

December 6, 2024

Steve Kooner, MLA
Email: Steve.Kooner.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Dear Steve Kooner,

Re: Congratulations and Invitation

On behalf of the Board of Education for the Richmond School District, I extend our heartfelt congratulations on your recent election and appointment as MLA for Richmond-Queensborough. We are eager to advocate for meaningful change within our education system, and your support is critical in this endeavor. Our commitment to improving education for all students, schools, and our community is essential. We recognize that true progress requires collaboration, and we hope you will join our district in advocating for impactful changes that will benefit our community. Your role as our appointed MLA is vital in this mission and your support is crucial in bringing key issues in our education system to the forefront of policy discussions, ensuring meaningful changes for our students, educators, staff, and community.

Our school district and community need your support as our MLA to amplify our voices and concerns and to prioritize the critical issues in our schools. Together, we can unite to advocate for the improvements our public education system desperately needs.

We have identified three critical issues that are negatively affecting our education system, and we urgently need action.

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

Our community deeply values the betterment of K-12 education and recognizes its critical role in shaping the future. As a Board of Education, we are committed to collaborating with local community and education partners to advocate for the priorities that will create an improved school environment for our students to thrive and succeed. We invite you to meet with our Trustees to explore how we can work together to address these key priorities. As you embark on your new role as MLA for Richmond-Queensborough, we hope you will prioritize public education as a vital area for reform.

Given the importance and urgency of these matters, the Richmond Board of Education would like to host you for a visit and tour of the Richmond School District in January 2025 to discuss these issues in detail.

To arrange a meeting, please connect with our Superintendent Christopher Usih or Secretary-Treasurer Cindy Wang by reaching out to Executive Assistant Tiffany Lee at tmlee@sd38.bc.ca or 604-668-6000 ext. 4302.

We look forward to meeting you and working together with you on educational priorities that will benefit the youth, families and community of Richmond. Together, we can make a genuine difference.

Sincerely,

Ken Hamaguchi, Chairperson
On Behalf of the Board of Education (Richmond)

cc: Trustees, School District No. 38 Richmond
Superintendent of Schools, School District No. 38 Richmond
Secretary Treasurer, School District No. 38 Richmond