

Quebec English School Boards Association Annual Report



2015-2016



Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec
Quebec English School Boards Association

By any measure, 2015 / 2016 has to be considered one the most active and ultimately successful years ever in the operations of the Quebec English School Boards Association. A glance at the long list of activities and events that QESBA led, participated, organized, attended, or supported shows a year that allowed for no office summer shutdown and no downtime coupled with constant high levels of pressure and demands.

3 Ministers of Education, 2 Presidents (plus one interim), 2 Vice-Presidents, a new Director of Labour Relations, a near complete turnover of CPNCA staff, the legislative fight of a life time, a province-wide consultation organized by QESBA, travels across the province and across the country, an office relocation, collective agreement negotiations with all employee groups, increased involvement with local, provincial, and national groups and organizations, and much more filled the calendar in 2015 / 2016.

The QESBA staff worked above and beyond to ensure that all the demands were met. Kim, Suzanne, Claude, Joanne, Angela, and Luisa deserve the credit and our appreciation.

New office space

The search for a new office space, which had been ongoing for more than a year, finally bore fruit. A space was located and a lease negotiated in a building at 185 Dorval Avenue, Dorval. The negotiations allowed QESBA to break the 3-½ years that remained on the Stanley Street location.

The new space was converted by the new building owner into a friendly, modern, accessible, and very usable offices and board room. The new space is highlighted by many windows and a lot of natural light.

Parking has been negotiated and is now free for all visitors and staff. This alone will amount to some \$8,000 – \$10,000 savings per year.

The move allowed us the opportunity to renegotiate leases and costs of our office equipment and services. We acquired a new phone system, upgraded our Wi-Fi and internet services, took full control of our videoconference equipment

(formerly shared with the Treasury Board), added new meeting software that will allow an increased number of participants who will be able to join from almost anywhere on their own personal smartphone, tablet, or desktop. We also acquired a 55" Smart Board that provides a much more complete meeting facility.

The new offices now include three self-contained meeting rooms. One is appropriate for a small group of up to four or five people, a second is good for six to eight people, and the Boardroom can hold 30 for a Board meeting and at least 60 people in theatre style seating.

The Boardroom has already been used by the DGs, the Directors of Human Resources, CPNCA, a couple of our member school boards, and an outside company that paid us \$125/day for the use of the room.

On June 10th we welcomed about 75 people to a catered event as the official opening of the new offices. Leading up to the event we carried out an online survey of all Commissioners and they chose to honour three people by naming our meeting and boardrooms for them. The smaller meeting room carries the name of Marlene Jennings. The mid-sized room is named for the first Minister of Education and father of the modern school system, Paul Gérin-Lajoie. The Boardroom honours a couple that has spent a lifetime of service to education, healthcare, and minority community vitality – Dr. Victor and Sheila Goldbloom.

We will work on developing a room rental policy to present to the Board later this year that will include rental rates, use of technology, hours of usage, extra services, parking, etc.



Bill 86

With complete disregard for school boards and the English minority language community, the Couillard government and Education Minister François Blais introduced and tried to force adoption of Bill 86 - An Act to modify the organization and governance of school boards to give schools a greater say in decision-making and ensure parents' presence within each school board's decision-making body.

Working with direction from the Board of Directors and member school boards, QESBA undertook the most aggressive, complex, and ultimately successful lobbying effort in the history of the association.

Soon after the Bill was deposited in the National Assembly an analysis of the Bill was undertaken both internally and by legal counsel. The conclusion was that the Bill was unconstitutional and a clear infringement of the right of the minority language community to manage and control its educational institutions. QESBA tried repeatedly to approach the Minister and ministry officials. The Minister steadfastly refused to talk to either QESBA or the FCSQ. Ministry officials and certain MNAs were clear that the government was going to move to adopt the proposed legislation as quickly as possible.

In order to get a true picture of the English community's view QESBA undertook to organize a research panel headed by former Federal MP and lawyer, Marlene Jennings. Members of the committee were former Quebec Assistant Deputy Minister of Education, Leo La France, Townshippers Association Executive Director Rachel Hunting, QFHSA President Brian Rock, and EPCA Vice-President Rhonda Boucher. Working through the summer, June to September, they received about 100 briefs and met with some 40 to 50 individuals and groups. Included in their deliberations were presentations by the Canadian Official Languages representatives, constitutional lawyers, election specialists, community groups, individuals, school boards, and other specialists.

