





Citizens for Educational Choice

CEC: *Citizens for Educational Choice is an umbrella group that supports fundamental choice in the province's educational system and opposes the government's intention to remove it.*

This package contains **summaries** and **web links** to documents that are important to the discussion of the future of French as a Second Language (FSL) training for Anglophone children in NB.

- 1. Flaws in the Croll-Lee Report**
- 2. Fixing the Croll-Lee Approach to Core French**
- 3. Common misunderstandings about French Immersion**
- 4. How to Deal with “Streaming”: Following Eight Years of Advice.**
- 5. A Summary of the Decisions of the Court and the Ombudsman**
- 6. A Proper Consultation Process FSL**
- 7. Learning from Ottawa-Carleton Board of Education recent Review of French as a Second Language Programs**
- 8. Report of Current Research on the Effects of Second Language Learning on First Language Literacy Skills (Bournot-Trites and Tellowitz).**

1. Flaws in the Croll-Lee Report

From Response to the Review of French Second Language (FSL) Programs and Services in NB-- Drs. Diana J. Hamilton and Matthew K. Litvak (<http://hamlit2008.googlepages.com/>)

Preamble

The Croll and Lee FSL report has recommended the total elimination of Early French Immersion in New Brunswick schools. This report has stimulated an intense and emotional debate in the public. When we initially read their recommendations, we were surprised and curious as to why their results and conclusions were so different from those of previous reports prepared by education experts in NB and elsewhere in Canada. Consequently, we decided to read the report carefully. In the process of doing this, we found that it is a deeply flawed document which fails to provide valid evidence in support of the sweeping policy changes that its authors propose. We also found the biased tone used, in what is presumably an objective report, to be troubling. Here, we systematically point out errors in both analysis and interpretation by copying sections of the report into the document and commenting on them. When possible, we provide alternative analyses to document our findings. We restrict most of our comments to quantitative aspects of the report, though at the end we also provide general comments and suggestions based on our analysis. We hope that the NB government will read this document and seriously consider the points we raise. Based on much of the public reaction to this document, we are very concerned that most people are simply accepting the conclusions of the report at face value, and that those who question it are criticized as having an agenda or belonging to a special interest group. The flaws in this report are significant and are of particular concern if the government is considering acting on its main recommendations.

Executive Summary

- The authors suggest that there is a downward trend in students in the Core program meeting intermediate proficiency, but appropriate statistical analysis shows no such trend. Numbers are not good, but they are not declining as indicated.
- All attrition rates in the document are calculated incorrectly and are highly misleading. The authors contrasted registrations across grades within single years rather than track a cohort of students through each year. They concluded that attrition was much higher in EFI than LFI. When we correctly calculated rates in high school for both programs (by following cohorts of children through as many years as possible), we found absolutely no difference in attrition rates. The method they used was a gross misrepresentation of the data – claiming there is a huge difference when in fact there is none. Clearly one of the main reasons cited to dismantle EFI in favour of LFI is based on incorrect and inaccurate analysis.
- The authors used oral proficiency assessment results to establish the number of students succeeding in the program, although this test is optional and not all students choose to take it. Many students may drop out in grade 10 or 11 to prepare for English university. Assuming that none of them have achieved the expected proficiency levels is not justified and

produces a downward bias in results. The report chooses achievement of a certificate as the sole measure of program success rather than determining how much French the children who went through all or most of it actually learned.

