
VIA EMAIL : EDUC.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Richmond, June 19, 2020

Attention: Honourable Rob Fleming
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fleming,

Re: **At École Jack Cook (K-7), in Terrace, the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique cannot offer an educational experience that is substantively equivalent to that offered to English-language students**

Request for your assistance to remedy this problem in Terrace

I write on behalf of the CSF to bring to your attention the significant school infrastructure problems at École Jack Cook in Terrace, which prohibit the CSF from offering an educational experience that is substantively equivalent to that offered to majority language students in and around Terrace.

For far too long, parents residing in and around Terrace have been discouraged from exercising their rights under s. 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The CSF needs your help to remedy the situation expeditiously.

École Jack Cook's critical infrastructure problems

At École Jack Cook, the CSF offers kindergarten to grade 7 programming from a homogeneous school facility, leased from Coast Mountains School District 82. In 2019-2020, 44 students were enrolled at École Jack Cook.

There has never been a CSF secondary program in Terrace. The closest CSF school is located more than 500 km away in Prince George. École Jack Cook is the only option for French-language education in and around Terrace.

The facility housing École Jack Cook is in a state of disrepair. The list of infrastructure deficiencies is long. Moreover, the student population has outgrown the small three-classroom facility, severely limiting the CSF's ability to offer the required programming and support services for students. In addition to the poor quality of the facility, many students endure unreasonably long travel times to attend École Jack Cook, making the overall educational experience even less desirable.

Health and safety risks at École Jack Cook

École Jack Cook is a small, three-classroom school facility, built as an Annex to SD 82's Kiti K'Shan Primary School. A floor plan of École Jack Cook is attached as **Appendix "A"**.

The parking lot (which can accommodate approximately 5 vehicles) is too small to accommodate the CSF parking and bussing needs, creating a dangerous environment for students as they enter the school.

Once inside the facility, students and staff must navigate a narrow hallway blocked by school and office supplies on their way to class, as this space doubles as storage (i.e. shelving units storing office supplies and the office printer are located in the hallway, impeding entry and exit).

The heating system is outdated and inefficient, resulting in the classroom heaters becoming very hot. Nothing can be kept close to the heaters due to their high temperature and risk of fire. There are toxic materials in the walls, meaning that furniture cannot be properly fastened to the walls. The school facility also has significant sanitation problems. There have been persistent rodent problems. The gymnasium has significant water damage, heating problems, and poor ventilation. Minor repairs that the CSF has completed, such as painting the gymnasium, are insufficient to address the root of the problem, and simply mask in part the underlying deficiencies.

From its crowded hallways to heavy doors, the school facility is not accessible for people with reduced or limited mobility. The refuge room, where staff and students should gather when seeking shelter in an emergency, is too small for the student population and is used as the school's only storage room. The emergency doors in the facility require so much force to open that in an emergency, students would have difficulty opening them.

Insufficient space to meet programming needs and to provide support services for students

École Jack Cook's facility is too small to meet the needs of its students and community. The staff kitchen is used for meetings with parents and counsellors, despite not being soundproof. The principal's office can only be accessed through a classroom and is not soundproof. There is no space for a library; books are located in a corner of one of the three classrooms. The gymnasium is used as a multi-purpose room and is occupied at all times, be it for physical education, as a space for art, as a cafeteria, or for recess when there is inclement weather (a frequent occurrence in Terrace), as a community room, and for school plays or other similar events. The gymnasium is inadequate for its primary purpose, physical education. In addition to being in a state of disrepair, it is not large enough for the activities of older students (in grades 4-7, for instance), as it cannot accommodate activities such as volleyball or badminton.

The lack of space, and the substandard quality of the facility, means that the school cannot offer many activities, including early childhood education. École Jack Cook does not fulfil its mission of encouraging community engagement and participation, and of a French-language community hub.

The list of problems described above is only partial. The CSF will submit a more comprehensive report of the infrastructure-related problems as part of this year's capital plan submission.

The Supreme Court of Canada recently clarified that “children of s. 23 rights holders must receive an educational experience that is substantively equivalent to the experience provided to the majority, regardless of the size of the school or program in question.”¹ École Jack Cook's current and future students are entitled to a school facility that does not pose risks to their health and safety and can properly accommodate their needs. Until the CSF can remedy the significant infrastructure deficiencies at École Jack Cook, and offer substantively equivalent French first language programming, most parents will continue to forego exercising their rights.

The significant potential for French-language education in Terrace

As a result of its flaws, safety risks, and insufficient size, many parents choose not to send their children to École Jack Cook.

According to 2016 Census data obtained by the CSF, the number of students eligible to attend École Jack Cook is far greater than the current enrolment. It is important to note that the Census provides an incomplete portrait of the number of students eligible to attend a CSF school, as it only gathers data on one (out of three) categories of eligible children, and even then, the data obtained for the only category that is collected is undercounted. Nevertheless, the 2016 Census data is the only and best data available to the CSF to estimate the potential basin of students who could enrol its programs.