The report that was issued and became known as the Jennings Report. The report was quoted far and wide by many groups and politicians through the Bill 86 proceedings.

The committee was introduced to the public at a press conference in Montreal and received full French and English media coverage. Committee Chair Marlene Jennings responded to many media requests for interviews and each of those was also widely covered.

In the meantime, QESBA President Jennifer Maccarone and the Executive Director embarked on a cross-Canada series of visits to garner support from other Provincial school board associations, experts, and minority language representatives. The tour included a cross-Quebec component seeing us travel from Outaouais to Gaspé and everywhere in between that we were asked to appear.

Op-Eds, letters, radio and TV interviews all played an important role in the efforts by the association to defeat this Bill. QESBA was a widely followed presenter at the Parliamentary hearings into the Bill. It was evident that our work to garner support from MNAs of all parties had been successful when not only PQ and CAQ members invoked and supported the minority community rights issue but then PQ party leader, Pierre-Karl Péladeau, made his only appearance at the hearings during our presentation.

The hearings ended, the new Minister Sébastien Proulx delayed decision-making, and finally at the AAESQ/QESBA Spring Conference he announced that the government had withdrawn the Bill and for all intents and purposes the proposed legislation was dead.

What we found out a month later was that while Bill 86 was gone, many of the elements of the Bill were not and reappeared in new proposed legislation, Bill 105.



Relationship-

building

A goal for 2015-2016 was to build new and firm up existing relationships with other organizations. There can be no doubt that our Bill 86 efforts allowed and even forced us to pursue this goal.

We enhanced the long-standing relationship with the Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec (FCSQ). We engaged in several joint and collaborative events and efforts. We convinced the President and then Executive Director to join us at CSBA, we provided leadership with the FCSQ on the Bill 86 efforts. We met and/or spoke with the Fédé on a regular basis and continue building on that relationship at all levels – President, Executive Director, and Communications Directors.

We also opened a line of regular communication with QCGN. The two Association Executive Directors speak on a regular basis and we are consulting with each other on education matters. While we don't always agree with each other on an approach to one subject or another, it is important that we know what the other is thinking. We continue to follow-up on this new collaboration and arranged a meeting of the QESBA and the QCGN Presidents to discuss current issues and how each organization can work with and support each other when and as necessary.

QESBA made a concerted effort to be recognized by Heritage Canada (PCH) and the Language Rights Support Program (LRSP) during the 2015/2016 year. These efforts paid off with us being invited to several meetings and consultations with both groups. In addition, QESBA was able to secure more than \$25,000 in funding to help with research and negotiation on the Bill 86 file.

The Fédération national des commissions scolaires francophones (FNCSF) was another of our focuses this past year. As the organization representing minority language community rights across Canada (except in Québec) we felt it was an important connection. The effort was fully recognized when the President and the Executive Director were asked to make a presentation of Bill 86 and the potential effects on minority language rights at the Ontario French school boards conference (ACÉPO) in Toronto and with an invitation to the FNCSF annual general meeting in Yellowknife later in October.

Other organizations that we were in touch with and/or built a relationship include the English Parents Committees Association, the Fédération des comités des parents du Québec, the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations, the DG's association, along several others.

We kept being reminded that we have to be aggressive about our presence in Quebec City. To ensure that we are known and recognized the Executive Director made more than 25 trips to Quebec City to attend MELS committee meetings, meet with individuals, and attend other events. The result was an increased presence at the Ministry, at Éducation internationale, and with the Ministère des finances.

Promoting the Association / Responding to invitations

To promote support for our actions in the Bill 86 events and to raise the profile for the Association, QESBA made efforts to apply for and respond favorably to conferences and workshops for speaking and presenting opportunities. Among the places QESBA travelled to this year were St. John's, Calgary, Winnipeg, 3 trips to Ottawa, 2 trips to Gatineau, 2 trips to Toronto, Boston, Gaspé, St-Sauveur, and more.

QESBA has applied to the National School Boards Association (NSBA) to present a workshop during next year's annual conference in Denver. We are waiting for confirmation if our proposal was accepted.

