



A
BRIEF
TO
THE KENNIFF COMMITTEE
ON
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LINGUISTIC SCHOOL BOARDS
FROM
QUEBEC FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

Montreal, March 1994

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The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways, ..

Tennyson - Idylls of the King

Introduction

Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations (QFHSA) was founded in 1944 to bring together local Home and School associations, some of which had existed since the 1920's. It is an independent, voluntary, parental organization representing approximately five thousand families, the majority being within the English speaking communities throughout the Province. Parent volunteers are active within the local Home and School associations, the provincial organization and, at the national level, through the Canadian Home and School Parent Teacher Federation.

One of the stated aims of the Home and School movement is to assist in forming public opinion favourable to reform and to the advancement of the education of the child. Now that the Minister of Education has stated his intention to proceed with the implementation QFHSA wishes to contribute to the ideas and actions necessary to ensure that the transition takes place in a manner that focuses on the best interest of the students.

The necessity for stability

QFHSA requests that, during the transition process, there be no change at the local school level, if possible, in the following areas:

School closure or amalgamation of the existing schools within the boundary of the new board should not occur until at least the end of the first year of operation of the new board, unless the consent of the community, as represented by the School Committee, Orientation Committee and Home and School Association is obtained.

The programs offered in a particular school should be maintained, unless change is requested by the School Committee, Orientation Committee and Home and School Association.

The members of the school staff, including the principal, should be kept in place, except where individual staff members request a voluntary transfer or where changes are required as a result of enrolment changes or vacancies in the school or elsewhere.

Some changes are inevitable

QFHSA recognizes that there are bound to be some changes during the transition process. We urge that those who are mandated to act in the following areas proceed in a sensitive manner and with consultation with the local school community:

Some parents may choose to relocate their children, causing a school to both lose and gain students. New school board boundaries or catchment areas may affect enrolment. Consequently, the enrolment in any particular school may be significantly changed.

Changes in enrolment may create problems with busing and schools over/under capacity. This may mean some changes in bus routes and the inability to accommodate some students at their preferred school.

Assignments will be found for all existing personnel working in any current board office, but there is no guarantee that a position occupied now will be the position occupied within the new linguistic board.

There will be a new electoral base and consequently there is no guarantee that any of the present commissioners will be returned to office.

The new commissioners for the new board will appoint the new Director General. The new commissioners for the linguistic board and the person appointed as Director General will be the key to the management style of the new board.

Change must occur in a positive atmosphere

QFHSA recommends the following actions which might mitigate the trauma of the change:

The Minister of Education should **not** delay the implementation of the new linguistic boards. It should be done now!

The Minister should determine the boundaries of the new linguistic school boards as soon as possible. The government does not have to wait until January 1995!

A school enrolment which is as open as possible should be permitted for at least the first year of the new school board. Parents should not have their students locked into, or out of, the existing Protestant and Catholic schools.

Students cut off from the school they are currently attending as a result of a new school board boundary should be permitted to continue to attend that school.

The Minister should encourage communication and cooperation between the new linguistic school boards for the mutual benefit of their students.

A provisional Parents Committee, with one representative from each school committee of the schools in the territory of each new school board, should be established on the territory of the new school board at the same time as the establishment of the Provisional Council. The relationship between this Parents Committee and the Provisional Council should be the same as currently exists between a Parents Committee and its school board.

The Minister should ensure that the Provisional Councils for the new linguistic school boards are controlled by the population which these new school boards will serve.

The Minister should regulate the transition process so that major changes would be the responsibility of the newly elected commissioners and the Director General of the new linguistic school board.

An ombudsman should be appointed to settle any disputes that may arise in the process of establishing the new linguistic school boards.

Conclusion

QFHSA has been involved in many of the discussions that have been held among the educational partners since the government of Quebec took the first step towards the reorganization of school board structures. Throughout this time QFHSA's primary concern was, and still is, the welfare of the children in the schools of Quebec. A resolution passed at the 1989 Annual General Meeting (resolution appended) emphasises our opinion that the child's access to a high quality education will only be safeguarded through the cooperation of all the partners. We believe that the active participation of parents as full partners in the school and school board is of paramount importance if the students are to be well served.



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RESOLUTION 89\1 GOALS FOR QUALITY EDUCATION TO ADHERE TO DURING
IMPLEMENTATION OF LAW 107.

WHEREAS Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations was opposed to Bill 107, in the light of the uncertainties of its intent and the presence of constitutional constraints; but

WHEREAS The New Education Act, Law 107, was passed into law on December 23, 1988, and

WHEREAS the implementation of language boards will be deferred, presumably awaiting a ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada on certain articles, and

WHEREAS the remaining articles come into force on July 1, 1989, and

WHEREAS the implementation of these articles will have an impact on many aspects of the workings of the present system of education, and

WHEREAS the composition of the present School Boards will remain as they are at the present time, presumably until the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations urge its local Home & School Associations to involve themselves in promoting cooperation between the various educational organizations (Home & School Associations, school committees, commissioners, school boards, teachers, administrators, etc.) existing in their school board communities so that the school system, despite inherent uncertainties, operates as efficiently as possible during the waiting period, guided by the following goals:

1. giving top priority to the educational services provided to the students
2. the maintenance of a high standard of education
3. an effective partnership for retaining the good things of the present system and making the implementation of Law 107 a tool for further improvements
4. the maintenance of local autonomy through democratically elected school boards.

