



CPF *Canadian Parents for French*

British Columbia & Yukon Branch

Vancouver, January 23, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in support of CPF Tofino-Ucluelet's efforts to introduce an Early French Immersion program into their community.

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) is a national network of parent volunteers who work to promote and ensure quality and equitable access to French second language opportunities for all youth. The CPF BC & Yukon Branch is by far the largest in Canada with over 8,100 members belonging to over 50 local Chapters. In a single year, CPF volunteers across BC and Yukon contribute more than 40,000 hours to organizing French second-language extracurricular activities to help French come alive outside the classroom. In short, Canadian Parents for French strongly believes that in a nation where both French and English are official languages, all children should have access to a quality bilingual education.

Though Tofino-Ucluelet does not currently house an Early French Immersion program, parents in these communities have come together to form a CPF Chapter to demonstrate their commitment to French-language education. This dedicated group of parents have completed all necessary documentation and procedures in order to successfully establish a Chapter and have committed to our Branch's bylaws and reporting requirements. The evident passion from parents within your community towards French-language education is reassuring in moving forward with the creation and implementation of a stable and viable program.

A recently conducted survey illustrates that, were Tofino-Ucluelet to offer an Early French Immersion program in the coming school year, there would be 26 students enrolled from these two communities. For a community this size, this is a formidable and viable number moving forward. In addition, between both communities there is an 80% support for the implementation of this program. Perhaps more interesting is that the parents of an additional two students currently in Grade 1 would choose to hold their child back a year in order to place them in a French Immersion program. Parents do not take the decision to hold their child back lightly, thus showing the deep commitment to and interest in establishing a French Immersion program in the community. Finally, parents with preschool children aged as young as a year old are enthusiastic towards the implementation of an Early French Immersion program, demonstrating sustainability were Tofino-Ucluelet to offer such a program.

The federal government cooperates with the provinces to enable young Canadians to learn French or English as a second language. The Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP) is one of the Department of Canadian Heritage's largest in terms of



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finance. Under bilateral agreements, the federal government reimburses the provincial and territorial governments for part of the additional expenditures they incur to provide education in the minority official language. These funds are calculated based on student enrolment in official language programs. By offering an Early French Immersion kindergarten class in the 2012-2013 scholastic year Tofino-Ucluelet would access these funds and receive approximately \$30,000 through the Learning Resources Grant, the French Immersion Grant, as well as the French Immersion Growth Grant. The Federal Funding Guide for 2011-2012 is viewable here: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/frenchprograms/funding_1112/1112_Frfunding_guide.pdf

Currently, there are over 275,000 students enrolled in French Immersion, Intensive French or French as a subject in BC and Yukon public school systems. In BC, French second language programs are in high demand. From 2002-2007, enrolment in Immersion in BC and Yukon jumped 25 per cent, while overall enrolment dropped four per cent. Indeed, 2012 marks the fourteenth straight year of enrolment growth in the province's French Immersion program; 7.7% of the entire public school student population, or 44,000 students, are now registered in French Immersion. With French Immersion enrolment at a record high, parents and educators are recognizing the life-long benefits of official language opportunities within the public school system.

There is no question that in terms of cognitive skills, French Immersion does not impair or limit a student's development. The performance of French Immersion students continues to meet or exceed that of their respective English-language cohorts on all standardized tests in grades four and seven. More students are pursuing French-language post-secondary education in BC, with multiple programs offered at Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, and Collège Educacentre College campuses located throughout the province. Both SFU and UBC offer French-language teacher training and certification, popular and competitive programs, to meet the demand for French program teachers in the westernmost province and territory.

According to a 2007 CROP poll prepared for CBC Radio-Canada, 88 per cent of Canadians believe that individuals who speak more than one language are better equipped to succeed in today's global economy. Furthermore, 82 per cent believe that learning a second language is one of the more fulfilling activities one can pursue, and two thirds of those surveyed indicated that knowing Canada's two official languages is a key element in defining what it is to be a Canadian.

The introduction of an Early French Immersion program serving Tofino-Ucluelet would provide educational, social and economic benefits to the small, relatively isolated coastal community. Firstly, students would benefit from a choice in educational programs that stimulate and challenge their learning as well as provide increased options for their futures. Secondly, as diversity in educational options would provide



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an advantage for young families to choose to stay in the region, the community would draw a social and economic benefit. Effectively, the introduction of French-language programs would keep young families from leaving the community in search of advantageous educational and cultural opportunities for their children.

With an approximate population of 3,150 the situation in Tofino-Ucluelet is similar to other communities in BC where CPF Chapters and French Immersion programs have shown great success. For example, the northern communities of Chetwynd and Hazelton are French Immersion programs that began small and experienced continued growth and popularity. Chetwynd houses a relatively newly-established French Immersion program serving a small community with a dual-track, split-grade elementary school - the first cohort of French Immersion students has yet to reach the secondary school level. Similarly, the Hazelton French Immersion program exists as a small program in a small community, providing a dual-track school in which there are multiple grade splits in both English- and French-language programs. However, the program is experiencing an increased demand and as a result the community has had to arrange for extra seats in the French Immersion kindergarten program this past year. For coming years, the community is looking into hiring extra French-language teachers or teaching assistants in order to meet the demands of the community's educational needs.

Inarguably, British Columbians and Yukoners are embracing French language programs more than ever before: they are certain of its cognitive and academic benefits, convinced of its economic and cultural advantages, and passionate about its capacity to keep the country united from coast to coast to coast.

It is for these numerous advantageous reasons that Canadian Parents for French BC & Yukon Branch supports CPF Tofino-Ucluelet's efforts to establish an Early French Immersion program in their community. CPF BC & Yukon strongly encourages School District #70 to introduce Early French Immersion in Tofino-Ucluelet.

Nous vous prions d'agréer l'expression de nos salutations les plus distinguées,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads 'Glyn L.'.

Glyn Lewis
Executive Director