QESBA remains a strong and active member of CSBA. The Presidents participated in the CSBA Board meetings and played roles on CSBA committees. At the moment we are working with Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, and Alberta on elements of the CSBA Policy book and constitution.

QESBA responded to the consultations on budget and attended the budget lock-up and follow-ups to provide our members with the best and most current information.

Elections

October 2015 saw QESBA elections for both positions of President and Vice-President. With agreement from the Board of Directors, the association undertook a study of possible electronic voting systems for these elections and after contacting a couple of companies settled on a proposal from a Montreal-based firm to carry out the first online election.

We got the process underway according to the rules as laid out by the QESBA Constitution but added another first time enhancement by arranging a webcast of the debates between the two candidates for each position. About 40 people attended the live debate and we were told that several hundred people tuned in to the webcast. Barry Morgan from CJAD radio was the moderator and the LBPSB communications department provided the technical back-up.

The election website was opened immediately following the debates and stayed open for four days until noon the day of the AGM. When the site closed over 87% of eligible voters had cast their ballots and the cost for the whole set-up, website, and reports was \$200 (plus taxes). It was undoubtedly a major success and served to show that elections can be carried out in an efficient and cost-effective manner.



QESBA finances

As the audited financial statements record, QESBA had a successful year in the finance department as well. Even with the expenses associated with all the activities undertaken by the Association during the 2015/2016 year the final result was an approximate \$40,000 surplus. That will allow the Association to start to rebuild the reserve fund that had been used over the previous few years to cover budgetary shortfalls.

We are still looking for creative new ways to increase revenue so that we may eventually lower member fees. This will undoubtedly take a lot of cooperation from all member boards and we are hopeful that the Board of Directors will be open-minded about suggestions that come forward. There are services that QESBA could undertake in behalf of member boards and we will examine potential possibilities to put forward.

An English network of shared services will enhance the vitality of the community ensuring we remain masters of our own institutions. We are open to all suggestions from members and we hope you will consider how the Association could help provide services that boards need. With Bill 15 and the restrictions on hiring, this could be an opportunity to increase individual board support, programs, or services without conflicting with the Treasury Board regulations. We would be pleased to receive any of your suggestions.

Collective Agreement negotiations

To top off all else that was going on during the year, it was also a year of negotiations with all employee groups. This is a marathon effort that occurs every five years in Quebec and QESBA is the official representative for the English school boards through CPNCA. The President of CPNCA is also, usually, the QESBA Director of Labour Relations.

With the government's focus on austerity, it looked to be an extremely contentious round of negotiations. The Treasury Board took full control of all aspects of the monetary issues in the contract talks and gave very little room to local groups to make decisions.

In the middle of negotiations in the month of October, the QESBA Director of Labour Relations, Anne-Marie Lepage, was named Assistant Deputy Minister of Education requiring her to leave the Association and CPNCA with little advance notice.

Joanne Simoneau-Polenz took up the challenge to step into the leadership role and with her skill and guidance the English sector of the Quebec education scene completed and signed all contracts before the end of the 2015/2016 school year. During that period Joanne applied for and was appointed Director of Labour Relations and subsequently elected as President of CPNCA.

All members of the CPNCA team, Joanne, the negotiators, support staff, and Luisa on translations, deserve our thanks for stepping up to get the job done in the timeframe demanded and within the restrictions by the government. Bravo to all!

Comments

It is clear that none of this would be possible without the ongoing support from the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, all member School Boards, and many individuals.

We have to start by thanking both Presidents, David D'Aoust (until October 2015) and newly elected President Jennifer Maccarone. A special word of thanks has to go to Stephen Burke who stood in for David D'Aoust when David was hospitalized. It was a particularly trying period and Stephen took up the task with professionalism and dedication.

The Finance Committee supported Claude Srouji and me to keep members informed and up-to-date on the Association's finances. Their Ad-hoc Lease Review committee of Sylvia Lo Bianco and Martin Sherman were very helpful in monitoring the arrangements of the new lease and the eventual move. The PD Committee with Chair Frank Di Bello worked with Kim to ensure timely information and activities during the year.

The new Parent Committee Liaison Committee with Rhonda Boucher of EPCA and Joanne Charron co-Chairing got up and running at the Spring Conference and should have a busy year ahead.

The Communications Committee helped to redesign the Association's business cards and will take this year to develop a comprehensive communications plan and to review the Association's logo and 'look'.

