



Brief presented by

the Quebec English School Boards Association

and

**the Association of Directors General
of the English School Boards of Quebec**

and

**the Association of Administrators of English Schools
of Quebec**

to

**the Institutions Commission
of the National Assembly**

on Bill 1

Québec Constitution Act, 2025

November 2025

Executive Summary

*While the government claims that education is the “priority of priorities,”
the purported “law of laws” suggests the contrary.*

The Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA), the Association of Directors General for the English School Boards of Quebec (ADGESBQ) and the Association of Administrator of English Schools of Quebec (AAESQ) expresses its profound concern with the process and content of Bill 1. This Bill undermines Quebec democracy and would lead to adverse repercussions for the entire education system, with particularly adverse effects for the minority English-speaking community.

The democratization during the Quiet Revolution remains one of the foundations of modern Quebec society and education. However, since 2018, the government has been gradually undoing this democratic and decentralized vision of education and replacing it with a majoritarian and centralizing vision. Bill 1 is the culmination of this process. It would undermine the autonomy of various institutions that have defended the fundamental and communal rights of Quebecers, including school boards and QESBA.

Although qualified as a “constitution,” Bill 1 erodes the foundations of the Quiet Revolution and of constitutionalism itself. A constitution responds to the needs of citizens; Bill 1 ignores them. A constitution limits the powers of the government and strengthens the rights of citizens; Bill 1 does the opposite. A constitution protects the institutions that defend citizens' rights; Bill 1 aims to discourage and punish institutions that contest measures taken by the Quebec government, including school boards. A constitution is created by and for the society it governs; drafted behind closed doors, Bill 1 presents a distorted vision of Quebec society, detached from the ambitions of the Quiet Revolution and reconstituted in the image of the ruling government. It fails to comprehend the beauty and foundations of Quebec society, much less to allow it to flourish.

Quebec is a collective project to which all its inhabitants contribute. Any future attempt to draft a Quebec constitution should be subject to broad consultation, reflect the common values of all Quebecers, and, at the very least, respect fundamental rights and the right of citizens and organizations to defend these rights before the courts.

QESBA, ADGESBQ and AAESQ will continue to reach out to participate actively in all discussions concerning education and citizenship in Quebec. However, it asks the government to withdraw this Bill in its entirety and to focus instead on the genuine issues of concern to Quebecers, particularly in education.

1.0 QESBA and its nine-member school boards value education as the foundation of Quebec society

1.1 QESBA and its nine member school boards

QESBA's serves nearly 100,000 students across 306 elementary and secondary schools, as well as in adult education and vocational training centers throughout Quebec. Collectively, they employ over 20,000 Quebecers.

Each of these school boards has its own demographic and territorial characteristics, pedagogical orientations, and historical roots. For example, some school boards have a vast territory and serve a very dispersed population. Despite this diversity, all share a common commitment to an inclusive public educational service offering, based on respect for all identities, all communities, and equal access for every student, without exception.

QESBA identifies four fundamental principles that embody this educational commitment:

- **A pedagogical approach centered on the student** rather than solely on the subject taught. Inspired by the spirit of the Quebec reform, this approach emphasizes the acquisition of competencies, in addition to knowledge, and promotes the development of critical judgement, citizenship, analytical thinking, and collaborative work.
- **Active participation of parents and the community.** As public institutions accountable to taxpayers, English school boards are committed to ensuring the accessibility, transparency, and openness of their establishments to parents and the community.
- **A firm commitment to preparing students to contribute fully to the future of Quebec.** This is reflected notably in sustained attention to the learning of French. The mission of each school board is to offer all students the means to master French, thereby fostering their inclusion, participation, and contribution to Quebec society. This commitment also extends to the teaching of arts, literature, history, as well as extracurricular activities rooted in Quebec's rich cultural heritage.
- **The recognition of the special status of English-language institutions.** The English-speaking community of Quebec, in all its diversity, continues to make an essential contribution to Quebec society. The public English school boards, the

only elected bodies representing this community, assume the responsibility of transmitting, promoting, and valuing this contribution within their establishments.

