

May 11, 2020

Minister Adriana LaGrange  
Minister of Education  
228 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

**Re: Response to New OLEP Funding Formula Open Letter**

Minister LaGrange:

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) Alberta is disappointed to hear of the adjustment to Official Languages in Education Protocol (OLEP) funding that you shared with us on April 27<sup>th</sup>. Though we appreciate that the reallocation of the funds is required due to the growth of Francophone first language (FFL) education, the gap in supports that is the result of the current and future cuts is of significant concern.

We have several concerns about this shift in funding and its process:

- There was a lack of consultation with stakeholders and other interested parties. To our knowledge, opportunities for students, parents, teachers or boards of trustees to provide input or even respond to a series of questions from the Advisory Committee did not exist. The general overview and opinion of the Provincial Advisory Committee was developed without this crucial input and information.
- Both OLEP and provincial funding for FSL education have not been increasing at the same rate as they have been for FFL education. This is of great concern as the Government of Canada has laid the planned increase of bilingual Canadians between now and 2036, squarely on the backs of the FSL graduates and community. The current rate of bilingualism in Canada stands at 17.9% with plans to be at 20% by the target date.
- Thanks to initiatives in Alberta, the support of Jim Dinning (a former Minister of Education, Alberta) and a constitutional obligation, there is francophone governance in place across Canada. CPF Alberta strongly supports both this and Francophone institutions. This, however, should not come at the expense of French second language education.

Parents place their children in FSL programs for a variety of reasons – they want better for their children than what they had; they want future doors opened to them; and they want their children to be able to fully participate in the world's global economy on even grounds with their international counterparts. Alberta is a member of the global economy and needs people who can not only help them maintain their current place but advance it. Cuts to the only funding program available to support French second language education severely limits these opportunities.

FSL education has no champion or impending legal obligation supporting its delivery. Rather, the programs are organized on a shoestring budget where passionate teachers are often forced to personally beg for or borrow the resources that they need to ensure the survival of the program. Alberta's own French Policy states that one in three Alberta students is enrolled in a French language program. It also states that our province has the fastest growing francophone population and it is also the fourth largest in the country. It also goes on to state:

"The provision of select government services in French and other supports to the community is not an obligation, but a decision that the Government of Alberta, through its ministries and agencies, has made. Through more dialogue, proactive collaboration and ongoing partnerships with diverse stakeholders serving the province's French-speaking population, the Government of Alberta can better understand the Francophonie's unique needs, continue to enhance the development and delivery of meaningful services in French, and support the development and vitality of Alberta's Francophonie for future generations." (French Policy, Government of Alberta, 2017)

How can such promises be made without sufficient resources to support them? "Alberta has an opportunity to better serve a significant portion of Albertans, while also enhancing Alberta's competitive advantage and strengthening the province's relationship with the Francophonie across Canada and the world." French second language education is the primary source for making this possible.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Wishart', with a stylized, flowing script.

Victoria Wishart, PEng  
President