

March 11, 2021

Honourable Jennifer Whiteside
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045, Station Provincial Government
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 9E2

Via email Minister.educ@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Whiteside,

We are writing in response to the recent changes made to the definition of “Youth Apprentices” and the negative impact it has on our Mission youth pursuing a career in trades.

In 2014, the Industry Training Authority (ITA) defined a “Youth Apprentice” as an apprentice between the ages of 15 and 19 years of age. Their status changed from youth to adult on their 20th birthday or on their graduation date, plus 150 days, whichever occurred first. Secondary schools were now able to claim up to \$2,200 in funding from ITA to support trades training for school-aged graduates.

This allowed our youth to continue their trades training beyond secondary school with much needed funding provided by the Ministry of Education in addition to the ITA funding.

Many of Mission’s young students were able to afford to continue their trades training at our local Riverside College. (riversidecollege.ca)

In 2019, the definition of “Youth Apprentice” was changed to disqualify graduated students under 19 years of age from receiving Ministry of Education funding to continue their trades training past secondary school graduation. This change created significant barriers for many of our youth pursuing a career in trades. Along with the loss of Ministry funding, our youth are now faced with finding the money to acquire a vehicle, enrol in the UFV Trades Training Campus in Chilliwack, pay full tuition, face a forty-two (42) minute drive, or a three (3) hour and forty-seven (47) minute ride by bus changing buses 4 times. Most of our youth, in the Fraser Valley, pay between \$400 and \$450 per month for car insurance and public transit is not as robust or as reliable as it is in more populated areas of the lower mainland.

Our province currently funds students to upgrade their courses to get into University after graduation, but we do not fund students to move into a trades career. Allowing students to use an additional year to attain “skills training” and receive a certification in a trade benefits our economy and the place they call home.

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By funding school aged graduates to attend Riverside College trades programs tuition free, we are increasing the number of high school graduates that continue onto a post-secondary education. We are writing to request that your Ministry of Education reinstate funding for graduated students under the age of 19 who are pursuing a trades training program in Mission and other school districts. This request was supported by boards of education around the province at the BCSTA October 2019 Provincial Council. British Columbia and Mission's economy will benefit from supporting our youth who wish to pursue a career in trades.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracy Loffler', written in a cursive style.

Tracy Loffler,
Chair of the Board of Education
Mission School District #75

cc: Randy Cairns, Trustee
Shelley Carter, Trustee
Rick McKamey, Trustee
Julia Renkema, Trustee
Angus Wilson, Superintendent
Wade Peary, Riverside College
Trades Training Advisory Committee