



Richmond Teachers' Association

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April 7, 2022

Dear Honourable Whiteside,

Re: Commitment to Truth & Reconciliation

On behalf of the Richmond Teachers' Association, I am writing to request your attention and immediate action on the recent positive announcements made by your Ministry and the BC Government in support of your Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

The first area I would like to address is the recent announcement of the new Indigenous-Focused Graduation requirement and the action the RTA believes is necessary for the successful implementation of the new Indigenous-Focused Graduation requirement, and to further our combined commitment to Truth and Reconciliation. At issue is the lack of funding announcement to support this curricular announcement. Districts are currently involved in budget planning, and now is the time to ensure targeted funding is provided to support a year of transition ahead of implementation.

The recent budget announcement on March 15 provided no rate increases for any of the of the operating grants, including Indigenous Education. When we consider the current rate of inflation and increasing cost pressures, districts were handed budget cuts. At the same time, the Ministry of Education has made a promise to implement a new graduation requirement but without any funding support. A lack of funding does not respect the commitment this government has made to Indigenous leaders and students across BC. While we recognize the Ministry is involved in an engagement process with Indigenous communities and the education sector, the lack of funding in the announcement will prevent districts from engaging in meaningful staffing and implementation plans.

The RTA has submitted our budget requests to the Richmond School Board outlining specific requests that we believe will help support successful implementation in Richmond. Unfortunately, few, if any of these requests will be possible because of the current funding shortfall that will result in budget cuts rather than necessary budget additions. Budget pressures could be avoided if the Ministry provided additional and target funding to school districts that align with your public narrative about the importance of public education to the province of BC and your commitment to Truth and Reconciliation. Throughout the pandemic, teachers have been reminded about the vital importance of schools to the social and emotional development of students and our combined commitment to help develop educated citizens, but the recent budget decision fails to reflect these values. Below is the Richmond Teachers' Association's recent requests to the Richmond Board of Education:

Given the recent announcement of the new Indigenous-Focused Graduation requirement, the RTA is submitting further feedback to support successful implementation in Richmond, as we recognize the Board's commitment to Richmond's Strategic Plan specifically:

Strategic Priority 1 – Inspired Learners

Goal 2 The district fosters resilient and healthy life-long learners.

Goal 3 Indigenous Peoples' history, perspectives, and learning approaches are embedded within district planning and practices.

Strategic Priority 2 – Equity and Inclusion

Goal 1 District learning environments are equitable and inclusive.

Goal 2 The district actively addresses unconscious bias and privilege, systemic discrimination and marginalization based on factors such as ability, colour, cultural identity, gender, gender identity, Indigeneity, political beliefs, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.

The RTA recognizes the ongoing support provided to classroom teachers to embed Indigenous Ways of Knowing and First People's Principles into the curriculum and pedagogies. This support is provided with the help of Teacher Consultants, resources and support for professional learning. Indigenous students are also provided support with the assistance of the Indigenous Support Team and the recent additions of Indigenous Gathering Spaces at Cambie and Grauer.

For the successful implementation of the new Indigenous-Focused Graduation requirement and to further our combined commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, the RTA believes more action is needed, including the following budget requests:

- a. One additional Teacher Consultant – Indigenous Curriculum Integration to support teachers (on-going). The new graduation requirement will add to the significant workload that already exists for the current Teacher Consultant, whose portfolio includes supporting teachers across elementary and secondary schools.
Cost 1.0 FTE = \$78,000
- b. FTE to ensure each secondary school, including RVS, can run at least one First People's Course for the 2022/2023 school year.
Cost 0.14 FTE x 11 = 1.54 FTE X \$78,000 ~ \$120,120
- c. FTE to provide at least one block to each secondary school to provide teacher release to plan and support successful implementation for the 2023/2024 school year. The RTA supports a similar model that was used for the successful implementation of Career Life Connections, where additional blocks were added to provide teacher time to coordinate, plan and support schools with the mandatory graduation requirement. Dedicated release time will allow teachers to work in their schools and across the District to begin the necessary work to ensure we can successfully provide all secondary students a deeper understanding of the experiences, cultures and histories of Indigenous People's.
Cost 0.14 FTE x 11 = 1.54 FTE X \$78,000 ~ \$120,120

- d. Additional resources to help teachers infuse Aboriginal Ways of Knowing and First People's Principles into the curriculum, including resources to support the offering of First People's courses in grades 11 to 12 (one-time).

The RTA remains optimistic that the Ministry of Education will incorporate many of these ideas in their implementation plan, but that information will not be available until August 2022, which is too late for the current budget planning cycle. Therefore, the RTA makes these requests for the 2022/2023 budget. Together, we must ensure we build on the excitement this new opportunity provides. Meaningful support for 2022/2023 school year will help build and sustain the energy and excitement across Richmond schools to engage in lasting and meaningful reconciliation and our combined commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and Anti-Racism.

The second area I will address is graduation credits and the need to review and increase the graduation credit requirement. The addition of a new mandatory course is good news, but it could be enhanced if the overall number of credits to graduate was increased to help foster and encourage students to further explore additional Indigenous-Focused coursework or other elective courses that provide rich learning opportunities for BC students. This is a missed opportunity that should be reviewed by the Ministry of Education.

I look forward to a response on these matters and would always welcome an opportunity to speak with you further.

Sincerely,



Liz Baverstock
President, RTA

cc: Kelly Greene, MLA Richmond-Steveston, Parliamentary Secretary for Environment
Aman Singh, MLA Richmond-Queensborough
Teresa Wat, Richmond North Centre
Henry Yao, Richmond South Centre
Scott Robinson, Superintendent of Schools
Sandra Nixon, Board Chair