- We used the authors' data to calculate how many students achieved the various levels of proficiency in both the EFI and LFI programs. We found that even though fewer students were tested in EFI than in LFI, more EFI students attained intermediate plus and advanced proficiency standards. Given the expectation that many who were not tested would also have met these standards, this difference may be even larger than measured.
- Based on data presented in the report, we calculated how many children in total meet particular proficiency levels (i.e., combine LFI and EFI numbers), and compare that to what would have happened if all these children had gone through the LFI program (which is what is being proposed). We found that there was no significant difference between the current program and the all LFI approach up to intermediate proficiency. However, the number of children attaining intermediate plus and advanced levels of proficiency would drop significantly under the LFI only scheme. If, as they propose, we switch to an "LFI only model" 270 tested students will do worse than the current model each year. Given that more enroll in the program than are tested, that number is likely a substantial underestimate of the number of students who will be detrimentally affected by this change.
- The authors suggest that eliminating EFI would dramatically reduce the number of exceptional students in each class. Based on the total number of exceptional students in grade 2 in 2005 (one example provided in the document), and estimating an average class size of 23, elimination of EFI would reduce the number of exceptional students in core classroom from a province-wide average of 5.4 to 4.25 students. Not the massive reduction that was implied in the report.
- On many standardized tests, core students are doing as well or nearly as well as EFI students. This suggests that streaming may not be as big a problem as it is purported to be.
- The authors suggest LFI is more cost-effective at meeting goals. However, based on stated percentages of students in each program and percentage of funds allocated to each program, EFI is 30% less expensive per student than LFI. EFI is the better financial choice if the goal is to produce French-speaking graduates.

To summarize, EFI produces better French speakers, costs less on a per-student basis, and has essentially the same attrition rate as LFI. The logical choice is to retain EFI. Core French certainly needs to be fixed, but we have found no justification in this document for eliminating EFI in the process. We strongly suggest that the central recommendation of this report not be adopted; it will lead to a reduction in French competence of hundreds of graduates per year, and result in a general lowering of standards. Numerous education experts have stated that EFI is the best program, and based on our analysis, we fully agree.

We feel that many of the legitimate shortcomings in New Brunswick FSL programs that the Commissioners have identified can be addressed more effectively as follows:

- by providing adequate resources to support a wider range of French-language course options and flexibility in Grades 10-12 in order to reduce early drop-out;
- by providing adequate support for exceptional children in EFI and LFI classes so that FSL training becomes available to these children;
- by actively promoting the benefits of learning French and encouraging all students equally.

2. Fixing the Croll-Lee Approach to Core French

The Croll-Lee Core French program begins in grade 5 with an 'Intensive French' course. The Minister says this will make great improvements over the current program. The experts disagree. In fact, the very people who designed NB's Intensive French program, Drs. Netten and Germaine, wrote in an open letter to the Minister that their program wasn't designed to be used in this way, and Dr. Genesee of McGill says it should not be called an Intensive French program at all because it is not supported by years of Core French instruction like every other Intensive French program. In addition, it seems to some parents that the Croll-Lee Intensive French program forces an immersion-like program on all parents, just under another name. Finally, many parents of special needs children are concerned that by relying so heavily on the short period of grade five Intensive French the Croll-Lee plan puts their children at extra risk.

There are more problems with the Croll-Lee approach to Core French than the way it misuses Intensive French. It recommends no specific improvements to our province's antiquated Core French curriculum, though FSL scholars such as Dr. Genesee say that curriculum renewal needs to be at the heart of any improvements. What's more, it removes all French education from the first five years of education, the very time when Dr. Ouellette and the Princeton professor Stephen Pinker tell us children have the greatest advantages in learning a second language. The Minister has argued that he must make this cut because the existing elementary program is not a success. We believe that by choosing an excellent set of curricula more suited to young people, he could make Core French become a success in the elementary years and a far more appropriate preparation for the Intensive French curriculum. In particular, we are told that the Advanced Integrated Method (AIM) is a much more active and up-to-date approach to French instruction and could benefit our elementary schools immensely.

Finally, to make up for these lost elementary hours, the Croll-Lee approach to Core French adds many more mandatory hours of French instruction at the end of the school career. It forces *all* students to take French in the critical last two years of High School. We are concerned that by shifting teaching time to this end of the school career, the Croll-Lee approach would make French instruction an unpleasant and highly ineffective experience.

