

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

January 30, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Response to Delegation – L’Académie Vimy Ridge Academy

ORIGINATOR: S. Stiles, Assistant to the Superintendent

RESOURCE
STAFF: W. Bayko, R. Leady

RECOMMENDATION

That the request by a delegation for the Board to terminate its agreement with the Department of National Defense as it pertains to the provision of space for cadet training at L’Académie Vimy Ridge Academy be denied.

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Presentations: This report is provided in response to presentations to the Board of Trustees on January 16, 2001 by Mr. Dave Hubert and Mr. Roy Piepenburg regarding the use of space at L’Académie Vimy Ridge Academy. Mr. Hubert requested that the Board deny access to school space for the training of military cadets or that the portion of his school taxes that support L’Académie Vimy Ridge Academy be removed from his tax assessment. He presented the position that the military culture is a culture of violence, brutality and hate and, as such, is incompatible with the values that should be fostered by a public education system. Mr. Piepenburg outlined his concerns regarding the exposure of youths to military occupations before they have the life experiences to enable them to understand the full impact of selecting a military career. He did not make a specific request of the board.

Background Information: Information about programming at L’Académie Vimy Ridge Academy and about use of school space is included as it provides a context for the recommendation.

L’Académie Vimy Ridge Academy Focus: The Academy offers the provincial curriculum to students in junior and senior high with a focus on Canadian studies, student achievement and discipline. There is a focus on leadership, citizenship, self-discipline, physical fitness and bilingualism. In fact, the intent is to enrich the students understanding of the forces that have shaped our country. Within this context, the role played by the military in society, in Canada and in other places throughout history, is examined. A study of the positive and negative aspects of the military in society enables

students to develop a greater appreciation of the need for democratic institutions and a population well versed in history. An important distinction is made between the role of the military in protecting a democracy and militarism. The goal is to help students make wiser decisions with regard to their role as citizens. It also provides an opportunity for students to learn about Canada's role internationally as a peacekeeper.

Use of School Space: The district is partner in a joint-use agreement with the City of Edmonton and Edmonton Catholic Schools that allows community groups access to school buildings and fields for a variety of purposes. The cadets are one group that makes use of school space and has done so for many years.

Decision: The administration has reviewed the request and recommends that it be denied because

- denying space to a legitimate community group that youth join voluntarily would be seen as discriminatory;
- the Academy continues to provide space for other community groups as well;
- all property taxes that are declared public or are undeclared are collected by the city and sent to Alberta Learning. Alberta Learning redistributes these dollars on a per pupil basis throughout Alberta. Thus, the district does not have control over the tax base.
- the district does not have a written agreement with the armed forces. However, it does have a working relationship with forces personnel. This relationship has been integral to the formation and ongoing success of L'Académie Vimy Ridge Academy. This relationship will be continued.

WE:gc