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### **March 9, 2016**

I am concerned that problems experienced predominantly in the urban centres of Guelph and Orangeville are being "shared" with those of us in more rural locations. Being fair doesn't mean that you must apply the same solution everywhere equally. Perhaps some of solutions proposed in the review, such as enrolment caps and reduced instructional time, can be utilized only at the specific schools that need it right now. This could buy us enough time to explore and hopefully benefit from longer term solutions such as recruiting/hiring, without restricting or punishing successful FI programs that are not currently experiencing problems.

I am also very concerned that Secondary FSL is being considered AFTER the conclusion of the Elementary FSL review. It seems to me that these two topics are deeply interrelated and that some "solutions" at an Elementary level may jeopardize the viability of the corresponding Secondary program. For example, capping Brisbane FI enrolment together with the foreseeable decision to one day create a Secondary FI program in Orangeville places the Erin District High School FI program in grave peril. In fact, it could significantly impair the success of the school as a whole, since FI students are a significant portion of the total student population.

I am also surprised that this review didn't consider changing boundaries or opening new FI locations. For example, would an elementary FI program in Shelburne relieve some of the enrolment and capacity pressures felt in Orangeville?

It feels to me like the committee is (understandably) defining the scope and proposed solutions in a sufficiently constrained way, in order to keep this project finite and achievable in the near term. I can see how attempting to tackle the entire situation would be daunting. However, I believe that we are capable of more than a band-aid fix that focuses on constraining, reducing and restricting. For what it is worth, I would like to put my full support behind the EXTENSIVE AND IMAGINATIVE IDEAS proposed in the March 6th "To Whom It May Concern" letter. Let's focus on growing the supply to meet the demand!

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### **March 10, 2016**

I have ■ children of which ■ are currently enrolled in FI. I also have another child starting jk FI this fall. That being said if the proposed cap is approved and goes forward what happens to my ■ child when ■ starts school in 2018? What if ■ isn't one of the

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children chosen to attend FI. How do I explain to my child that ■ isn't allowed the same educational opportunities as ■ sisters and brother.

How is it fair that some children get to attend and others don't.

With the cap, let's say only 90 new JK students are allowed to enroll in the FI program.

So of the 90 students let's say 15 of these students come grade 1 or grade 2 find that the FI program isn't really for them and they switch to the English track. Then what?

There was probably other students that weren't selected under this "cap" that would have followed through with FI but weren't given the opportunity to even start FI.

I think instead of putting a cap on the number of children that you are going to allow to better their education, you should hire French speaking teachers from outside of Ontario.

Every child deserves the same opportunity to learn and taking away that right shouldn't be allowed in his country.

I am a resident of ■. There is a need for the French immersion program to be brought to a school up here. These kids sit on a bus for 2 or more hours a day.

I think if you brought the program up here there would be a great response and more kids would enroll. I think some parents are deterred from registering for FI because it's not local and the kids go so far out of town.

I think the point I really want to get across after writing all this is that a Cap isn't the way to go. Taking away FI from deserving children isn't right. Every child deserves the right to learn.

Scaling back the FI program isn't the answer. Expanding it to other schools and hiring more French speaking teachers from other areas of Canada or another country would be the best option to provide our kids with the best education possible.

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### **March 10, 2016**

- Growing communities are busing students over 1 hour each way weekly – when does the board plan to merge the findings from this Committee with the transportation issues.
- If the caps are met will students be denied entry? What will the enrollment process look like?

Recommendation 16 – what is considered significant changes for the 5 year review cycle? The challenge is that we know the growth residential areas based on city/area planning. So why are we not just calling this out as a continuous issue?

- Outstanding recommendations will be addressed when?

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### **March 10, 2016**

If cap/selection process is implemented, can annual statistics be released about how many students applied and how many accepted, and have that data considered for the capped number the subsequent year?

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### **March 10, 2016**

I am concerned that most of these changes are strictly due to staffing/money concerns and not data or research related to second language learning.

If there is an increased demand for the program, there should be increased availability, not reduced. Recruitment and incentives for French staff is needed.

