

FRENCH IMMERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 2-2021

To the Chair and Members
Winnipeg Public School Board:

May 4, 2021

The French Immersion Advisory Committee reports as follows:

1. Bill 64 – The Education Modernization Act

The Committee was informed that on March 16, 2021, the Province of Manitoba announced substantive changes to the education system in Manitoba.

The Committee was informed that the new governance model includes 15 new regions, plus Division Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine (DSFM) to replace 37 separate school divisions in Manitoba. This would require Winnipeg, St. James, Louis Riel, Pembina Trails, Seven Oaks and River East Transcona School Division to merge into one region for the City of Winnipeg representing 188,540 students. The Committee was informed that local School Boards would be replaced with a Provincial Education Authority.

The Committee was informed that through this new Governance Model School Community Councils would be established in place of Parent Councils. One parent representative of a School Community Council from each of the regions would be elected to the Provincial Advisory Council. This would result in one parent being elected to represent the City of Winnipeg schools and all parents.

Trustee Dumont provided an overview of Bill 64 which highlighted some of the proposed changes and the impact Bill 64 may have on programs and services. The Committee was informed that the Province expects \$40 million in savings that would go to frontline education across Manitoba, this equates to one half-time teacher per school in Manitoba. WSD provides many programs and services to support our students such as Nutrition programs, Housing assistance, Health connections, Reading Recovery, Math Pathways, Autism programs, Anxiety Programs, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Program which are important to our families. The Committee was informed that Manitoba Education believes that a complete restructuring of education is necessary to find efficiencies, meanwhile, suggestions of modest and less disruptive changes such as merging all Winnipeg school busses, shared IT and purchasing would result in immediate savings. The Committee was informed that Manitoba Education suggests that where you live changes how you learn because school funding is based on a district's ability to raise money through property taxes, however WSD receives less than 60 percent of its operating revenue from the Province and has no choice but to rely on property taxes to fund resources needed for important programming for students. The Committee was informed that Manitoba Education claims that Indigenous students are falling behind because only 51 percent of Indigenous students graduate within four-years, compared to 90 percent graduation rate among their non-indigenous peers. The Committee was informed that pointing to a four-year graduation rate as the indicator of success shows ignorance of the socio-economic and social status challenges students face. WSD supports a large number of Indigenous students who return to school and successfully complete their diploma as mature students. Many Indigenous students overcome trauma in order to successfully graduate which may take more than four years to achieve, but is no less a success.

The Committee voiced concern that one parent representative for the City of Winnipeg could not represent the needs of such diverse communities. The Committee expressed that Bill 64 was not a democracy, but was authoritarian. The Committee expressed concern that there is no guaranteed representation for French Immersion programs within the 15 regions or the School Community Council under the new model.

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The Committee agreed that to abolish a system that has been in place for 150 years, with such disregard is disrespectful. The Committee expressed concern that programs that were fought for and built over 40 years could be lost.

The Committee expressed concern that DSFM would provide a more stable environment and that French Immersion teachers may choose to work for DSFM rather than continuing under the new and less reliable model.

2. Provincial Consultation

The Committee received an overview on the timelines outlined by the Province to consult with parents, Parent Advisory Councils, and School Staff regarding the role and processes for School Community Councils and the establishment of the Provincial Education Authority.

The Committee was informed that during the spring/summer of 2021, the Province intends to consult with parents, parent advisory councils, and school staff on the role parents can play in decision making and the role and processes for school community councils. The Province also intends to consult with education staff and stakeholders on priority actions as well as establishing a curriculum review panel, and a new assessment framework.

The Committee was informed that by fall of 2021, the Province intends to release a road map for the implementation of the priority actions and the timelines for change.

The Committee was informed that by November 2021, the Province anticipates having the Provincial Education Authority established along with the changes to the current school trustee system expected by July 1, 2022.

The Committee was informed that Bill 64 is not law yet and there is still time for the voices of the community to be heard. Bill 64 still has to pass through the Committee level of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, any community members who oppose Bill 64 are encouraged to register to speak. Community members interested in speaking on this bill in the fall can register at 204-945-3636 and can find more information at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/about/faq/fact5.pdf>.

3. MAPC Bill 64 Meeting Invitation

The Committee was informed that MAPC is organizing a coalition of parent councils and allies to save public education in Manitoba. Parent Councils are being invited to participate in zoom meetings to discuss and develop a campaign to stop Bill 64.

The Committee was informed that virtual meetings are taking place and all are welcome to attend.

