



THE VOICE OF  
THE PARENT  
IN EDUCATION

# QFHS NEWS

SPECIAL EDITION SEPT/OCT 2014

## QFHS NEWS



Special Bulletin On:

**SCHOOL  
ELECTIONS  
NOV. 2 2014**

In partnership for distribution with  
the QCGN and QESBA

**QC  
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#### Mission Statement

The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations Inc. is an independent, incorporated, not for profit, volunteer organization dedicated to enhancing the education and general well being of children and youth.

The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations Inc. promotes the involvement of parents, students, educators and the community at large in the advancement of learning, and acts as a voice for parents.

## SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

### WHY VOTE ???

This is the year that the school board elections will finally be held. Commissioners who signed up for a 4-year term back in 2007, have now served for over seven years.

There is much misinformation out there about who is eligible to vote and where they should and could cast their vote. The QFHS has taken on the task of helping to raise awareness of the elections and to encourage parents/citizens to exercise their franchise and to get out there and vote on November 2nd.

But who should they vote for? Who is running? What difference does it make?

This year, Quebecers will have the unprecedented opportunity to vote for the Board Chair in addition to individual candidates for commissioners of their ward.

The elected school commissioners are charged with acting in the best interests of the children in all the schools in their board, not just their ward. This school election falls at a critical time. Budget cuts continue, and commissioners are charged with the responsibility of approving budgets at the school board. In the past, some decisions have been made by commissioners that have resulted in school closures, which have had a negative impact on the vitality of some Quebec communities.

Once the local school closes, families may move away permanently. School Board elections are perhaps the only situation where a minority language community can express their needs. Get to know the candidates for commissioners. They are the ones taking your interests into consideration. Make sure they know what your concerns are, and find out what the candidates stand for!

Education affects community. Future doctors, engineers, educators, technicians and others are in school now - and soon they will be playing key roles in our society. They need our support now to ensure that they have the skills to contribute in the future.

If you are reading this as a member of your local home and school association, you already have a pretty good idea why all public schools in Quebec need volunteer parents to help support the educational mission of the school. In the French schools parent associations are also mounting a major campaign to encourage parents to vote for French school commissioners. They understand, as we do, the importance of this election.

As parents we are involved with our children at home, at school, and an important piece of this involvement is to elect commissioners who know our schools intimately and can listen to the parents and their concerns.

We are fortunate to have the opportunity to have our voices heard in this first election in 7 years. Our future lies in the few minutes it will take from our busy lives to go out and vote. It is time well spent! All Home and School parents/ Quebec citizens, and eligible voters must participate in this mission. The very survival of our schools depends upon it. If we do not exercise this right something fundamental to our existence may be diminished. Get out and vote!



**Who Is Eligible To Vote?**

Click link above for details

*Larry DePoe*  
**QFHS President**

**Election Perspective from QESBA**



November 2<sup>nd</sup> will see the first school board elections in seven years. It will be a key moment for both the English and French school boards. In 2007 there was a 17% voter participation rate in the English system and an overall 8% rate when the turnout at the French boards is taken into account. Successive governments have lamented about what to do to either increase the voter turnout or eliminate school board elections all together. We cannot let our right to manage and control our own education system just disappear. In 2014 we need to make a strong statement that we want, need, and support our publicly elected school board system. We certainly don't want to allow the government to appoint our representatives.

We can ensure that the government respects our wish to maintain our system by voting, and voting in large numbers on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. However, in order for there to be a vote we need candidates. The number of elected Commissioners will be greatly

reduced this election, making each seat all the more important. There will be only 95 commissioners elected to the nine English school boards. Our students from pre-Kindergarten to Adult and Vocational Training are counting on good people to step up to run for election.

It is not hard to get started. You need to be over 18 years of age, a Canadian citizen, your principal residence on the territory of the board in which you want to run for election, and not be prohibited by law from being a candidate. In addition, you need to be prepared to attend school board and community meetings and participate at various events to represent your community. You also should be a passionate believer in the public education system. If you meet those criteria you need an official nomination form, 10 supporting signatures to run for Commissioner or 50 supporting signatures to run for Board Chairman. Deposit your completed form with your local returning officer and you are ready. The nomination period ends on **September 28<sup>th</sup>**.