If you cap the program, you limit the number of French students in your area who may go on to become French teachers.

If English instruction is implemented in younger grades, that instruction should be for the benefit of students and not simply staffing & budget. Children will not benefit from Phys. Ed. being taught in English, however being taught to read and write might be helpful for future academic success.

If a cap is put in place, would there be a consideration of broadening the later starting extended program to allow for students who would do well in a more immersive program?

Have you accounted for the fact that Dufferin didn't have an immersion program until much later than 2006 when presenting your statistics?

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### **March 15, 2016**

I don't feel that the meeting went as well as could be, there was little information of what will, can be done, but a lot of "could be" "might happen" my [REDACTED] has attended FI since day one, and regardless of if she is in FI or not how does it apply to "enough room" in schools. Weather these children attend FI or not their bodies would still be taking up space in a school. I don't feel the board as they stated thought this would "take off" so well, obviously this wasn't well thought out in all aspects. For those of us who don't reside in Guelph, it's nice that a new school is being provided there for FI but how does that help the students in other areas. This is very disappointing and frustrating from a parents situation. Our [REDACTED] loves FI, and those students who have dropped out throughout the years, are those spots filled? Very unhappy with the whole situation.

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### **March 16, 2016**

Putting caps on the french immersion program, especially in North Wellington will put children at a disadvantage. I feel that the board needs to do more to accommodate the demand for more french-speaking teachers, not less. Under the Ontario Labour Mobility Act, teachers who are qualified and certified in other provinces will automatically be

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certified by the Ontario College of Teachers. This means that french-trained, certified teachers from Quebec and New Brunswick should have no problem acquiring jobs here. Where is the disconnect? We need to attract and accommodate french-trained teachers in order to boost the program. By restricting it, these teachers will instead choose other, more accommodating boards.

Our children deserve at least the same opportunities and benefits of learning a second (or having support in their first) language as others in this province. Students in French Immersion benefit both socially and academically, they learn, at first, to pick up on social cues that help them understand their french learning environment. They have exposure to other cultures, not only from within the classroom but through exchange opportunities and beyond the school environment, because they understand and can communicate in french.

Living and working in [REDACTED] many years ago, I was surprised at how important fluency in both official languages was in commerce. Many large companies have offices in Quebec and there was demand for french speaking staff and executives...in [REDACTED]. In a global context, other than english, french is the only other language spoken in countries on five continents.

John Ralston Saul, famous Canadian novelist, essayist and philosopher uses the analogy of a corridor in reference to bilingualism. For those who are unilingual, there are doors only on one side of the hall, for those who are bilingual, just as many doors on the other side appear, doubling opportunities for learning and success.

Why would the school board, charged with educating our kids want to close those doors to all but a few? It is imperative that all of our children have at least the same opportunities as those in larger communities.

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## March 16, 2016

I believe that a cap to a French Immersion Public Program is the wrong solution in a Public Education system. Access for all in Canada to a bilingual program is in sync with being a Bilingual Country and should not be treated as a privilege available to a minority only. In an officially bilingual country, it seems more than short-sighted to deny interested families the opportunity to enroll their children in French Immersion.

I am from [REDACTED], and I chose to move to [REDACTED] because of the French Immersion program. We moved here when our kids were in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. We came from a full French board and I was worried about switching to a FI program but I talked to teachers there before enrolling and was reassured of the quality of the program offered at Palmerston. Prior to that I also taught French to adults [REDACTED]; my student there were young adults who had been through the French Immersion program and I was amazed of the quality of their French. They were taking my class in

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order to obtain promotion in their work where there was better opportunities for a much needed bilingual staff. With that in mind I was happy to register our kids with UGDSB.

If at the time we were under a lottery system, with a less than 100% French curriculum, there is no doubt that our kids would have been going to Guelph or Orangeville to a French School Board. This is obviously going to happen with other families and means a loss for UGDSB.

