

February 27th 2015

Pierre Chouinard
 President, English Parents' Committee Association (EPCA)
 7875 chemin de la Côte-de-Liesse,
 Montréal, Qc.
 H4T 1G5

Dear Mr. Chouinard,

Further to the EPCA's recent meeting and discussions with the Quebec Minister of Education at that time, Dr. Yves Bolduc, regarding the future direction and possible changes to school board governance, and considering MELS expressed an interest in increasing parental involvement in school boards, the special education parent commissioners of several Quebec English school boards met to discuss this issue from the perspective of students with special needs.

We, the special education parent commissioners of five Quebec English school boards, have identified the direct and negative impact the proposed school board mergers would have on the success of special needs students. We have also identified key decision making areas in which there is a lack of special needs or general parent representation.

In our role as representatives of the special needs communities at our respective school boards, we offer the following recommendations to be communicated to MELS.

(I) School Board Merger Recommendations:

<u>Request</u>	<u>Reasoning</u>
Maintain all 9 English School Boards intact	Merging the ETSB and/or RSB and/or NFSB would place an excessive burden on the delivery of complementary services to students with special needs. Any merger of these school boards would result in a significant increase in geographical territory, and would make it exceedingly difficult for professionals such as speech therapists, occupational therapists and psychologists to travel from one school to the other. This would increase travel time and associated costs, thereby decreasing the number of visits each professional could make, resulting in a negative impact on the success of students with special needs requiring these services.

(II) Recommendations to Increase Parental Involvement in School Board Governance

<u>Request</u>	<u>Reasoning</u>
Provide all parent commissioners with the <u>right to vote</u> at Council.	To increase parental input and responsibility for school board affairs. To ensure transparency and accountability of the parent commissioners to the parent population.
Elect a <u>parent representative for special needs to be a member of the governing board of every school/center</u> during the annual general meeting, from amongst the parents of students with special needs at that school/center.	To increase parental input specific to the special needs community at the governing board of every school and center. To communicate the concerns and suggestions of the special needs community at every school and center with the school board level advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities.
Add parent representation at all of the school-level “Special Needs Parity Committees” that allocate funds between all of the students with special needs at each school.	To increase parental input and responsibility, at a committee which currently consists of school administrators and staff members only (as per the 2010-2015 QPAT Teachers’ Collective Agreement, Section 8-9.03).
Add parent representation at the school board “Special Needs Central Parity Committee” that allocates funds received from MELS to the individual schools.	To increase parental input and responsibility, at a committee which currently consists of school board administrators and members of the Teacher’s Union only (as per the 2010-2015 QPAT Teachers’ Collective Agreement, Section 8-9.02).

We recommend that changes be made to the Quebec Education Act in order to put the aforementioned requests into effect.

We look forward to continuing to engage in a relationship of open discussion and dialogue with the newly appointed minister of Education, Mr. François Blais.

Sincerely,

The Québec English Special Education Commissioners (QESEC):

- Sandra Buckingham, Parent Commissioner, Lester B. Pearson School Board
- Joanne Charron, Parent Commissioner, English Montreal School Board
- Pamala Cripton, Parent Commissioner, Sir Wilfred Laurier School Board
- Shannon Lafond, Parent Commissioner, Western Quebec School Board
- Cindy Veronneau, Parent Commissioner, Eastern Townships School Board