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Toronto Catholic District School Board
80 Sheppard Ave. E.
Toronto, ON M2N 6E8
Attn: Angela Gauthier, Director of Education

February 2, 2017

VIA EMAIL

Dear Ms. Gauthier:

Good teachers make a difference. So, I was deeply shocked to read the TCDSB's 'Long-Term Program Plan' drafted on January 31, 2017, in which I learned that St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School's Extended French curriculum would be *razed* in favour of ever-trendy French Immersion.

As of 2015, EQAO reports that St. Vincent de Paul's students outperform board *and* provincial averages in all academic categories. Additionally, the school has been a stalwart presence in the Roncesvalles community for over 100 years, as recently demonstrated by its participation in the Roncy Rocks festival and its perennial involvement in the We social justice movement. This is already one heck of a fantastic school! Yes, this is one part the result of a strong community of invested parents and great kids, and I don't wish to diminish their contributions. But, there is another part: stellar teachers.

It's a well-researched and documented fact that a star teacher can lead to improved outcomes for their students. This school is *full* of such teachers. The staff list at St. Vincent de Paul consists of 20-odd educational professionals who have converged on this school because of a shared desire to inspire great little minds. These teachers are now as much a part of the community as anyone else. And yet, I wonder how many of this already tiny staff list will be shipped off to other schools, only to be replaced by young, untested and inexperienced new teachers who are hired, well, for no other reason than they have an OCT certificate and can speak French?

I am well aware of the enhancing benefits of introducing another language such as French for a child's education. If St. Vincent de Paul had no French offering, I would be on the front lines fighting for such a change. The value of this experience is supported by many experts. Yet, St. Vincent de Paul already offers this benefit, and it's the best of both worlds – the academic advantages of learning a second language and the inclusiveness of not forcing separate streams, i.e., an advantaged "French" stream and a lesser "English" stream.

Lastly, I question the shoddy methodology employed by those involved in the LTPP consultation survey that led to this unfortunate decision. They report that, "from an estimated half-a-million (500,000) Catholic ratepayers/stakeholders residing in the City of Toronto (MPAC data)" -- of which I am one, though I received no such survey, but I digress – "481 responses were received." They go on to imply that this sample size is considered accurate 95% of the time with a margin of error $\pm 4.5\%$. Now, I admit that I am not a statistician. However, it seems to me that a self-selected (versus randomized) group of

respondents, of which only 217 are parents, can in no way be seen as representative of the actual parent community of St. Vincent de Paul. I don't even factor in questions of proportionality of the respondents. Whether the respondent list represented our neighborhood in terms of sex, marital status, ethnic diversity or socioeconomic status, we may never know.

I am the proud father of a one year old boy, Matthew, who I hoped would soon join this school's community. It *was* my belief that Matthew would have the best opportunity to thrive surrounded by such incredible support. Now, this belief is thrown into question. I have to wonder why I would bother sending my precious little human to a school in turmoil, and subject him to the whims of an ill-advised school board.

It continues to be my hope that Matthew will benefit from a Catholic education in Extended French at St. Vincent de Paul. For this to realize, it is also my sincere hope that the TCDSB will reconsider its decision to shake up and potentially ruin an incredible community: a delicate ecosystem built on trust, passion and investment from students, parents *and* teachers over many years. Why mess with a good thing?

Respectfully yours,



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cc: Donna Kairys-Wojdylo, Principal, St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School
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