It is also a loss for communities like ours in [REDACTED]: for a community to continue to grow and attract young families, which in turn brings money, businesses and jobs/labour into the community, schools and school programs are top of mind. It is clear as a family we would not have moved to the Township of [REDACTED] if it wasn't for the French Immersion program as it is now. We would not be spending our dollars at the grocery store, hardware store, pharmacy, optometrist, dentist...we would not use the Hospital, the Theatre, any of the town services the high school etc. paying out tax dollars to the Town of [REDACTED]. We would not be participating to this township economical development.

The proposal and recommendations offered are made from a pure administrative view of cutting cost and simplifying human resources burden. This issue is not new and the demand has been increasing steadily for years, which is totally in line with the mundialization of our societies. The board has seen it coming, and obviously more efforts need done to ensure it is ready for this situation. I don't think this demand is going to shrink and go away. Our societies have changed and we all want more opportunities for our children who see themselves as citizens of the world like never before.

I am a small business owner and yes, it is difficult to find the right employees, but we do not take the decision to reduce sales and close departments if the demand is there. We have to become more creative and put more resources in our research to fill in the empty spots.

We have the chance to have for neighbor a French province, are we taking full advantage of that? Are we advertising in all the Universities (not just in Ottawa please) the positions that are open here? Couldn't we offer incentives to young teachers willing to move out of the province? I do think that Quebec faces the same issues we do with too many applicants for the number of positions open. It is the situation here with English speaking only teachers. There has to be a small percentage of them willing to come work here to at least have an opportunity. And like me, surely some of them will decide to settle here. This is only to our advantage isn't it?

Thank you for listening and reconsidering the recommendations made to the board.

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### **March 21, 2016**

I am a resident in the [REDACTED] PS neighbourhood in [REDACTED], and I am expecting my first child in [REDACTED]. I am a former graduate of an Ontario French Immersion program. In my own life I've received enormous benefits from having had the opportunity to learn a second language in public school, and I had been looking forward to enrolling my own child in such a program.

News presented in the local papers last year that a French Immersion enrollment cap and lottery is being considered in [REDACTED] came as a shock and a huge disappointment.

I urge the Upper Grand District School Board to do all in its power to improve teacher recruitment strategies so as to prevent the need for a cap. I would hate to imagine that my child's future, and those of my neighbours, might be dictated by the mere chance of a lottery system. We should be making a much stronger effort to ensure that all children can participate in a bilingual Canada.

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### **March 23, 2016**

In reading the French Review report and recommendations, I do have some serious concerns. I have one child who will be starting FI in the fall, and a younger child who will start JK in a couple of years.

A main concern is how this will affect families with siblings. It would be devastating to have my two children attend different schools, and for only one of them to have the opportunity to participate in the FI program. We aim to make French a part of family life and are working on creating a support system for our older child in FI. If our children end up in two different programs, that will force us to create separate support systems for each child, and will make it extremely difficult for us to make French part of our family life.

A second concern is how this affects families who are within walking distance of a French Immersion school. A cap would force many families to bus their children to an English school, whereas they could have easily walked to their local FI school. I urge you to take geographical proximity into account, should you go ahead with the cap.

We should feel fortunate to live in a community where so many families want to have their children learn in French. I understand that there are staffing issues, but restricting access to the program is not the right direction for our community. I would rather have the school board first try out all the recruitment efforts outlined in the report, and then consider a cap in a few years' time, should the recruitment efforts prove not to be fruitful.

There are so many parents in our community who work extremely hard day in and day out to create thriving family lives. A cap would lead to creating disjointed family

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schedules, bussing children who could easily walk to school, and forcing parents to devise different educational support systems for each child. All of that takes away so much from families, so I hope that there is a way to move forward without restricting access to the program.

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### **March 25, 2016**

I am the mother of a [REDACTED] year old with my second child expected [REDACTED]. My partner speaks french as a second language and routinely speaks and reads with my [REDACTED] in French. I had expected that my children would have the opportunity to attend French Immersion to further their second language development. I am very sad at the prospect that one or more of my children will not be given the opportunity for a solid education in both of Canada's national languages. As a graduate of the core french program through the English track I do not feel that the French language education received through Core French is sufficient for the development of french as a second language. The ability to speak both of Canada's national languages fluently has given my partner a significant advantage in employment and enriched our families life. I sincerely hope that you reconsider the prospect of a random lottery for French Immersion as I hope that my children's lives are similarly enriched by receive a solid education in both of Canada's national languages.

