

May 11, 2020

Honourable Adriana LaGrange
228 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB
Canada T5K 2B6

Re: New OLEP Funding Formula Open Letter

Dear Minister LaGrange,

It has come to the recent attention of the Canadian Association of Immersion Professionals (ACPI) that the Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP) funding specifically allocated to French as a Second Language programs will be significantly reduced beginning 2020/21. This is of grave concern on two levels. First and foremost, the growth in French Immersion has been exponential the last several years in Alberta, as well as across the country. Revealed in our Pan Canadian Consultation, support is needed now more than ever in schools in order to deliver quality French Immersion programming for the next generation of bilingual Albertans.

Secondly, ACPI welcomed the new official languages plan, "*Action Plan for Official Languages – 2018-2023: Investing in Our Future*", which has the specific goal to increase bilingualism, "*part of our new Action Plan, we are setting a very ambitious target — to increase our national bilingualism rate from 17.9% to 20% by 2036. We will get there by raising the bilingualism rate of English speakers outside Quebec from 6.8% to 9%.*" (Pillar 3). As a result, ACPI is very concerned that this is not reflected in the distribution of funds for Alberta.

With over 46 000 students enrolled in French Immersion in Alberta and substantial growth each year, equitable distribution of funding between Francophone and FSL programs has never been more vital. Proper consultation by the OLEP Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC) with immersion professionals, administrators, coordinators, parents, trustees, teachers and other stakeholders would be an essential first step, thereby providing critical information, such as a deep understanding of the challenges, and ultimately better inform decision-making.

Since an increase in OLEP funding was initially allocated by the federal government, ACPI is now surprised and disappointed to learn that significantly less will be available for Alberta immersion programs. Numerous worthwhile initiatives will struggle to survive, such as: quality and consistent professional learning, recruitment and retention, on-going informed program support through coordination and consultant positions, resource purchasing, coordination of cultural events, partnerships with France and

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international French diplomas (DELFI). This decision is a step backwards as far as advancing French language education in Alberta, which has already been extremely challenging. Ultimately, this decision disadvantages future Albertans nationally and devalues French Immersion.

As an association that supports immersion programs nationally, we suggest that the province of Alberta fairly support French Immersion programs by the hiring qualified bilingual staff at Alberta Education to specifically meet the needs of French Immersion (OLEP funding management, professional development and curriculum development), by allocating funding equitably and by creating committees that have immersion specialist representation.

Program:	Grades:	Old \$:	New \$:	% difference:
FFL	ECS-Grade 6	U/K ¹	\$69.00	U/K
FFL	Grade 7-12	U/K ¹	\$120.00	U/K
FRIM	ECS-Grade 6	\$80.00²	\$68.00	-15%³
FRIM	Grade 7-12	\$129.00²	\$114.00	-11.5%³
FSL	ECS-Grade 6	\$65.00 ²	\$53.00	-18.5% ³
FSL	Grade 7-12	\$89.00 ²	\$65.00	-27% ³

Finally, we kindly request that the Alberta Ministry of Education review and revert the decision which disadvantages Alberta's French Immersion programs.

Bilingually yours,



Marie-Josée Morneau
President of the Canadian Association of Immersion Professionals

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