The network's 306 public English schools and centers actively contribute to the future of the French language in Quebec, notably by offering some of the highest-performing French second-language and mother-tongue educational programs. These programs often go beyond the requirements stipulated by the ministerial program.

1.2 The Association of Directors General of the English School Boards of Quebec (ADGESBQ)

The Association of Directors General of English School Boards of Québec (ADGESBQ) represents directors general and assistant directors general of the nine English school boards. Its mission is to influence education policy development in Quebec and to promote the professional interests of its members. ADGESBQ fosters collaboration between the various school boards to advance education in Quebec. It makes available to its members all useful information concerning the improvement of the education system.

1.3 The Association of Administrators of English Schools of Quebec (AAESQ)

AAESQ is a professional provincial organization representing 500 English school, centre, and board level administrators across the Province of Quebec. The Association also represents 200 retired administrators.

AAESQ represents the interests of the Association within and outside the education community and communicates relevant information to its members in a timely manner.

AAESQ aims to advocate for and encourage high-quality education by fostering excellence in leadership within the public education system.

2. Bill 1: The Rejection of Education as the Foundation of Quebec Society

The democratization of education during the Quiet Revolution remains one of the foundations of modern Quebec society. The very creation of a Ministry of Education constituted a milestone in Quebec's democratization. It ended ecclesiastical control to replace it with a "political structure dependent on a democratically elected government and

accountable for its policy and management not only to the representatives of the people but also to the entire population”¹.

The creation of regional school boards also had a democratic objective: it opened the way to “a welcome extension of democratic institutions into the school domain”². The Parent Commission clearly stated that an essential condition for an “effective and democratic system is a decentralized administration”³. The democratization of educational institutions is the result of a “revalorization of the democratic spirit, a spirit founded on respect for human rights, on the tolerance that dialogue requires, and on the interest that everyone must have in the common good”⁴.

However, since 2018, the government has been systematically undoing this democratic and decentralized vision of education, replacing it with a majoritarian and centralizing approach. Through Bills 21, 84, 96, and most recently 94⁵, which QESBA has firmly opposed, the government has favored exclusion, conformity, and restrictions on access to the detriment of its fundamental responsibility towards education. It has been concerned with dress codes and religious symbols rather than its fundamental mission: academic success. This political repositioning moves away from the vision of the Quiet Revolution, which aimed for a school system founded on “respect for human rights, on the equality of all in the diversity of functions and capacities”⁶.

Through Bills 40, 23, and 100⁷, in addition to the aforementioned Bills, the government is progressively dismantling the democratic foundations of the Quebec education system, in favor of a centralized system placed under its direct control.

Bill 1 represents the culmination of this process of erosion of the democratic and legal mechanisms that frame the Quebec people. Its content contributes nothing to parents,

¹ Martial Dassylva, « L'Église catholique du Québec et « l'épreuve » de la Révolution tranquille » (2002) 10:3 [Bulletin d'histoire politique](#) 129, p. 130.

² Claude Corbo, *L'éducation pour tous. Une anthologie du Rapport Parent*, Montréal University Press, Montréal, 2002, p. 326.

³ Report from the Commission royale d'enquête sur l'enseignement dans la province de Québec (« Commission Parent »), [vol 1](#), par. 142.

⁴ Commission Parent, [vol 1](#), par. 102.

⁵ Bill [n° 21](#), *An Act respecting the laicity of the State*; Bill [n° 96](#), *An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Quebec*; Bill [n° 94](#), *An Act to, in particular, reinforce laicity in the education network and to amend various legislative provisions*.

⁶ Commission Parent, [vol 4](#), par. 5.

