



December 10, 2018

Honourable Robert Fleming
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

VIA EMAIL: EDUC.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Fleming:

Re: Request for a meeting with the newly elected Board of Regional Trustees of the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique to discuss areas for collaboration

I write on behalf of the Board of Regional Trustees for the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (CSF) to respectfully request a meeting with you and your senior officials as soon as possible. The objective of this meeting is to provide a forum for the CSF and the Ministry of Education (EDUC) to discuss ways the CSF and EDUC can work together to improve the delivery of French-first language instruction throughout the province.

As you are aware, the CSF is unique from other school districts operating in British Columbia in its purpose, structure and financial needs. The CSF is mandated to provide French-first language instruction to select eligible students throughout the province. In order to fulfil its linguistic and cultural mandate province-wide, the CSF has operational and capital funding needs that are different from other school districts in British Columbia. In this regard, there are three areas in particular the CSF wishes to discuss with you and your officials: the operational funding allocation system, staff recruitment and retention and implementation of the CSF's Capital Plan.

1. Funding Allocation System

As a result of its unique constitutional mandate and its province-wide structure, the CSF has different funding needs than other school districts in British Columbia. These unique funding needs have been recognized by successive governments, such that some adjustments have been made to the Funding Allocation System formula as applied to the CSF. However, the CSF-specific adjustments apply general increases to the CSF's operating funding as otherwise determined by the standard formula and are therefore not flexible enough to address the CSF's actual needs.

Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique

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The CSF did make a submission to the K-12 Public Education Funding Allocation System Review Panel appointed by the Ministry to consult with education stakeholders in April 2018. However, to date the CSF is unaware of any adjustments EDUC is considering making to the funding model to answer the unique funding needs of the CSF. As such, the CSF Board of Regional Trustees wish to discuss changes to the Funding Allocation system that will respond to the CSF's unique operational needs and ultimately result in stable and predictable funding to support the CSF in fulfilling its mandate.

The CSF is the only school district in British that is structured to serve various communities, both urban and rural, throughout the province. The CSF's province-wide structure, combined with the fact that it serves select eligible students, means that its student population is widely dispersed through the province. As a result, the CSF incurs additional operating costs in order to implement the programs necessary to uphold the Province's and CSF's constitutional obligations, including professional, education, and cultural and linguistic programs. The CSF also incurs additional expenses in order to ensure its schools are accessible. For example, the CSF must provide transportation services to its dispersed population, including in urban areas. In essence, the CSF's service delivery model more closely represents those of a rural school district than an urban one, even where the CSF school is located in an urban area.

2. Staff Recruitment and Retention

It is well known that there is a shortage of French teachers throughout Canada, and British Columbia is competing with the rest the provinces outside of Quebec for French-speaking teachers. While the English-language school districts are struggling to find teachers for their French immersion programs, for the CSF the situation is exacerbated by the facts that it operates schools across the province, its staff must speak French, and it must compete against English-language school districts offering positions to French speakers for their French immersion programs. All business and educational instruction in the CSF schools and administrative offices take place in French. Therefore, the CSF's recruitment challenges go beyond attracting French speaking teachers, as all specialists and support staff must speak French as well. The CSF is aware that EDUC has implemented strategies to try to recruit French teachers; however, the CSF find itself in competition with other school districts in the province who are offering various incentives to attract French teachers to their area. The CSF requires flexibility in its operating budget to enable it to incentivize teachers and other staff to work at its schools.

In addition, the CSF would like to work with EDUC to develop recruitment strategies to attract French-teachers and French-speakers from European countries for positions with the CSF, and to

work with both EDUC and the Ministry of Advanced Education to develop enhanced/fast-tracked French-language training and teacher training programs to alleviate the French teacher shortage problems in British Columbia.

3. Implementing the CSF's Capital Plan

Officials from EDUC and the CSF have been working collaboratively over the past year and a half to identify sites that may meet the CSF's needs. This work has primarily focused on the communities where the court has determined that the province has infringed upon the CSF's s.23 Charter rights, the "judgement communities". While the CSF's Board of Regional Trustees recognizes the urgency to find solutions in all of these communities and appreciates EDUC's efforts to assist the CSF in these communities, there are many non-judgement communities where the CSF's current and projected enrolment warrant immediate solutions and are high priority for the CSF. The CSF also has facilities that are high seismic risk but have not yet been included in the seismic mitigation program.

Minister Fleming, the CSF's newly elected Board of Regional Trustees wishes to have a collaborative and productive relationship with you and your officials and is respectfully requesting a meeting with you, as soon as possible, to discuss the issues set out above, and any other issues you may want to raise with us.

I look forward to hearing from you in the nearest future.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Marie-Pierre Lavoie", written in a cursive style.

Marie-Pierre Lavoie
Chair, CSF Board of Trustees