The Directors General were always available to lend a hand, provide information, attend meetings on our behalf, and help out in any way possible. Our sincere thanks and appreciation goes the President Rob Buttars, their Executive, and all their members.

While passions sometimes get heated and some harsh words may be exchanged, we all understand that everyone, QESBA Directors and staff, are dedicated to finding creative ways to improve the services and support that the individual Boards provide to all students, teachers, support staffs, and administrators. It certainly is not overstatement or exaggeration to state that 2015/2016 was one of the busiest, pressure-filled, and successful years ever enjoyed by the Association in its 88 years of existence.

We are proud of what we have collectively and collaboratively have accomplished and we look forward to more success in 2016/2017.

Respectfully submitted



La Fédération
des commissions
scolaires
du Québec



ASSOCIATION DES COMMISSIONS
SCOLAIRES ANGLOPHONES DU QUÉBEC
QUEBEC ENGLISH SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

**NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION**

Canadian Support for School Democracy in Québec

QUÉBEC, SEPTEMBER 9, 2015 – During the press conference held to mark the start of a new school year in Québec, tainted by funding cuts and provincial negotiations, representatives of the French-language and English-language school boards of Canada emphasized the fact that school boards have played a major role in ensuring student success. They also underlined the important ties that exist between them, as well as the fact that educational issues affect all Canadian communities. For this reason, today, the representatives of the French- and English-language school boards of Canada have strongly expressed their support for the continuation of school democracy in Québec.

In response to the intentions of the Minister of Education, Higher Education and Research of Québec to abolish universal suffrage, the vice-president of the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA), Floyd Martens and the president of the *Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones (FNCSF)*, Robert Maddix reiterated that the election of school board commissioners is every community's exclusive right to manage and control its education system, while being directly accountable to the communities served.

While this important support is welcome, the president of the Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec (FCSQ), Josée Bouchard and the president of the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA), David C. D'Aoust, expressed great concern about the future of the current school system, should it be entrusted to individuals with special interests without being, just like elected school board commissioners, accountable to their communities. "Look at what is currently happening in Québec—last spring, elected school board commissioners publicly and strongly denounced the funding cuts imposed by Québec, do you think that a board of directors not directly elected by the community will take such liberty?", commented Josée Bouchard. In addition, David D'Aoust mentioned that, despite provincial negotiations and unprecedented funding cuts, back-to-school activities were carried out in an orderly manner as is the usual practice. "It is our responsibility as elected school board officials to implement the necessary measures to ensure that available and accessible services are provided to students throughout Québec."

Recalling that some 800 elected school board commissioners in Québec manage a budget of approximately \$10 billion, presidents D'Aoust and Bouchard indicated that they are striving, in every way, to use all available financial resources to ensure student success, as demonstrated by the very low rate of 4.2% in school board administrative costs. "In light of the fact that a number of studies commissioned by the government report that school boards use resources efficiently and effectively, we ask ourselves what is the value-added for Minister Blais in abolishing school elections? The role of elected school board officials is not to carry out the Minister's orders, but to defend a public school network and to support the local communities."

Letter to Minister of Education Blais and to the Premier of Québec

Last spring, the Canadian School Boards Association, the *Fédération nationale des commissions scolaires francophones*, the Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec and the Quebec English School Boards Association expressed strong support for the continuation of school elections in Québec to the Minister of Education, Higher Education and Research and to the Premier of Québec in a letter consigned by the presidents of the school board associations of Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, Manitoba, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan.

The public stand taken today by the presidents of the FCSQ and the QESBA shows that issues associated with school democracy not only exist in Québec, but also across Canada, particularly in the Francophone and Anglophone communities.

-30-

Information: Caroline Lemieux
Attachée de presse

Fédération des commissions scolaires du
Québec
Tél. : 418 651-3220
Cell. : 418 570-9716
clemieux@fcsq.qc.ca
Twitter : [@fcsq](https://twitter.com/fcsq)

Kim Hamilton
Director of Communications
and Special Projects
Quebec English School
Boards Association
Cell.: 514-919-3894
khamilton@quesba.qc.ca



Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec
Quebec English School Boards Association



English Parents'
Committee Association

QC
GN | Quebec
Community
Groups
Network
www.qcgn.ca

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

Jennings report validates minority community position on the right to management and control of school boards

MONTREAL, SEPTEMBER 16, 2015 – The Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA), the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN), the English Parents Community Association (EPCA) and the Quebec Federation of Home and Schools (QFHSA) are pleased with the findings of the Elections Systems Study Panel which aim to protect the constitutional rights of English-speaking Quebecers and to protect the integrity of our educational institutions which are key to the vitality of our communities.