We believe the Minister should not follow the highly experimental recommendations of the Croll-Lee report. He should take the following steps to improve our Core French program:

1. Continue to offer French instruction in the first five years of school (returning it in those schools where it has been removed)
2. Implement innovative, active Core French curriculum for grades 1 - 4, such as the highly-regarded *Advanced Integrated Method*
3. Carefully distinguish Intensive French from Immersion, to make sure that the Core Intensive French does *not* become 'immersion light'
4. Ensure that the Intensive French experience is helpful to *all* students, including those on SEPs.
5. Consult with FSL experts to roll out an excellent curriculum that dovetails with the Intensive French program and builds on its achievements
6. Do not rely on mandatory French in grades 11 and 12 to provide sufficient teaching hours

3. Common misunderstandings about French Immersion

Fact sheet on issues surrounding French Second Language education in NB:

Subject	Government position or anecdotal assumptions	Actual data
Enrollment in immersion province-wide	20%, 25%, or 30%; all three numbers have been used	Provincial average 31.5-23.5% in grades 1 to 5, 40-34% in middle school, drops substantially in high school (esp. grades 11 and 12). Varies widely by region. Source: Department of education data 2007-08 summary statistics (http://www.gnb.ca/0000/publications/polplan/stat/SummaryStatistics2007-2008.pdf)
Attrition rates	EFI much higher than LFI (numerous tables from Croll and Lee)	No difference between the programs when attrition is calculated correctly (source Hamilton and Litvak - hamilt2008.googlepages.com; academics from U de M and UNB have concurred).
Costs	EFI is drawing resources away from the system (source – Croll and Lee anecdotes, and Robert Parkinson, head of Council of DEC Chairs on CBC television)	- Immersion is only slightly more expensive than core, and EFI costs less per capita than LFI (source – cost estimates provided to Croll and Lee by the Department of Education; see analysis in hamilt2008.googlepages.com). - The federal government provides funds for FSL programming. These funds have not been discussed in the Croll and Lee report, so the implications of the proposed changes in available funding are unclear.



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Class size	Higher in core (source – Croll and Lee anecdotes (no data presented), Robert Parkinson, head of Council of DEC Chairs on CBC television and CBC radio, and Minister Lamrock on various occasions)	Following are average class size province-wide from each grade. Calculations are based on data presented in 2007-08 summary statistics (http://www.gnb.ca/0000/publications/polplan/stat/SummaryStatistics2007-2008.pdf) Grade 1 - EFI = 17.7, core = 17.7 Grade 2 - EFI = 18.5, core = 18.2 Grade 3 - EFI = 20.0, core = 21.2 Grade 4 - EFI = 21.9, core = 22.8 Grade 5 - EFI = 21.1, core = 22.4 Across all grades EFI = 19.6, core = 20.4; a difference of less than one student
Streaming	EFI causes streaming, leading to class composition problems and poor performance in core classrooms (Source: Croll and Lee and numerous comments from the Minister and others)	There is no evidence of streaming affecting test scores in grades 2 and 4, and a minimal effect in grade 5. Differences do appear in grade 8, after late immersion students have been removed from the core program (source: Department of education data provided to Croll and Lee, hamilt2008.googlepages.com). All evidence suggests that streaming will be worse under the Lamrock plan (source: Dr. Joe Dicks). "Early French Immersion is the most equitable program to teach children to become bilingual. The notion it is a program only for elites or children of higher abilities is not supported by research" (quote from Dr. Fred Genesee). Ottawa-Carleton school board recently scrapped LFI in favour of EFI and middle immersion, stating that "LFI is a select group of highly-motivated and higher-ability students" and that "LFI tends to serve a more homogeneous group of students." Further, they state that "EFI typically serves a more heterogeneous student population in terms of cognitive ability and social background." In other words - streaming is worse under late immersion. (Source: Final Report Review of French as a Second Language Programs, Elementary Phase, Ottawa-Carleton School Board http://hamlit2008.googlepages.com/OCBoardofeducationFinal_Report_FSL_R.pdf) See point 4 below for more detail
Class composition	Almost all children on SEPs are in Core, removing EFI will fix this (claim by Croll and Lee, and others)	Removal of program will on average reduce # of SEPs per class by a little over 1 child (Source Department of Education data provided to Croll and Lee found at http://www.gnb.ca/0000/publications/ss/reportonexceptionalities%202004-2005.pdf and analyzed by Hamilton and Litvak). This situation is avoided in Nova Scotia because children with exceptionalities are encouraged to remain in



