

THE QUEBEC FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

BRIEF PREPARED FOR SUBMISSION

TO

THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC

RE: BILL 28

November, 1971

BRIEF ON BILL 28

The Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations, in presenting this Brief on behalf of its 85 associations on the island of Montreal, stipulates that consultation on Bill 28 has been limited to its members on the Island and does not presume to represent the view of the 49 off-island associations. These 85 on-island associations represent 26,400 people.

You are well aware of the great concern which has been expressed by the English community with regard to the proposed changes in school organization under Bill 28. The response we received from our local associations was not only evidence of this, but the comments and detailed analyses which were presented, indicated to us that many of these returns were based on a close study of the various Bills and reports which lead to this proposed legislation.

The evolution of our school programme towards the education of the individual, which would permit each student to select a schedule most suited to his needs, demands a change in the rigidity of our present administrative structures. The limitations of the present taxation structures for education which has restricted the freedom of the parent to place his child in the school of his choice without financial penalties has often placed parents in an impossible position.

We therefore support the proposition of the Minister that changes are needed to offset these limitations, and also to provide more equalized opportunity for quality education throughout the Island of Montreal. Our

prime concerns are that in the search for equality, the aspect of quality may be lost, and that the proposed structures may prove to be more restrictive than those we already have.

A third and immediate concern is that any changes in education should evolve constructively from the present structures and ensure that the process of education of the children presently attending schools will not be disrupted in any abrupt manner.

Within the Protestant system the demand for proficiency in teaching has always been a top priority. The qualifications of our teaching staff at all levels and in all areas can be matched with any on the continent. Much of the initiative in our educational progress has come from this concentration of quality personnel. Our teachers have the support of our school boards and of the parents in their pedagogical recommendations.

It is with the background of these remarks that we present to you some proposals that have come from the "grass-roots" of our organization.

It is our desire to encourage the establishment in the Province of Quebec of a system of education that will provide for all children of this province the necessary tools and philosophical background to enable them to compete successfully with other citizens of our country, our continent, and our world, and to participate as knowledgeable and responsible citizens of the twentieth century.

The philosophy of "student-centred" education which was proclaimed by the Parent Report and which is presently evolving in the schools of this province has our complete endorsement. Because this particular type of education involves close co-operation between parent, teacher, administrator and child, it is necessary that the educational structures of administration provide the most flexible atmosphere possible at the local school level.

It is the contention of this body that Bill 28 fails to provide this. While it has taken the outward form of the recommendations of the Parent Report in providing for an Island Council, Unified School Boards and School Committees, the responsibilities given to these bodies are altered.

Our basic principle is that re-organization of the school administration on the Island of Montreal should begin at the level of the school.

1. Because the school itself has the most direct effect upon the child, parent, teacher and administrator at this level must become the focal point of administration, and all other administrative functions should grow from this basic unit.

We would recommend that a principal, teachers, and students following an elementary or secondary series of courses of a neutral or a particular confessional and linguistic curriculum be designated as a "school", with the appropriate school committee.

2. Because we feel that religion is primarily the responsibility of the

parent as concerns his children -

We recommend that confessional responsibility be added to the functions of the school committee.

3. We recommend that the school boards be divided on a linguistic basis, recommended in the Pagé Report (Recommendation 10, Pagé Report, page 113 English version).

This recommendation is made "because we believe that this corresponds to the concrete sociological reality in Montreal" (Pagé Report, page 57, English version).

This cultural duality has been elaborated upon in the Pagé Report, (page 23, et. seq. and Page 44 et. seq., and Page 57) and in the Bilingualism and Biculturalism Report (Volumes 1 and 2) and in the submission of the Montreal Catholic School Commission to the Pagé Commission and therefore need not be dwelt upon in this Brief. Nowhere is it more obvious than on the Island of Montreal.

