

September 25, 2017

The Honourable Rob Fleming, Minister of Education
Scott MacDonald, Deputy Minister of Education
Dave Duerkson, Executive Director, Legislation, Policy & Governance Branch

via email

Dear Sirs,

The province of British Columbia currently faces an unprecedented public education staffing crisis: the overall system is short some 1000 teachers. In Vancouver alone, as of the third week of September, there are the equivalent of 53 full-time teacher positions (72 positions overall) still unfilled. Recent hiring in Vancouver have already drawn on seconded district staff, support staff, and even retired teachers, suggesting the actual number of additional teachers required for sustainable public education school operations is far greater. These positions are at the frontline of the provision of K-12 education within our public system.

Students and families are being adversely affected by this staffing crisis. Across the province there are students in classrooms who do not have a full-time teacher; students with learning challenges are losing resource time; and some special needs students are being told to stay home in the absence of supports; and parents who have to deal with the fallout of circumstances affecting their children while juggling their existing parental and employment commitments.

While understanding the exceptional circumstances of implementing the Memorandum of Agreement resulting from last year's Supreme Court ruling, the Parent Advocacy Network (PAN) strongly urges the Ministry of Education to take further immediate action in creative short-term measures to enable the necessary recruitment of additional qualified professional teachers.

Given the near certainty that all in-province qualified applicants have already been placed, out-of-province and internationally qualified teachers must be aggressively targeted.

We ask you to consider the following one-time actions to this end:

- Remove administrative impediments by working in conjunction with the BC College of Teachers and the BCTF to expedite the certification process for out-of-province and international applicants.
- Offer incentives such as incremental signing bonuses for multi-year commitments, teacher development allocations to support specialization and upgrading, and moving stipends to reduce the cost of relocation.
- Recognize the significant barrier to teacher recruitment and retention faced by urban districts in Metro Vancouver due to housing affordability and provide grant funding for accommodation initiatives such as non-market teacher rental facilities or dormitories.

A secure and sustainable quality public education system is essential for the future of our province and our children, and this depends on sufficient numbers of qualified teachers. It is imperative that the Ministry work quickly and diligently to recruit additional qualified, professional teachers from out of province and international pools to ensure that all open teacher positions are filled as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

The Parent Advocacy Network

CC:

Premier, Hon John Horgan, BC NDP

Leader of the Opposition, Hon Rich Coleman, BC Liberal

Leader, BC Green, Hon Andrew Weaver

Hon Sonia Furstenau, BC Green Spokesperson for Education

Hon Dan Davies, Liberal Spokesperson for Education

Hon Mary Polak, Liberal Spokesperson for Education

Hon Bob D'Eith, Chair, Select Standing Committee on Finance & Government Services

Hon Dan Ashton, Deputy Chair, Select Standing Committee on Finance & Government Services

Suzanne Hoffman, Chief Educator

Gordon Swan, President, BCSTA

Glen Hansman, President, BCTF

Jen Mezei, President, BCCPAC