⁷ Bill [n° 40](#), *An Act to amend mainly the Education Act with regard to school organization and governance*; Bill [n° 23](#), *An Act to amend mainly the Education Act and to enact the Act respecting the Institut national d'excellence en éducation – Québec's National Assembly*; Bill [n° 100](#), *An Act respecting the negotiation and determination of conditions of employment requiring national coordination in particular in the public and parapublic sectors*.

school staff, or the future of our students. In 2022, Premier Legault had recognized that “education is the greatest lever for personal and collective fulfillment”⁸. Conversely, Bill 1 once again ignores the concerns of those who admire school boards, school staff, students, and parents, in favor of a political vision centered on identity exclusion and the increased centralization of government decision-making power.

While access to quality education constituted one of the pillars of the modernization of Quebec society during the Quiet Revolution, the proposed “constitution” contains no reference to this fundamental objective, nor to many other issues of concern to Quebecers. While Premier Legault recently affirmed that education “remains the priority of priorities”⁹, the purported “law of laws”¹⁰ suggests the contrary.

Why do the “collective rights” of Quebecers not include the right to quality education? What about already recognized collective rights, particularly linguistic rights in education? Bill 1 simply does not answer these fundamental questions. It is a missed opportunity to recognize that access to quality education for all is one of the foundations of modern Quebec society.

3. Bill 1: An Attack on School Boards and Democratic Institutions

Bill 1 stands out not only for what is absent, but also for what is present. While this Bill adopts the pretense of a constitution, the essential is in the details. In the name of promoting “constitutional autonomy,” the *Act respecting Constitutional Autonomy* (hereinafter the “*Autonomy Act*”) would undermine the autonomy of various institutions that play a central role in Quebec democracy. It attempts to silence institutions that have defended the communal and fundamental rights of Quebecers, including school boards.

In recent years, English school boards have successfully defended linguistic rights stemming from Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* before the courts. This is how they were able to protect school democracy, by keeping the English system safe from Bill 40. School boards are not the only ones resorting to the courts to protect the rights of Quebecers.

However, Section 5 of the *Autonomy Act* (as well as its counterpart, Section 27) aims to discourage and punish institutions that contest measures taken by the Quebec government, including school boards. This is an anti-democratic response: instead of focusing on access to education, the government is attempting to prohibit access to the courts.

⁸ Opening speech of the first session of the 43rd legislature (November 30, 2022), online : [Gouvernement du Québec](#).

⁹ Prime Minister’s opening speech (September 30, 2025), online : [Gouvernement du Québec](#).

¹⁰ Bill 1, art. 1, enacting Québec *Constitution Act*, 2025, art. 1.

Furthermore, Section 15 of the *Autonomy Act* impedes the ability of school boards to establish pedagogical priorities when entering into agreements with federal entities or entities from other provinces. Sections 16 and 17 of the *Autonomy Act* go further: they notably allow the government to order school boards to reject alternative funding sources, such as federal funds for culture, and to prohibit school boards from participating in federal parliamentary processes. The government could use these powers to isolate the English school boards, making them dependent on the provincial government and subject to the whims of the political party in power.

School boards are only one example of the voices that Bill 1 seeks to silence. Its measures target over a hundred institutions, notably municipalities, professional orders, universities, the Commission des droits de la personne (Human Rights Commission), and even the Director General of Elections. Bill 1 thus targets institutions essential to the functioning of a democratic state.

Bill 1 betrays the foundations of the Quiet Revolution. Drafted behind closed doors, it ignores the real needs experienced in classrooms and seeks instead to restrict access to the courts for those who defend the rights of all Quebecers. This is a far cry from the promises of the Quiet Revolution: “to govern with the people, to plan with the people, to dialogue with the people... by establishing in all fields a spirit and structures favorable to dialogue”¹¹.

4. Bill 1: A Truncated Quebec

Bill 1 presents a narrow vision of who “belongs” to Quebec society, a vision that is not shared by many Quebecers. The government calls Bill 1 a “mirror” of the Quebec nation¹². However, it is a distorting mirror¹³. Bill 1 draws the boundaries of the province by imposing values that primarily reflect the political agenda of the current government. It fails to comprehend the richness and diversity of Quebec society, much less to allow it to flourish.

