



British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

March 2, 2017

The Honorable Christy Clark

Premier of British Columbia
PO BOX 9041 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W9E1, Canada

RE: Continued and Coordinated Support for Refugee Students

Dear Premier Clark,

British Columbia, and Canada as a whole, should be proud of the initial programs and resources put in place to support the recent arrival of large numbers of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia and other war torn countries. In 2016 alone, approximately 3,050 Syrian refugees came to call B.C. their new home. Those numbers will continue to grow as individuals in crisis seek reprieve from oppression the chaos of war. As a society, we stand out as a beacon of hope and tolerance around the world. Certainly, our commitment, like yours, to do what is best for these refugees has not waned.

Many B.C. schools are, however, struggling with turning that goodwill into ongoing, tangible support systems for refugee students. Children and youth arriving from areas disrupted by war, poverty and famine often arrive with a host of complex psychological, social and health concerns. They may not have ever attended school, and most often have to learn English as a new language. In short, their future success is dependent upon our ability to address their many, often complex educational and personal needs.

Recognizing the need for ongoing programs and resources to assist these students, Trustee representatives at BCSTA's February Provincial Council passed the following motion:

That BCSTA write a letter to communicate to the province the need for a provincial committee to work with the federal government and provincial ministries to identify available ongoing funding, and/or acquire ongoing funding required for school districts to meet the complex and diverse needs of all refugee students and their families and ensure their future success.

On behalf of B.C. Boards of Education and the students, families and communities we represent, I respectfully request that you initiate the processes needed to address our motion.

If we are to meet the long-term needs of refugee students in this province, we need your support and leadership to bring together the people and resources needed to provide these required services in our schools. Please join with me in calling for a cohesive provincial and national strategy aimed at meeting the long-term needs of refugee students.



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BCSTA would be happy to collaborate with you, your Ministers and the Federal Government to identify and address specific funding and policy recommendations so that we may resolve this issue. Instigating this change, and bringing together the necessary individuals and facilitators needed to succeed, is where we need your help.

I look forward to hearing from you as to how we can take these first steps together. The lives and futures of many students depend on it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Teresa Rezansoff", written over a light blue circular stamp.

Teresa Rezansoff

President

BC School Trustees Association

cc:

Mike Bernier, Minister of Education

Mike de Jong, Minister of Finance

Shirley Bond, Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training

Terry Lake, Minister of Health

BCSTA Board of Directors