

Report of the Holodomor Committee “Response Team” re the Toronto District School Board

Members:	Eugene Yakovitch - Chair	Valentina Kuryliw - Co-chair
	Alexander Chumak	Andrew Melnyk
	Luba Tarapacky	Marika Szkambara
	Lydia Falcomer	Yuri Darewych
	Orest Subtelny	Christine Bidiak

Eugene Yakovitch and Valentina Kuryliw called a special “Response Team” to deal with the crisis over the lack of inclusion of the Holodomor in the TDSB new course on Genocide to be taught, September 2008.

Although the UCC, Toronto Branch, knew about the situation in the fall of 2007, nothing official about the course was forthcoming from the TDSB. Letters from the Ukrainian community, protesting the exclusion of the Holodomor from the core curriculum, led to the setting up of a *Review Committee of “experts”* in March 2008, who once more decided not to include the Holodomor. The Director of Education, Gerry Connelly, accepted the 9 recommendations of the Review Committee, which excluded the Holodomor as a mandatory genocide to be taught.

In May this *Report* was posted on the TDSB web site and new procedures to appeal the decision were outlined. As timelines were very short, the Response Team set to work preparing the 20 minute submission for the meeting.

The presenters were:

1. *Andrew Melnyk*, Principal and Supervisory Officer for the York Region Board of Education, with 35 years of experience. Andrew gave an introduction and arguments for inclusion, including the recent passing of a bill on the Holodomor as a genocide in the Canadian Parliament.,
2. *Valentina Kuryliw*, Department Head of History for the TDSB with 35 years of teaching experience, presented 15 points on curriculum issues as to why the Holodomor should be and could be included, including the timelines for the Genocide course.
3. *Luba Tarapatsky*, parent of high school children, dealt with the bias and exclusion of her children’s history from the Genocide course and asked why it was being excluded.
4. *Alexander Chumak*, former trustee of the TDSB, presented arguments for inclusion and asked the trustees to reconsider and do the right thing as elected representatives and include the Holodomor.
5. *Christina Bidiak*, Ukrainian Women’s League and a taxpayer, stressed the importance of inclusion for the 1,250,000 Ukrainians in Canada and 100,000 in the Toronto area.

The Appeal Committee of the TDSB barely met the quorum requirements. Two trustees voted over the telephone and it was obvious that no one was really interested in the well prepared arguments at that meeting on June 2, 2008. A prepared answer to a trustee by the Assistant Director did not deal with any of our presented points. All the trustees were interested in simply voting and getting it over with. .

There was no explanation given as to why it was not accepted, except that there was not enough time in the course (110 hours) to teach more than 3 genocides, which is rubbish.

The TDSB did say that the Holodomor could be included as a research topic or for individual study by students, which is definitely not the same thing as teaching it to students.

It was mentioned that it was already being taught in other courses, not exactly true, as is the Holocaust in quite a few other courses, and yet is included.

The Presentation Team and all present left very disappointed at the result and felt humiliated by the lack of interest of the trustees and TDSB staff.

A second meeting was called for June 12, 2008 to deal with the Recommendations before the entire TDSB, 22 trustees. Once more, we organized a letter writing campaign, called and contacted trustees to ask them to reverse the decision and include the Holodomor as the 4th genocide to be studied in the course.

Some trustees did state that they knew very little about the issue and had not become properly informed until the letters of protest started arriving. A discussion to put in a motion to change the status quo was discussed. The day before the June 12 meeting, suddenly this motion was withdrawn, and on the 12th, the trustees voted unanimously to accept the recommendations of the Director of Education, that is, not to include the Holodomor as a 4th genocide to be studied.

At the June 12, 2008 meeting of the TDSB Board, Mari Rutka entered 2 motions:

1) To establish the fourth Friday of each November as a day of remembrance and recognition of Holodomor within TDSB schools

2) To develop a secondary teaching guide and curriculum materials for social studies courses covering the 1930s within TDSB secondary schools and to distribute this guide and these materials to all TDSB secondary schools by September, 2009

These motions will go to Committee in August and will be voted on at the TDSB Board meeting in September.

There is another meeting on June 25, 2008 but it will not be about the Holodomor. That is a done deal.

We will continue to monitor the TDSB Board meetings. We have a list of trustees who supported us and those who were against us.

Municipal elections are 2 years away. We will remember them.