We would add to the above an expression of opinion from our own membership which feels that such a division is necessary -

- a) For control of English-language education by English-language educators.
- b) To enable parents, teachers and administrators to communicate more effectively to ensure the participation of English-language parents in the education of their children, and similarly French-language parents in the

education of their children.

c) Because many of the present administrative functions of the school boards will be taken over by the Island Council and it would appear that there would be an economic advantage to having four English School Boards and nine French School Boards on the Island. These school boards would require a total of thirteen pedagogical administrative personnel units.

d) As a basis for improved relationships between French and English educators, the geographical overlapping of French and English Boards provided in the Pagé Report would offer more opportunities for co-operation and collaboration between the two communities than exist at present. Such co-operation could lead to an evolution of unified boards that could come about harmoniously and naturally. (Page 57 of the Pagé Report). Further co-operative efforts are introduced at the Island Council level in the Pagé recommendations (see Page 97 of the Pagé Report) through the two permanent pedagogical services.

While recognizing that many persons of both French and English background would like to see an end to the "two solitudes" in Quebec, and feel that unified boards might be one step towards this, we can only submit that, at the present moment in the history of this province, the majority of the English community cannot support such a decision because they feel that it will place in jeopardy the education of the children in the English language. This is particularly noticeable when one considers that even those who accept the principal of unification qualify their acceptance by insisting that such

unification must spell out clearly in the Education Act that there will be a Director of English Language Education within each school board, that it must be written into the Act that school boards must be held responsible for providing such education.

4. We recognize that acceptance of linguistic boards means that the Constitution of Canada would have to be changed.

We therefore recommend that the Quebec Government, on behalf of the people of Quebec, utilize all its influence to have the constitution of Canada amended to provide every parent in Canada with the right to choose for his children an education in either of the official languages of Canada. It shall then be an obligation for all provinces to provide such opportunity to all its citizens, regardless of their language of origin.

We further recommend that, where such demand for education in French or in English is below the norms set by the province in terms of economic reality, the Canadian government be obliged to fund such education.

5. We recommend that School Boards retain the ownership of buildings, the receiving of government grants, and all pedagogical powers that they enjoy at present.

6. We recommend that the Island of Montreal be divided into regions generally as outlined in the Pagé Report.

Whoever divided the Island of Montreal into the proposed eleven regions of

Bill 28 does not seem to have been aware of the existing school facilities on the Island. Many of the present large high schools have been cut off from their feeder schools by arbitrary demarcation. We suggest that the proposed divisions of the Island similar to those as drawn up in the Pagé Report be substituted. These were drawn up not only with the highway and railway systems of the Island in mind, but also upon the recommendations of the major school boards, who took cognizance of the locale of schools and school populations, and also with the advice of the Montreal Planning Committee, who projected future population growth.

7. We recommend that all schools at present under the Lakeshore Regional School Board be included in any new Montreal Island organization.

8. The powerful body presented under Bill 28 as an Island Council lends itself to the status of a "Super School Board" through its powers. Such a body would be too remote to respond to initiative and needs at the local school level, when its concerns would have to cover the population of the Island of Montreal, a population larger than that of five of the provinces of Canada.

Let us make it clear that it is the imposition of the Island Council upon the School Boards and the School Committees with which we take issue.

We recommend that the Island Council be a duly elected body, elected by and from the School Boards: and that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman be elected by and from the members of the Council. The function of the Council shall be limited to assessment and collection of taxes, approval

of school board budgets, planning, and certain services as outlined in the Pagé Report (page 111 Recommendation 20 of the Pagé Report) and that:-

a) Each School Board shall receive as a fundamental right a minimum fiscal allotment for its operation (i.e. non-capital) expenditures which shall be based on budget norms (determined by averaging the previous years actual expenditures per student for all Island Schools in each budget norm category) as applied to its total school population. Each Board shall have the right to distribute this allotment of funds to its individual schools in any manner which, in its sole discretion, best represents the needs of its schools, without prior approval either by the Island Council or the Department of Education. Requests for additional special funds, beyond this basic allotment, shall be supported by a budget which will go to the Island Council for approval, such approval requiring a simple majority vote.

b) Requests for capital funds for new buildings or additions or alterations to existing buildings shall be supported by a capital appropriation request which will go to the Island Council for approval with a simple majority vote being required.

c) All budgets for special funds and appropriation requests amounting to more than \$50,000.00 and which have been approved by the Island Council shall go to the Department of Education for final approval.

