
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education
Ministry of Attorney General
and Minister responsible for Multiculturalism

B.C. PROVIDES MORE SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR YOUNG REFUGEES

VANCOUVER – School districts will now receive additional support for children from refugee families entering the school system after September, announced Education Minister Shirley Bond and Attorney General Wally Oppal today.

“These students often require more support, in English as a second language and other areas,” said Bond. “We are taking steps to make sure that refugee students are now counted twice a year, and receive the funding they need to support their success.” Bond was following up on a commitment she made Friday at the annual general meeting of the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA).

Refugees arrive in British Columbia at unpredictable times in the year, with up to 300 arriving following the regular September student counts for school districts’ operating grant funding. An additional count for refugee students in February will make sure that districts receive the additional funding needed to help settle and integrate refugee students into the regular school system.

The BCSTA and the Lower Mainland ESL Consortium requested the Ministry of Education review the current funding model for refugee students and implement a second count to provide the supports these students require for transition into the school system.

Supports for refugee students come from several sources, including a recent \$1.6-million commitment through the Ministry of Attorney General’s WelcomeBC initiative to build multi-disciplinary settlement teams that help refugee families settle into new homes, schools and lives. WelcomeBC is supported through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

“Our settlement workers in schools initiative, currently operating in 10 school districts, helps our school districts take a lead role in providing vital services for immigrant families,” said Oppal. “This enhanced funding will ensure we continue to build culturally diverse communities and help immigrants succeed in settling in British Columbia.”

“We are very happy that the ministry has been responsive in looking at the needs of refugee students and school districts,” said Connie Denesiuk, incoming BCSTA president. “This additional funding will help these students coming from challenging circumstances abroad to begin their B.C. education.”

The government is working to make B.C. the best-educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent. Since 2000-01, the Province has increased funding to B.C. public schools by close to \$1.2 billion: \$789 million in operating grants and \$407 million in one-time grants. During the same period, the number of students in the system has declined by more than 50,000.

Media Public Affairs Bureau
contact: Ministry of Education
 250 356-5963

Dave Townsend
Public Affairs Officer
Ministry of Attorney General
250 387-4962

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