Based on the incomplete 2016 Census data, there are at least between 116 and 216 students aged 5-13 who could enrol in an elementary program in Terrace, and at least between 70 and 140 students aged 14-17 who could enrol in a secondary program in Terrace.

The CSF requires assistance from the Ministry of Education to provide substantively equivalent education in Terrace.

The CSF requires the Ministry of Education's assistance to identify an appropriate space to relocate École Jack Cook while a more permanent solution is identified.

As part of its current capital plan, the CSF will be seeking (1) new space for École Jack Cook as soon as possible, and (2) the construction of a K-12 school facility with space to offer a French-language Strong Start program and early childhood education space. A request for a new school in Terrace was included in the CSF's School District Facilities Plan and Long-Range Facilities Plan, submitted to the Ministry of Education in 2015 and 2016, respectively. It has been the number one priority in the CSF's Capital Plan since 2017.

Parents in Terrace have been very patient, for a very long time, but their patience is wearing thin. Parents have obtained letters of support from their locally, provincially, and federally elected representatives, which are attached as **Appendix “B”**. The French-language community in Terrace

¹ *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique et al v British Columbia*, 2020 SCC 13 at para 107.

has the CSF's support. On behalf of the parents, the CSF now seeks your support, and that of your Ministry.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

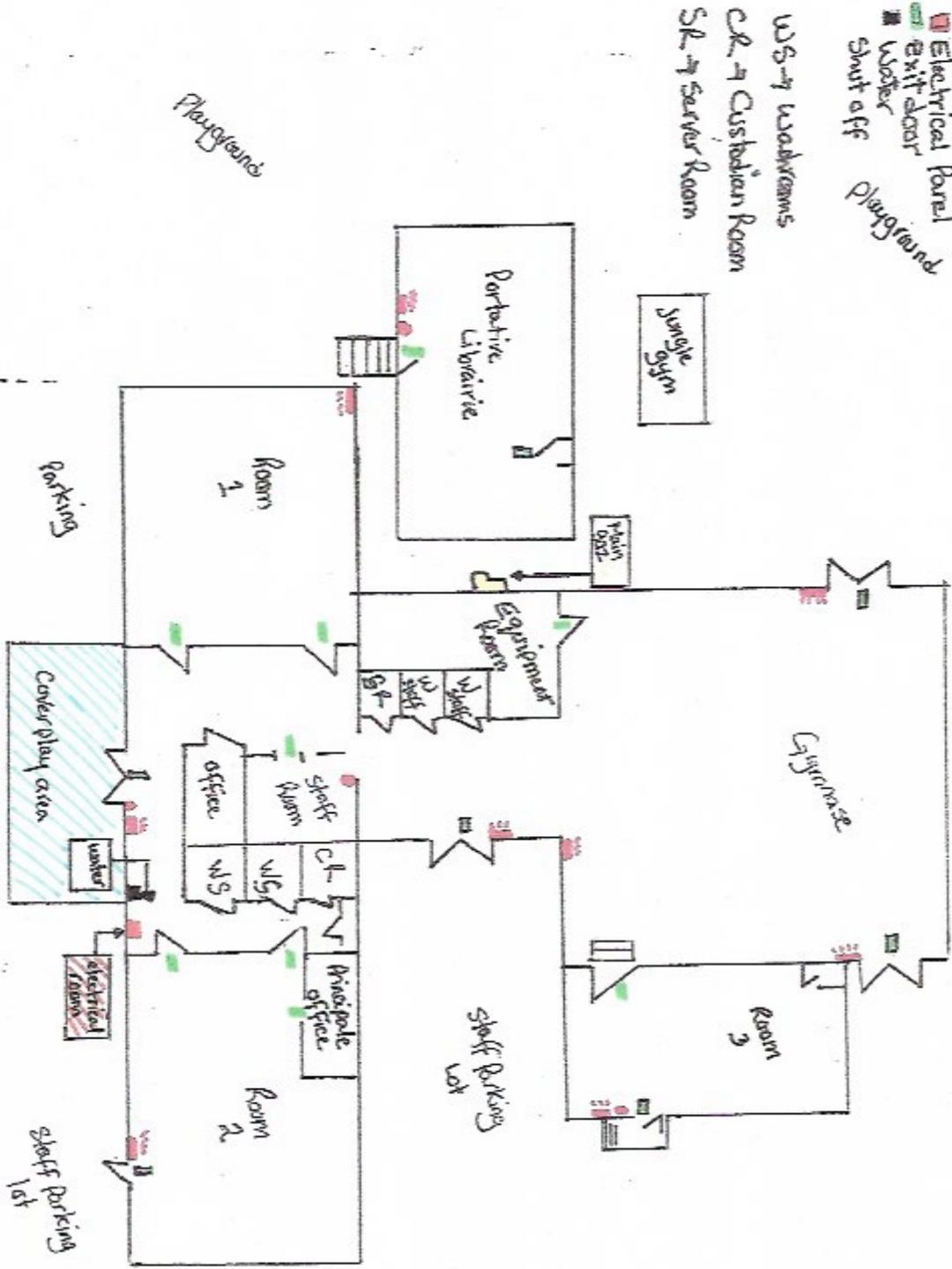
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marie-Pierre Lavoie'.