“Our schools are a major cornerstone of our minority language communities and it is essential that our community be consulted on this very important issue,” said Walter Duszara, Secretary of the QCGN. “Our schools preserve and promote the culture of English-speaking Quebecers which is why our linguistic minority community has the right to manage and control these institutions. The Government of Quebec's role is to provide the resources necessary to ensure English schools are a substantively equivalent to majority schools, not to interfere with how we govern our schools.”

“We are very pleased with the consultation conducted by Mrs. Jennings and the Panel. No stone was left unturned and the results speak for themselves,” commented QESBA President David D’Aoust. “We needed the consultation of the community-at-large to be able to show the Couillard government that we, collectively, as a minority community have the right to manage and control our institutions and that the only way to ensure this is by electing our representatives by universal suffrage.”

“EPCA is pleased with the Jennings report more specifically, that it does call for more parent involvement including the right to vote on councils,” said President Pierre Chouinard.

QESBA, QCGN, EPCA and QFHSA created the panel to study electoral systems and the possible application of a new system for school board elections that would be effective, efficient, and meet the standards for minority language community management and control rights as defined in the Canadian Constitution and clarified by subsequent Supreme Court decisions. The four sponsoring groups will examine the report in detail and move forward with their own recommendations to the provincial government based on the findings of the Jennings report.

- 30 -

For further information:

Kimberley Hamilton, Director of Communications and Special Projects,
khamilton@quesba.qc.ca
Quebec English School Boards Association
Telephone: 514-849-5900, ext. 225, cellular: 514-919-3894

Rita Legault, Director of Communications and Public Relations, |
rita.legault@qcgnc.ca
Quebec Community Groups Network
Telephone: 514-868-9044, ext. 223, cellular: 514-912-6555



Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec
Quebec English School Boards Association



English Parents'
Committee Association

QC
GN | Quebec
Community
Groups
Network
www.qcgn.ca

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

Jennings Panel Endorses Elected School Boards

Panel Proposes New Voting Procedures

MONTREAL, SEPTEMBER 16 2015 – Following three months of intense study, the Election Systems Study Panel (the Panel) released its final report today urging the Quebec government to maintain the current practice of electing English school boards by universal suffrage as the best, and perhaps only, way to fulfill the government's obligation to protect the minority language community's constitutional rights. The report, which was submitted to the Panel's four sponsoring organizations - Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA), the English Parents' Committee Association (EPCA), the Québec Community Groups Network (QCGN) and the Québec Federation of Home and School Associations (QFHSA) as well as to Minister of Education François Blais – also suggests a range of measures including online voting in order to increase voter participation.

“Over the summer,” explained the Honourable Marlene Jennings, Chair of the Panel, “we met with constitutional and elections experts, retired school board Chairs, 2014 school board election Returning Officers as well as representatives of community groups, parents, individuals, and other interested parties. In spite of the study being conducted in the middle of Québec's traditional holiday period, we received nearly 40 written briefs, emails, and phone calls. The clear consensus is that English-speaking Quebecers are interested in and value their school boards, viewing them as crucial to student success and to our community's overall vitality.”

“At the same time,” continued Ms. Jennings, “we recognize that parents have a vested interest in our school system and we are urging that steps be taken to ensure that their voices are strengthened.”

The Panel is recommending that Parent Commissioners continue to be elected through the current Parent Committee Electoral College system with all of the rights, responsibilities and duties of Commissioners elected through universal suffrage but with the addition of the right to vote. The Panel is also proposing that the number of Parent Commissioners be increased from 4 to 6 on each School Board.

“The constitutional experts – and we met with four of them – along with our review of the relevant Supreme Court judgments are clear that the English-speaking minority has the right to manage and control its education system,” noted Ms. Jennings.

Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, a non-exception clause, establishes the Constitutional provisions for minority language education rights in Canada. The Supreme Court has noted that the broad scope of Section 23 facilitates the creation of disparities between Canada's linguistic minority groups and as a result recommended in 2003 that Section 23 cases could generally be settled by referring to the jurisprudence of three leading cases: *Mahe v Alberta*, *Reference Re Public Schools Act*, and *Arsenault-Cameron v Prince Edward Island* (Bergman, Daniels 2014).

While not specifically designated under Section 23, protection for the right of minority language Community members to elect School Board Commissioners and Chairs from within their communities through universal suffrage as the natural means by which to exercise their right to management and control identified by *Mahe* appears logical and is common across Canada (Bergman, Daniels 2014). It can be argued that, because the Council of Commissioners is the decision-making arm of the School Board and Section 23 grants management and control rights to minority language community members so they can make important decisions impacting their language and culture, minority language community members also have the right to choose those Directors from among their numbers (Bergman, Daniels 2014).

“We also acknowledge that steps need to be taken to increase voter turnout,” added Ms. Jennings. “We need to make it easier to vote. We heard horror stories about inaccurate voting lists, long line-ups at the polls and the need to travel long distances each way to exercise one's right to vote. This is unacceptable in the twenty-first century.”

Specific recommendations of the Panel designed to increase voter participation include:

1. Conducting English School Board elections through online, telephone and mail-in ballots only;
2. Granting English School Boards the legal authority to collaborate with their French School Board counterparts to revise voter lists for School Boards on their territories;
3. Modifying the voter registration process so that:
 - a. English Minority tax payers who pay into the English School Board system are automatically registered to the English School Board voting list;
 - b. Graduates of English public high schools are automatically registered to the English School Board voting list;
 - c. English Minority youth who turn 18 are automatically registered to the English School Board voting list;
 - d. Parents of children who have graduated from an English public High School are automatically registered to the English School Board voting list;
 - e. In the event that the Québec government does not implement ESSP recommendations 6 and 7, that voters in English School Board elections have the ability to identify their respective School Boards and be registered to vote for the appropriate candidates by showing proper identification on the day of the elections at their polling station.

“The strength of elected school boards is that commissioners have a special link to the community they serve,” concluded Ms. Jennings. “They are grass-roots representatives with their ears to the ground. Parents know them and appreciate that they are there to help ensure the education system adapts to students’ changing needs while preparing them to succeed within Quebec and the wider society. It is not surprising that despite significant hurdles including limited financial resources students in the English system enjoy an above-average performance in regards to graduation and success rates of students.”

About the Panel

The Election Systems Study Panel (ESSP), launched in June of 2015 and sponsored by the Québec English School Boards Association (QESBA), the English Parents’ Committee Association (EPCA), the Québec Community Groups Network (QCGN) and the Québec Federation of Home and School Associations (QFHSA), is an independent volunteer Panel consisting of five members of the English Minority Community (EMC). Chaired by the Honourable Marlene Jennings, former Member of Parliament, other Panel members include former Assistant Deputy Minister from the Ministry of Education Leo La France, Executive Director of Townshippers’ Association Rachel Hunting, President of QFHSA Brian Rock, and Vice-President of EPCA Rhonda Boucher.

The Panel’s mandate included the review of numerous election systems as well as the current system of universal suffrage for the selection of Commissioner and Chairs; consultations with English Minority organizations and individuals with expertise on the various options; a review of past elections; and making recommendations for the four sponsor organizations to present to the Québec government. The Panel investigated all system options through the prism of Official Language Minority Community (OLMC) Constitutional Rights.

The Panel received nearly 40 written briefs, emails, and phone calls, conducted 29 interviews involving nearly 50 individuals, and conducted a literature review using the secondary analysis of primary Sociological, Anthropological, and Sociolinguistic research as it pertains to the English Minority Communities in Québec (ESCQ). Academic research on School Board governance was used to provide background information on Québec’s current election system for English Minority School Board Commissioners and Chairs as well as to situate, for the Ministère de l’Éducation, the role of English public School Boards in the maintenance and proliferation of ESCQ vitality in Québec. Panel members also included an analysis of Supreme Court of Canada judgments and jurisprudence within the context of Official Language Minority Communities (OLMC) rights under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and an analysis of research documenting OLMC School Board models in other provinces.

