



CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH – HAMILTON

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Trustee Judith Bishop
Chair, Policy Working Sub-Committee
Hamilton Wentworth District School Board

August 10, 2005

Dear Trustee Bishop:

The Executive Members of Canadian Parents for French –Hamilton Wentworth Chapter have reviewed the Interim Report of the Transportation Policy Review. We would like to express our **strong support** for the inclusion of French Immersion under proposed Section 10 of the revised Transportation Policy: Potential Expansion of Transportation Services.

This draft Policy represents a major step forward for the French Immersion program in Hamilton. It will allow parents, school councils, board staff and trustees to work together in future years to seek equitable transportation solutions for French Immersion students and their families. The provision of bussing for Immersion students will have the following positive impacts:

Increasing Enrolment and Retaining Students:

Appendix B of the Interim Report states that transportation services “are to be used to increase enrolment and retain students”. French Immersion enrolment will increase if some form of bussing is provided. The current lack of transportation service is a major disincentive for the French Immersion program.

Through the provision of bussing, the Board will also retain some of the families who currently enroll their children in the separate school board, or the Halton school board to take advantage of their transportation services.

The federal government's Action Plan for Official Languages has challenged education stakeholders to double the number of functionally bilingual high school graduates by 2013. The provision of transportation for Immersion students would show the Board's endorsement and support of this initiative.

Promoting Equity in Accessibility to Appropriate Programs:

Appendix B of the Interim Report states that the Board's interest is to ensure that “students have accessibility to appropriate programs”. French Immersion has been a successful part of the Hamilton District School Board's curriculum for over 25 years. The Province of Ontario has set out a specific Ontario Curriculum for French Immersion, and provides additional funding for French Immersion students at both the elementary and secondary school levels.

Currently, the lack of transportation prevents some families from accessing the French Immersion program. CPF feels that every Canadian should have the right to be bilingual.

Every child in Hamilton should therefore have the equitable right to attend a French Immersion program. A child's attendance should not depend on the affluence of his family or their ability to drive him to school. Providing transportation for French Immersion will provide equity in accessibility to this program.

Improving Student Pedestrian Safety:

Appendix B of the Interim Report states that that transportation should be "provided in a safe manner and concerns for students' pedestrian safety will be a consideration in the provision of services". The current combination of no bussing and huge catchment areas for French Immersion schools is creating vehicle and pedestrian havoc. At Norwood Park on the mountain, over 400 students are being dropped off and picked up by car each day –an accident waiting to happen and a major liability for the Board. The provision of bussing for French Immersion students will work toward improving this student pedestrian safety issue.

Providing Transportation services within the Funding Envelope:

Appendix B of the Interim Report states that transportation should be "provided within the transportation funding envelope." The provision of bussing will increase French Immersion enrolment, which will in turn increase the amount of Provincial FSL funding to the Board. Transportation for French Immersion will also help retain students in the HWDSB, which will increase the student grants to the Board. We would hope that this increased funding can be used to help off-set the costs of providing transportation.

I attach for your information a letter from Kerry Pond, Acting Director of the Business Services Branch of the Ministry of Education assuring me that "transportation to French Immersion programs will be taken into consideration as we work on our new approach to student transportation."

Conclusion:

Once again, CPF Hamilton-Wentworth applauds the efforts of the Policy Working Sub-Committee and endorses the conclusions of the Interim Report of the Transportation Policy Review. We look forward to working with you in future to consider opportunities for the provision of bussing for French Immersion students using the available funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our input.

Sincerely,

Rosalind Minaji
Chair, CPF Hamilton-Wentworth

Attach: August 10, 2005 letter from Ministry of Education

cc All Trustees
Superintendent Don Grant
Superintendent Krys Croxall