

April 23, 2024

Good evening and welcome. I want to extend a Happy Passover to all who are celebrating over the next week and of course, again, extend the sincere regrets of Board Chair Bill Brassington who can't be with us this evening.

As I'm sure everyone here is well aware, on tonight's agenda is the Annual Budget Bylaw for the next school year. I'm confident folks are also aware of the struggles, not just Burnaby, but all BC public school districts are facing with respect to operational funding for BC's K-12 system. Year after year, we see districts having to trim more and more to meet the legislative requirement of a balanced budget. Quite simply, there just aren't enough funds in the system to meet the growing needs of students, staff, and the school community especially when coupled with the capacity constraints resulting from record enrolment increases.

Consequently, Boards are having to make incredibly difficult decisions on where and how to make these unavoidable cuts with the aim to limit – as much as possible – cuts to the classroom.

While this is the challenging reality we are faced with currently, there are steps that we as a Board are taking to address these funding challenges at a provincial level – the level at which change is needed. This Board feels strongly that we must support all learners in our District. We believe that the public education system must be a reflection of what is happening in our communities and across the province. Consequently, this Board believes in advocating for changes needed to meet the needs of all students.

This past weekend, myself and other members of this Board attend the BC School Trustees Association AGM. It is at this annual event where Trustees from across the province come together to debate and decide what advocacy the BCSTA will undertake in the coming months and years.

As in past years, our Board submitted motions for debate at the meeting and one of the motions we submitted was on the funding for temporary resident registrations.

Temporary Resident Registrants (TRRs) are school-aged students who are enrolled in BC K-12 schools who are eligible for a publicly funded K-12 education because their guardians have been lawfully admitted to Canada and hold either a temporary work permit or temporary study permit for a period of one year or more. These students are separate from fee paying international students.

With changes to federal immigration rules, enrolment in BC's public schools has dramatically increased over the last few years. This immigration includes newcomer refugee claimants as well as temporary residents legally entering Canada under work and/or study permits.

Burnaby's experience with enrolment growth has followed the provincial upward trend with regard to immigration and specifically TRRs. As an example, using 2022-2023 enrolment numbers, the Burnaby School District has experienced a 500% increase in TRRs since the 2015-2016 school year.

Using registration numbers from the current year, the Burnaby School District enrolment trend continues to see an even higher growth in TRRs. Through discussion with other Trustees, we've also learned that Burnaby's growth trajectory is comparable in all Metro school districts.

What should be no surprise is that immigration most certainly does not follow the school calendar.

And herein lies the issue: Temporary Resident Registrants who meet operational grant funding requirements may only receive funding if they are registered prior to September 30 in a given school year. This means BC school districts receive no funding from the Ministry of Education and Child Care when TRRs arrive after September 30 in a given school year. For Burnaby, and indeed most Metro Vancouver districts, the overwhelming majority of TRRs register after September 30.

This equates to literally millions of dollars missing from BC's education system.

Compounding this issue is the fact that TRRs often require additional supports from schools such as counselling services, support from Settlement Workers in Schools, English Language Learning programming, and/or Education Assistants based on their varied backgrounds.

School districts cannot, and do not turn away TRRs or their families when they attempt to register after September 30 even though no funding is received from the Ministry. Once registered, TRRs are still serviced by the respective school district with the resources they have.

The motion we presented was for BCSTA to advocate for the Ministry to provide midyear funding for TRRs who enroll after September 30 and restore the millions of dollars missing from BC's education system. This motion overwhelmingly passed at the AGM and we're hopeful the province will take the necessary steps to address this equity issue in our schools.

If actioned by the province, going forward, Burnaby will hopefully not be faced with such challenging budgetary decisions like the ones before us tonight.

Of course, this Board's advocacy does not end with the BCSTA AGM last weekend. We have also raised the issue of TRRs funding with Burnaby's local MLAs, sharing with them the financial and operational impacts realized without TRRs midyear funding. We have made them aware of the millions of operational dollars that TRRs are legally entitled to but do not receive if they register on October 1 or beyond.

We, as a Board, are committed to continually raising equity issues, such this one, with provincially elected representatives, federally elected representatives, and with advocacy organizations like the BCSTA. As I stated at the start, this Board believes strongly that the funding model for K-12 public education must be responsive to and reflective of classrooms and our community, meeting the needs of all learners. Our aim is to ensure that all Burnaby students – and in fact all students in BC – receive the best opportunities for success in BC's public education system. This is what we believe in and what we will continue to advocate for.

That concludes my chair report. Thank you.

**Kristin Schnider, Vice-Chair
Burnaby Board of Education**