

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Grave concern expressed about the TDSB's proposal to cut transportation to the French Immersion/Extended Programs**

Toronto, May 21, 2019 - Canadian Parents for French (Ontario) is expressing grave concern over the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) proposal to cut transportation to the French Immersion/Extended programs, a decision that will directly impact 6,500 of the 28,000 students currently enrolled in the programs in this school board.

The decision comes in the wake of the Ontario Government's financial cuts to education, leaving school boards scrambling to balance their own budgets and in this case make a decision that directly impacts student outcomes and the opportunity to become proficient in both official languages.

All Canadian students should have access to a wide variety of effective, evidence-based French as a second language (FSL) programs from Kindergarten to grade 12. In Ontario, the French Immersion program has experienced 5.7 percent annual growth over the last consecutive eleven years.

"Parents enrol their child in French Immersion/Extended because they understand the cognitive benefits of learning French and how it develops cultural awareness and helps prepare our children for a diverse global economy," stated Denise Massie, president of Canadian Parents for French (Ontario). "For many families, having access to a school bus or tokens for older students is a lifeline to the programs."

Parents are preparing to delegate to the TDSB's Finance Committee on May 27<sup>th</sup> and June 3<sup>rd</sup> to share their personal stories and the collective need for equitable access to the programs. The TDSB's decision is contrary to the board's expressed commitment to inclusion, equitable access and long-standing support for growing French Immersion/Extended programs to meet the demand. Any loss of French as a Second Language grants as a result of enrolment decreases would place an additional financial burden on the board.

The Federal government has set an objective to increase the bilingualism rate of the Canadian population to 20% (from the existing 17.9%) by 2036. Provincial and territorial governments and school boards need to set out an overarching vision that will support and ensure the opportunity for all Canadians to learn their second official language and affirm the benefits of a bilingual and multilingual Canada.

Canadian Parents for French (Ontario) will be present on May 27<sup>th</sup> and will follow the deliberations and decisions of educational authorities closely.

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*Canadian Parents for French is a nationwide, research-informed, volunteer organization that promotes and creates opportunities to learn and use French for all those who call Canada home.*

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