

NATIONAL OFFICE:
176 Gloucester Street, Suite # 310
Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 0A6
Tel: (613) 235-1481
Fax: (613) 230-5940
E-Mail cpf@cpf.ca
Internet <http://www.cpf.ca>

December 13 2010

Ms. Roberta Hall
Chair, Board of Education
School District 6 (Golden Zone)
812 14th Street South
P.O. Box 1110
Golden, BC V0A 1H0

An Open Letter to Ms. Roberta Hall and the School District 6 Trustees:

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) requests that the School District 6 Trustees reconsider the adoption of the Centre for the Study of Educational Leadership and Policy (CSELP)'s Recommendation 2 outlined in its *External Review of the Golden Zone: Final Report*. The CPF national office supports the CPF Golden Chapter's *Response to the External Review of the Golden Zone* and hopes that the Trustees will consider its recommendations as an alternative.

At a crucial time of program re-evaluation, the Trustees of School District 6 should take the opportunity to cement their commitment to bilingualism. Academically challenged students are too often victims of a neglectful curriculum that does not recognize their rights and abilities to flourish in a proper bilingual school setting. CPF applauds the Trustees for identifying that this vulnerable student population suffers from a lack of French-second-language (FSL) program accessibility, and we also commend the Trustees' goal of trying to address this issue. However, eliminating early French immersion (EFI) and introducing a middle French immersion (MFI) program will not serve that purpose.

EFI is best suited to the widest range of student abilities. All students, including special-needs students, deserve access to this quality education. It is important for the Trustees to consider that contrary to popular belief, *special-needs students are not differentially handicapped in immersion programs* and in fact they perform on par with special-needs students in the English stream.

The current EFI program in Golden introduces French immersion to students in kindergarten. The new MFI program the Trustees have agreed to adopt would introduce immersion to students in grade four. Many special-needs students are not yet identified as such until grade one or later. Parents and educators are typically reluctant at this point to enrol special-needs students in immersion programs, so the Golden district could actually see decreased numbers of initial enrolment in immersion if EFI is to be traded out for MFI. Offering early entry points can actually serve to give academically challenged youth an opportunity to excel in immersion before a special-needs diagnosis is identified.

Please consider reversing your decision and adopting the CPF Golden Chapter's recommendations, which will better ensure equitable access and even-handed resource

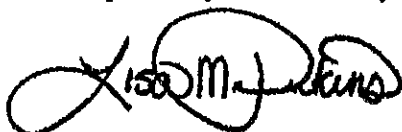
diversification throughout the community. By enhancing French-language instruction in all streams and broadening opportunities for all students to access FSL program options, the Golden community could be poised to stand as a national leader in delivering productive, effective and equitable education.

Honourable Trustees, please consider that this time of re-evaluation presents the Golden district with an opportunity to serve as a model for the rest of British Columbia and, indeed, all of Canada: one that shows even in small English-dominant communities, Canada's youth have the right and the capability to engage in its linguistic duality. Particularly when government departments such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Supreme Court of Canada are expressing an increased commitment to Canada's Official Languages Act in its hiring policies, we must not let our youth miss out on the privileges that come with official bilingualism.

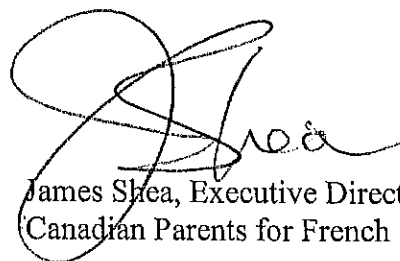
CPF is committed to helping each of Canada's regions deliver quality education to our youth. We are a network of parents that aims to complement school boards across the country, and regardless of the decision that is reached, CPF is prepared to work with School Division 6 in our capacity as bilingual education advocate. The CPF national office will continue to provide research, advocacy, programming, and educational support where it is needed. It is our hope that the Trustees will recognize that our network is a friend of public education, and that our evidence-based recommendations are founded in nothing but a desire to see our youth achieve their personal best.

CPF is working together at all levels—municipal, provincial and federal—to highlight the urgency of this issue and bring to the attention of the School District 6 Trustees that eliminating EFI will not solve the accessibility issues in the community. Please consider adopting the CPF Golden Chapter's recommendations from the *Response to the External Review of the Golden Zone* in order to provide the best possible education for all youth in the Golden community.

Respectfully submitted by:



Lisa Marie Perkins, President
Canadian Parents for French



James Shea, Executive Director
Canadian Parents for French

CC: Sandra Smaill, Vice-Chair, School District 6 Board of Education
Dan Soles, Vice-Chair, School District 6 Board of Education
Greg Anderson, Trustee, School District 6 Board of Education
Betty Lou Barrett, Trustee, School District 6 Board of Education
Ron Christenson, Trustee, School District 6 Board of Education
Shannon Hood, Trustee, School District 6 Board of Education
Jim Jenkinson, Trustee, School District 6 Board of Education
Rhonda Smith, Trustee, School District 6 Board of Education
Paul Carriere, Superintendent, School District 6 Board of Education
Debra Pool, President, CPF British Columbia & Yukon
Robert Rethon, Executive Director, CPF British Columbia & Yukon
Laurie Dalzell, Acting President, CPF Golden Chapter