

Mémoire - Projet de loi 185

le 29 mai 2018

Mémoire déposé

**à la Commission parlementaire de la culture et de l'éducation de
l'Assemblée nationale du Québec sur le:**

**Projet de loi no 185: Loi reportant la prochaine élection
scolaire générale et permettant au gouvernement d'y
prévoir l'utilisation d'un mode de votation à distance**

**Présenté par Chris Eustace: anglophone, 73 ans, contribuable payant la taxe
scolaire**

Attn: Louisette Cameron

**Comments to the National Assembly on Bill 185 - NO to the
postponing school board elections from November 2018 to
November 2020**

**I am a retired teacher, grandfather of children attending the public
school system , and a participant for 20 years at Lester B. Pearson
School Board Council meetings by asking questions at Question Period
time.**

**I have also submitted mémoires to the Culture and Education Committee
on school board reform Bills 86 and 105, and a brief on Bill # 166 : An
Act to reform the school tax system.**

**I am opposed to Bill 185 for several reasons. Here are some of my
thoughts from published letters to the Editors of The Gazette , Le
Devoir and Le Soleil.**

First , it is the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA), and its French counterpart, the Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec (FCSQ) that want the mandates extended. This means more money for them without facing the electorate

They asked the Couillard government to postpone the school board elections scheduled for November 4, 2018, because they claim the elections are too close to the provincial elections which are set for October 1, 2018. They say this would produce "electoral fatigue" resulting in a low voter turnout.

This is nonsense. Consider the rate of participation in the last school board elections in Nov. 2014. Voter turnout in the francophone sector was about 5 % ; the anglophone sector garnered about 17% with about 50 % of the seats acclaimed.

If the commissioners want to be elected in an open and democratic manner, the elections should go on as scheduled. Making up a new date with a special law gives the impression that school boards have a "special status."

Moreover, it is understood that parents are more interested in school matters as opposed to school board affairs.

To make the aforementioned point, consider this story.

Parents had recently won the right to sue school boards regarding the amount parents pay for school fees. In late September 2017 , Education Minister Sébastien Proulx wrote to the FCSQ, QESBA and the English and French parent groups asking them to come up with recommendations, by December 15, 2017 on the matter.

On December 11, the Fédération des comités de parents du Québec, who were accompanied by the Fédération québécoise des directions d'établissement d'enseignement (school principals), submitted their recommendations to the Minister.

The FCSQ and QESBA, who had refused to participate in the exercise, were nowhere to be seen and they have the temerity to ask for extended mandates.

School board elections should not be postponed.

Also consider these facts: According to the laws of Quebec, the next election for the commissioners of Quebec school boards is scheduled for November 4, 2018. The last one was in Nov. 2014

Consider these laws: Article 2 of the 'Act Respecting School Elections' specifies that 'An election shall be held every four years to elect a chair and all the other commissioners ...' Article 3 sets the day, 'Polling day shall be the first Sunday in November'.

At any level of government, whether municipal, provincial or federal, there is a sanctity about elections. These are not to be easily played around with as they are a cornerstone of our democratic institutions. These elections are never postponed. Why then should school board elections be treated any differently?

"The school board elections of 2011 were delayed for a year, then another year and ultimately for a third year. Instead of a four-year term, the commissioners elected in 2007 remained in office until 2014, a seven-year term. This is not acceptable. Mandates are for a four-year term, no more, no less." (Joe Lalla - EMSB commissioner)

There is no doubt that delaying an election may be received enthusiastically by some present school board commissioners. After all, it is an extra two years of pay.

At the Lester B. Pearson School Board the chairman, Noel Burke , will gain about (seventy thousand dollars) \$70,000 for an extra two years... No wonder they want Bill 185 adopted. as soon as possible .

The former president and then executive director of the QESBA, Marcus Tabachnick described some English boards in three (3) newspapers as having "a lack of clear, coherent leadership."

