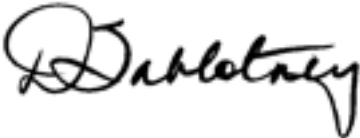
Thank you for your April 8, 2016 response to our Board's February 23, 2016 letter in which we expressed our concerns regarding funding for Settlement Services which provides important programs and services for newcomer children and families. For ease of reference I have attached both letters.

At a meeting with Mr. Joe Peschisolido, MP, Steveston-Richmond East, on April 26, 2016, our Board was advised that the Federal Government is currently reviewing immigration services and we hope that the review will take into consideration the concerns our Board has expressed about continued funding support for this important service to our community.

We again request that Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada consult directly with school districts in order to determine the level of increased funding required to operate Settlement Workers in Schools programs in the 2017-2018 fiscal year and beyond, and create a plan for addressing sustainable and consistent funding requirements in subsequent years.

Education is vital for the wellbeing of our Canadian nation as a whole. Education and the unique services provided by the SWIS program are especially vital for immigrant children and families to become contributing residents of Canada.

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)
Richmond Stakeholder Group Presidents

Hon. L. Reid, MLA (Richmond East)
J. Yap, MLA (Richmond-Steveston)
Hon. T. Wat, MLA (Richmond Centre)
House Leader, Official Opposition
Education Critic, Official Opposition

Board of Education:

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

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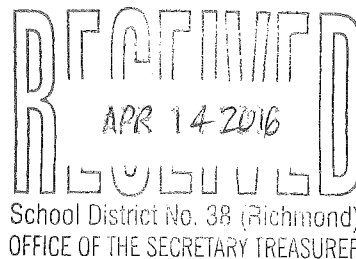
Minister
of Immigration,
Refugees and Citizenship



Ministre
de l'Immigration,
des Réfugiés et de la Citoyenneté

Ottawa, Canada K1A 1L1

Ms. Debbie Tablotney
Chairperson
School District No. 38 (Richmond)
7811 Granville Avenue
Richmond BC V6Y 3E3



Dear Ms. Tablotney:

Thank you for your letter of February 23, 2016, written on behalf of the Richmond Board of Education, concerning settlement programming being offered in your school district.

I would like to assure you that the Settlement Workers in Schools program is an important component of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's settlement programming and your dedication to offering quality services is highly commendable. We know that schools can effectively reach youth, families and other vulnerable newcomers who may not otherwise receive settlement services. Access to these integral services helps to build strong communities that are truly welcoming and inclusive.

As part of the Department's financial responsibilities, it is necessary to adjust regional funding allocations under multi-year contribution agreements to take into account changing immigration patterns, client needs and/or demand for services. These considerations resulted in funding changes to service provider agreements in British Columbia for 2015 and 2016.

In December 2015, I announced new funding of \$335 million over four years for resettlement and settlement services to help integrate 25,000 Syrian refugees into communities across Canada, including British Columbia. I am pleased to inform you that your school district will receive supplementary funding to support the settlement needs of Syrian youth in schools.

I want to thank you again for your commitment and for taking the time to share your thoughts and concerns with me.

Yours sincerely,

John McCallum, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Canada

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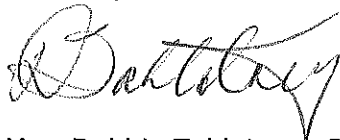
At the public board meeting on February 1, 2016, the Richmond Board of Education passed the following resolution:

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)
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