

News release

For immediate release

PARTIES GRADED ON THEIR COMMITMENT TO FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE TRAINING

PCs score a failing grade with a “F”, while Liberals score the highest with a “B”

Moncton, New Brunswick, October 2, 2024 - Canadian Parents for French New Brunswick has released its evaluations and grades of the province's four major political parties based on their responses to a key survey prepared in August. The survey aimed to assess each party's commitment to French Second Language (FSL) education and policies supporting FSL in the province and were graded by teachers blindly, with no political bias. The results provide voters with critical insights ahead of the upcoming election, helping Citizens understand where each party stands on the future of FSL in New Brunswick.

While each party stated some commitment to French Immersion (FI) policies, none scored an “A”, indicating that each party needs to provide more support for FSL in our province.

The **highest score was the New Brunswick Liberal Party with a “B” grade**. They were the only party that committed to continuing grade 1 and 6 entry points. The Liberals also recognized that “political interference” is causing stress to teachers, leading them to exit the English system for the French School system. It was disappointing the Liberals would not commit to protecting FI through Legislation. While overall, we are reasonably pleased with the Liberals' responses, we need more details, such as:

- Will they restore French instruction percentages to previous levels as per policy 309?
- Will they commit to consulting FI teachers and stakeholders before making any changes?

The **lowest score was from the Progressive Conservatives under Premier Blaine Higgs, who were given a “F” grade**. Although stating that they would “absolutely” retain FI, they did not mention any entry points or provide any details. Stating they would not be “locked into any one program” is a dangerous answer allowing them to abolish or change entry points or FI entirely. In the past they've also shown they don't understand the definition of FI.

- They did not answer the question on ensuring FI in rural communities.
- They answered the survey with platitudes towards protecting French language instruction in NB but offered absolutely no details.

We are dismayed with the Premier's lack of commitment to quality French immersion education in our province.

Both the NDP and the Green Party scored barely passing grades. We were pleased with the NDP's stated commitment to FI and enshrining FI into the Education Act, they offered little details and some of the details they did provide were contradictory. We would like to see more details from the NDP.

The Greens' response was disappointing in that although they stated that FI was an integral part of the education system, they offered no details. They also refused to commit to enshrining FI into law. Additionally, their only commitment to increasing access to FI in rural areas was a nonsensical promise to create a Standing Committee to study the issue.

Quotes

"In Canada's only officially bilingual Province we deserve and require the best in FSL training. FI has shown it works 92-98% of the time. It is deeply disappointing and frankly, concerning that the Premier and his party continue to have a failing grade on French immersion. The PC's only scored as high as a "F" because teachers don't give "Z's".

Recent data by the Department of Education show FI is working and should be expanded, while it is Intensive French that requires more resources to be effective. The bottom line is that French Immersion gives young people in New Brunswick the ability to work, prosper and raise their families here in New Brunswick. We need our parties to stand up and protect that."

Chris Collins, Executive Director for Canadian Parents for French, New Brunswick

Key Facts

- Each party was blind graded by a committee of five teachers in their responses to questions sent to them on FSL in New Brunswick.
- The survey was sent to the parties in August and grades were as follows:
- Progressive Conservatives – F (47%)
- Liberals – B (84%)
- NDP – D (60%)
- Greens – D (60%)

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About Us

The Canadian Parents for French New Brunswick is a non-profit and non-partisan organization representing Parents and educators who want more opportunities to learn and use French for Canadian youth in New Brunswick. We recognize that for New Brunswick to be a truly bilingual province, it is necessary for anglophones to be able to speak French.

We expect our elected officials to champion and promote official language bilingualism. We believe this reinforces our unique identity as Canada's only bilingual province and that French language education improves our economy and culture.

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