

Canadian Parents for French

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Executive Secretary: 584-7853 (Regina, Sask)

November 20, 1980.

The Honourable Harry Hays,
Co-Chairman,
Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario.



Dear Senator Hays,

The Fourth National Conference of Canadian Parents for French held in Winnipeg November 6-8, 1980, unanimously adopted the following resolution -

WHEREAS one of the main objectives of Canadian Parents for French is the general improvement and enrichment of the educational opportunities for its citizens, and

WHEREAS a number of other provincial and national groups have declared support for the more extensive use of both Canadian official languages in our schools,

BE IT RESOLVED that Canadian Parents for French hereby endorse the right for all Canadian children to education in either or both of this country's official languages, and

BE IT RESOLVED that we hereby affirm our strong support in principle of legislation which will advance and guarantee such rights for our children now and in the future.

I was directed by the delegates to bring this resolution to your attention as a Joint Chairman of the Committee on the Constitution.

Canadian Parents for French was formed in 1977 primarily to improve French language learning opportunities for English-speaking children. In passing the resolution the delegates (who represent parents in all the provinces and the territories) affirmed in the strongest way their support for the linguistic rights of all Canadian children.

Canadian Parents for French hopes that at this time in our country's history when language rights are under discussion, you will take this resolution into consideration when formulating your Committee's recommendations.

Yours very truly

Janet M. Poyen
Janet M. Poyen,
National President.

Canadian Parents for French

ALBERTA BRANCH

R.R.1, Site 6, Box 17
Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2G4
November 21, 1980

Honourable Senator Harry Hays
Honourable Mr. Serge Joyal
Joint Chairmen
Senate and House of Commons
Special Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada
Postal Box 1044
South Block
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A7



Dear Sirs:

In an effort to preserve opportunities for all children to learn in French or in English within the province of Alberta and to allow those opportunities to evolve into rights for all children to learn in French or English, we present our submission with regard to Minority Language Educational Rights as defined in section 23(1) and (2) of the proposed resolution respecting the Constitution of Canada.

Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch in September, 1979 endorsed and reaffirmed in September, 1980 the following resolution:

Whereas: one of the main objectives of Canadian Parents for French is the general improvement and enrichment of the educational opportunities for its citizens, and

Whereas: a number of other provincial and national groups have declared support for the more extensive use of both Canadian official languages in our schools, and

Whereas: more and more the composite-cultured, dual language nature of our Canadian social structure is being recognized,

BE IT RESOLVED that Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch hereby endorse the right of all Canadian children to quality education in either or both of this country's official languages, and

BE IT RESOLVED that we hereby affirm our strong support in principle of all legislation and/or constitutional amendments which will advance and guarantee such rights for our children now and in the future, and

BE IT RESOLVED that we support the continuing promotion in this country of the many and diverse cultural and language elements which collectively make up our rich and unique Canadian culture.

RATIONALE I:

Although there are positive achievements fostered by Alberta Education in the areas of bilingual education, Statute 150 of The School Act reads:

"(1) A board may authorize

(a) that French be used as a language of instruction, or
(b) that any other language be used as a language of instruction
in addition to the English language, in all or any of its schools."

The inviolability of local autonomy of school boards has been invoked to delay or refuse parental requests for bilingual programs. In 1978, the County of Leduc refused to institute a Grade I program in Leduc because 23 children did not constitute a sufficient number. Grande Prairie turned down parents of 17 children in Grade II for the same reason. In the spring of 1980, the Calgary Board of Education changed its decision as to the required number of children from 14 students, to 20 students to 24 students within a three month period. In 1980, the Red Deer city school boards refused to establish a program from Kindergarten to Grade II in spite of the fact that the parents of over 40 children from Grade II expressed their interest for the program. These decisions deny children the right to French education and a subsequent decision to offer a program even a year later will almost inevitably exclude these children from an opportunity to become bilingual.

RATIONALE II:

The number of students registered in bilingual programs has increased from just over 6,000 in 1976-77 to close to 11,000 in 1979-80. This is an increase equivalent to 20 % per year. It is apparent that the support for bilingual education is growing stronger each year.

In Alberta's 57 bilingual schools (where French is the language of instruction from 50% to 80 % of the school day), the majority of students are from English-speaking homes. There are also a number of bilingual (Ukrainian, Cree, German or Chinese and English) schools in Alberta. These schools are available to Alberta children regardless of origin.

We believe that since the parliament of Canada has enacted that English and French are the official languages that citizens of Canada should have the right to have their children receive their primary and secondary education in either official language.

In summary,

We trust that the Special Joint Committee on The Constitution of Canada will acknowledge the cultural pluralism of our country and will support entitlement of all Canadians to an education in either or both of Canada's official languages. It is imperative to recognize that Canadians everywhere and whatever cultural background should be entitled to the universal right to learn either or both of Canada's official languages. To deny Canadians the right to learn their official languages is to erode the positive efforts in bilingual language education that the French, English and other ethnic groups have worked together to achieve. To deny our children the right to an education in either or both of Canada's official languages is to deny our children the opportunity to participate fully in an united Canada.

We appreciate the opportunity to express our thoughts as it provides us with hope that the democratic ideals of liberty, justice and equality will be upheld.

Yours respectively,

Carolle Anderson
Carolle Anderson
Alberta Director