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		the program and are provided with appropriate support.
Gender bias	FI classes are biased toward girls.	<p>This is true, and the bias increases over the grades. However, instituting only LFI is likely to exacerbate this bias. The Ottawa-Carlton study examined this and found the following: "10% more girls than boys enrolled in EFI, 14% in MFI, and 26% in LFI" Source: (Final Report Review of French as a Second Language Programs, Elementary Phase, Ottawa-Carleton School Board http://hamlit2008.googlepages.com/OCBoardofeducationFinal_Report_FSL_R.pdf)</p> <p>Interestingly, the 10% difference noted for EFI is also approximately what we see in New Brunswick, and in the middle school grades, where the Department of Education does not differentiate between EFI and LFI in its gender statistics, the difference increases, suggesting that as in Ottawa, LFI increases the gap between girls and boys. Source: http://www.gnb.ca/0000/publications/polplan/stat/SummaryStatistics2007-2008.pdf)</p>
Effects on mother tongue learning	Belief that children need a good grounding in their mother tongue and that EFI is detrimental (widely held)	Absolutely no evidence to support this. In fact, the opposite is true, second language training seems to boost mother tongue proficiency. See Bournot-Trites, M., Tellowitz, U. (January 2002). Report of Current Research on the Effect of Second Language Learning on First Language Literacy Skills. Halifax: Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation. Link: http://acpi.scedu.umontreal.ca/pdf/report.pdf .
Optimal timing of introduction of a second language	EFI offers children an advantage in accent, but otherwise is not essential. Notes other countries introduce L2 at later grades. (Minister Lamrock's comments, and a suggestion that Dr. Genesee backs him).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LFI results in a lower proficiency level (Department of Education data as presented in the Croll and Lee report) - Portugal recently moved the start of English instruction from grade 3 to grade 1 because they concluded earlier was superior. - Every other province starts EFI in kindergarten. - Dr. Genesee disagrees with Minister Lamrock, stating that the optimal starting point depends on circumstances, and in a truly bilingual environment like New Brunswick, an early start is better (stated during a lecture in Fredericton May 14, 2008, and in a subsequent letter to the Daily Gleaner)
Achievement levels	- Intensive French may offer children the boost needed to boost results from LFI to match EFI.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Success of intensive French cannot be predicted because, a) children in trials have not graduated, b) the trial students all had core French and CHOSE to be in the trial. Hence, success rates will offer an absolute best case scenario. - EFI is by far the best route to advanced proficiency. (Croll



