

April 14, 2016
File: 01-0005-01/2016-Vol 01

The Honourable John McCallum
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1L1

Dear Honourable Minister McCallum:

Re: Settlement Workers in Schools Funding

Richmond City Council is writing this letter in support of the request from the Richmond Board of Education (attached) to ensure that funding for the Settlement Worker in Schools (SWIS) Program receive increased and ongoing funding. Since the Federal Government repatriated funding of the SWIS program from the Province in 2014, funding has been reduced to this program by 16.5 %, resulting in the loss of several staff positions.

It is our understanding that the funding formula is now based on an average of the previous three years' budgets, rather than reflecting actual service levels, and is based on place of arrival rather than settlement, thereby not taking those moving to Richmond from elsewhere into account.

The importance of the settlement process in communities with high levels of newcomers such as Richmond cannot be overemphasized. For families facing the many challenges of adapting to life in a new country, being able to access adequate settlement services through the school system will benefit both the children and the family as a whole by providing a solid base for a strong future in their new country.

Thank you for respectfully considering this letter of support.

Yours truly,

Malcolm D. Brodie
Mayor

pc: Board of Education (Richmond), Superintendent of Schools
Hon. A. Wong, MP (Richmond Centre)
Hon. J. Peschisolido, MP (Steveston-Richmond East)
J. Yap, MLA (Richmond-Steveston)
Hon. T. Wat, MLA (Richmond Centre)

MINUTES EXTRACT

COUNCIL SCHOOL BOARD LIAISON COMMITTEE

Wednesday, March 30, 2016

9. **SWIS ADVOCACY**

Trustee Debbie Tablotney, SD38, remarked that there have been funding cuts in the SWIS (Settlement Workers in Schools) programs. Councillor McPhail suggested that the City has sent a letter of support in the past and could do so again.

As a result of the discussion, it was moved and seconded

That the City of Richmond / School Board be requested to consider:

That City staff investigate the issues regarding funding for the SWIS program and report back to the General Purposes Committee meeting.

CARRIED

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

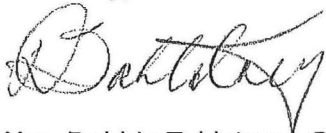
At the public board meeting on February 1, 2016, the Richmond Board of Education passed the following resolution:

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