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### **March 25, 2016**

The choice of a French Immersion program should be open to ALL parents and not Capped by the School Board. Capping the program will mean that some families will be denied, it will create winners and losers. It will create more barriers for families who have enough struggles to deal with, whether poverty, access to information or just not aware, so in the end only those families who are engaged will have access to the few FI spaces.

As a [REDACTED] I did not register my youngest child until the start of the school year. The Capping means that my children would never have had access to the opportunity to participate in Immersion. You are creating systems that will treat families and children differently, that is not equitable and not what public education is all about. Public education is for everyone and there should not be any discrimination at all.

I choose French Immersion and have as much right to this choice and education and opportunity for my kids as any other parent and family.

I would like to see the School board scrap the Cap and keep on the same track. No caps, no changes.

Growing French Immersion is good for our community.

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### **March 26, 2016**

Cap FI enrolment or get rid of it and implement a strong core French program.

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If, as a province and a nation, we value the French language in predominantly non-French speaking communities, it is our responsibility to provide all children with equal access to this language with qualified teachers and a feasible system. This is not happening with the FI stream. Many (if not most) teachers are french immersion graduates themselves and not native French speakers (i.e. not high quality language instruction). Most speak with strong accents and imperfect grammar. And there is a lack of them anyway. The pressures on schools to accommodate the increasing numbers of FI kids continues to compromise the English stream children and their families who just want a strong publicly funded education system that meets the needs of everyone. In addition - all jurisdictions do not have equal access to the same system. Either give everyone a strong core french and get rid of FI or cap it. Please lets begin working together towards a system for all kids and not continue to spend more time and resources on those kids whose parents have the strongest voices. It is not the language that builds success in children (the research is somewhat conflicted-there has never been a good prospective cohort done to really understand the perceived benefits of FI). If the review conducted by UGDSB says to cap- then what right does anyone have to disagree? It is inexcusable to disagree with research (the UGSDB document) because it doesn't meet the needs of a vocal group of resourced individuals who live in the cities most expensive neighbourhoods.

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### **March 26, 2016**

After learning about the possibility of an "enrolment cap" & "lottery system" for French immersion my main concern is that my [redacted] children will not end up at the same school. Currently, my older child attends [redacted] and I am really hoping that my younger child (now [redacted] old) will also be able to attend this school in a few years when he's old enough to start kindergarten. But, with the proposed "lottery system" my younger child might not get into French immersion, and I would have to pull my [redacted] from the French immersion program so that both my kids can go to the same school. I don't see how I could do drop-off and pick-up to 2 different schools at the same time!!! The sibling issue definitely needs to be addressed. I wonder if younger siblings could be "grandfathered" into the French immersion program, so that families aren't broken apart into different schools?

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### **March 29, 2016**

#### **SUPPORTING A GROWING FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM IN UGDSB: INTRODUCTION:**

Enrollment in elementary schools has been declining across Ontario on average, while at the same time, French Immersion enrollment is increasing as a percentage of total student numbers.



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In the Upper Grand District School Board, the early total French Immersion program has been in place for over forty years and is thriving and growing because families understand the importance of bilingualism in an officially bilingual country. To its credit, our French Immersion program has been inclusive and accessible to all students in the county whose parents opt for the program. Certainly choice is empowering and making educational choices results in parents who support their children, schools and programs.

Introducing caps eliminates choice and is inevitably discriminatory. Caps either allow families to choose French Immersion and then possibly be rejected, or only provide the choice to a select number of children. Caps will create an exclusive program which FI in Upper Grand currently is not nor should it ever be.

