



September 11, 2017

Delivered via email: education.minister@gov.ab.ca

The Honourable David Eggen
Minister of Education
228 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Eggen:

Re: Reduction of Fees for 2017-2018

This is further to the joint letter of March 20, 2017 from the Chair of the Public Board and the Chair of the Edmonton Catholic School Board regarding our positions on those language program schools and alternative programs not being recognized as designated schools for reduced transportation fees.

Now that the 2017-2018 school year is in progress, I am writing to let you know that we have received hundreds of calls from parents throughout the District who are upset about being excluded and having to pay for transportation fees for language programs. In this era of inclusivity, we feel that exclusion, based on parents' choice to enroll their children in programs outside of their boundaries and in schools that better suit the needs of their children, is unfair.

Alberta Education's *Administrator's Guide to Implementing Language Programming* states that the benefits of language learning, "... provides a strong rationale for making language learning an integral part of student learning (p.2)." Our District concurs with Alberta Education that language learning is an integral part of basic Education in Alberta. As we noted in our letter of March 20th, should language programs not be considered as designated schools and exempt from the reduction of transportation fees, the mandate from the Government has created an inequitable and punitive situation for many families. Bill 1 is also impacting our school operations as it is consuming an extraordinary amount of time to process hundreds of inquiries and concerns.

Added to our inability to address this matter is that school districts cannot subsidize these fees because the Province is not providing funding to offset the lost revenue.

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We know that feedback is important to the government. We believe it is important for you to know how Bill 1 is being received by our and your constituents. As Chair, it is my responsibility to bring this to your attention on behalf of parents in the Edmonton Catholic community.

I am writing to request the Alberta Government reconsider and demonstrate what is stated in the Guide to Implementing Language Programming that language programs are part of the basic education in Alberta by including them in those that are eligible for transportation as part of your government's funding structure.

Thank you for taking our concerns seriously.

Sincerely,



Laura Thibert
Board Chair

Copy: Board of Trustees, Edmonton Catholic Schools
Michelle Draper, Board Chair, Edmonton Public Schools
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Boris Radyo, Assistant Superintendent, Edmonton Catholic Schools
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