

October 8, 2024

Dear [Candidate Name],

As Chair of the Richmond Board of Education (the Board), I am writing on behalf of the Board to bring to your attention four key areas of advocacy that are essential for enhancing the learning and working conditions of our students and staff. With the 2024 provincial election approaching, we respectfully request that you support and prioritize the needs of our public education system throughout your campaign, recognizing the important role it plays in our community's future.

Capital Funding for Two New City Centre Schools

Richmond's city centre is experiencing significant population growth, largely driven by newly approved housing developments and an influx of young families. As a result, the district is projected to face a continued shortfall of seats and increasing enrolment numbers. Without immediate funding, the district will face significant challenges in accommodating students in city centre. This situation will directly impact the quality of education and the overall student experience. Providing adequate infrastructure now will ensure that students have access to a conducive learning environment, which is essential for their academic success and well-being.

We respectfully request your advocacy in securing provincial funding for two new schools in Richmond's city centre to address this urgent need.

Capital Funding for Seismic Mitigation Program

The Richmond School District is facing an urgent need for capital funding to address our seismic mitigation program. 22 schools in our district, including 18 elementary schools and four secondary schools, have been identified with a high seismic risk rating. This means that over 10,000 student seats are in dire need of seismic mitigation measures. The safety and well-being of our students and staff rely on timely funding to address this critical issue.

We respectfully request your advocacy in securing provincial funding for the remediation of the remaining 22 schools in our district that have been identified with a high seismic risk rating.

Recruitment and Retention of Staff

Recruiting and retaining staff is a significant challenge for the Richmond School District. Our unionized CUPE workforce—including carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and information technology roles—faces significant competition from other agencies offering higher pay scales. The district is exploring partnerships with post-secondary institutions to create apprenticeship opportunities that will attract and retain future employees within these sectors. Additionally, the expansion of teacher training programs is essential, particularly for specializations requiring additional training, such as English language learning, learning resource, and school counselling positions. Offering these programs within our district, in collaboration with university partners, would help remove barriers related to finances, time, and location.

We respectfully request your advocacy to support the development of apprenticeship opportunities and the expansion of teacher training programs. These efforts are essential to ensure a well-supported workforce that can continue to provide quality education for every student.

Inclusive Education, Mental Health and Student Success

Inclusive education is fundamental to ensuring that every learner, regardless of background or ability, has the opportunity to succeed. This includes providing opportunities for academic success, supporting social and emotional well-being, and creating culturally responsive learning environments. Additionally, feedback from our students indicates a growing need for mental health supports, underlining the importance of access to these resources for all K-12 students. We also recognize the need for focused support for Indigenous learners, children and youth in care, and students with disabilities and diverse abilities, as well as English Language Learners (ELL) given the significant number of ELL in our district.

We respectfully request your advocacy to prioritize inclusive education, mental health and focused supports, pushing for targeted support and sustained momentum on these critical issues.

Conclusion

Based on the identified priorities and the pressing needs of our growing community, we respectfully request your advocacy and support in four critical areas: securing capital funding for two new schools in Richmond's city centre, addressing seismic risks through the remediation of 22 schools, improving recruitment and retention of staff, and enhancing inclusive education and mental health resources for our students. These investments are crucial to ensuring a safe, supportive, and thriving educational environment for all learners and staff in our district. Your commitment to these priorities will not only support the educational success and well-being of our students but also strengthen the foundation of our community's future.

Thank you for your attention and support on these matters.

Sincerely,

Heather Larson, Chairperson
On behalf of the Board of Education

Liz Baverstock, President
Richmond Teachers' Association

Stacey Robinson, President
CUPE Local 716

Nicole Widdess, President
Richmond Association of School Administrators

Connie Huang, President
Richmond District Parents Association

Kelly Gibson, Chair
Richmond Management & Professional Staff

cc: President of BCSTA
Trustees, School District 38 Richmond
Superintendent, School District 38 Richmond

Secretary Treasurer, School District 38 Richmond
Presidents of Partner Groups