

VOLUME 61 ISSUE 3

FALL 2023

QFHSA NEWS

THE NEWSMAGAZINE FOR HOME AND SCHOOL MEMBERS



Jumping Back into School Life

The QFHSA's Fall Conference:
Join us Saturday, November 4, p. 3

Knowledge Is Golden:
Tips from Golden Torch Volunteers, p. 5

The Bill 40 Decision:
A Successful Appeal, but Challenges Remain, p. 13



The Quebec
Federation of
Home and School
Associations

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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.

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A huge thank you to the local Home and School Associations that shared their photos for this issue.

We welcome your letters!

You are invited to send us your comments/suggestions on this edition of the QFHSA News by email to news@qfhsa.org.



And We're Back!

A Message from the QFHSA's President

IT SEEMS NOT ALL THAT LONG AGO that I was wishing everyone a restful and fun-filled summer. Now here I am welcoming you back to another school year and sharing news from the QFHSA, our board of directors, and the Quebec courts.

Members of the board were pleased to hear from Steven LeSueur, president of the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT), at our September 9th board meeting. He informed us about the status of negotiations, the teacher shortage, and the September 23rd Common Front Rally.

Executive training workshops, a long-time and important tradition at the QFHSA, were set for Tuesday, September 26th for Home & School treasurers; Thursday, September 28th for membership and communications chairs; and Monday, October 2nd for presidents and vice-presidents. The three workshops were virtual events.

Staff and board members have begun preparations for our in-person Fall Conference on November 4th. We had such fun together at the May Awards Banquet. This makes us very hopeful that our members will take advantage of the opportunity the Fall Conference brings to gather once again and connect with other association members, our directors, staff, vendors, and presenters.

Parents, students, the QFHSA board of directors, committees, and staff—we are all most definitely back in action!

With the summer came a momentous decision from the Superior Court of Quebec. On August 2nd, at long last, we finally received a decision on Bill 40 and it was great news. Justice Lussier's decision was a significant and important win for the English community in Quebec and for linguistic minorities across Canada. **It affirmed the English-speaking community's constitutional right to manage and control its educational institutions.**

We were very disappointed when on September 8th, Premier Legault announced that the government would appeal the Superior Court's decision. *For more information about Bill 40 and its implications for Quebec's English minority, please see Brian Rock's article on page 13 of this newsletter.* The QFHSA will continue to advocate for our parents and our community and support the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) in its ongoing effort to keep our school boards.

The QFHSA is always happy to welcome new voices to our board of directors and committees. You can find out more about our board and our committees—Education, Rights, Resolutions, Nominations, and Finance—on page 8 of this newsletter.

I wish you all a great school year and I hope to see soon. *And please do not hesitate to contact me or the office if you have any questions.* Take care and stay safe.

Rosemary Murphy



Join us for the

QFHSA'S

2023 Fall Conference

THE TIME IS NOW!

Workshops, Discussions, and More!

Saturday, November 4th

Merton Elementary School, 5554, ave. Robinson, Côte St-Luc

Event Registration: 8 - 9 a.m.

Opening Presentation, Workshops, Lunch: 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

PLUS Join us for a short Regional Council get together after lunch!

Register today!



info@qfhsa.org



514-481-5619



Tracking the Summer's Developments... *A Message from the Executive Director*

IT HAS BEEN A SUMMER of forest fires and floods, hot weather and lovely weather... a real mixed bag. But now fall is in the air, kids are back at school, and parents are getting back into familiar routines.

There were a few significant developments in Quebec education over the summer.

The Bill 40 Decision: The decision was long overdue, but it brought such a relief! Justice Lussier affirmed Quebec's English-language minority community's right to control and manage its education system. In all other provinces, when school board systems were dismantled, every government made sure that the French-language minority school systems maintained their school boards so as not to be in violation of Article 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Quebec decision was the only logical decision a judge could make. It is therefore such a disappointment that the CAQ government has decided to appeal, yet again.