9. This Island Council is to have direct control of the levying and spending of public monies and as such should be elected by those persons whose monies are involved. Because all residents are involved in the payment of school taxes.

We recommend that the citizenship requirement be removed from the right to vote for School Commissioners substituting instead residential (one-year) status. (This is the requirement for civic elections.)

10. Our primary recommendation is that the Island of Montreal should be re-organized as proposed in the Pagé Report. It appears to be both the most practical and the least disruptive way to implement the stated aim of the Minister of Education.

We recommend that any re-organization of educational structures on the Island of Montreal start at the level of the school, and be added to in a democratic manner.

We would therefore request that the election of School Committees, (see Bill 27, where these committees are to be formed in 1973) be set up on the Island of Montreal in 1972.

The functions of these committees should be those which we have previously submitted to the Minister (See Appendix).

In addition to the above recommendations, the members of Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations wish to make known to you, Mr. Minister, and to the members of the Education Committee, the high regard in which we hold the teachers working in the Protestant School system. We are in deep sympathy with their request to continue their right to negotiate through their present syndicale united.

In conclusion, Mr. Minister, the members of the Education Committee, the Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations, on behalf of its Island Associations, would like to assure you of our continued co-operation with the Department of Education in its every effort to improve the educational opportunities for the children of this province. We have presented you with a proposal which we feel is reasonable and acceptable, and which we feel is more economical than that of Bill 28. This proposal will allow for a change from present structures with the minimum disruption to the children now attending schools. We sincerely hope that these recommendations can be accepted so that we may work together to a bright future in education in Quebec. We thank you.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRANSITION

1. It is the opinion of this Federation that the provisional Island Council should represent as closely as possible the population distribution of the Island of Montreal. We therefore recommend the following persons serve on the Provisional Council duly elected by the School Boards from which they are selected:
 - a) 5 members from the Montreal Catholic School Commission, one of whom shall represent the English-Catholic community.
 - b) 3 members from the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal, one of whom shall represent the Jewish community, and one of whom shall represent the French-Protestant community.
 - c) 2 members from the Catholic School Boards on the Island of Montreal other

than the Montreal Catholic School Commission, one of whom shall represent the English-Catholic sector.

- d) 1 member from the Lakeshore Regional School Board.
- e) 2 members from the Department of Education.
- f) 1 member ex-officio from the Montreal Urban Community Planning Department.

2. The function of this body shall be:-

- a) to set up an independent committee to establish the boundaries and wards of the 13 new school boards, taking cognizance of municipal boundaries, highways and railway barriers, school populations, present school facilities, and other relative factors. This committee should hold public hearings at predetermined times and places before the boundaries are made final. The establishment of boundaries and wards should be completed before June 1973.
- b) to call for the election of the 13 new school boards for June 1973.
- c) to prepare a preliminary tax assessment and tax rate, which would be the basis of the Permanent Council's final decision on tax matters.

3. The present school boards on the Island on Montreal will remain in authority until June 30, 1974. No decision on the Provisional Council shall be binding on the education decisions of these boards during this period.

4. The first elections of school commissioners to the new school boards shall

be held in June 1973. These newly elected school boards shall:

- a) make an inventory of the assets and liabilities of each existing school board and prepare a plan for the apportionment of such assets and liabilities between themselves and the new school boards.
- b) prepare, in collaboration with the existing school boards, a plan for integrating their staffs into the permanent Council and into the new school boards, and hold the appropriate consultations.
- c) prepare, in collaboration with the existing school boards, the budgets of the new school boards for the school year 1974-1975 and submit them for the approval of the Minister of Education before the date fixed by him.

