

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

August 13<sup>th</sup> 2015

***QESEC Annual Report 2014-2015:***

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**Formation of the group:**

The English Parents Committee Association (EPCA) facilitated a meeting between the Special Needs Parent Commissioners and the Executives of the Special Needs Advisory Committees of the Quebec English School Boards on February 22, 2015. The LBPSB SNAC Chair, SNAC Vice Chair and Special Needs Parent Commissioner attended.

We were very pleased to have representation from 6 English School Boards attend, including:

- Lester B. Pearson,
- English Montreal,
- Sir Wilfred Laurier,
- Riverside,
- Eastern Townships,
- and Western Quebec.

The purpose of this meeting was to share ideas and best practices within the special needs parent community. It became immediately clear that the parents of students with special needs across the province share many of the same concerns in the area of Education.

Of course, there exists significant concern regarding budget cuts to education, and the potential negative impact on the services to students with special needs.

There is also concern about how the process for the validation of Handicapped Codes will function, now that the MEESR has closed the local offices that previously administered this function.

During the Minister of Education’s meeting with EPCA in January 2015, he indicated that he values parental input, and has requested feedback regarding school board governance issues. To that end, the Special Needs Parent Commissioners formed a new group called the “Quebec English Special Education Commissioners”, QESEC, in order to provide a common united voice to the MEESR.

QESEC members elected Sandra Buckingham (LBPSB) as Chair, and Pamala Cripton (SWLSB) as Secretary.

**QESEC letters to the MEESR:**

Despite the group’s formation midway through the school year, members worked diligently to discuss matters of importance to the special needs parent community, and used a consensus model to put forth recommendations to the MEESR that were approved unanimously by all QESEC School Board representatives. Three letters of recommendation were forwarded to the MEESR.

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### **School Board Governance Recommendations:**

In response to the Minister of Education’s request for feedback from the parent community, QESEC prepared a letter of governance recommendations to encourage increased representation of parents of students with special needs at Governing Boards and at all levels throughout each of the School Boards.

<http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/extra/img/143QESECRecommendationstoMELS-Governance.pdf>

The recommendations were to:

- Maintain all 9 English School Boards intact, and not to pursue merger plans.
- Provide all Parent Commissioners with the right to vote at Council.
- Elect a parent representative for special needs to be a member of the Governing Board of every school.
- Add parent representation to the “Parity Committees” which allocate funds received from MEESR and determine the level of services to be provided to all students with special needs throughout the school board.

These recommendations were presented to the EPCA Directors during their meeting on February 28, 2015. The QESEC recommendations were subsequently approved and endorsed by the EPCA Board of Directors, and the letter was translated at EPCA’s cost. The letter was hand-delivered by the President of EPCA to Mme. Chantal Beaulieu, Assistant Deputy Minister of English Affairs at MEESR, during their meeting on March 21, 2015, along with a letter of endorsement from EPCA:

[http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca//eng/extra/img/1442015CoverLetterfromEPCAfortheQESECFebruary28\\_2015.pdf](http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca//eng/extra/img/1442015CoverLetterfromEPCAfortheQESECFebruary28_2015.pdf)

### **Concerns regarding Budget Cuts in Education:**

The combination of recurring and new cuts to School Board budgets 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.

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.

The following letter was sent directly to Mme. Chantal Beaulieu, Assistant Deputy Minister of English Affairs at MEESR. She confirmed receipt, and indicated that she would share QESEC’s suggestions with her colleagues:

<http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca//eng/extra/img/141QESEClettertoMEESR-S.N.Funding28May2015.pdf>

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### **Election Process and Role of SNAC/SEAC parent members and Special Needs Parent Commissioner:**

As the role of the Special Needs Parent Commissioner (SNPC) was just created by MEESR this year, it is to be expected that adjustments will need to be made in the Education Act. QESEC recommends as follows:

- Clarify that the SNPC should be elected by the parent members of the SNAC/SEAC committee, rather than by the Central Parents' Committee.
- Similarly, clarify that the SNAC/SEAC parent members should be elected by their peers, parents of students with special needs, rather than by Central Parents' Committee.
- Clarify that the SNPC represents all parents throughout the school board, and as such, should be provided full membership and voting rights on the Central Parents' Committee.

The following letter was sent directly to Mme. Chantal Beaulieu, Assistant Deputy Minister of English Affairs at MEESR. She confirmed receipt, and indicated that she would share QESEC's suggestions with her colleagues:

<http://snac.lbpsb.gc.ca//eng/extra/img/145QESEClettertoMEESRElectionProcessJune2015.pdf>

### **Other Items**

Additional items of interest were discussed and may result in additional recommendations moving forward, including increasing the participation of SNAC/SEAC committees in making recommendations regarding the allocation of resources for students with special needs as mandated by the Education Act; the need for increased teacher training in the area of special needs; the need for transition plans and for continuity of support services after the age of 21; the need for better communication between the health and education ministries; the need for the development of a standardized protocol to govern the development, implementation and evaluation of IEPs.

Finally, QESEC watches with great interest the ongoing Collective Agreement negotiations with the unions of teachers, support staff and professionals, insofar as students with special needs will be affected.

Respectfully submitted by,

**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*