We are all Quebecers and full members of Quebec society. Parents, school staff, and students of the school boards represented by QESBA, ADGESBQ and AAESQ are proud to faithfully contribute to the flourishing of Quebec. English school boards educate students who are bilingual, open-minded, and civically engaged. They offer opportunities for students to fully develop their skills, while fostering critical reasoning and constructive dialogue. They work to create a stimulating, inclusive, and learning-conducive school environment.

¹¹ Daniel Johnson, *Débats de l'Assemblée législative du Québec* (December 6, 1966), p. 84.

¹² François Carabin, « La constitution de la CAQ qualifiée de «bouclier», puis de «bébelle» » (October 7, 2025), online : [Le Devoir](#).

¹³ Jean-Marc Fournier, « La constitution caquiste, un miroir déformant et un bouclier autocratique », online : [Le Devoir](#).

QESBA, ADGESBQ and AAESQ have long worked with the government, in a spirit of collaboration, to promote excellence in educational services. It will continue to reach out to participate actively in all discussions on education in Quebec. Yet, its efforts systematically run up against a policy of exclusion, centered on identity debates rather than student success. Bill 1 prolongs this trend: instead of listening to others, a basic skill taught in school, the government seeks to suppress dissenting voices and redefine Quebec society in its own image.

Quebec is above all a collective project, a majestic structure where every citizen adds their unique piece to build the complete edifice of society. English school boards actively participate in this edifice and seek the support of their partners. Yet, the government misses an opportunity by stonewalling the builders instead of contributing to the work. It is time to put an end to internal conflicts and focus on building the collective project, particularly in education.

5. **Bill 1: Not a real Constitution**

Bill 1 was tabled as if it were an ordinary statute. It possesses none of the characteristics of a constitution in a liberal democracy, notably the establishment of a consensus around key concepts *before* its drafting.

It also lacks another essential characteristic of a constitution: limits on government power. This deficiency deeply concerns QESBA, ADGESBQ and AAESQ, which defends not only the highest standards in education, but also the constitutional rights of the English-speaking community. QESBA will continue to protect these rights with vigilance and tenacity.

However, it is not only the rights of the English-speaking community that are at stake. The measures proposed in the *Autonomy Act*, the amendments to the *Code of Civil Procedure*, and the amendments to the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, among others, threaten the rights of all Quebecers.

The government is attempting to present Bill 1 as legitimate by calling it a “constitution,” while its content would deprive these same citizens of their hard-won rights. With respect, this project underestimates the intelligence and critical thinking of Quebecers, acquired throughout their schooling.

6. QESBA, ADGESBQ and AAESQ's Recommendations:

Given all the elements set out:

1. QESBA, ADGESBQ and AAESQ calls on the government to **withdraw Bill 1 in its entirety.**

The future of Quebec is not found in this Bill, which threatens the rights of citizens and the progress accomplished since the Quiet Revolution.

2. QESBA, ADGESBQ and AAESQ firmly puts forward that any future attempt to draft a « Quebec Constitution » be subject to **broad consultation to achieve consensus and thus ensure the legitimacy of the project.**

Any constitution must protect the rights and freedoms of Quebecers, respect the rule of law, guarantee democratic participation, and define the powers and limits of the government, notably in education, health, and security, to strengthen the stability of the democratic order.

3. QESBA, ADGESBQ and AAESQ demands that the government **re-focus on the priorities that affect all of Quebec society.**

Bill 1 diverts attention from the real issues facing Quebec society by rehashing old debates, while reinforcing the centralization of power and the suppression of dissent.

According to QESBA, ADGESBQ and AAESQ, the implementation of necessary measures to guarantee fairness and access to quality education is a primary responsibility of the government. The government should fulfill its fundamental obligations rather than imposing, in the guise of a constitution, a political platform that unilaterally defines Quebec identity and values, to the detriment of social cohesion and the future of Quebec.