

## SECTION I – INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 – BRIEF HISTORY OF FRENCH IMMERSION

French immersion is a Canadian success story that has been widely studied and emulated. The first French immersion programs were offered in Montréal in the 1960s. In Manitoba, the first French immersion classes began in 1973, with a few hundred students enrolled in schools in the Saint-Boniface and Winnipeg school divisions. After 50 years of French immersion education in Manitoba, more than 28,000 students are now enrolled in the Program, which continues to grow and evolve.

Since 1995, Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning has recognized French immersion as one of the four official K–12 school programs, along with English, Français, and Senior Years Technology Education.

### 1.2 – ROLE OF THE BUREAU DE L'ÉDUCATION FRANÇAISE IN THE FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM

The Bureau de l'éducation française (BEF) supports French language education that promotes the development of French immersion learners' language proficiency, academic success, and plurilingual identity.

Since 1974, the BEF has been mandated to provide leadership and direction for educational reform as it applies to French language education in Manitoba.

In consultation with community organizations and education partners, the BEF, through its leadership, establishes policies, sets guiding principles, targets key initiatives to support program outcomes, and develops and provides resources and services, including curricular and pedagogical support, as well as assessment aimed at supporting the French Immersion Program in Manitoba schools.

Furthermore, because French immersion is delivered in a minority-language context, the BEF plays an important role in supporting initiatives and collaborations that provide students access to a variety of rich language and cultural experiences. BEF's partnerships with system and school leaders, teachers, community organizations, and the federal government are crucial to the success of the French Immersion Program, as they create opportunities that allow students to engage with the French language inside and outside the classroom.

### 1.3 – CURRENT LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR FRENCH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN MANITOBA

In 1967, Bill 59 recognized French as a language of instruction in Manitoba's public schools. In 1970, Bill 113 confirmed the equality of French and English, the two official languages, as languages of instruction.

Currently, The Public Schools Act defines the context within which French language education in Manitoba is delivered. The Act states that if there is sufficient demand from parents, a school division is required to offer French immersion programming as per section 79(3). The Act allows English and French to be the languages of instruction in a public school (79[6]) and English must be taught as a subject to a maximum of 25% of the total instructional time from Grades 4 through 12. Furthermore, the administration and operation of a public school can be carried out in the English language or the French language (sections 79[1] and 79[5]).

The Statutes of Manitoba (Chapter P250 of The Public Schools Act) stipulate the following:

- Where in any school division or school district, there are 23 or more pupils who may be grouped in a class for instruction and whose parents desire them to be instructed in a class in which English or French is used as the language of instruction, the school board shall group those pupils, and upon petition of the parents of those pupils requesting the use of English or French, as the case may be, as the language of instruction in respect of those pupils, the school board shall group those pupils in a class for instruction and provide for the use of English or French, as the case may be, as the language of instruction in the class. (section 79[3])
- The administration and operation of a public school shall be carried out in the English language or the French language [. . .]. (section 79[5])

In a school where French is used as the language of instruction for 75% or more of the school day from Grade 1 through Grade 6, and 60% or more from Grade 7 through Grade 12, the administration and operation of the school shall be carried out in the French language. (see Manitoba Regulation 469/88 R section 9[2])

- [. . .] English may be a subject of instruction in any grade; and shall be a subject of instruction in every class in Grades four to twelve where French is used as the language of instruction. (section 79[6])

Time allotments for courses of study taught in either English or French shall be the same, except that, where English is a required subject, under subsection 79(6) of the Act, for those classes using French as the language of instruction, the time allotment for English shall not exceed 25% of the total instructional time. (Manitoba Regulation 469/88 R section 3)

These and other provisions of The Public Schools Act and the regulation pertaining thereto provide the foundation for the policy presented in this document.