

**DATE:** April 18, 2023

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Trustee Saadiq Sumar

**SUBJECT:** Funding for Displaced Students, Refugee Students, and Refugee Claimants

**ORIGINATORS:** Trustee Saadiq Sumar, Trustee Marcia Hole

**RESOURCE STAFF:** Todd Burnstad, Karen Mills, Bob Morter

**REFERENCE** [Trustees' Handbook – Section 5.2.2 – Notices of Motion](#)  
[Response to Request for Information Report re: Refugee and Displaced Students](#)  
[Motion re: Funding to Support Ukrainian Refugee Students](#)  
[Supporting Ukrainian students in schools](#)  
[Supporting Ukraine for as long as it takes](#)

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## ISSUE

Trustee Sumar served notice of motion at the March 7, 2023, Board Meeting.

## BACKGROUND

On November 14, 2022, the Government of Alberta announced that *“a rate similar to the refugee grant...will be allocated for Ukrainian students to provide language, social and educational supports.”*

In addition to this funding, the Province added, *“Ukrainian students who are enrolled after the September 2022 count date and are identified to Alberta Education by the March 2023 count will be eligible for 50 per cent of the grant.”* This announcement accurately recognizes that additional funding is required to ensure that *“schools are prepared to provide [students] with mental health supports...”* and that *“new [students] feel supported and welcomed.”* However, the funding is only available to students entering Canada through the [Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel](#) (CUAET) program. These students are defined by Alberta Education as *displaced students*.

The same funding is not provided to students from Ukraine who have not come to Canada via CUAET, or to those from other war torn countries, refugee students, or students claiming refugee status who come to Alberta and enrol in school jurisdictions, including Edmonton Public. Refugee students are eligible for the Refugee or English as Another Language grant (whichever is higher) for up to five years. Students claiming refugee status (i.e., not yet granted refugee status by the federal government) are currently unfunded by the provincial government, either on a per-student basis or through the WMA.

It should also be noted that the Displaced Student grant is only for one year. Displaced students (i.e., those arriving through CUAET) do not qualify for refugee funding and, depending on their English language skills, may not be eligible for English as Another Language Funding.

This is not equitable or just. Why should it matter which war torn country a child is arriving from? All children deserve access to high quality public education. That access should be funded when the student enrolls and the additional funding should continue as they adjust to a new culture and country.

At the April 19, 2022, Board meeting, Trustee Kusiek brought forward a recommendation to advocate to the provincial and federal governments for funding and support for “*globally displaced children and refugee students*”. The recommendation was unanimously approved. While both this report and Trustee Kusiek’s motion contemplate additional funding and supports, this report builds on the provincial funding structure established since that report was approved by the Board.

Although the federal government “*has put in place support services to help [Ukrainian 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, refugee claimants, and displaced students from countries other than Ukraine. It is important to recognize that although funding for education is decided at a provincial level, 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 displaced students, refugee students, and students claiming refugee status to ensure that students are funded based on need, not their country of origin.

#### RELATED FACT

1. Between the September 2022 count date and March 1, 2023, 205 displaced, 257 refugee and 43 refugee claimant students - a total of 505 students - were identified as having enrolled in Edmonton Public schools.

#### RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Edmonton Public School Board advocate to the Province of Alberta that students who are identified as “refugee students” or “students claiming refugee status” receive allocations, including the second count date and prorated funding, equal to that of those defined as “displaced students” in addition to continuing to have access to five years of Refugee or English as an Another Language funding.
2. That the Edmonton Public School Board advocate to the Province of Alberta that students who are identified as “displaced students” be eligible for five years of funding equal to that of those defined as “refugee students”.
3. That the Edmonton Public School Board advocate to the Government of Canada for funding and support for all refugee students and students claiming refugee status, regardless of country of origin, equal to that being provided for displaced Ukrainian students.

#### OPTIONS

1. Approve the recommendations as presented.
2. Provide feedback and request changes to the recommendations.

#### NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of the recommendations, the Board Chair would write to the following ministers to advocate for equitable funding and supports for all displaced students, refugee students, and refugee claimants:

- Alberta’s Minister of Education

- Alberta's Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
- Canada's Minister of Finance
- Canada's Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
- Canada's Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion
- Canada's Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

Further, this issue will be brought forward to the Alberta School Boards Association Spring General Meeting to be considered as an emergent position statement.

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