



June 4, 2018

To:

Mr. Rory McGuckin, Director of Education, Toronto Catholic District School Board
Mr. Dan Koenig, Associate Director, Academic Services, Toronto Catholic District School Board

Re: TCDSB International Languages Program cuts at Eastern Rite schools

Dear Mr. McGuckin and Mr. Koenig,

The Eastern Rite Ukrainian Catholic community in Toronto has had an almost sixty-year relationship with the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB), a relationship built on trust, good will and academic excellence, all centred around the education of our children in the Eastern Rite faith.

The Ukrainian Canadian community is disappointed with the TCDSB decision to make cuts to the International Languages Program (ILP), specifically the announcement on May 31, 2018 which unilaterally abbreviates the provision of International Language (IL) instruction from 5 x 30-minute classes per week to 4 x 30-minute classes per week. This twenty percent (20%) reduction in instruction contradicts the TCDSB's own statement that the International Languages Program (ILP) "has a distinguished history of providing our students with valuable opportunities to learn a third language and culture that prepares them to thrive in today's interdependent global society."

The proposed changes to the IL program reducing the hours of IL instruction dilutes the Ukrainian language component of our children's education. The TCDSB has recently approved a transportation boundary change to help stimulate enrolment at St. Josaphat. This announcement of IL program cuts will have the opposite effect at all three Eastern Rite schools.

It is even more disappointing that this reduction in ILP hours is to give in to a demand from organized labour. The Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers' ('union') (TECT) claims to be "committed to the advancement of the teaching profession and to a vibrant and inclusive publicly funded Catholic school system based on Gospel values". It is unfortunate that the TECT and its members are compromising our children's education, using it as a bargaining chip in their ongoing and protracted negotiations with the TCDSB. Leveraging our children's education in a labour dispute is appalling. By forcing the TCDSB into this action, the TECT is encouraging a regression of the teaching profession and a disregard of the Gospel values it claims to be based on. TECT members who teach at ILP schools have a unique opportunity to work in an environment enriched by a third language which also comes with rich cultural and faith-based traditions.



Ukrainian language instruction is a core element of the education of our children as Eastern Rite Ukrainian Catholics. Without this core element of our children's education, these students would enrol in other schools and the TCDSB would be at risk of losing 1,100 students, in excess of \$20 million of government funding, and more than 100 jobs in union and administration roles.

Over the past several years, we have seen an annual parade of parents to board meetings held at TCDSB offices to voice their concerns and preserve core elements of our children's education in the Eastern Rite Ukrainian Catholic faith, often on very short notice. The constant threat to the core elements of the Eastern Rite Ukrainian Catholic community's agreed upon relationship as a key member of the TCDSB community calls into question the good will and trust that this relationship is built on. Our schools weren't even able to announce the positive news of last week's proclamation of Ukrainian Canadian Heritage Day and Month at the TCDSB, or the overall benefit to our community of the transportation boundary change for the Eastern Rite schools, before this negative news once again has us questioning the fealty of our relationship.

We turn to the TCDSB to re-affirm its commitment to the Eastern Rite Ukrainian Catholic community by meeting with key community members, school staff and parents to engage in a conversation centred around maintaining daily Ukrainian language instruction at our three Eastern Rite schools. It will not surprise TCDSB leadership to learn we already have potential solutions that we will bring to this discussion, ideas that will not only meet the TECT demands, but also continue to satisfy the Ministry of Education's curriculum guidelines, at absolutely no extra cost to the board. We look forward to continuing the ongoing open dialogue we have engaged in with you over the past several years, covering a diverse range of topics. This dialogue has led to positive, collaborative discussions resulting in outcomes beneficial to all stakeholders in the Catholic education community, most importantly, our children.

We look forward to meeting with you in the coming weeks.

Respectfully,

Taras Bahriy
President, UCC-Toronto

Orest Sklierenko
Chair, Education Committee, UCC-Toronto

Cc: Bishop Stephen Chmilar, Ann Andrachuk, Joseph Martino, Yvan Baker, Doug Yack, Adrian Della Mora, Lily Hordienko, Anna Iwasykiw, Leda Ostafichuk, Taras Kalymon, Oksana Pikh, Lijanna Shklar, Stephanie Soltys