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Claims that EFI performs dismally. - Calls intermediate standard bilingual. (all statements by Minister Lamrock) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and Lee report) - Intermediate can't get you a bilingual job (research conducted by Bruce Robertson), will "irritate the native listener" and is described as "individuals utterances are minimally cohesive". (Policy 309 description of the different proficiencies : http://www.gnb.ca/0000/pol/e/309A.pdf)
Resource availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource teachers don't exist and therefore can't be hired in the FI system. CPF said it would take 10 years to develop the capacity (Minister Lamrock's statements) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Francophone system recently hired 35 of them. - Dr. Dicks has stated that these people could be provided using short-term strategies such as identifying and expanding current best practices in this area and by offering intensive summer courses. - CPF made no such statement. - No resources are given to EFI (\$4080 to EFI versus >\$1 million for Core awarded by the Joint Committee on Classroom Composition) (source: NBTA submission to the FSL commission, page 5). - Relevant question – has anyone ever tried to provide these resources within EFI?
Universality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only 40% of children have access to an EFI class (statement by Premier Graham, April 3, 2008) - The proposed program is universal (Minister Lamrock statement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 78% either attend an EFI school or live within 16 km of one, and could easily attend. (calculated based on locations of schools identified from individual district websites) - The proposed program is not universal. It provides a common experience at grade 5 for most children (it appears that some may have to be exempted). After grade 5 students will choose between a core French option or Late French Immersion. Since LFI is academically challenging, the more capable students are much more likely to choose this option. This is supported by data provided to Croll and Lee by the Department of Education, and by the Ottawa-Carleton school board report as cited above).
Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "N.B. students rate, on average, among the worst in Canada" (Telegraph-Journal). NB education system "has ... produced more functional illiterates in both official languages than even its most 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Canada-wide rate for all 16 -25 yr. olds (Anglo and Francophone) is 34% according to the Canadian Council on Learning's strict definition - NB's illiteracy rate for the same group is lower than the average, 32%, and 2% better than in 2001. -Saskatchewan, a comparable province, but without a linguistic minority, has a rate of 31%; Ontario's is worse than NB's, at 33% - NB's overall high rate is due to the older population: 44% of NB illiterates are 56 or older (Source: http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl)



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	strident sceptics have feared" (Times and Transcript)	
Previous studies	Several years of previous studies support this decision by highlighting the lack of inclusion in EFI (Minister Lamrock statement)	No study beyond Croll and Lee has ever suggested this. All did suggest that resources have to be provided to make EFI more inclusive.
Literacy and second language education experts	Literacy experts support the proposed changes but second language experts do not. (source: Minister Lamrock)	Literacy is an integral component of school-based second language education programs, especially immersion programs. A fundamental premise of immersion is that students will develop literacy skills in their second language (French) and that these skills will transfer to the first language. It is essential that those involved in immersion education be extremely well-versed in best practices in literacy. (quote from Dr. Joe Dicks)

4. Streaming – the issue at the heart of the matter

Although many explanations for his decision have been offered, the one that Minister Lamrock seems most concerned about is streaming. This idea essentially means that children of different abilities end up in different academic streams. The argument used by the Minister is that the brightest students end up in Early French Immersion, and that challenged children are predominantly in the Core English program.

There are several issues we need to consider here:

What are the measurable effects of streaming in the early grades?

Data in the Croll and Lee report provide information on this. They tell us that in grade 2 and grade 4, standardized testing reveals no meaningful differences between children in EFI and Core. By grade 5, there is a difference developing, but it is still small. However, by grade 8 there is a substantial difference. Notably, though, as shown in the table below, the difference appears because Late French Immersion students leave the Core program and do better than both Core and EFI students. In other words, streaming isn't a testing issue until LFI comes into play.

Grade	Test	Core	EFI	LFI
2	Reading	69.3%	68.2%	
4	Reading	66.6%	68.6%	
5	Math	59.3%	64.5%	
8	Math	53.7%	64.9%	68.2%

What does other research say about immersion and streaming?

There is substantial research pointing to the fact that streaming under an LFI-only system is likely to be much worse than it is now, as the Croll and Lee data suggests. Further, in an extensive review of FSL programming, the Ottawa-Carlton district school board determined that EFI was the more egalitarian program and served a more heterogeneous population of students. As a result of this study, they decided to eliminate LFI from the program offered in their region. See additional information on this later in this document.

What is likely to happen if the Croll-Lee recommendations are followed?

All research suggests that streaming will be worse. Data also suggests that boys will be particularly under-represented in late immersion classes. There is already a bias in EFI, but the Ottawa study identified a more substantial bias in LFI. Hence, at a point when class work becomes more academically challenging, students will indeed be separated according to ability, and to a lesser degree, gender.

How do we avoid this?

Streaming can be minimized in EFI by dedicating the resources necessary to make it inclusive. Nova Scotia does this – teaching assistants are provided, students are retained and even repeat grades while remaining within the program. For years the Department of Education has told parents of struggling students that they need to be placed in the Core program because that is where they will get the help they need. This does not have to happen. Resource people can be trained in short order to ensure that EFI classes also receive a fair measure of support.