Yet, hand in hand with these decisions comes the responsibility of our community to exercise our rights while we still have them. **Please make sure you show up for the school board elections next year!** Use it or lose it!

Ombudsmen Update: All the new Quebec Student Ombudsmen have the ability to communicate with our students in English, which is so important. When a complaint gets to the level of the Ombudsman's Office, students *must* be able to communicate in the language that is most comfortable for them to ensure that they are truly understood.

The Teacher Shortage: The teacher shortage was reduced by the time school started. The English school boards have been successful in filling almost all of their teaching positions. However, our schools still do not have sufficient support staff and the resources needed to help teachers manage the class loads they have been given. It does not appear that Minister of Education Drainville truly appreciates how difficult it is to teach without support. It is to be hoped that the minister will make a real effort to consult with community groups and listen to what they have to say. If Minister Drainville wants the best for the students, then he needs to ensure that the necessary resources are provided. It will be the teachers who can best communicate to him what is needed, not his aides.

Ban on Cell Phones in the Classroom: We all acknowledge that cell phone/social media addiction is harming

our students. To spend the school day without a cell phone will be a challenge for students, but it is a necessary exercise for their health and well-being. It will be equally important for parents to not give in to the temptation to communicate with their children during school hours. That is one of the traditional responsibilities of the school secretary.

AI Chatbots: This school year will have many challenges, including the added task of monitoring the use of AI chatbots in student homework and assignments. Today's teachers will have to spend more time correcting handwritten essays and students may have to rely less on technology and more on paying attention in class. Education is ever evolving and we all have to run to keep up with it or slow down and get back to basics.

Here's to a new school year!

Carol Meindl

Dates to Remember

Thursday, October 19 at 7 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board of Directors Meeting
Saturday, November 4 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The QFHSA's Fall Conference for Parents
Saturday, November 25 at 9:30 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board of Directors Meeting



Photo from Adobe Stock

Golden Wisdom

Sage Advice from our 2023 Golden Torch Volunteers

IN LATE SUMMER, the QFHSA sent a survey to our 2023 Golden Torch award winners. We invited them to share their volunteer stories and the knowledge they have gained. As you may know, the Golden Torch award is given to local Home and School volunteers who inspire others with their dedication, leadership, and organizational skills. Award recipients are chosen by their peers.

The survey asked a range of questions, including “What is the most effective way to recruit new members?” and “What are your tips for organizing a successful fundraiser?” As we suspected, Golden Torch volunteers have much wisdom to share—and this information is very useful for present and future Home and School volunteers.

A sincere thank-you to Andrea Cappelli from St. Patrick Elementary, Maria Ligon from Edgewater Elementary, Samantha Patel from Merton Elementary, Jennifer Pearcey from Forest Hill Senior Elementary, and Mimi-Anna Tabaczuk, also from St. Patrick Elementary, for taking the time to complete our survey and generously sharing their perspectives with us.

Our survey respondents have been volunteering an average of 11 years. They also have done a wide range of jobs for their local associations. They have been occasional

volunteers, committee heads, and most have held a couple of executive positions as well.

What motivated our Golden Torch volunteers to get involved in Home and School in the first place? Our survey respondents most often gave these two reasons: **to be involved in their children’s school lives** and **to make connections with the school’s parent community.**



Now, years into their volunteer journeys, our Golden Torch volunteers provide these four excellent reasons for doing what they do:

1. Because they are improving school life for the children.
2. Because they are supporting their teachers.
3. Because of all the friends they have made. You meet “some pretty awesome people.”
4. Because they are now part of a community.

Finding that sense of community has been huge for our Golden Torch volunteers. Maria’s best all-time memory of her Home and School work is the time she has

spent with all the other volunteers and growing these relationships into friendships. Mimi-Anna writes: “Parenting can often feel lonely/overwhelming/taxing. When parents have opportunities to work side by side with other parents, for their children, an added bonus is the support and community they experience by joining in.”