For more information, please contact :

Kim Hamilton

Director of Communications and Special Projects

Telephone : 514 849-5900, ext. 225, cellular : 514 919-3894

E-mail : khamilton@qesba.qc.ca



Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec
Quebec English School Boards Association

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

QESBA elects new President

MONTREAL, OCTOBER 19, 2015 – The Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) is pleased to announce that Jennifer Maccarone, Chairperson of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board was elected President of the QESBA on Saturday, October 17.

The Association held their Annual General Meeting over the weekend in Sherbrooke, Quebec where elections over a four-day period by on-line voting were held for both President and Vice-President with an 88% participation rate. Suanne Stein Day Chairperson of the Lester B. Pearson School Board was elected Vice-President.

“I would like to thank Commissioners from across the province for giving me their vote of confidence to lead this important Association,” said Jennifer Maccarone. “We are currently in negotiations with this government not only for our very important Teachers, Professionals and Support Staff but for the very future of elected school boards. I will ensure that the voice of QESBA is heard by this government on behalf of our education community but especially for our students,” concluded Maccarone.

QESBA is the voice of English public education in Quebec.

- 30 -

Source: Kim Hamilton
Director of Communications and Special Projects
Cell.: 514-919-3894



Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec
Quebec English School Boards Association

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

QESBA wants the Minister of Education to respect the EMSB by-election

MONTREAL, NOVEMBER 10, 2015 – The Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) is questioning the 23% voter turnout in both the Fabre and St-Henri-Ste-Anne provincial by-elections held yesterday as registered at the Directeur général des élections du Québec.

If the Couillard government considers a 23% voter turnout credible for a provincial by-election then he is also declaring the legitimacy of the English school board elections held last fall. Moreover, the electoral turnout in both of these provincial ridings is equal to the turnout at the English Montreal School Board in November 2014.

“The Minister is set to deposit a draft bill tomorrow in the National Assembly that will suspend school board by-elections including the one at the English Montreal school board that has not only already begun, his ministry in fact approved it. Is it because this by-election is being held in an English language school board where there are three registered candidates? We suspect that the Minister does not want the English-speaking community to mobilize and have a healthy voter turnout,” said QESBA President Jennifer Maccarone.

“We maintain and will always maintain the importance of democratically elected school boards for our minority community, this is a constitutional right that we will defend. The electoral period has already begun at the EMSB give the community their voice, and their constitutional rights,” concluded Mrs. Maccarone.

QESBA is the voice of English public education in Quebec.



Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec
Quebec English School Boards Association

News Release

For immediate distribution

Teacher Appreciation Week

MONTREAL, FEBRUARY 9, 2016 – The Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) is pleased on behalf of its Board of Directors and elected and parent commissioners from across Quebec to recognize and thank each of the 8,000 dedicated individuals who teach in our classrooms across the province.

It is Teacher Appreciation Week, an important opportunity to recognize those who serve as a model and who deserve our gratitude and appreciation for their exemplary contribution to society. They have the responsibility of developing the full potential of every student – and that is indispensable.

Teachers in the English network are examples of dedication; our collective 85% success rate is only one example of their tireless work. “Education is constantly evolving, and the teachers in our network are essential innovators as they go above and beyond the call, on a daily basis in their classrooms and communities,” said Jennifer Maccarone, QESBA President. “We must be honouring and supporting our teachers year-round. Nonetheless, this is a moment for all Quebecers to recognize the importance of these committed individuals,” the President concluded.

QESBA is the voice of English public education in Quebec.

-30-

Information: Kim Hamilton
Director of Communications and Special Projects
514-919-3894



Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec
Quebec English School Boards Association

News Release

For immediate distribution

QESBA presents its' position on Bill 86 to the Culture and Education Commission

QUEBEC CITY, MARCH 9, 2016 – The Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) presented its' position on draft Bill 86 during the Culture and Education Parliamentary Commission today in Quebec City.

QESBA maintains that the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports, Sébastien Proulx, should suspend work on Bill 86 and open a dialogue with education partners to develop amendments to the Education Act that will have a positive impact on students and the English-speaking community in Québec.

“The English-speaking community is proud of its' 85% success rate. We have always been open to change and discussion with successive governments,” said QESBA President Jennifer Maccarone. “Those changes must benefit student success, schools, and communities. This bill will not improve any of those priorities, and actually, will only negatively impact our students' success, our schools, and our communities.

