

Waterloo Catholic District School Board Budget Advisory Committee
Adult ESL Satellite Site Presentation, May 14, 2008

On behalf of a coalition of ESL satellite site sponsors and students, I respectfully ask the Waterloo Catholic District School Board to consider providing ESL adult classes at satellite sites, starting in September 2008. We believe satellite sites will provide ESL classes in a cost-effective manner that meets the needs of adults unable to attend the three current sites.

Background

In June 2007, the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) decided to no longer provide adult English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, effective March 2008. This responsibility was picked up by Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB), with many of the additional ESL students being accommodated at their sites currently providing adult ESL classes. In Kitchener-Waterloo, the WCDSB has three sites: St. Francis, St. Joseph and St. Louis. Satellite sites previously operated by the WRDSB ended in March 2008 and were not continued by WCDSB due to “financial and human resources capacity” issues.¹

These satellite sites were (with numbers as of December 2007):

- **Lincoln Rd Chapel, Waterloo** (approx. 25 ESL students in morning/16 ESL students in afternoon classes)
- **Centreville-Chicopee Community Centre, City of Kitchener** (approx. 20 ESL students in afternoon classes)
- **Stanley Park Community Centre, City of Kitchener** (approx. 22 ESL students in afternoon classes)
- **Victoria Hills Community Centre, City of Kitchener** (approx. 50 ESL students in morning classes)
- **Chandler Mowat Community Centre, House of Friendship** (approx. 50 ESL students in morning classes)
- **Courtland Shelley Community Centre, House of Friendship** (approx. 29 ESL students in morning classes)
- **Sunnydale Community Centre, Waterloo, House of Friendship** (approx. 22 ESL students in afternoon classes)
- **A.R. Kaufman P.S.** (approx. 20 ESL students in evening classes)
- **W.T. Townshend P.S.** (approx. 16 ESL students in evening classes)

Current Issue

For many reasons, there are K-W ESL adult students who previously attended at satellite sites who are not attending the three WCDSB sites (presentation by student).

¹ February 7, 2008 letter from Roger Lawler, WCDSB Director of Education to Chief Matt Torigian, Community Safety & Crime Prevention Council Chair

We believe satellite sites provide an excellent cost-effective opportunity that meets the needs of ESL adult students unable to attend the three WCDSB sites.

1. Operating costs for ESL classes at satellite sites are reduced due to low overhead costs. The classroom space is provided at no cost, with a small honorarium ranging from \$300 - \$450 per year. Space is a very significant in-kind resource offered by satellite sites. For example, at City of Kitchener community centres, the in-kind contribution amounts to \$8,653 per year per facility (2.5 hours per day @ \$17.75 room rate, 5 days/week for 39 weeks).
2. The costs for administration, teachers and materials can be covered through general legislative grants ("grey registers") which provide funding per student per hour. These costs can be covered with approximately 15-20 students per class.
3. Adults who are not able to attend ESL classes currently can be reached more effectively through satellite sites which provide safe smaller settings which are located closer to their homes and have less barriers to participation.

There is urgency for making this decision soon:

- Space that was set aside for adult ESL classes in satellite locations will soon be allocated for other programs in the Fall. Once program space is gone, it is very unlikely that it can be found again later.
- Other programs created to support the adult ESL classes, such as the ESL School Readiness Programs at the three House of Friendship sponsored sites, are in jeopardy of losing their funding. These are programs for pre-school children of the adult ESL students, provided while the parents are in class. If these programs are discontinued, it is very unlikely that new funding sources will be found.
- Adult ESL students unable to attend the three WCDSB K-W sites have not been in class since March 2008. Satellite sites have attempted to provide other opportunities such as Conversation Circles, but these programs are not sufficient to provide the same level of learning as ESL classes, and English language skills that were being learned are slowly being lost.

We believe that there are many benefits to providing adult ESL classes that impact the individual, their families and our community. We also believe that it is important that these classes are provided in a way that meets the needs of the adult students, so that all who need and want to attend have that opportunity. Providing satellite sites for adult ESL classes, in addition to the three current WCDSB sites, is a cost-effective way to do exactly this.