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| QESEC | Québec English Special Education Commissioners |
| - the voice of the special needs community in public education | |

May 28, th 2015

M. François Blais
Ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche (MEESR)
600 rue Fullum, 10e étage
Montréal (Québec)
H2K 4L1

Subject: Budgetary Concerns Relating to the Education of Students with Special Needs

Dear M. Blais,

We, the Special Education Parent Commissioners of the Québec English school boards, have grave concerns about the direct and negative impact the recently announced school board budget cuts will have on the success of all students, and particularly those with special needs.

As recognized by the MEESR, the model of integration of students with Special Needs within the regular classroom can lead to higher academic achievement, an increase in self-esteem and better social skills. Moreover, educating children with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers fosters understanding and acceptance, while better preparing students of all abilities to function in the world beyond school.

Several years ago, the MEESR recommended that all School Boards implement a policy of Integration of Students with Special Needs. While it is understood that in certain exceptional cases the grouping of these students into separate classes may be the best option, the English School Boards of Québec responded to the Ministry's request by developing and implementing a model of integration for students with Special Needs that strives to provide a positive educational experience to ALL students in integrated classes.

It must be recognised however, that to be effective, this model requires an appropriate amount of financial and human resources in the form of integration aides, special education technicians, resource teachers, and professionals such as psychologists and speech-language pathologists. The combination of recurring and new budget cuts will have a direct negative impact on the resources necessary to support the education and integration of students with Special Needs, and will severely impede the quality of education for ALL students in Québec. Each of our School Boards currently supplements the funds received from the MEESR for the support of our students with Special Needs. With the continual increase in the number of students with special needs every year, each of our School Boards has a shortfall of funding in this area in the millions of dollars – funds which to date have been reallocated from other school funds. However, with the increasing budget cuts, it is no longer possible to redirect funds in this manner, which will no doubt result in cuts in services to our most vulnerable students.

In our role as representatives of the special needs communities at our respective school boards, we would like to express our concerns regarding the increasing budgetary compressions that are being enforced on School Boards throughout Québec. We request that the MEESR increase funding to the English School Boards, specifically in the area of Special Needs. It is imperative that School Boards receive the full amount of funding that is required to support a successful model of integration, to ensure that students with special needs receive equal opportunity for a quality education as all students in Québec deserve, and have legal right to receive.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sandra Buckingham, *Lester B. Pearson School Board*
Joanne Charron, *English Montreal School Board*
Pamala Crompton, *Sir Wilfred Laurier School Board*

Shannon Lafond, *Western Quebec School Board*
Lori Rodrigues, *Riverside School Board*
Cindy Veronneau, *Eastern Townships School Board*

The Québec English Special Education Parent Commissioners (QESEC):

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