He chastised the boards for self-proclaiming as being "open and transparent" when in reality boards seem "more closed than ever. "

As an example, he wrote of the secretive way an English commissioner was recently appointed at the LBPSB. Even though the candidate picked secretly was fully qualified , the fact is that she is the spouse of the local politician and this secrecy seemed to have caused a lot of friction. As the newspaper said: "Parents voiced contempt."

We need a renewal of governance not an extended mandate. Consider some boards that are corrupt Why should the taxpayer put up with this corruption for TWO MORE YEARS?

So to review. Postponing school board elections is not only undemocratic but also unethical.

Extending the mandate of commissioners for two years with pay without facing the electorate goes against the principles of basic democracy . It is unethical to extend the mandate in the last year of their present mandate.

Also remember, the hue and cry , two years ago by the ACSAQ and FCSQ, when the Liberal government proposed Bill 86, which called for greater decision-making power at schools by scrapping elected boards.

They said "NO" and demanded elections - and got them via Bill 105. Now they want them postponed till the autumn of 2020. What hypocrisy.

Remember this bit of hypocrisy from the Montreal Gazette , Opinion page by nine English chairpersons , on June 7, 2007? (The government was thinking of postponing elections)

Coincidentally, the headline of the opinion piece by the ACSAQ was titled: "Nov. 4 board elections provide forum to debate future of English schools"

They wrote: " What should be done, by whom, how and when to modernize and revitalize our system of universally elected school boards?

That's an important discussion. We shouldn't shy away from it. In fact, it is time to embrace a focused, public and accountable debate on how to best improve the governance of public education, how to maximize community interest and involvement, and ultimately, how to facilitate the best possible quality of public schooling across Quebec.

Nov. 4 is the date for school board elections. **There has been talk, however, about delaying those elections for up to two years. The Quebec English School Boards Association and its nine member boards believe this would be a mistake. If school-board commissioners are to be fully accountable to their constituents, it is only normal that they consult them at the regularly scheduled time in the most fundamental manner: at the ballot box.**

There have been legitimate concerns about the level of public awareness, the effectiveness of the electoral process and the level of voter turnout in school board elections. There have even been questions about the continued viability of our universally-elected school boards. Those questions are of fundamental importance, and our communities need to be involved in the discussion. The candidates need to be involved. So does the media, so does the government.

Extending the mandate of current school boards by delaying the elections isn't the appropriate way of further democratizing the system. There is, a better way to ensure a fruitful public debate on these questions is undertaken and energized: by holding the discussion during an election campaign, as scheduled for this fall.

There are opportunities as well as challenges in managing public education and in ensuring that the governance of our English public system is accountable, effective and representative of the population we serve. Among the opportunities: building upon our leading-edge expertise in second-language teaching, expanding school-community, inter-board, municipal and business partnerships, consolidating our progressive and inclusive approaches to helping every student reach his/her maximum potential. Among the challenges: a continued, if stabilizing, decline in school enrolment, increased competition from private schools, maintaining and upgrading infrastructures, the use and abuse of new technologies, to mention only a few.

Exploiting these opportunities and meeting these challenges is everybody's business. The effective management of our public school network is inextricably linked to the healthy and progressive development of our children, the economic well-being of Quebec and the future of our communities. About \$790 million of taxpayers' money is spent every year in Quebec on English public education. What better place to talk about such issues than in an election campaign?"

EXACTLY ! Let's talk but NOT postpone.... and PARENTS HAVE TALKED!

La volonté des parents (**leSoleil** 28 mai)

Le ministre de l'Éducation Sébastien Proulx devrait envisager les dernières interventions des Comités de parents des plus grosses commissions scolaires francophones et anglophones au Québec.

Contrairement à ce que la Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec (FCSQ) et l'Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec (ACSAQ) souhaitent, les comités de parents de la Commission scolaire de Montréal (CSDM) et de la Commission scolaire English-Montreal (CSEM) ont clairement déclaré, par

résolutions, qu'ils veulent que les élections scolaires se tiennent à la date prévue, c'est-à-dire le 4 novembre 2018.

