

Concern grows over future of French education



The dismantling of the Bureau de l'éducation française (BEF), the organization responsible for the creation and administration of French-language education in Manitoba, is ringing alarm bells as both educators and parents wonder if this is the first of many cuts to come to francophone programs.

In October 2017, the position of assistant to the deputy minister (ADM) focused on French-language education was abolished and all other BEF staff were transferred to jobs in English-language education.

This is cause for concern since a fully functioning BEF is essential to the quality of French-language education that Manitoba educators and schools provide to students.

Over the past 14 years, French language programming has represented the fastest growing segment of Manitoba's K-12 education system with enrolment up nearly 40 per cent.

Currently, there are more than 30,000 students enrolled in French-language education and this number is expected to increase in coming years based on factors like immigration, increased opportunities for French speakers, partly due to the enactment of *Bill 5-The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act* which promises bilingual capacity for frontline services, and recognition of the value of being immersed in the French-language education system.

The government's commitment to improving the number of public services offered in French does not align with the cuts to French-language education and begs the question of how they plan on providing French-language service when the future of quality French-language education is being threatened.

Suffice to say, all indicators point to the need for more investment to strengthen French-language education, not less. Join us in calling on the province to restore government funding and resources to the Bureau de l'éducation française and to reinstate an assistant to the deputy minister to ensure that French-language education remains a priority.

Community meetings will be held in early March to further discuss this issue. Please ensure that your members, students and students' parents are informed about these meetings.

For those of you on Facebook, join the community group Ensemble pour l'éducation française. This group is a great resource and offers a space where concerned community members can express themselves and share information in regards to the history, current issues and the importance of French- language education in Manitoba.

To join the group, simply log in to your Facebook account and search *Ensemble pour l'éducation française* or type the following link into your address bar. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/527049504345984/>