

<b>QESEC</b>	Québec English Special Education Commissioners
<b>- the voice of the special needs community in public education</b>	

June 12, <sup>th</sup> 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: Recommendation: Election Process of Special Education Advisory Committee Parent Members,  
and Election Process & Role of the Special Needs Parent Commissioner***

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Dear M. Blais,

We, the Special Education Parent Commissioners of the Québec English school boards, have serious concerns about the Election process for special needs parent representatives as outlined in the current version of the Québec Education Act. These concerns are outlined below.

In addition, as per our previous letter dated February 27, 2015 (attached), we would like to reiterate our recommendation to increase the representation of parents of students with special needs in school board governance.

1. The Election process of SEAC parent members:

As per the Québec Education Act., Section 185 (1), the parent members of the advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities (SEAC) are “designated by the parents’ committee”.

QESEC does not agree that SEAC parent members should be designated by the general parents’ committee as prescribed by the Education Act, since all members of the parents’ committee may not be familiar with the perspective and priorities of the special needs community. QESEC feels strongly that the special needs parent members should be elected by their peers, and by those whom they actually represent: parents of students with special needs.

Thus, it is QESEC’s recommendation that the Québec Education Act, Section 185 (1) be changed, to reflect that the SEAC parent members should be “**elected by their peers: parents of students with special needs**”.

2. The Election process of the Special Needs Parent Commissioner:

Similar to the election of SEAC parent members, as per the Québec Education Act Section 145, the Special Needs Parent Commissioner is “elected from among the parents who are members of the advisory committee” by “the members of the parents committee”.

Once again, QESEC does not agree that the Special Needs Parent Commissioner, who represents the parents of students with special needs throughout the school board, should be elected by the members of general parents' committee. Rather, SEAC parent members should have the responsibility of electing their own representative.

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In addition, we suggest that the role of the Special Needs Parent Commissioner requires additional clarification in the Act, to provide specific designation as the representative of all parents with special needs throughout the school board.

Thus, it is QESEC's recommendation that the Québec Education Act, Section 145 be changed, to reflect that the Special Needs Parent Commissioner should be "elected **by and** from among the parents who are members of the advisory committee, **and represents all parents of said students throughout the school board**".

### 3. The Role of the Special Needs Parent Commissioner at the general Parents' Committee:

It is QESEC's opinion that the Ministry of Education's intent of creating the new position of Special Needs Parent Commissioner was to increase the voice of the parents of students with special needs throughout the school board: at the Council of Commissioners, as well as at the general Parents' Committee. All four Parent Commissioners are designated as "representing the parents' committee" as per Section 143 (2) of the Québec Education Act, and the other 3 Parent Commissioners are full voting members of the Parents' Committee, while the Special Needs Parent Commissioner is not clearly designated as member of the general Parents' Committee. QESEC recommends that the Special Needs Parent Commissioner also be provided with full participatory and voting rights at the Parents' Committee.

Thus, it is QESEC's recommendation that the Québec Education Act, Section 143 (2) be changed to reflect that the Special Needs Parent Commissioner should represent the voice of the special needs parent community at the general Parents' Committee as a full voting member: "three commissioners, or if the number of commissioners referred to in paragraph 1 is greater than 10, four commissioners representing the parents' committee **with full voting and membership rights**"

Thank you for your consideration of these recommended changes to the Québec Education Act, pertaining to representation of parents of students with special needs.

Sincerely,

**The Québec English Special Education Parent Commissioners (QESEC):**

**- *the voice of the special needs community in public education***

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

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

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February 27<sup>th</sup> 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:**

<b><u>Request</u></b>	<b><u>Reasoning</u></b>
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**

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<b><u>Request</u></b>	<b><u>Reasoning</u></b>
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 Parent Commissioners (QESEC):**

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  
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