APPENDIX SCHOOL COMMITTEES

Recommendations of Brief presented by La Fédération des Unions de Familles, La Fédération des Associations Parents-Maîtres, and the Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations of Quebec, and the Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations.

1. That the school committee be given specific duties and powers and not only the functions stipulated in Bill 27.
2. That the school committee meet for the following goals:
 - a) to define criteria for the engagement of the principal and teachers of the school and the choice of didactic materials.

b) to delegate a parent from the school to serve on the various committees of the school board concerned with that school.

c) to assure the participation of the community, through the utilization of the natural and economic resources of the environment, and through the utilization of the human resources within the home and the intermediary organizations and others.

d) to bring about the development of pedagogical steps appropriate to the community and the school.

e) to study the political aspects of the civil service directives and others which have repercussions on the administration of the school budget.

f) to discuss all other questions of interest to the parents of the school population.

3. That the teacher representatives to the school committee be increased to 1, 2 or 3 depending on the number of school pupils and that they have the right to vote.

- for the selection of school principal
- for the selection of teachers
- for the election of school board members

4. That student representatives, at the secondary level, be part of the school committee, at a number of 1, 2, or 3 depending on the number of students in the given school.

5. That regulations provide for provisional school committees to be set up during the year preceding the coming into force of Bill 27.

6. That the provisional school committees set up their own electoral regulations under the following stipulations:

i) the school committee procure an official list of parents of the children who attend its school, send a copy of said list to all persons therein listed, and a notice of the date, hour and place of nominations for office.

ii) the school committee will call an election before October 15th.

iii) the school committee will call a meeting of parents for the holding of the election by means of a notice which will be delivered not less than 5 clear days before the election.

7. That for the start of the school committees a corps of animators be available for the development of this parent committee.

8. That a representative of each of our Federations participate in the committee which will formulate the regulations concerning school committees.

Mrs. Denise Arrey, President of Quebec Federation followed up the above presentation with the following recommendations after consultation with the Federation Executive and previous Federation studies on school committees. These were sent to the Minister of Education on July 14th, 1971.

1. Parent should be elected chairman by the School Committee.

2. Teacher and principal to vote with the School Committee.
3. The School Committee should report to parent population of a school at least twice a year, at a general meeting.
4. Where voluntary parent organizations exist, or come into being, such organizations should be represented on the School Committee as observers.
5. Where such committee represents a minority language school, (French or English) within a school board, it shall be consulted directly on curriculum for its school.
6. The religious designation of a school and the courses in religion offered within that school should be determined by the School Committee after consultation with the parent community. The School Board shall have power to veto if it can show cause of violation of the minority's wishes in respect to religion, or if financial or fuinding facility shortage require multi-confessional use of such facilities.
7. Curriculum and time allottment for the teaching of the second language should come under the direct supervision of the School Committee, in collaboration with the principal and staff of the school.
8. The School Committee shall establish priorities in curriculum in consultation with the principal and teachers and these should be undertaken by the principal and staff within the norms set up by the Province and School Board.
9. The School Committee shall work with the other parent organization and the general community organizations to integrate the school into the community and

to promote the use of the total community resources by the school.

MINORITY REPORT

While the majority of our Associations voted in favour of the Brief as presented, there was a minority who did not accept Bill 28, BUT accepted the principle of unification.

We are presenting the following on their behalf as a minority report.

Local associations supporting this MINORITY REPORT number 16.

Maisonneuve	Verdun High
Dunrae Gardens	Roslyn
Crawford Park	Westmount Park
Riverview	Westmount High
Willingdon	Westminister
Westhill	Gardenview
Merton	Thorndale
Wager	Sunnydale Park

It is our sincere hope that the unification of school boards on the Island will produce a realistic, workable, economical, and mutually satisfactory system of education. If this goal is to be accomplished it will be done only by all parties concerned working together to establish the new system. It is for this reason that sixteen of the Home & School Associations on the Island have reconsidered our position with regard to the linguistic boards, and are now presenting what we consider to be a reasonable "unified system".

