

FRENCH IMMERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 1-2021

To the Chair and Members
Winnipeg Public School Board:

February 18, 2021

The French Immersion Advisory Committee reports as follows:

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Committee approved the Agenda of February 18, 2021, as distributed.

2. 2021/2022 DRAFT BUDGET

The Secretary-Treasurer was in attendance to provide an overview on the draft Budget for the 2021/2022 school year.

The Committee was informed that on February 4, 2021, the Province of Manitoba announced an increase in education funding of \$20.8 million dollars. This resulted in a decrease in funding from the province of 1.6% or \$2.9 million dollars and an additional reduction from other revenue resources such as the Federal government of \$1.3 million dollars. As a result, the Board of Trustees is required to reduce almost \$5 million in programs in order to achieve a balanced budget of \$421,039,405. As directed by the Provincial Government, the property tax levy for WSD home and business owners will be frozen at 2020 levels or a decrease of about \$6 a year on the average assessed home value of \$225,700 within in WSD.

The Committee was informed that the reduction in the provincial budget along with the two percent cap on the special levy has created a deficit that requires WSD to reduce programs and/or services in order to achieve a balanced budget for the 2021/2022 school year.

The Committee was informed that the Board of Trustees drafted a proposed list of reductions to be made including School Resource Officers, Unfilled divisional support position vacancies, Occupational/ Physiotherapy, Milk Subsidy Program, Utility savings, School Budgets (non-salary), and School Clerk positions(12 month to 10 month). In response to an enquiry, The Committee was informed that a list of non-mandated programs is available under Financial Facts on the WSD website.

The Committee expressed concern regarding the proposed reductions to school budgets. The Secretary-Treasurer informed the Committee that school budgets generally have a surplus at the end of the year and the proposed reduction reflects that surplus. The Committee was informed the 20 percent reduction may not be applicable to every school, as it would take into account schools that had larger surpluses versus schools that would require additional funding.

The Committee expressed concern about additional Covid-19 expenditures that may be required to support students/schools. The Secretary-Treasurer informed the Committee that Covid-19 expenditures are considered a one-time expense, the draft Budget is only taking into consideration ongoing expenditures.

The Committee expressed that any reductions to the Occupational/ Physiotherapy program will have an impact on the children and families that need these services and that it would be difficult in the future to get this program back .

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The Committee was informed that the Board of Trustees will request a meeting with the province to request that funding be provided by the WRHA for the delivery of the program. In the event that WRHA is unable to subsidize the costs of the Occupational/ Physiotherapy program the Board of Trustees would need to re-examine the list of non-mandated programs to determine in what other areas reductions could be made to balance the budget.

The Committee agreed that it would be beneficial to lobby the province to provide funding to school boards that takes into account inflation costs to ensure that schools are able to cover these vital programs. The Committee was informed that they can contact their MLA and the Minister of Education to voice their concerns.

The Committee was informed that the majority of funding for French Immersion Programs comes from Property Tax. The WSD's French Language Program expenditures are approximately \$45 million. WSD received approximately \$1 million in revenue from the Province and equalization represent approximately \$6.3 million resulting in a shortfall of \$37 million. The Committee expressed concern that French Immersion programming is mainly covered by special levy and not core provincial funding.

The Committee was informed that the survey results for the SRO program are still being compiled and will be presented to the Board of Trustees at a future meeting. The Committee was informed that initially the SRO program began as a tripartite agreement between the City of Winnipeg, the Province of Manitoba and WSD, for the delivery of service and was equally funded by all parties. In recent years, the province does not provide funding to support for any increases and WSD has supplemented the difference to support the continuation of the program. The Board of Trustees will continue discussions with the City and Province regarding alternate options for the SRO program.

3. FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM

The Committee was informed that Virtual programs are available in French and currently there are 82 students participating. The Committee was informed that there is still a shortage of teachers, however WSD has continued recruitment efforts, including pre-hiring teachers pending graduation. WSD has also encouraged teachers to upgrade their French skills to increase the number of teachers available to provide French education.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie Dumont
Trustee Representative

IN ATTENDANCE:

Voting Representatives

Ecole J.B. Mitchell School
Ecole Garden Grove School
École secondaire Kelvin High
Ecole Lansdowne
École LaVerendrye
École River Heights
École Robert H. Smith School
École Sir William Osler

Regrets

College Churchill
Ecole George V School
Ecole Laura Secord School
Ecole Luxton School
Ecole Riverview School
Ecole Sacre-Coeur
Sisler High School
Ecole Stanley Knowles
Ecole Victoria-Albert School
Ecole Waterford Springs School

Administration

Fatima Mota, Superintendent of Education Services
Julie Smerchanski, Director
Paul Kochan, Secretary-Treasurer
Ruth Schappert, Principal Ecole LaVerendrye
Ryan Hughes, Principal Churchill High School
Wade Gregg, Principal Ecole Laura Secord school
Matthew Couture, Principal Ecole George V School
Paulette Huggins, Principal J.B. Mitchell School
Brad Burns, Principal Ecole River Heights School
Andrea Powell, Principal Ecole Robert H. Smith School
Dominique Ostermann, Principal Ecole Sir William Osler
Stephanie Helander, Recording Secretary

Trustees

Jamie Dumont
Jennifer Chen