Le gouvernement Couillard devrait respecter les souhaits des premiers éducateurs: les parents, car ils savent mieux que tout autre ce qui est dans le meilleur intérêt de leurs enfants.

Chris Eustace

Montréal

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<https://www.lesoleil.com/opinions/carrefour-des-lecteurs/la-volonte-des-parents-24391b10e0937c41c6e4b794c370e9df>

Le lundi 30 avril 2018

Le Comité de parents de la CSDM rappelle qu'il souhaite le maintien des élections scolaires en novembre 2018

https://www.cpcsdm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/cp_report_electionsscolaires2018.pdf

Summary in French:

La Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec (FCSQ) et l'Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec (ACSAQ) ont rencontré le ministre de l'Éducation Sébastien Proulx pour poursuivre leurs discussions sur le report de la date des élections des commissions scolaires de novembre 2018 à l'automne 2020.

Elles prétendent que la date des élections est trop rapprochée de celles des élections provinciales qui se tiendront le 1^{er} octobre 2018, ce qui entraînerait une « fatigue électorale » et, donc, une faible participation des électeurs.

C'est ridicule!

C'est étonnant que le parti Libéral, à la tête actuellement d'un gouvernement majoritaire soutenu par 1,7 millions d'électeurs lors des élections provinciales en avril 2014, puisse même envisager une telle option.

La suggestion n'est ni démocratique ni éthique. Voici pourquoi.

Il y a seulement deux ans, la FCSQ et l'ACSAQ ont fortement porté plainte auprès du gouvernement Couillard qui essayait de moderniser le réseau d'instruction publique dans le cadre du projet de loi 86. Ce projet de loi donnait aux écoles un plus grand pouvoir décisionnel en éliminant les élections des commissions scolaires et, en général, les conseils d'établissement se seraient trouvés au cœur du réseau. Les commissions scolaires l'ont dénoncé comme étant non démocratique.

Le gouvernement a donc abandonné son plan avant-gardiste et remis en place les élections dans le cadre du projet de loi 105. Et maintenant, ces commissions scolaires veulent reporter la date des élections.

Que les choses soient claires.... la date de ces élections est fixée par la loi. Les mandats sont d'une durée de quatre ans. Il n'y a aucun consensus sur le report des dates de ces

élections. Par conséquent, le gouvernement ne doit pas priver l'électorat québécois de ce droit si fondamental.

De plus, les élections des commissions scolaires ont déjà été reportées il n'y a pas si longtemps, ce qui s'est traduit par un mandat d'une durée de sept (7) ans (de 2007 à 2014). Ce n'est pas un contexte sain pour la démocratie, car ça empêche toute personne percevant des actes répréhensibles ou des situations de corruption de se porter candidat afin d'avoir l'occasion de corriger les choses.

Les élections obligent la reddition de comptes. Demander le report de cette date, quelques mois avant la fin d'un mandat, n'est absolument pas éthique.

Envisager l'idée de reporter la date des élections n'améliore aucunement la démocratie au sein des commissions scolaires, car elle ne sert qu'à faire plaisir à des commissaires qui ne cherchent qu'à avoir deux autres années de salaire et de pouvoir.

Monsieur le Premier ministre : Il est temps de mener votre province et de voir à ce que les élections des commissions scolaires se tiennent le 4 novembre 2018, conformément à la loi.

Le Devoir - lettre - 28 avril 2018

La réalité derrière le report des élections scolaires

<https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/lettres/526404/la-realite-derriere-le-report-des-elections-scolaires>

Le fait de reporter la date des élections des commissions scolaires ne contribue en rien à la promotion d'un mode de vie démocratique sain dans nos établissements scolaires publics.

Cependant, cette manipulation du calendrier renforce, surtout chez nos jeunes, l'inutilité d'élire des commissaires scolaires. Dans ce sens, ça a une bonne fin révélatrice.

Respectueusement,

Chris Eustace