For some time, there has been an “idealization” of the neighbourhood school. All things being equal, everyone would choose that their child attend the closest school to their home. But the reality is that there is more than one Board of Education in this region and several choices available to parents in terms of programs and schools both public, private and separate. Furthermore, because of the aging demographic and smaller families and the tendency to move into the newer suburbs, many schools have declining enrollment. Through all this change, it remains the Board’s responsibility to provide the highest quality education possible for the students in Upper Grand. In cases where an English (or French Immersion) program is too small to be viable, it is logical and important to change boundaries and merge programs to ensure students receive the best education. Many families will resist such inevitable change, but that does not mean the Board is wrong. It means that the Board needs to support the families and students to adapt to the changes as successfully as possible. It is the education which is the key to successful students, not the location in which the education takes place. This is a mindset which needs to be encouraged on an ongoing basis!

When a Board is confronted with this need to adapt program locations, it can be seen as an opportunity rather than as a threat. One of those opportunities is to embrace the success of French Immersion programs in UGDSB and institute a number of measures (outlined in this paper) to ensure that it will continue to grow and to graduate well educated bilingual students. At the same time, another major opportunity is to determine how to enhance the English language program so that it will attract students because of its excellence. While my purpose here is not to discuss this in great detail, allow me to give examples of what I would see as valuable considerations leading to English program enhancement. Centres of Excellence could be established which might offer challenging and exciting opportunities such as a Centre offering an elementary International Baccalaureate program; another for mathematics and science; another for music and the arts; one for environmental studies etc. Upper Grand has a Learning Choices Committee which would be a logical place to begin this planning and development process. Then parental choice would be more than simply French Immersion or the regular English program. In other words, re-focus the issue and challenge the movers and shakers to seek opportunities rather than react to issues with negative responses such as capping and lowering instructional hours in French. We will all lose with this scenario. Finding solutions which do not limit the choices of parents

and which provide an excellent education regardless of program, requires an extensive understanding of school organization, resources including staffing, and a willingness to compromise on the location of programs to ensure there are enough students to facilitate great programs.

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**HOW THE UPPER GRAND DSB CAN SUPPORT ITS FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS TO ALLEVIATE THE ISSUES OF FSL STAFFING AND RETENTION:**

One of the key requirements is effective teacher recruitment, professional development and teacher retention. It makes sense that UGDSB must immediately develop a concerted, determined and organized approach to this recruitment and these are the strategies which will facilitate successful recruitment:

1. Recruitment information must be available on the public website all year round. The information needs to be clear, welcoming, easy to access and informative. Our region has many advantages and opportunities for new teachers and their families and we have to be prepared to “sell” these to potential recruits. Applications should be encouraged twelve months of the year (continual recruitment) and an “Eligible to Hire” list should be maintained.
2. UGDSB representatives must annually attend, in person, Career Fairs at universities across Canada in order to attract the best qualified people. These universities include Bishops, Brock, Glendon College, Lakehead, Laurentian, McGill, OISE (U of T), Queen’s, Trent, Laval, Montreal, Ottawa, U of Quebec (Montreal, Rimouski, Trois Rivieres), Western, Windsor and York.
3. With the demise of FI in New Brunswick and its struggling economy, this is a good province in which to actively recruit teachers.
4. Start a pilot project(s) with a university (universities) to place the university’s students in UG FI schools as support. These students can then do their teaching practice in the host schools.
5. Have a partnership with one or more of the above universities to provide UG teachers with the mandatory Additional Qualification course for FSL 1, and therefore assist current teachers to become qualified.
6. Assess the current teaching staff within UG to determine who may be FSL qualified and yet not teaching in Immersion or only teaching part time.

**ANOTHER IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN TEACHER RETENTION IS GOOD, ONGOING TEACHER SUPPORT WITHIN THE BOARD:**

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This should involve a Program Coordinator with Instructional Leaders who provide support to teachers and assist with the implementation of French Immersion. Professional Learning Opportunities should be in place for all grade levels and can consist of such things as:

1. Kindergarten Network on inquiry-based programming, learning centres, play-based learning etc.
2. Grades 1-3 training in Alpha Jeunes (a diagnostic reading assessment tool which UG utilizes)
3. Grades 4-8: FI schools can be organized into clusters to allow for the development of learning communities
4. Professional Learning Communities to facilitate professional learning discussions among teachers with a variety of program needs
5. Transition Meetings (grades 7-9) to facilitate networking and program planning discussions between the elementary and secondary panels regarding the transition to grade 9 from grade 8.
6. Demonstration Classrooms for teachers to watch and discuss teaching techniques and program strategies
7. Secondary FI to discuss teaching strategies, resources, curriculum, and language proficiency benchmarks
8. Professional development workshops on Differentiated Instruction to accommodate students who require additional supports in the classroom.