While being a Home and School volunteer can certainly be rewarding, it can be challenging at times. There can be resistant school administrations, unhappy/disgruntled parents, and just too much work to do. About the latter situation, one Golden Torch volunteer writes: “The toughest challenge was handling large projects with very little help. This can become overwhelming when more volunteers are not available or not willing to participate. I worked many extra hours with a small group of amazing volunteers to have some incredible events but the time, planning, and execution were significant.”

Images from Adobe Stock



From handling difficult situations to running an effective meeting, our Golden Torch volunteers have lots of great advice to share, as you will see on the following pages.

Continued on the next page

News for You

Golden Wisdom

Continued from the previous page



Tips for Recruiting New Home and School Members

1. **Be present at school events** (especially early in the school year). Have face-to-face chats with parents. Samantha stresses the importance of getting to know your parents and personally inviting individual parents to join the team.
2. **Advertise.** Share all the exciting things your Home and School is doing with the entire school.
3. **Make family events fun and welcoming.** Andrea writes, "Nothing better than current volunteers showing potential newbies that we are a fun group to join."

Golden Torch volunteers agree that the best advice to give a brand new volunteer is **every little bit of time and effort helps**. Andrea explains: "Even a small job really helps get others motivated to do the same and it helps build a sense of community within the school."



Tips for Keeping those New Recruits (And Keeping Them Motivated):

1. **Listen to what they have to say.**
2. **Offer fun events.**
3. **Recognize/thank them** for their time and work.
4. **Show all the good things that were accomplished with their help.** (Through photos, social media, etc.)
5. **Be flexible/accommodating.**
6. **Offer coffee and snacks!**



Tips for a Successful Fundraiser/Event:

1. **Set your goals.**
2. **Plan, plan, plan.** Organize events as early as possible; set a rain date for outdoor events.
3. **Delegate tasks and be clear on your expectations.** The more you delegate, the less overwhelmed individual volunteers will be!
4. **Stick to your schedule.**
5. **Learn from others!** Maria writes: "Reach out to other Home & Schools that have done the same fundraisers/events for tips."
6. **Learn from your mistakes.** Have a postmortem meeting and keep detailed post-event notes. Andrea explains: "AFTER the event, write down all your notes as to what worked well, what didn't work and what needs tweaking. We quickly forget small details once we've moved on to the next event and by the time we are planning the events the following year, no one can remember the hiccups."
7. **Buy extra "just in case."**
8. **Have a reasonable budget and keep receipts.**
9. **Keep school staff/administration in the loop.**
10. **Make sure you have enough volunteers to run the event smoothly.**
11. **Share the news about your success and let people know how the money raised will be spent.**



Tips for Staying Organized:

1. **Find organizational tools that work for you** and help you keep track of your responsibilities. Our Golden Torch volunteers use spreadsheets, calendars, lists, Google docs, chat groups with the team, and Zoom or in-person meetings to organize, plan, distribute the work, and stay on track.
2. **Make task lists.**
3. **Delegate where you can.** Create committees headed by a chair and trust that team to take care of the tasks assigned to them.
4. **Take care of problems as they arise;** don't let them pile up.



Tips for a Successful Home and School Meeting:

1. **Set some ground rules** for meeting conduct.
2. **Follow the agenda.**
3. **Make sure participants feel heard** by opening topics for discussion as much as possible. "Don't shut anyone out," reminds Samantha.
4. **At the same time, remember to keep the meeting moving.** If a discussion goes on too long or gets heated, table the topic for a future Home & School meeting or a separate meeting just on that topic.
5. **Be respectful.** Give the person who is speaking your attention (no side-talking). Respect a person's opinion even if you do not share it.
6. **Don't forget the coffee and cookies!**

Golden Wisdom

Continued from the previous page



Tips for Managing a Conflict:

1. **First, make sure you have a volunteer code of conduct** and share it with your volunteers.
2. **Address a conflict as soon as possible.**
3. **Meet one on one with the person;** don't try to handle the problem in a group setting.
4. **Acknowledge the person's feelings and point of view.** Remember that there needs to be mutual respect when it comes to opinions—even when they are very different.
5. **Try to come up with a mutually agreeable solution/compromise.**
6. **If the situation is too intense, seek the help of others** (your school principal, the QFHSA) to help you deal with the problem.

