



British Columbia  
School Trustees  
Association

February 25, 2017

The Honourable Mike Bernier  
*Minister of Education*  
PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8V 9E2

RE: Teacher recruitment and retention for northern, remote and rural school districts

Dear Minister Bernier,

At the February meeting of the BCSTA Provincial Council, delegates passed the following motion:

*That BCSTA request the Minister of Education help northern and rural and remote school districts with recruitment and retention issues arising from the Memorandum of Agreement Re: LOU No. 17: Education Fund and Impact of the Court Cases – Priority Measures by implementing measures including:*

- *Providing increased funding assistance to northern school districts;*
- *Offering student loan forgiveness to teachers who accept teaching positions in northern school districts;*
- *Increasing the Remote Recruitment and Retention Allowance.*

As you are from a rural community in northern B.C., I know you appreciate the difficulties school districts in the more remote regions of our province face in both recruiting and retaining qualified teachers. The interim agreement between BCPSEA and the BCTF calls for the hiring of approximately 1000 teachers across the province, and I expect the conclusion of the current bargaining process will confirm at least as many full time 'permanent contract' teachers for the foreseeable future. This presents both a wonderful opportunity and a significant challenge for northern, remote or rural school districts.

In the current highly competitive recruitment environment, it will be critical that school districts and schools in such locations are not disadvantaged moving forward. The reality is that they will have a more difficult time attracting and keeping the teachers they need to provide the programs students want and deserve. It is also not just a question of sheer numbers. Districts and schools in rural areas must be able to recruit and retain teachers with the qualifications and experience needed to teach senior sciences, languages, math and technologies. Unless measures are quickly put in place, we will see a significant negative impact on the ability of these school districts and schools to offer the same programming as in more urban communities.

With spring programming and teacher hiring already underway, time is of the essence. BCSTA is committed to working with you and Ministry of Education staff to finding workable long-term solutions to the current situation. I am requesting that a strategy to immediately address the situation province-wide, with a focus on northern, remote and rural school districts, be put in place before the House breaks for the upcoming election.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this very important issue. With the current review of Rural Education in B.C. nearing completion, this is an appropriate opportunity for us both to support equality of opportunity throughout the province. I look forward to hearing from you and your staff as to how we can most effectively move forward in addressing this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a vertical stroke, likely representing the name Teresa Rezansoff.

**Teresa Rezansoff**

*President*

BC School Trustees Association

cc: Dave Byng, *Deputy Minister of Education*  
The Honorable Linda Larson, *MLA, Boundary Similkameen*  
Renzo del Negro, *CEO, BCPSEA*  
BCSTA Member Boards of Education