



April 11, 2018

Oral Remarks by Mary Cruden, Canadian Parents for French (Ontario)

Planning and Priorities Committee, TDSB

Canadian Parents for French is a national, research- informed, volunteer organization. We further bilingualism by promoting and creating opportunities for young people to learn and use French. The organization got started in 1977 and has a long involvement with Toronto school boards. In the last few weeks, hundreds of TDSB students have been participating in our annual public speaking event Concours Oratoire. You can come see the students in action at the provincial finals at Glendon on May 5.

As you know, during May and June, the TDSB French review will take place. We are pleased that TDSB stakeholders will have the opportunity to share the successes and challenges with you, particularly core, extended and immersion students and their families.

What you may not be aware of is that 2019 will be the 50th anniversary of the Official Languages Act which acknowledged the social contract of our country between the English and the French. You have played an important role in providing anglophone and allophone children with the opportunity to learn French in preparation for full participation in the public and cultural life of our country. The federal government has just announced the new 2018-2023 Action Plan for Official Languages with \$500 million in new funding. The Ministry of Education is taking action on the supply, recruitment and retention of FSL teachers. What better time to **review, renew and strengthen** the TDSB's commitment than now.

In preparation for the upcoming conversations, we are available to support you. If you turn to pages 3-5 in your delegation package, you will see a partial list of resources available. On page 3, I draw your attention to our Ontario goals for French Second Language learning:

1. Increase student confidence, proficiency, and achievement in FSL.
2. Increase the percentage of students studying FSL until graduation.
3. Increase student, educator, parent, and community engagement in FSL.

Following that is our brief, the State of FSL Education in Ontario. It contains data and information from a variety sources. The full presentation of this brief takes about an hour – feel free to book me for that! Tonight, I can only tweak your curiosity and give a little insight into one key indicator in one program - student participation in French immersion.

While core, extended and immersion all develop a student's proficiency in French, French immersion with an early start and significantly more time in French, is the optimal approach. It is also the subject of many op ed writers and tweeters, some informed, some not so informed.

Ontario's annual average annual growth rate for the last 10 years for participation in French immersion is 5.7%. The TDSB's is 4.8%.

TDSB FI elementary participation is 10%. The boards surrounding you range from 13-25%. In eastern and northern Ontario, participation in French immersion is 30-53%. Given the TDSB's population, another benchmark could be the province of Manitoba with participation at 13.2%.

Your early French immersion program is strong with an SK start and about 100% French through grade 3. However, 27 Ontario school boards start immersion in JK including Toronto Catholic.

The TDSB decided at amalgamation in 2000 and again in 2009 to have 3 entry grades in recognition of the varied needs and aspirations of the Toronto students and their parents. That makes you a leader in equity of access as does guaranteeing a spot for every on-time applicant. Providing transportation also supports equity and you are among the 50+ boards who do so.

As you know well, education is funded through Grants for Students Needs. Students in core, extended and immersion generate the same Pupil Foundation Grant as any student but they also generate an FSL Allocation. The more students in French, the bigger the amount. The TDSB receives approximately \$30 million annually to "support additional costs" related to French, however, these funds go into your general revenues. You also receive \$460 000 in enveloped federal funds to support professional learning and classroom enrichment.

As you can see in the resource list virtually every thought or question about French programs has been researched. You can watch the Minister outline her commitment to ensuring an adequate supply of FSL teachers on our youtube channel. We have included the links to the Ministry's resources and public opinion research –

73-84% of Canadians believe that "more efforts should be made so that young people become bilingual and can speak in both English and French".

Therein lies both the success and the challenge as you embark on the French review.