Marie-Pierre Lavoie
CSF Chair

Copy: Scott MacDonald, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education
Joel Palmer, Executive Director, Ministry of Education
Marie-Christine Claveau, CSF Trustee (Northern Region)
Michel St-Amant, CSF Superintendent
Lucie Pineau, CSF Secretary-Treasurer

Enclosed: **Appendix "A"**: École Jack Cook Floor Plan
Appendix "B": Letters of support obtained by the École Jack Cook Parent Advisory Committee

- Fire Extinguisher
 - ☒ Fire Alarm Pull Station
 - ☒ Gas Shut off
 - ☒ Electrical Panel
 - ☒ Exit door
 - ☒ Water
 - ☒ Shut off
- US → workrooms
 CR → Custodian Room
 SR → Server Room



11/22/2011 n.a

Appendix "B"

Ottawa

Room 260, Wellington Building
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
Tel.: 613-993-6654
Fax: 613-993-9007



Smithers

3891 1st Ave
Mail to: PO Box 4914
Tel.: 250-877-4140
Fax: 250-877-4141

Prince Rupert

818 - 3rd Avenue West
Prince Rupert, British Columbia V8J 1M7
Tel.: 250-622-2413
Fax: 250-624-7737

Nathan Cullen

Member of Parliament / Député
Skeena - Bulkley Valley

Terrace

112-4716 Lazelle Ave
Terrace, BC V8G 1T2
Tel.: 250-615-5339
Fax: 250-625-5341

Conseil Scolaire Francophone (CSF)
Bertrand Dupain, Directeur général
100-13511 Commerce Parkway
Richmond, B.C. V6V 2J8

April 16, 2018

RE: New Francophone School in Terrace, B.C.

Dear Mr. Dupain,

I am writing to offer my support to the parent association (APE) of École Jack Cook to the Conseil Scolaire Francophone, to build a new school in Terrace, B.C.

L' école Jack Cook is an old school that no longer meets the needs of the students and teachers. The enrolment is growing and the current facility is inadequate. The other concerns are that the school no longer meets building standards and poses a health risk to both students and teachers.

A new school will give adequate space for current students and the possibility to take on more. It will ensure they have a safe and healthy environment.

I strongly urge you to support APE of École Jack Cook in getting a new school. It will be a benefit to the students as well as to the community of Terrace.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nathan Cullen".

Nathan Cullen, MP
Skeena-Bulkley Valley

NC/g
UFCV/232

nathan.cullen@parl.gc.ca
<http://nathancullen.ca/>



CANADA 150



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Ellis Ross, MLA
Skeena

M. Dupain et M. Thibeault

cc: Honourable Rob Fleming
Minister of Education

Re: Ecole Jack Cook public francophone school
Letter of support

This letter is to support the Ecole Jack Cook's Parent Association in their quest for a new school. They are outgrowing their current facility and wish to expand into a facility that would also provide for future growth.

They are currently renting from Coast Mountain School District 82; however, owning their own building would also secure a sense of permanence within the community. It would also add another benefit to those families wishing to move to the Northwest.

Yours truly,

Ellis Ross – MLA Skeena

Constituency Office

104-4710 Lazelle Ave
Terrace, BC V8G 1T5

Ellis.Ross.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Legislative Office

Room 201 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

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THE CITY OF TERRACE



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3215 EBY STREET
TERRACE, B.C. V8G 2X8
(250) 635-6311 PH.
(250) 638-4777 FAX
www.city.terrace.bc.ca

March 22, 2018

Conseil Scolaire Francophone de C-B
7051 Killarney Street
Vancouver, BC
V5S 2Y5

To M. Dupain:

Re: Letter of Support for the Parent Association (APÉ) of École Jack Cook to Build a New Public Francophone School in Terrace

On behalf of the City of Terrace, I would like to express our support for the Parent Association (APÉ) of École Jack Cook to build a new Francophone School in Terrace.

École Jack Cook has been in operation for many years, providing a unique contribution to education in the community. In order to continue to do so they will need to build a new Francophone School. There are currently 42 students enrolled at École Jack Cook, a population that continues to grow regardless of the inadequate building they currently utilize.

École Jack Cook contributes to the diversity of Terrace. The availability of a Francophone School is a major consideration for some families in their decision to relocate.

We are happy to provide our support to the Parent Association (APÉ) of École Jack Cook to build a new Francophone School in Terrace so that they can continue to offer public francophone education and secure their permanency in the community.

Sincerely,



Carol Leclerc
Mayor