



Depuis le bureau de - From the desk of **LOGAN LIUT**



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****DELEGATION BEGINS****

Canada. What does that word mean to you? It represents something greater than the original meaning of village: it's the land we stand on, the air we breathe, the customs of our shared culture, founded on three pillars, one of those being French. Our current government structure and national fabric would not be the same if it wasn't for Francophone people. It is for this reason that I stand before this committee today, as a bilingual person being educated in the TCDSB.

To begin, in our land acknowledgement, we minimize the impact and importance of Métis people who are living on this land, who are traditionally Francophone and who are present here and now in Toronto, and have been for generations. Our Land Acknowledgement seems to assume that while Métis people exist elsewhere in Canada, they did not exist previously on these lands. This is false. Métis people, part European and part Indigenous, have existed since Europeans started colonizing Canada. The first thing that I propose today is a review of the Land Acknowledgement: for the Toronto Catholic District School Board to include the Métis Nation alongside all other specific tribes and nations that are already acknowledged.

In our board, students, especially those students who wish to learn the French language, are suffering from a lack of cultural and practical education in the French language and our unique Franco-Ontarien culture. When students from our school board attempt to speak French in real life, they often suffer from language insecurity, often being unable to understand and effectively communicate with other Francophones, especially informally right here in Canada. It is often said that language is more culture than communication: for a student being taught 'the international French' being placed in an environment in, for instance, Québec, it can be isolating and disheartening for our students when they attempt to speak the language and have not been given an education in their *own* French... that is, the Canadian dialects of French.

After consulting with community leaders in Catholic education and advocates for the Franco-Ontarien community, I stand here and propose a new direction for bilingual student leadership in our school board: a council of determined bilingual youth, with a focus on Franco-Ontarien culture, from each secondary school across the TCDSB.

This council of bilingual students must be separate from all previous student leadership for the protection and preservation of what is left of Franco-Ontarien culture... this council should be solely made *for* and directed *by* bilingual and Franco-Ontarien youth.

One might ask: why can't already established organisms or committees do this advocacy? History has shown to us Franco-Ontariens that we must advocate for ourselves and always have a seat at the table to ensure the survival and continuity of French in this nation. The council will be readily equipped to assist with anything that the Board needs answered regarding our French language learning or Francophone culture. Our school board can gain real insight from a group like this.

There is no downside for the Board when it comes to my proposition: logistics can be handled by student leaders with professional supervision from a staff member. Economically, there is little to no impact, as it is merely a council that would meet at the CEC or, virtually, during the pandemic. It is free advice to the Board from concerned students: it's cost-effective, and efficient.

This is not a political issue, nor a funding issue: it is an opportunity for the TCDSB to show its acceptance of the Franco-Ontarien community, its progressiveness on cultural erasure of Francophone people in Ontario, and would create only positive side-effects for our board and our school communities. Thank you.

****DELEGATION ENDS****