Moving forward

It is universally acknowledged that EFI is the best program for producing bilingual graduates. Given that part of the goal of the Minister’s plan is to improve bilingualism, why not commit to retaining EFI and making it more inclusive? Numerous studies (e.g. MacKay 2006, Scraba 2002, Rehorick et al. 2006) have recommended adding resources. Some claim that has not

worked, but is there any evidence that anyone has really tried? Given the level of support provided in both programs, we would argue that this is not the case. This should be addressed and every effort made to fix the situation before we give up on a successful program.

5. A Summary of the Decisions of the Court and the Ombudsman

Judicial Review

Legal papers were filed May 14, 2008 in the Court of Queen's Bench in Saint John seeking a judicial review of changes made to French Second Language programs following the March 14th, announcement of Education Minister Kelly Lamrock.

Concerned parents across the Province joined together and retained Fredericton lawyer, Thomas Christie, after it became clear that the Government was not willing to postpone the changes to FSL education to allow for a proper consultative process with all stakeholders.

The FSL Commission Report, authored by Dr. James Croll and Mrs. Patricia Lee, neither of whom are experts in second language education, was made public on February 29th. This report has been widely criticized for its shoddy analysis of Department of Education data, the lack of statistical support for its own recommendations and bias in the report's language. The recommendations of the report were fully implemented by the Minister on March 14th.

Two NB families, the Small family and the Ryan family, provided affidavits to the court describing their concern with the lack of consultation and speed of the Minister's decision. Both families had children registered for Grade 1 Early French Immersion in September 2008.

On June 11th, Justice H.H. McLellan returned his decision on the matter. He found that the decision of the Minister of Education Kelly Lamrock to eliminate Early French Immersion was "unfair and unreasonable". The judge stated that: "The Minister's decision to phase-out Early French Immersion is removed into the Court and quashed."

The Minister of Education has responded by re-opening the consultation period, lasting until July 25th. He will then release his decision regarding the future of French Second Language instruction in our public schools on August 5th.

According to the court's decision, the Early French Immersion program is on for September 2008. Minister Lamrock may eliminate the program for a second time on August 5th. We've fought hard for a second chance, and we urge you to participate in the on-going consultation process.

For the full decision, please see the following link:

http://hamlit2008.googlepages.com/SmallRyan_vs._NewBrunswick.pdf

Ombudsman's Report

After the decision to eliminate Early French Immersion in March, the office of our provincial Ombudsman and Child and Youth Advocate, Bernard Richard, was inundated with letters of complaint. Over three hundred letters were received which were opposed to the decision, countered by only 39 in favour of Minister Lamrock's decision. Mr. Richard thus conducted an investigation into the fairness of the decision.

The Ombudsman uncovered some troubling information. During the initial consultation period last winter, the authors of the Croll-Lee Report (Dr. James Croll and Mrs. Patricia Lee) received comments from people from across the province regarding Early French Immersion. The majority of the 450 responses were in defense of the program, yet the authors belittled this massive response and wrote that these people "failed to provide constructive thoughts".

Dr. Croll and Mrs. Lee also state that no better or reasonable proposals besides eliminating EFI were submitted. The Ombudsman uncovered several submissions that gave definite solutions to classroom composition issues, but were ignored by the Commissioners.

Mr. Richard also describes in his report discussions between Dr. Croll and the Deputy Minister on costs for the different programs. The authors appear to have juggled financial data to create a "very different and much more impressive picture" of the Late Immersion program. The Ombudsman found that exchanges like these called into question the independence of the review process.

The Department of Education was also found to have been actively planning for the elimination of Early French Immersion before the report was even delivered to the Minister and while accepting registrations for the program. The Ombudsman found that the sudden cancellation of a program so soon after accepting children into it raised serious concerns about lack of fairness.

