



October 24, 2017

Ref: 196188

Parent Advocacy Network for Public Education  
**Email: [parentadvocacynetwork@gmail.com](mailto:parentadvocacynetwork@gmail.com)**

Thank you for your letter of September 25, 2017, regarding the recruitment of additional teachers in British Columbia.

I share your vision for a secure and sustainable high-quality public education system. I truly value input and open communications with parents and community members, such as the Parent Advisory Network, and believe this is invaluable to me in achieving this vision.

Government's commitment to education was highlighted in the September 11, 2017, budget update, where the Honourable Carole James, Minister of Finance stated: "A strong education system is fundamental to a strong economy, healthy vibrant communities and a bright future for this and future generations." The first step was fulfilling our commitment to invest in student success with an increase of \$1.4 billion over next three years in education funding, bringing total investment to over \$6 billion per year.

The budget increase reflects in large part, the additional resources districts need to implement the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), which government has committed to fund. Funding includes all salaries, benefits, and overhead costs needed to implement the MoA. In addition, the Ministry of Education has provided all needed capital costs, including tenant improvements within schools to reconfigure existing space; relocating or repurposing existing portables or adding new portable classrooms.

Under the *School Act*, boards of education are responsible for all staffing decisions within their district. At the start of every school year, there is a normal level of staffing adjustment, which may create some uncertainty as districts determine appropriate staffing needs commensurate with student enrolment. This year has been especially challenging given implementation of the MoA; however, I have been advised the hiring of approximately 3,500 new teachers is going well with no significant hiring shortages.

.../2

The Ministry was advised by the Vancouver School District that as of September 18, 2017, as you note, there were 72 vacancies, equivalent to 53 fulltime equivalent positions. This is less than two percent of the total number of full time teaching positions in the district. More importantly, there are no classrooms without a teacher and no special needs children who have been required to stay home due to those unfilled positions.

To assist districts to fill new positions with certified teachers, the Teacher Regulation Branch established a process to prioritize processing of applications of teachers identified by employers as having start dates in September 2017, and added staff to improve the general efficiency of the certification process. At this time, I am not aware of any significant backlogs or delays in processing certifications of qualification. The Teacher Regulation Branch has balanced its statutory obligation to maintain the highest standard of certification while ensuring processing delays do not prevent deploying those qualified teachers into the classroom.

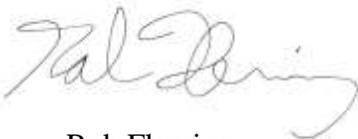
There are a number of measures available to assist districts with recruitment, including the Make a Future initiative and the \$2,300 Recruitment and Retention Allowance. In addition, in anticipation of the acute recruitment challenges faced by rural communities, the Ministry established a \$2 million Rural and Remote Workforce Sustainability Fund, which allows districts to offset related costs, such as moving allowances, housing supports, and training.

However, to achieve a sustainable and high quality public education system for every student in the Province, we must do a better job of understanding of long-term recruitment and retention challenges. With this in mind, the Ministry is in the process of undertaking a review of the educator workforce to identify the quantity, characteristics and qualifications needed. This will provide the analytical basis to implement targeted policies and programs to ensure qualified educators are in the right place, at the right time into the future.

Your involvement and input, I believe, will be invaluable going forward. I invite you to contact Keith Godin, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Governance and Analytics Division, by phone at (250) 356-6760 or by email at [Keith.Godin@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Keith.Godin@gov.bc.ca).

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Fleming". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Rob Fleming  
Minister