



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Wow! What a year 2020 has been. Some highlights and some hard times, and a year we will undoubtedly never forget. Throughout all the mayhem, Canadian Parents for French Alberta has been there to support our students and our parents. Our Alberta Branch staff and board members along with our many, many volunteers have continued to show their dedication to our common belief in the importance of French education in Alberta. We thank all of you who have weathered the storm and are still actively participating in the pursuit of a bilingual Canada. Merci beaucoup! Things sure have been busy on the advocacy front this year. We have had numerous meetings and consultations with decision-makers including the Minister of Education to address the needs of our French second language learners. Likely the biggest issue on the minds of our parents is the return to school this fall, the quality of instruction if they opt for on-line learning and the safety of their children if they decide to be in the classroom. We know that our teachers will do their best to provide a healthy and productive learning environment and we want to support students, parents and teachers alike as we all navigate this unique school year. Topics about which we have been madly writing letters, making phone calls and holding meetings are:

- Distribution of the Government of Canada's Safe Return to Class Funds and ensuring that French language education is top of mind for the Ministry.
- Providing our FI and FSL teachers with the resources they need to transition from in-class instruction to on-line course delivery. English teachers have access to online resources through online programming, but our French Immersion teachers are being left to create their own resources to support the on-line environment.
- Sharing of existing resources from one school board to another so we do not end up with "have" and "have not" jurisdictions (in many cases urban versus rural schools)
- Attrition rates in French Immersion programming. We are concerned that since so many of our FI students have English-speaking parents who may feel unable to support their student at home, we may end up seeing parents being forced to choose between French Immersion and safety. High attrition could force school boards/districts to increase class sizes or eliminate FI programming all together.
- Literacy for our young (K to 4) students. We know that consistency in the early years is critical to literacy development for both French and English. With the sudden change in their instruction in March due to the pandemic, these young students will have a literacy gap in both languages. We need to have the supports in place for teachers and students so that their chosen language of instruction remains the same, and support for parents so that they are confident in the program of choice for their child(ren).
- Ongoing concern about the numbers of qualified French teachers/adequate staffing to facilitate the online French Immersion programming 1-12, and what the Provincial Government can do to attract and retain more teachers.

This list goes on. We are actively doing everything we can to ensure that our students are successful, and we will continue to advocate on their behalf.

I hope that you are finding the help and support that you need for the success of your student(s). Ask questions, attend the CPF National conference, call your local Chapter or Provincial Branch, consult the many resources already posted on the CPF Alberta website, and read the very well-written guide "Yes! You Can Help"

(<https://education.alberta.ca/media/563591/yesyoucanhelp.pdf>). Let's all remember that French Immersion is a commitment; it takes trust and perseverance and it is so worth it in the end!

Thanks to all of you for supporting CPF and for believing that your child deserves a French education. Let's continue to work together and support one another in this effort to foster a Canada where French and English-speakers live together in mutual respect and where linguistic duality forms an integral part of our society.

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