After weighing the evidence, the provincial Ombudsman came to the conclusion that the decision making process was based on flawed analysis. While these flaws were pointed out to the report's authors by Department of Education staff at the draft stage of the report, they remained in the final version of the Croll-Lee Report.

The Ombudsman concluded his report with the following recommendations:

- **Allow parents to register their children for Grade 1 EFI in September 2008**
- **Delay implementation of any FSL reform until September 2009, allowing the government to conduct a public engagement according to the guidelines set out by the province's Advisor on Public Engagement.**

Minister Lamrock has rejected both recommendations.

For the Ombudsman's full report, please see the following link:

<http://www.gnb.ca/0073/PDF/FSLReport-e.pdf>

6. A Proper Consultation Process for FSL

Five Steps to True Engagement on French Instruction in NB

New Brunswick parents believe that there is a better way to facilitate a 'full debate' on French instruction in our province than the process recently declared by Minister Lamrock in response to Justice McLellan's judicial review and reiterated by the government despite the Ombudsman's Report released on Wednesday.

Minister Lamrock's six-week consultation approach is very problematic. In place of a full debate, Minister Lamrock's starting point is once again the recommendations of the flawed Croll and Lee report. He has stated that he will only consider ideas that respond to this report's conclusions, despite the fact that their analysis and their conclusions have been discredited, and the Ombudsman's report has shown that this 'independent' report was drawn up at the advice of the Deputy Minister (p. 9-10). The Minister's consultation document further demands that the public address the needs of 'art, music and physical education', topics that were not even part of the original consultation phase, much less the goal of the Croll and Lee process.

Such a narrow focus suggests that the new process, like the old one, is a foregone conclusion. These widely-held suspicions were confirmed by the Minister's leaflet distributed in all provincial newspapers on June 14. This leaflet presents the quashed decisions of the Minister regarding FSL as completed initiatives and makes no mention of any debate or consultation. In effect, it ignores the judge's ruling and is responsible for creating substantial confusion for both the public and the school system.

We believe it is not too late for this government to learn from its own report entitled "A New Model For Public Engagement", which states that "government must learn to be a convener, facilitator, enabler and partner in the process." Recently, this government has provided successful precedents for working out an impasse like this. In similar situations, this government backed up, consulted and devised a plan through a fair and impartial committee composed of stakeholders and experts, or through a select committee of the legislature. Together with the Ombudsman, we believe this approach would be effective for the FSL impasse as well, and a proper engagement process would comprise the following steps:

Quickly establish a fair and impartial committee of experts and stakeholders representing a broad view of opinions. This should include experts in second language learning, literacy, and inclusion.

1. Require the committee to determine:

- accurate information on contentious issues raised both outside and within the Croll and Lee report, such as what role, if any, our FSL system has in class composition, class-size disparity, and literacy.
- what information and recommendations can be salvaged from the Croll and Lee report.



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- what recommendations of the previous four FSL reports still pertain to NB's education system and may be useful in the current context.
- 2. Undertake open, transparent, two-way communication between this committee and citizens, making all opinions and data available to everyone.**
- 3. Allow the Minister of Education to step back from this process and concentrate on other duties of the Education Minister, following the precedent of other Ministers of this government.**
- 4. Plan for the 2008-2009 academic year using the existing EFI program (grade 1 entry), reflecting the spirit of the decision of the court. The committee should present a realistic timeline for its process that will ensure adequate consultation and effective implementation of a new plan for 2009-2010. This will ensure that such an important decision is not rushed, and will prevent the instability and confusion for students and teachers that may result from hasty implementation.**

The editorial board of the Daily Gleaner, the political panels on CBC Radio's SHIFT and Radio Canada's noon programming, the Peterborough Examiner, and three opinion pieces in the Telegraph Journal have independently proposed models similar to this one. Now the Ombudsman is calling for the same approach. This is an approach recommended by the government's own report, which states "leadership must come at least as much from the bottom-up as the top-down." Such an approach would produce a long-term plan crucial to the fabric of our province. Further, it would provide a framework that will allow stability beyond the four-year election cycle, and reduce the likelihood that a subsequent government would again feel compelled to initiate a major overhaul of the system. Following this process would also help restore a measure of trust that has been lost between the public and Government during this debate.