**Submitted by:**

***The Quebec English School Boards Association***

**Perspectives of a Parent Commissioner**

Looking back on my years as a commissioner brings a sense of pride and accomplishment. I spent ten years as a member of the Council of Commissioners at the Lester B. Pearson School Board; five as a parent commissioner and five as a commissioner. It wasn't always easy. In fact at times it was extremely difficult. However, they were years of great learning and personal growth.

As a longtime parent volunteer and committee member at the school level, the position of parent commissioner was a natural fit for me. Together with my fellow parent commissioner, we were the voice of parents at the school board. It was intimidating, challenging and rewarding, all at the same time.

Parent commissioners are in a very unique position and wear many hats. They are also members of governing boards and the school board's Parent Committee, with great demands on their time. They witness first-hand how the information and decisions that originate at the school board unfold. Being in a good position to gather input at the grassroots level, they work to ensure that a parental perspective is considered in all matters. Over the years, I've seen decisions on issues of safety, transportation, technology, school fees, nutrition, and the consultation process, to name a few, be influenced greatly by the input of parents.

Parental views and concerns can also impact initiatives at the school board. During my years of involvement, we (parents) were the driving force behind governing board training, long before it was required by law. We gave workshops, prepared materials and lists of resources. As well, it was at the continued request of the High School Parents' Committee that our secondary schools now offer a common entrance exam. Another initiative that comes to mind was our annual Volunteer Awards Evening. It was

created by the board's Central Parents' Committee, and ran for 17 years before it was unfortunately discontinued two years ago. These are concrete examples of parents making a difference.

The transition from parent commissioner to commissioner was not a difficult one. I went from speaking on behalf of parents to representing all the constituents in my ward. I was also able to vote at Council meetings, a right that as a parent commissioner I did not have. Not being allowed to vote was never an issue for me though, as I always believed it was your voice that mattered most.

That being said, commissioners do make important decisions by vote. They set policy and direction, oversee the management of resources, and work to ensure student success at all levels. Without question, the toughest decisions I made as a commissioner revolved around the closure of schools. These were never taken lightly, knowing full well what an impact they have on the entire community.

Commissioners can and do make a difference. They make decisions that matter to students and the community. Get to know your commissioner candidates and then vote in the school board elections. It will help ensure that the best people are elected to this important position.



*Sue Williams*

**Parent Commissioner 2002 - 2007  
Commissioner 2008 - 2013**

**Perspectives of a Commissioner**



The Quebec English public school system has much to be proud of. Even with declining enrolment and serious budget cuts, English school boards have exceptionally high success and graduation rates, great alternative, enriched and support programs for students and especially, engaged parents and collaborative stakeholders, all of which have contributed to enhance the vitality of the English-speaking community. At the same time, the ability of Quebec taxpayers to support and sustain important educational, social, health and family programs is being questioned.

perspective candidates for election this November 2<sup>nd</sup> have the dauntless challenge of convincing the public and especially our parents that school boards, as a level of local government, are important. Elected commissioners, in addition to attending committee meetings at the school board, often attend Governing Board meetings in schools and hear the concerns of parents, staff and administration. They play a vital role in determining the particular needs of the individual schools and the community they serve. They also make important policy and budget decisions for

the entire board when they meet as a Council. Members of the public and especially the parents of the children we serve have to be convinced that in order to guarantee the survival of elected school boards, they will have to vote in much larger numbers on November 2<sup>nd</sup> than they did in 2007.

While the government grapples with important budget issues and determines whether the services it provides are sustainable, public education has to continue to be viewed as an important investment in our future. Over the next few months, elected commissioners will have to make some difficult choices and tough decisions. They will have to be data driven and results oriented, and clearly defined as being in the best interests of the students. Elected commissioners will have to work together with other school boards and differently with stakeholders, looking at alternative ways of generating savings, keeping in mind that these savings will be reinvested in student success and perseverance. Failure to change the way we do business, as already is the case in three other provinces, will most definitely result in the public, and ultimately the government, questioning the relevance of elected school boards.