The primary concern of our Federation has always been the education and welfare of the children on the province. Bill 28, unlike its predecessor Bill 62, follows the enlightened thinking that produced the "Parent Report". It is in the educational terms of the Parent Report then, that we now lend our support to the principle of unified school boards.

Parents in our associations, are, we believe justly proud of the education that has been provided for the children under the Protestant School Boards in the past. As members of Home & School we have worked continuously for over thirty years to contribute to this education, both literally and politically. We mention this only in order that you may understand the concern which our parents feel as they move from the known to the unknown.

Despite all the merits of the Protestant system, there are irregularities that need correction. Our inner city schools need more assistance, we need more Francophone teaching staff if we are to develop the teaching of the second language to the extent where all our graduates will be adequately bilingual to work in a French-speaking milieu, and, no matter how well-represented people may be by appointees, we feel that school board members should be elected, with the exception as stipulated in the Bill in Article 583, to remove the present disenfranchisement that exists for many persons whose children attend school under Protestant School Boards.

The problems we have mentioned above are closely allied to similar problems under the Catholic School Commissions. It seems reasonable that we should try to solve them together.

Such a change in the structures of education on the Island cannot be effected without considerable disruption to the educational process itself unless it is done carefully and with consideration at all times for the people involved, particularly the students and teachers at present in the schools. Fear predominates in both the Anglophone and Francophone communities. The threat of eventual

Anglophone predominance on the Island has brought forth a reaction from certain members of the French-speaking community for unilingual-French education. This, in turn has raised a fear in the Anglophone community that the right to English-language education in the Province of Quebec will be withdrawn by some future Government. To allay the fears of both groups it would seem that the rights of all should be embedded in the Constitution of Canada in such a way that no population distribution could ever destroy the right of any parent in Canada to choose for his children an education in either the French or English language.

RECOMMENDATION 1

We therefore recommend that the Quebec Government, on behalf of the people of Quebec, utilize all its influence to have the constitution of Canada amended to provide every parent in Canada with the right to choose for his children an education in either of the official languages of Canada. It shall then be an obligation for all provinces to provide such opportunity to all its citizens, regardless of their language or origin.

We further recommend that, where such demand for education in French or in English is below the norms set by the Province in terms of economic reality, the Canadian Government be obliged to fund such education.

This recommendation is made on the assumption that one Canadian citizen must have the same rights as twenty, or a hundred, or any other set number.

Quebec has throughout its history gone further than any other province to provide such education for its minority, and has earned the appreciation and

respect of its English community as a result. The fact that the other provinces have only recently awakened to their responsibilities to the Francophone minority in their provinces has been detrimental to our nation as a whole.

It is our opinion that the Provisional Island Council should represent as closely as possible the population distribution of the Island of Montreal. We therefore recommend the following persons serve on the Provisional Council duly elected by the School Boards from which they are selected.

RECOMMENDATION 1

That the Provisional Island Council be composed of the following:

- a) 5 members from the Montreal Catholic School Commission, one of whom shall represent the English-Catholic community.
- b) 3 members from the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal, one of whom shall represent the Jewish community, and one of whom shall represent the French-Protestant community.
- c) 2 members from the Catholic School Boards on the Island of Montreal other than the Montreal Catholic School Commission, one of whom shall represent the English-Catholic sector.
- d) 1 member from the Lakeshore Regional School Board.
- e) 2 members from the Department of Education
- f) 1 member ex-officio from the Montreal Urban Community Planning Department.

RECOMMENDATION 2

That the function of this body shall be to set up an independent committee to establish the boundaries and wards of the new unified school boards, taking cognizance of municipal boundaries, highways and railway barriers, school populations, present school facilities, and other relative factors. This committee should hold public hearings at predetermined times and places before the boundaries are made final. The establishment of boundaries and wards should be completed before June 30, 1972.

