



June 2, <sup>nd</sup> 2015

M. François Blais  
Ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche (MEESR)  
600 rue Fullum, 10e étage  
Montréal (Québec)  
H2K 4L1

Subject: Budgetary Concerns Relating to the Education of Students with Special Needs

Dear M. Blais,

We, the Special Needs Advisory Committee of the Lester B. Pearson School Board, have grave concerns about the direct and negative impact the recently announced school board budget cuts will have on the success of students with special needs.

Studies have shown that for students with special needs, the model of inclusion within the regular classroom can lead to higher academic achievement, an increase in self-esteem and better social skills. Moreover, educating children with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers fosters understanding and acceptance while better preparing students of all abilities to function in the world beyond school.

Several years ago, the MELS recommended that all school boards implement a policy of inclusion of students with special needs. The Lester B. Pearson School Board has responded to this request and successfully implemented a model of inclusion for students with special needs that has been effective in providing a positive educational experience to ALL of our students.

It must be recognised that this model requires an appropriate amount of financial and human resources in order to be effective; most importantly those of attendants, technicians, resource teachers, professionals and consultants. The special needs community watches the ongoing contract negotiations between the MEESR and these parties with great interest and grave concern, as many items in these discussions pertain to students with special needs. We ask that the MEESR gives serious consideration to limiting the impact on services to students with special needs during these contract negotiations.

The combination of recurring and new budget cuts will have a direct negative impact of the resources supporting the education and integration of students with special needs, and will severely impede the quality of education for ALL students within the Lester B. Pearson School Board. Our school board currently supplements the funds received from the MEESR for the support of our students with special needs. The shortfall of funding in this area is approximately 4 million dollars – funds which to date have been reallocated from other school funds. However, with the increasing budget cuts, it is no longer possible to redirect funds in this manner, particularly since the number of students with special needs increases every year. As a result, we expect to have no other choice but to cut services to our most vulnerable students.

Special Needs Advisory Committee of the Lester B. Pearson School Board:

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In our role as representatives of the special needs community at the Lester B. Pearson School Board, we would like to express our concerns regarding the increasing budgetary compressions that are being enforced on school boards throughout Québec. We request that the MEESR increase funding, specifically in the area of special needs, so that the successful model of inclusion at our schools can continue in its current form. It is imperative that we receive the full amount of funding that is required to support the current successful model of inclusion, and ensure that our students with special needs receive equal opportunity for a quality education as all students in Québec deserve.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Brett Hillgartner

Chair, Lester B. Pearson Special Needs Advisory Committee 2014-2015

CC: Special Needs Advisory Committee, Lester B. Pearson School Board

Central Parents' Committee, Lester B. Pearson School Board

Council of Commissioners, Lester B. Pearson School Board

C. Heffernan and S. Balleine, Assistant Directors General