Submitted by:

*Frank Verillo*

**Retiring Commissioner, English Montreal School Board**

**Need Help?**



LE DIRECTEUR GÉNÉRAL  
DES ÉLECTIONS DU QUÉBEC

**418-528-0422**

**1-888-353-2846**

**Toll - Free**

**School Board Returning Officers**

<i>Central Quebec</i>	<i>Cathleen Scott</i>	<i>1-800-249-5573 ext. 3022</i>
<i>Eastern Shores</i>	<i>Chantal Pitt</i>	<i>418-968-8412 or 1-866-968-8412</i>
<i>Eastern Townships</i>	<i>Pauline Lazure</i>	<i>819-868-3100 ext. 55025</i>
<i>English Montreal</i>	<i>Robert Stocker</i>	<i>514-483-7200 ext. 7888</i>
<i>Lester B. Pearson</i>	<i>Remi Poliquin</i>	<i>514-780-8683</i>
<i>New Frontiers</i>	<i>Cuthbert McIntyre</i>	<i>450-691-1440 ext. 227</i>
<i>Riverside</i>	<i>Kathleen Balfour</i>	<i>450-672-4010 ext. 6016</i>
<i>Sir Wilfred Laurier</i>	<i>Linda Di Domenico</i>	<i>450-621-5600 ext. 1322</i>
<i>Western Quebec</i>	<i>Richard Vezina</i>	<i>819-684-1313 ext. 1152</i>

**The FUTURE starts Today**

**In Scotland, recently 85% of eligible voters turned out to use their voice and vote for their future. Our children are our future. Be sure to get out & vote on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014.**



**QFHSA Action Plan and Election Timeline at a Glance**

**Important dates to remember**

Sept. 23 - 28	Nomination Period for candidates (Chairs and Commissioners)
Sept. 26	QFHSA launches its Action Plan on School Board Elections with partners QCGN and QESBA
Sept. 29	Returning Officers release the names of candidates
Sept. 22 - Oct. 18	Promotion period to encourage and ensure eligible voters are on or <i>transferred</i> to the correct list
Oct. 4 - Oct. 18	Electoral list Review and Revision Period * <i>Please note dates may vary by School Board</i>
Oct. 18	last day for Electoral List Revisions
Oct. 25	QFHSA Fall Conference with Special Panel Discussion on School Board Elections
Oct. 26	Advance Polls
Nov. 2	Election Day

**Are you on the correct electoral list?**

Based on current and existing electoral lists and the law with respect to An Act Respecting School Elections; all places of residence are to receive by mail a card detailing the particulars of: **a)** who in the home is registered to vote, **b)** on which school board list they are found, **c)** where they are scheduled to vote, **d)** the dates of the advance poll, **e)** the date & location of their polling station and **f)** where and how to revise the information if it is incorrect.

**Did you know?**

If you have children in both the French and the English School Boards in your area, you may vote for candidates in both boards.

Like us on our QFHSA Facebook page.



**Meet the candidates**

In October watch for opportunities to meet the candidates in your area, discuss the issues and have your voice heard! Check with your school boards, in your community, with the QFHSA, and on your local news!

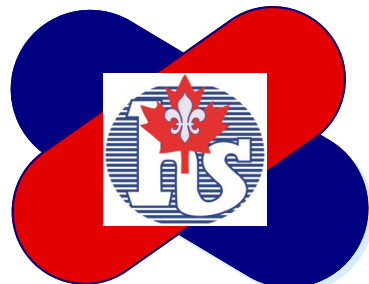


**Do you need to change lists or be added?**

All requests to transfer your name from a French voters list or to be added to the English School Board voters list where you live need to be submitted in writing. Forms are available through the School Boards' Returning Officer and on-line. You may also present yourself with 2 pieces of identification at the school boards' revision office. Contact numbers for returning officers can be found on page 3 of this bulletin.

Visit us at [www.qfhsa.org](http://www.qfhsa.org)

**Panel Discussion on School Board Elections with:**



**Lawrence DePoe**  
QFHSA President

**Frank Verillo**  
Retired Commissioner

**Kim Hamilton**  
QESBA

**Walter Duszara**  
QCGN

- **Regional Councils**
- **Informative Workshops**
- **Exhibitors, Lunch, Door Prizes**
- **Panel Discussion on Elections**

*You are invited to the ...*

**QFHSA Fall Conference**

*featuring Michael Quinn*

Neuroscientist & educational consultant

**Saturday October 25, click for full details**



**Brain Matters**