The second function of the Provisional Council would be to call for the election of the new unified school boards for June 1973.

The third function of the Provisional Council would be to prepare a preliminary tax assessment and tax rate, which would be the basis of the Permanent Council's final decision on tax matters.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The present School Boards on the Island of Montreal will remain in authority until June 30th, 1974. No decision of the Provisional Council shall be binding on the educational decisions of these Boards during this period.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Concurrent with the setting up of the Provisional Council, the election of School Committees (see Bill 27, where these committees are to be formed in 1973). We would request that they be set up on the Island of Montreal in 1972.

The functions of these committees should be those which we have previously

submitted to the Minister. (See attached Appendix)

RECOMMENDATION 5

We would recommend also that a change be made to Section 99 under Bill 27 as it pertains to the Island of Montreal with reference to those having the right to vote for School Commissioners. The first qualification should read: "To be at least 18 years of age and of resident (one-year) status in the ward in which he is eligible to elect."

RECOMMENDATION 6

We would further add to the functions of the School Committee the role of ombudsman so that parents, students and teachers, who are unable to resolve problems with the school authorities will be able to appeal at the local level.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The newly elected unified school boards (June 1973) shall serve two years prior to the drawing of lots. In June 1974, these school boards shall elect an Island Council to replace the Provisional Island Council.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The permanent Island Council shall be composed of:

- a) One representative from each board elected by and from the Regional Board.
- b) Two appointments from the Department of Education, selected on the basis of their qualifications and experience in education.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The functions of the Island Council shall be:

- a) To establish an equalized tax assessment on the Island of Montreal.
- b) To set the tax rate for the Island of Montreal sufficient to cover the needs of the School Boards as indicated in their budgetary estimates.
- c) The establishment of two pedagogical councils for the Island of Montreal, one for French-language education and one for English-language education. These Councils will develop research and experimental programs, provide in-service training for teachers, and all other pedagogical services required by the Regional School Boards. Through these Councils educational facilities could be set up by agreement with the school boards to provide for special education for minority groups with particular educational problems. These Councils would also establish a resource centre for the use of all School Boards and teachers on the Island of Montreal.

It is the opinion of our associations' members that such pedagogical councils (one for English-language education, and one for French-language education) are an absolute necessity if education is to continue to develop and flourish in this province. These councils would not only serve regional needs but would also supply the Department of Education with a continuum of educational initiative. The Island Council and the School Boards should provide the necessary initiatives for teachers of both languages to make use of the services of both Councils. Such Councils would also provide a substantial saving to school boards, as it would save duplicating many of these services

for each school board.

All other powers and responsibilities should be assigned to the Council by the new Regional School Boards on the Island to meet the needs of these school boards, and shall be based on a two-thirds majority vote by the school boards.

Our Reasons for Proposing the above Transition

1. With the immediate formation of School Committees, the new Regional Boards will have a direct contact with each school under their jurisdiction to work through the problems of re-organization. Such direct contacts can eliminate many of the unnecessary problems that arise when controlling body is too far removed from the people who will feel the effect of changes. Decisions taken on the basis of statistics rarely reflect the human concerns, which must be tackled on a person to person basis.

2. Many presumptions of 'discrimination' will be avoided if the community has worked together to solve a problem. A person will give more consideration to the welfare of his neighbor's children, will be more concerned and understanding than he will be to unknown 'numbers' of children.

3. If unification is to work, as the Minister himself said "there must be a basis of trust and understanding". We feel this basic trust is more readily developed at the community level, between the Regional Board and the community it serves, than between a local and a distant Island Council.

4. The Regional Boards, being elected and operational before the election of

a permanent Island Council, will have had an opportunity to work out which matters are best handled locally, and which are more effectively handled on an Island-wide basis. They will also have an opportunity to work out the necessary agreements for pooling of services and resources prior to taking control, so that there will be a minimum of disruption in the educational process at the school level.

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