

March 7, 2011

Elizabeth McAuley

Language Coordinator

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Knowledge Management Division

Ministry of Education

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Dear Ms. McAuley:

The current education climate in British Columbia and throughout the developed world is that of creating a new vision; of creating a generation of critical thinkers, lifelong learners, engaged citizens and world leaders.

In Canada , to truly be a leader, one has to be bilingual in both of our country's official languages (English and French). It is in this context that we are confused by and deeply concerned with the draft curriculum put out by the Ministry of Education for "Additional Languages". It appears that this curriculum proposes to strip French of its status as an Official Language, thereby limiting children's leadership potential in Canada .

By changing curriculum requirements in BC, where do our students stand in their ability to compete for university entrance and employment opportunities in Canada ? The Official Languages Commissioner's office Feb 17, 2011 states that "The government of Canada remains the largest employer in the country. The senior ranks of government and thousands of positions

right down to front line service providers require the knowledge and use of Canada's official languages. Examples are evident everywhere across the country though federal departments and agencies such as Service Canada, Health Canada, Parks Canada, the RCMP, Citizenship and Immigration, National Defence, Census Canada, the Coast Guard, Fisheries and Oceans, Canada Post, Revenue Canada, Western Economic Development, Canada Mortgage and Housing and Industry Canada to name only a very few. Opportunities will continue to exist for the knowledge and use of our two official languages"

We also see the Additional Languages draft curriculum as being very harmful to the late French immersion program in BC. The draft curriculum allows for schools to offer additional languages beginning in grade six. Currently children who enroll in late immersion, which begins in grade six, have had exposure to at least one year of "core" French and have developed an interest in pursuing the language in more depth. By removing this opportunity, we fear that enrolment in late immersion will be greatly diluted thereby further limiting leadership possibilities in our citizens.

Several other questions arise regarding additional languages curriculum. What if a family moves within BC and the new school does not offer the same "additional language" of instruction? What if a family moves to a different province and the student has never had exposure to French? Who decides the proficiency level of a student based on the European Framework if the school in which the child is enrolled does not have someone who can assess their chosen language? What if a student has proficiency in a language that is not on the Ministry's list of "additional languages"? What do the exempt students do with their time in elementary school if they are deemed proficient and choose not to pursue another additional language? How do we maintain our country's claim to having two official languages when our schools don't even acknowledge that French holds a different status than other languages? How does the BC Ministry of Education gladly accept funding from Heritage Canada for French programming in schools but not acknowledge French as an official language within the draft Additional Languages curriculum?

In Part VII of the Official Languages Act – Advancement of English and French, the *Act* explicitly sets out the Government of Canada's commitment to enhancing the vitality of official language minority communities and to promoting English and French in Canadian society. Besides co-ordinating the implementation of this commitment by all federal institutions, the Minister of Canadian Heritage may take measures to:

- enhance the vitality of official language minority communities;
- encourage the learning of both English and French in Canadian society;
- assist the provinces to support official language minority communities, to offer bilingual services and to provide minority-language and second-language education;
- encourage and assist the private and voluntary sectors to provide services in both official languages;
- encourage Canadian organizations and institutions to project the bilingual character of Canada , both at home and abroad.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage must report annually to Parliament on the progress in achieving these goals. (http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/hrpubs/tb_a3/olaannot-eng.asp).

As multicultural as British Columbia is, the fact remains that we have only two official languages as stated by the Official Languages Act and the Additional Languages Curriculum document should therefore reaffirm the status of French as an official language of Canada and require that students acquire a certain level of proficiency.

Sincerely,

Sabine Goertz

President

Canadian Parents for French - Delta Chapter

cc: Heritage Canada

Official Languages Commissioner