The new Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports must sit and discuss openly with education leaders and find viable solutions. QESBA has many ideas on how we can improve our system for students without making changes for the sake of change, destroying our structures, and placing our students at risk,” concluded the President.

QESBA is the voice of English public education in Québec.

Information: Kim Hamilton
Director of Communications and Special Projects
514-919-3894



Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec
Quebec English School Boards Association

NEW RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

QESBA thinks the Leitaio budget is a first step in reinvesting in education

QUÉBEC CITY, QUÉBEC, MARCH 17, 2016 – The Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) believes that the Leitaio budget is a first step in reinvesting in education.

The budget deposited today promises among other specific items an overall 3% increase. Furthermore, an additional investment of approximately \$600 million over three years to reinvest specifically in infrastructure, \$39 million to support early intervention for elementary students and \$35 million to address the high school dropout rate. It is impossible to say how much exactly of this money the English system will actually see, the budget credits will allow for the exact amounts only in April.

“We believe that this is a first step into reinvesting in our future but it is just a beginning we must ensure that our students remain an indefinite priority,” said QESBA President Jennifer Maccarone. “Our network is proud to boast an 85% success rate, well above the average and goal of 80% by 2020, it proves that our system works and that our priority is our students’ success,” concluded the President.

QESBA is the voice of English public education in Québec

-30-

Information : Kim Hamilton
Directrice des communications et des projets spéciaux
Cell. : 514-919-3894



**Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec
Quebec English School Boards Association**

EDUCATION MINISTER BLAIS OUT OF TOUCH

Obsession with structures threatens student success

By: Jennifer Maccarone – President, Quebec English School Boards Association

As we enter the last week of the current session of the National Assembly, Francois Blais, the Minister of Education seems determined to table an ill-conceived and unworkable restructuring plan of our education system.

Since the very first discussion of potential change, the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) has been insisting that the focus should be on student success. Through the Jennings Report and in meetings with the Minister we have made suggestions for improving the system, but this Minister has consistently refused to engage or even to listen.

The QESBA has been trying to help this disconnected Minister effect real, implementable, meaningful, and practical improvements to the current, already very successful, Quebec education system. Mr. Blais has systematically refused any such collaborative approach. In addition he continues to show total disregard for minority language community rights.

Despite our willingness to enter into a dialogue, the Minister remains single-minded in his approach to change. His lack of understanding of what will work and what changes can be put in place are a threat to student success. We work in the system and we have ideas to help move the government towards its goals in a logical and respectful manner, as we have done with previous governments and Ministers of Education.

QESBA and three other important groups came together over the summer to get a sense of what our community really thinks. The result was an independent report produced by the Jennings panel. Their report clearly demonstrated the importance the English

community places on its educational institutions. The results and recommendations were summarily dismissed by this Minister within hours of the Report's publication.

In a letter sent to the Minister in early November we pointed out to the Minister that management and control of education are the cornerstones of the minority language community's rights. We provided the Minister with a copy of a recent speech by the former Supreme Court Justice Michel Bastarache, in which he states that minority language rights holders are not limited to parents of students but must be taken to mean the entire minority community. QESBA, and many partner community groups, are committed to preserving and protecting those Constitutional rights and advised the Minister that while QESBA stands ready to work with the government it will not and cannot relent on rights issues.

The majority of the members of any future School Board Council must be chosen by the community at large by universal suffrage. The School Board Chairman should also be elected by the community. QESBA asked for parents to be given voting rights during the 1998 change to linguistic school boards and repeats that request now. It is also clear that the Councils must retain control over budgets and programs to meet constitutional protections.

The current Councils were elected just a year ago and it would be disrespectful to the more than 250,000 Quebec citizens who voted in the English and French school board elections to nullify those results by ending the term of office prematurely. We also maintain that voter participation will increase if we opt for electronic voting or twin the date of school board and municipal elections.

There is still lots of time to do this right. There is no need to rush just for the sake of optics. Change for the sake of change, which will also likely lead to lengthy court battles, will only put student success at risk for years to come. Our students not only deserve better, but we have a responsibility to give them better.

November 30, 2015

Jennifer Maccarone is President of the Quebec English School Boards Association and Chairperson of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board.