New Brunswick parents believe the government must take its own advice and embark on a fair and just consultation process, for the sake of their children and the future of the Province. Change for the sake of change, without regard for potential negative outcomes, is not acceptable.

7. Learning from Ottawa-Carleton Board of Education recent Review of French as a Second Language Programs

The Ottawa-Carleton Board of Education recently decided to terminate their Late French Immersion Program in favour of earlier starting points. They based this decision on a well-research report. Their observations are very relevant to our situation here - Ottawa is a bilingual environment with similar participation in French Immersion programs.

With regard to streaming and class heterogeneity there are numerous quotes from the Ottawa-Carleton review that are pertinent to Minister Lamrock's and DoE's most recent justification for terminating EFI in NB. Here are two:

- "Much of the debate within the immersion literature has focused on the appropriateness of this type of program [FI] for certain groups of students (e.g., ELLs, students with special needs, students in their early years of schooling). While it is acknowledged that early on this may have been the case, more recent research suggests **that immersion programs are not elitist (particularly in EFI)**, and that there can, and should, be an appropriate program option for all groups of children, including those with special education needs and those for whom English is their second language."
- "Immersion programs have traditionally been viewed as being elitist. However, Dube and MacFarlane (1991) argued that while this may have been the case in the initial stages of implementation, **EFI typically serves a more heterogeneous student population in terms of cognitive ability and social background**. The reason for this is that parents of children in SK have little knowledge of their child's academic ability because it has not yet been formally assessed. By grade 4 or grade 7, however, parental decisions to register in MFI and/or LFI programs are based more on a child's academic ability, resulting in more homogeneous groupings than those found in the EFI program."

The take home message here is that EFI results in more equitable class composition and less streaming than LFI. Also notable -> boys are more likely to be substantially under-represented in LFI than in EFI.

For the full report please see the following link:

http://hamlit2008.googlepages.com/OCBoardofeducationFinal_Report_FSL_R.pdf

8. Report of Current Research on the Effects of Second Language Learning on First Language Literacy Skills (Bournot-Trites and Tellowitz).

A report commissioned by the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, of which NB is a member, examined the effects of second language learning on first language literacy skills. The information from this well-researched report helps clarify the relationship between FSL and first language skills.

Their conclusions were clear:

- 1. There is no negative effect of second language training on first language proficiency, and***
- 2. Second language training seemed to actually boost proficiency in first language literacy skills.***

See excerpt from their report below:

"The effect of learning a second language (e.g. French) on first language skills has been positive in all studies done. Furthermore, the loss of instructional time in English (first language) in favour of the second language has never been shown to have negative effects on the achievement of the first language. Cummins' interdependence hypothesis, which maintains that language skills are being transferred from one language to the other, can be assumed to be true for the core French situation as well. One can confidently assume that cognitive abilities acquired in the learning of one language can be put to use in the acquisition and proficiency of the other language. Numerous studies about the relationship of second language learning to first language skills support this claim. In these studies the first language skills did not suffer. On the contrary, in many studies first language skills were shown to be enhanced, even if instruction time in L1 [first language] was reduced in favour of L2 [second language] instruction.

The literature gives us this very positive evidence about the value of learning a second language. These advantages have been shown in the above studies to be in the cognitive area; but another important educational factor is the positive attitude and understanding it creates for other cultures. Lapkin and Swain (1984, p. 52) report on a study of compositions that grade 5 and 6 students had to write, about "Why I like being Canadian." The immersion students gave on average two to three times as many reasons than did the English comparison groups. They commented especially on the rich and varied cultural and linguistic composition of Canada. This was seen to be a very positive and encouraging consequence of learning a second language." (pages 30 and 31).

For the full report, please see: <http://acpi.scedu.umontreal.ca/pdf/report.pdf>