

May 25, 2023

Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance
Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion
Honourable Karina Gould, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

Dear Ministers:

Request for equitable support for all refugee students

First, please accept our thanks for easing the way into Canada for Ukrainian families fleeing war by establishing the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel (CUAET) program. We appreciate this caring approach, how it extends the welcoming and generous nature of Canadians, and how it reflects the government's understanding that our fellow humans who are experiencing trauma should not have to face more barriers as they strive to establish new lives in an unfamiliar culture and country.

At Edmonton Public Schools, we have welcomed 205 students who came to Canada through the CUAET program, 257 other refugee students and 43 students claiming refugee status - a total of 505 students - between September and March of this year. As Alberta's second largest school division, we are happy to play whatever part we can in making all these students feel welcome and preparing them for a fulfilling life in Canada. Unfortunately though, there are inequities between supports for refugees arriving through the CUAET program and those from elsewhere. We recognize that funding for education is decided at a provincial level and therefore will be addressing funding discrepancies directly with our Minister of Education following the provincial election on May 29.

However, foreign policy and immigration are determined at a federal level. Therefore, the federal government also has a responsibility to provide equitable educational supports for all refugee students, and students claiming refugee status, no matter what or where they are fleeing from or how they enter Canada.

Although the federal government has put in place support services to help families after they arrive, it is unclear whether those funds are intended to support the needs of Ukrainian students only, or if they will be further extended to refugee students and students claiming refugee status from countries other than Ukraine.

Policy needs to ensure that students are not only funded, but also have access to supports based on need, not their country of origin. We ask that all of your ministries collaborate to ensure this is the case

and that you work with your provincial partners to achieve equity for some of our most vulnerable students. If you have questions about our request or would like additional information, please let us know and we would be happy to arrange a phone call.

Sincerely,



Trisha Estabrooks
Board Chair

c: All Alberta MPs
Marilyn Dennis, President, Alberta School Boards Association
Vivian Abboud, Chief Executive Officer, Alberta School Boards Association
Dennis MacNeil, President, Public School Boards' Association of Alberta
Troy Tait, Executive Director and CEO, Public School Boards' Association of Alberta