4. Minister of Education's Student Advisory Council

The Committee was informed that the Minister of Education is receiving application from Students for the Minister of Education's Student Advisory Council. The Student Advisory Council would be comprised of up to 20 Manitoba youth, aged 14 – 18 and would report directly to the Minister of Education. Council members would serve a 12 month term starting in August, 2021 and ending August 2022. Council members would also meet with government staff and education stakeholders via virtual meetings.

5. French Immersion Updates

The Committee received an overview of the French Immersion Program over the last 15 years.

The Committee was informed that the French Immersion Program has been showing consistent growth with a more substantial increase in the last five years. Winnipeg School Division (WSD) has the highest number of French Immersion schools in Manitoba, outside division scolaire franco-manitobaine, with approximately 4,750 students enrolled in the French Immersion Program. The French Immersion Program is currently offered in eighteen schools. The French Immersion Program provides instruction in most subject areas in the French language, with minimum time expectations in Kindergarten, Grades 1 – 8, and a minimum of 14 credits (WSD expects 15 credits) from courses taught in French. The French Immersion Program starts in Kindergarten or Grade 1 in the Dual Track setting, and in Nursery, Kindergarten or Grade 1, in the Milieu setting. One junior high school offers the Late Immersion Start at the Grade 7 level.

The Committee was informed that the statistical analysis of the IB Program demonstrates that there is a low number of French Immersion students selecting to enroll in the IB Program, and those who wish to continue enhancing their French skills, already have the opportunity to enroll in French courses in the IB Program at École secondaire Kelvin High School. Given the current recruitment challenges, any additional implementation of French courses and/or Programs would further augment the difficulty in recruiting qualified staff to teach them. The Committee suggested that offering an incentive program to encourage French teachers to stay in Winnipeg might be beneficial.

The Committee was informed that WSD has partnered with the University of Winnipeg and Inspire in the Build From Within Teacher Development Program that provides Indigenous High School Students with the opportunity to receive support while studying to become teachers. WSD recommended that a partnership with the Université de Saint-Boniface be established to actively recruit and place former WSD students in WSD schools for their practicum. WSD also recommended that a data base of French Immersion students who enter the Faculty of Education be established to maintain connections with them with the possibility of providing practicum placements.

6. Renaming of Cecil Rhodes School Update

The Committee was informed that the Board of Trustees received an overview of the results and confirmed that the school community and the community at large did not speak with one voice. In respecting the two different voices a conclusive recommendation was not reached however the members of the Committee felt that naming schools after individuals lends itself to conflicting ideals as societal values continue to be in constant flux.

The Committee was informed that the results of the survey for the Renaming of Cecil Rhodes School were referred to the Building/Transportation Committee for review and consideration. At a Board meeting held on May 3, 2021, the Board of Trustees voted in favour of a name change for Cecil Rhodes School. It is anticipated the name change would be implemented by September 2022.

7. Renaming of Greenway School

At a Board meeting held April 12, 2021, the Board of Trustees referred the request from the French Immersion Advisory Committee to rename Greenway School to the Building/Transportation Committee for review.

At a meeting held April 28, 2021, the Building/Transportation Committee reviewed the request and agreed that more information is necessary to be considered by the Board.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie Dumont
Trustee Representative

In Attendance:

Voting Representatives

Ecole George V School
Ecole J.B. Mitchell School
Ecole Secondaire Kelvin High School
Ecole Laura Secord
Ecole River Heights
Ecole Riverview
Ecole Robert H. Smith
Ecole Sir William Osler

Regrets

College Churchill
Ecole Garden Grove School
Recole Lansdowne
Ecole LaVerendrye
Ecole Luxton
Ecole Sacre-Coeur
Sisler High School
Ecole Stanley Knowles School
Ecole Victoria Albert School
Ecole Waterford Springs School

Administration

Fatima Mota, Superintendent of Education Services
Julie Smerchanski, Director
Brenda Lapointe, Board and Community Liaison Officer
Nancy Karpinsky, Principal Ecole Garden Grove
Ruth Schappert, Principal Ecole LaVerendrye
Maria Silva, Principal Ecole Secondaire Kelvin High School
Brad Burns, Principal Ecole River Heights School
Dominique Ostermann, Principal Ecole Sir William Osler
Amanda Capina, Vice-Principal Sisler High School
Nathan Tocher, Vice-Principal College Churchill
Warren Nickerson, Vice-Principal Ecole Robert H. Smith
Amanda Ferbrache, WANTE Representative
Tarin Howard, Recording Secretary

Trustees

Jamie Dumont
Jennifer Chen