



Association des comités de parents anglophones English Parents' Committee Association

CCE – 024M
C.P. – P.L. 40
Organisation et
gouvernance scolaires

Le projet de loi no. 40

Loi modifiant principalement la Loi sur l'instruction publique relativement à l'organisation et à la gouvernance scolaires

Présenté par

L'Association des comités de parents anglophones

À la Commission de la culture et de l'éducation

Assemblée nationale du Québec

Le mardi 5 novembre 2019

The English Parents' Committee Association is a coalition of parent committees from English-language school boards across Québec, representing nearly 100,000 students in the English language youth sector. EPCA is a non-profit association funded by the *Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur*.

EPCA advocates for English Public Education in Québec and lobbies on issues of concern of our Parents' Committee members. Whenever there is an educational issue, we are the voice of the parents.

The English Parents Committee Association demands high performance from our schools, teachers and administrators. As parents, our two prime concerns about any given education policy come down to:

1. Will it increase the graduation rate of Quebec schools?
2. Will it make our graduates better equipped to deal with the world?

EPCA is disheartened to see that the government put all its attention and resources into producing a bill that targets neither the quality of education, the graduation rate in Quebec nor the well being of our children.

We have, however, taken note of what the government hopes to achieve with this bill, and we would like to offer some comments about these goals, as well as suggestions that might make this bill more effective at achieving its stated goals.

In this process we hope that the bill may be amended to make improve educational outcomes.

1. À propos de l'intention de donner plus d'autonomie aux écoles et d'inclure davantage la communauté dans la prise de décision: nous apprécions la volonté du ministre d'augmenter l'implication des parents à ce chapitre. Cependant, nous croyons que plusieurs caractéristiques de ce nouveau modèle pourraient nuire à cet objectif de rapprochement vers la communauté:

- a. The new model provides no specifics regarding representation on the service centre Board of Directors of special needs, elementary, high school and vocational communities. Each of these sectors has its own characteristics and distinct needs and should be represented by parents involved with them. We believe the bill would be more effective if it is amended to specify this aspect of representation on the Board. At a minimum, it is urgent to ensure that a parent of a special needs student is included on the Board.
- b. The new model, by contrast, provides very specific criteria for the community representatives who will replace the existing elected commissioners (i.e. one each from the financial sector, sports and leisure, human resources, etc.). We see it as highly unlikely that the people with these backgrounds are likely to step forward spontaneously to run for these positions, particularly in rural areas.

Better that the criteria for community representatives be made less specific, and that these representatives be vetted and nominated by the community they serve.

- c. For parents and community representatives, there is also no provision for the cost of running a campaign, which will limit the pool of candidates to those who can afford this cost. Better that there should be clear provisions for reimbursement of campaign costs. This way, the diverse range of a community's interests can be reflected in its representatives.
- d. The parents in the territory of a service centre should form the electorate for the parent members of the service centre Board of Directors.
- e. The parent members of the Board must also be members of the parent committee of the service centre. While other Board members are supported by their respective organizations and associations, parent representatives are lone agents in this new model. However, as members of parent committees, parent representatives would benefit (in terms of communications, proximity to other parents), and be able to provide more effective representation.

2. Regarding the government's intention to reduce bureaucracy, we fear that the outcome will be more likely a hollowing-out of the education system. This bill removes intermediaries between parents and the ministry that have helped us in the past to refine and play a more effective role in the governance of our schools. When there is consultation on new decrees by the ministry, it will fall to the Governing Board to do much more of this work, to go through documentation and articulate their responses.

We believe it is important to maintain the existing consultative process through parents committees, as well as Governing Boards. Both parents committees and Governing Boards are being put in a position to fail, asked to do more without the resources or remuneration to do this work effectively.

3. À propos de la volonté du gouvernement de dépolitiser l'éducation, nous croyons que ce projet de loi aura plutôt un effet négatif sur la démocratie dans le système.

a. While the English sector retains elections at large for community representatives to the service centre Board of Directors, this electoral process is enfeebled and attenuated. The school electoral list for the English minority previously used for this vote must be maintained, and it should be easy to get onto this list; a matter of showing up, identifying and voting.

b. We would have hoped to see the elections integrated with municipal elections, for example, and otherwise reinforced and helped to reach out to the community, rather than narrowing the base of the electorate and limiting the representativeness and legitimacy of these bodies. It is not too late for this Assembly to modify these details of the bill to retain and reinforce the community outreach of this electoral process that has historically been an important event in the English-speaking community.

4. We come now to the government's intention to save \$45 million over the next four years. In our view, this saving is on the back of parents. The elimination of school commissioners and elections to make these savings will mean more responsibilities for Governing Boards, for example, but there is little recognition of what this means for the individuals in this volunteer ecosystem. We are all working in the system that educates Quebec children, from the Minister to the rookie parent on the local parent committee; but I ask you who are here today at this committee: how many of you could do your jobs effectively if you were working on a volunteer basis and paying your own expenses, your own babysitting costs? If you expect more from this part of the system, you must provide it with adequate resources and remuneration.

To conclude, we note that this bill has not emerged from any white paper or clear intention to improve education in Quebec. It offers no metrics that matter to us, such as improving the graduation rate and the quality of education. The government needs to stop focusing on structural changes that will not help our students, and instead loom at the excellent success rates of the 9 Anglophone school boards. School boards are the one element of the public system that the English speaking minority can call its own, thus giving it a degree of democratic legitimacy that is absent for English speakers dealing with other public services

The existing School Board system is a community-based intermediary between the school and the Education Ministry, and an important institutional support to parents; and we see the new service centres proposed to replace them as having uncertain legal status, with leadership clearly answerable to the ministry before parents, teachers or administrators. Without amendment, this bill is a disaster for our schools and the communities they support.

We encourage this Assembly to look long and hard at this bill, and to be ready to amend it in the interest of the quality of education in Quebec.