**THERE ARE OTHER INITIATIVES WHICH SHOULD ALSO BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE UGDSB IN ORDER TO EFFECTIVELY PREPARE IN ADVANCE FOR THE GROWTH IN THE FI PROGRAM:**

1. Each year an Annual French Immersion Report should be published and analysed and used to respond to the challenges and opportunities for the French Immersion programs to ensure the continuation of an excellent early total Immersion program in UGDSB. This report should include the following information:

- the enrollment in each grade in each school ,including secondary
- the attrition rate for each grade in each school
- the results of exit surveys to determine the reasons for any attrition
- explicit data on Board efforts to recruit FSL teachers
- data to show the results of recruitment initiatives
- specific information on the efforts made to retain FSL teachers , including Professional Development programs

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-indicate what FSL qualification opportunities were offered to UGDSB teachers and the uptake ratio

-analysis of current staff including those teaching on a Letter of Approval (no FSL qualification) or those teaching on a Letter of Permission (no teacher certification)

-analysis of current UG teaching staff who are teacher certified with FSL qualification yet either not teaching in FI or only doing so part time.

2. Establish a French Second Language Advisory Committee which includes staff and parents representing all geographical areas of the Board. The role of this Committee would be to utilize the information obtained from the Annual French Immersion Report to ensure that UG was sufficiently prepared to respond effectively to challenges and opportunities within the FI program. This historical data would act as a guideline so trends and issues could be predicted and managed.
3. Develop an excellent package of materials for potential teacher recruits to introduce them to the many advantages and opportunities of living and working in this wonderful region. This should include the overview of housing prices in the various UG communities, activities and resources for their children and job opportunities for their spouses. In other words, this recruitment package should be designed to "sell" the positive attributes of the region's central cities, small towns and rural areas....a location for every preference.

#### CONCLUSION:

We have it all at our fingertips in Wellington/Dufferin.....a great and growing French Immersion program; an excellent region; committed parents; and a Board which has shown its leadership in offering and maintaining French Immersion, accessible to anyone, for over forty years.

Let us concentrate on our strengths and opportunities and see any weaknesses and threats as a chance to develop even stronger programs for the futures of our students.



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**March 29, 2016**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. After completely reviewing the "Report of the French Review Committee - 2015", we want to express our appreciation to the committee involved in creating a report that delivers a complete and thorough consideration of facts and options -- the task put before this committee was a very difficult one.

We feel strongly that FI is a valuable resource for any Canadian family who wishes to celebrate the language diversity in our country and it's imperative to give all families a choice for the language of their children's education in one of our two official languages.

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That being said, the quality of programming is paramount, and while we understand the reasoning for the suggested "cap", we ask you explore all options to retain the integrity of the program as you expand teaching staff to ensure all your current stakeholders are appropriately served. The growth in interest in FI programming should be celebrated and supported - not capped and made into a lottery where only the "lucky" kids get the opportunity to attend FI and receive the life long benefits of this program.

We have one child who is thriving in the FI program. We had fully expected to enroll our second child in FI in [REDACTED], promoting a fair opportunity for learning and development in our small family.

While the ""kinks"" are worked out in the larger scale programming strategy, we feel strongly that it is unreasonable to ask families to support two school systems, and two language streams if their preference is for their children to attend the same school. We want siblings of existing FI students to be eligible without having to enter a lottery.

In the short term - we ask you allow families who are already part of the FI stream to keep their children together in the same school.

In the long term, we hope it is your goal to ensure enough programming is available to support all those who are interested in taking advantage of a French education.

We appreciate the decisions you are faced with have no simple solutions and that concessions may be necessary. We simply ask that you consider the families that currently support this system as your primary stakeholder and consider their requirements (sibling admission) as your priority needs to serve.

With much gratitude.  
[REDACTED]

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