

March 14, 2019

Mr. Ravi Kahlon
MLA – Delta North
Email: ravi.kahlon.mla@leg.bc.ca

Dear Mr. Kahlon,

Thank you very much for your informative talk at the Delta Chamber of Commerce meeting on Friday, March 1, 2019. The Delta Board of Education is pleased to see strong support for the public education sector.

A significant theme in your talk was economic strength in sectors that employ British Columbians in trades, technical and vocational careers. Our Board understands that opportunities for students to gain exposure and training in these areas while enrolled in the K-12 Public Education system is key to preparing for entry into those promising jobs. Further, our students tell us that the ability to explore different careers and get a head start on post-secondary education and training is essential to becoming prepared for their post-secondary pathways.

Yet there is a significant gap in our ability to connect students with the careers of the future. Our school district is unable to hire the specialist teachers needed to support our students success due to a province wide shortage of qualified Technology Education teachers. In fact, we have had to close some shop classrooms in Delta because of our inability to find qualified candidates (see more: <http://www.bctea.org/2017/01/11/where-have-all-the-shop-teachers-gone/>).

Currently in our province, there is one two-year program to train Technology Teachers at the British Columbia Institute of Technology "BCIT" that graduates 22 students per year (see more: <https://www.bcit.ca/study/programs/605ddipma>).

To qualify for the Technology Teacher Education program, students must first complete 30 post-secondary credits and then, upon completion of the two year training at BCIT, students must then complete the University of British Columbia's Teacher Training Program (see more: <http://teach.educ.ubc.ca/technology-education-program-highlights/>).

We have identified a number of barriers for people considering Technical Education career training:

- a) the length of time to obtain qualifications for Technical Education Teachers;
- b) years of earnings: these are people with in-demand skills in our economy and often they choose work in their specialty field rather than missing years earnings while incurring the high cost of post-secondary education;
- c) available high paying jobs that have greater earnings than teacher salaries;
- d) a lack of Technology Teacher Education program spots distributed throughout the province. The current single-option centralized model for both BCIT and UBC is inaccessible for many. Many regions in our Province, especially the fast growing South of the Fraser Region, would benefit from post-secondary options that do not require students to move to one of the highest cost of living areas in the province, further adding to the financial barriers of this career choice.

The Demand for Applied Skills Courses is Growing in Delta:

British Columbia's new curriculum now includes Applied Design, Skills and Technology content beginning in Kindergarten all the way through to Grade 7. In one year, 96 elementary teachers in Delta have participated in district Tool Use and Safety sessions. Our teachers are now using these skills with their students. When these students begin Grade 8 they will have greater proficiency and interest in continuing with these skills based courses and accordingly, there will be an even greater demand for courses in technical education.

Delta School District further emphasizes the opportunities for rewarding careers for our students with three in-district parent and student information evenings each year where we provide information about course selection and post-secondary opportunities. Further, we have a very unique partnership with the City of Delta as they host an innovative Trades and Technical Career Fair which thousands of our students have attended since 2013. The event provides students with an opportunity to explore trades and technical careers through hands-on, interactive exhibits, meet with post-secondary institutions and to meet real experts (see more: <http://www.delta.ca/discover-delta/festivals-events/trades-technical-career-fair>).

Additionally, we have a key partnership with the Industry Training Authority Youth Programs that help students get started in a trade while still in high school, with opportunities to work in a chosen field and earning money before they even graduate (see more: <http://youth.itabc.ca/>).

A Call for Action:

British Columbia's public education sector is the key to providing the skilled and trained workforce needed to keep our economy strong. Our education system is one of the top performing systems in the world and with highly knowledgeable and skilled students graduating from our schools. On behalf of the Delta Board of Education, I would ask that the shortage of Technical Education Teachers be addressed in collaboration with Boards of Education, the Post-Secondary Sector, the British Columbia Teachers Federation, the Industry Training Authority and employers, so that the Delta School District is able to support our students to reach their full potential and be ready for the skilled jobs of the future.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Laura Dixon
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cc: The Honourable Rob Fleming, Minister of Education
British Columbia Technology Teachers Association
Industry Training Authority
Delta Chamber of Commerce
Mr. Ian Paton, MLA – Delta South
Mayor and Council, City of Delta
Association of Delta School Administrators
CUPE Local 1091
Delta Teachers' Association
British Columbia School Trustees Association, All Boards