



Association des comités de parents anglophones English Parents' Committee Association

Montreal, April 24, 2020

Minister Jean-Francois Roberge
Minister of Education and Higher Education
Édifice Marie-Guyart
1035, rue De La Chevrotière
16e étage
Québec (Quebec) G1R 5A5

VIA EMAIL : Jean-Francois.Roberge.CHMB@assnat.qc.ca

SUBJECT : Reopening of schools

Dear Minister Roberge,

The English Parents' Committee Association of Quebec (EPCA) is concerned about the suggested plan and accompanying timeline to reopen schools in the province.

As you know, our Board of Directors has pronounced itself in support of any plan to reopen schools that is accompanied by ironclad assurances that all measures, advisories and recommendations of the competent Quebec health authorities are explained, understood and implemented with rigor.

The health and well-being of our students, staff and the community are our priority, and we want assurances that all options are being examined in the rollout of any back-to-school project.

Whether such a plan involves some sort of amalgamation involving homeschooling, distance learning and a return to actual classrooms; alternating school days for different grade levels; or the staggering of schedules and splitting of classes, all options must be on the table.

We would ask why it is so pertinent to open schools now, so close to the end of the current academic year. We believe such a scenario presents significant and obvious challenges:

In terms of Montreal and Laval, to our knowledge, there is simply no way to maintain the significant and effective levels of social distancing necessary to prevent further spread of infection among large student cohorts.

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Transportation will be equally challenging, given our preoccupation about filling buses with children, and the question of availability of extra fleets of vehicles to accommodate any division of routes to reduce ridership density.

If the government is indeed planning to move forward on a three-week timeline as suggested, we would like to know how realistic this projection is to implement everything that needs to be done effectively.

Myriad issues of hiring, technology, scheduling, parent and employee buy-in, transportation and infrastructure, must all be considered in short order and we cannot afford to get it wrong.

Rather, we as the voice of English parents in Quebec, believe that we should instead be focused on transitioning our students to the new academic year. That is, getting them back to school, prepared and able to learn without the entire system being rushed into action in a haphazard manner, and possibly greeted by a less-than-enthusiastic reaction from many Quebec parents.

Indeed, parents across all regions representing all grade levels are already expressing opposition and concern about *any* back-to-school project, and thus raises questions about those parents who refuse to send their children to school. As this is all being deemed optional thus far, what options and resources are in store for them, if any?

This presents another concern: That of inequities and imbalances that will inevitably result when a fraction of children resumes their studies, while others remain at home. We also feel that we may be wasting a golden opportunity in this unprecedented era to develop real, comprehensive online learning strategies and mechanisms that will be a boon to Quebec students today and in the future.

We believe these are all essential questions that need to be answered, and we would respectfully ask that you consider them with great care. As always, EPCA is at your disposal to discuss this and any other related matter at your convenience.

As the voice of English school parents in Quebec, EPCA is committed to obtaining the best possible outcomes for our students and our communities, and remain steadfast in our scrutiny of all projects, discussions and matters affecting English students in the province.

Please accept our best regards,

EPCA QUEBEC President
Katherine Korakakis