



Audrey West
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June 9, 2023

RE: Rutherford School

Hello Audrey,

On May 24, 2023, the Board of Education received your letter dated May 3, 2023, with respect to the enrollment of international students related to the opening of Rutherford Elementary School and funding. The Board directed that staff respond to your letter.

At a meeting held on May 17, 2023, staff had presented a [report](#) with respect to the Board's support of increased international student enrollment that led to the newspaper article your letter referenced. It is important to note that the district does not require international student enrollment to reopen the school but rather is targeting international student fees as a risk mitigation strategy. While our region is one of the fastest growing communities in the country, our district still has not surpassed its peak enrollment in the late 90s. This is based on the demographic reality that families have fewer children.

As you are no doubt aware, opening a school carries a significant cost. When the district's enrollment was declining, closing a school and amalgamating school populations allowed the district to focus its limited resources on staff to support our students. In the event that our growth projections either fail to appear or are lower than anticipated, the district will be faced with reducing staff to fund a facility.

I note that the district's operating budget (Operating Grant) in the last five years (2019-20 to 2023-24) has gone from \$132,404,507 to \$159,607,369. While there is no doubt that additional supports for the district from the Ministry of Education and Child Care would be appreciated and used to support students, the district's choice to expand international programming is a result of a local choice to open a school and the risk management strategy to go with it, not as a specific result of underfunding.

Once again, the resulting cost of opening Rutherford is a local decision and expanding international student enrollment is not a direct result of underfunding but rather, one strategy to ensure continued service to students while also opening the school.

Sincerely,

Mark Walsh
Secretary-Treasurer