

Language pupils protest

By RUTHANNE URQUHART
Ottawa Sun

In any language, the message was clear yesterday when more than 100 Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board English as a Second Language students and teachers rallied on Elgin St. to protest ESL school closures.

"Our students are very passionate not just about learning the language, but about learning the culture, and having good facilities and qualified teachers," said St. Joseph's Adult School teacher Moneca Gabriel,

Bulgaria native Rado Raikov, a St. Andrew's Adult School student, wants to study architectural landscaping, already his profession, at Carleton University.

"For me, learning English is the best chance to begin my studying and my job here," Raikov said.

The Board voted Tuesday to close six schools, but closed only one on Wednesday.

"Our parents — and some students — are voters," said Maggie Daly, president of the ESL Instructors' Union. "They were well organized. We hope this message gets to Mike Harris and Dave Johnson."

The government provides a \$2,200 yearly grant per student, less than half the grant for an elementary or high school student.

"When you compare that to the cost of keeping someone on social assistance," Daly said, "it doesn't make financial sense."

Locally, there are about 3,000 ESL students.