In addition to providing practical tips, our Golden Torch volunteers reminded us of how fulfilling the job of the Home and School volunteer can be.

Our Golden Torch volunteers described the joy that comes when you...

... Witness firsthand the generosity of parents who quietly offer funds to cover other children's pizza lunches.

... See the happy faces of staff during Staff Appreciation Week or the children at events.

... Are greeted with a smile and a "Hi Pizza Lady" in a school hallway.

... See your volunteer relationships turn into lasting friendships.

... Know your hard work makes good things happen: a great event, a school improvement project.

... Share your love of reading with Cycle One students during Literacy Week by reading your favourite story to them.

... Hear a kindergarten graduate say she wants to be like you when she grows up.



As she finished up the survey, Jennifer wrote these words:

"Home & School is a great way to get involved in your school, meet like minded individuals, get to know the staff who teach/help your children daily, and make a positive contribution to your children's educational experience."

It is a great description of what Home & School is—and an excellent ending for this article, too!

Karen Henchey,
Communications Officer



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News for You



Become a Member of a QFHSA Committee or our Board of Directors *And Support Home and Schools Associations Across the Province*

THE QUEBEC FEDERATION of Home and School Associations accomplishes all it does thanks to our staff and a dedicated group of volunteers. Indeed, volunteers are absolutely essential for the running of the federation.

The QFHSA benefits greatly when new volunteers join our team. Our discussions are enriched by fresh perspectives and the work is made lighter with more helping hands. Won't you consider joining our team? It is a wonderful opportunity to learn, express your point of view, and have an impact in the lives of Quebec children, youth, and families.

Getting Involved at the Committee Level: *There Are Lots of Options!*

Whether you are interested in the current political developments affecting Quebec's minority language community, want to understand the latest changes to school curricula or have a keen eye for finance, you will find a QFHSA committee that is just right for you. The discussions are always interesting and your volunteer contribution will be deeply appreciated.

Our committees meet periodically during the school year. Committee meetings are typically held on Zoom on a weeknight.

About the Education Subcommittee:

This group is composed of individuals who share an interest in Quebec education and there is much to discuss! In 2022/23, for example, the Education Committee delved into the new Culture and Citizenship in Québec Program, sexuality education, the impact of COVID on student learning, and the support needed for school employees.



The *Literacy Subcommittee* within the education team is responsible for promoting awareness of the requirements for literacy in a knowledge-based society and mobilizing school and community volunteer resources to advocate and deliver literacy programs for prevention and remediation. The subcommittee oversees several projects including the Library Assistance Program, Born to Read, and the Reluctant Reader Literacy Project.

About the Rights Subcommittee:

This group addresses topics concerning individual rights and freedoms within the Quebec education system. Some of the topics the

Rights Subcommittee explored in 2022/23 include Bill C-13, the use of the Notwithstanding Clause, the availability of bilingual services for students from Quebec's ombudsmen, and the accommodation of immigrant and refugee children in our schools.

About the Resolutions Subcommittee:

During the year, the QFHSA's various committees and our member associations develop resolutions in response to issues of importance to our federation. The members of the Resolutions Subcommittee collect the resolutions, discuss them, and prepare them for submission to our membership for approval at the QFHSA Annual General Meeting. Adopted resolutions then become the impetus for advocacy and action.

About the Finance Committee:

The Finance Committee is responsible for overseeing the finances of the federation. Among other duties, the committee prepares and reviews annual budgets, reviews accounting procedures, prepares financial reports, and makes recommendations to the board of directors on financial matters.

Continued on the next page

Board of Directors and Committees

Continued from the previous page

About the Nominations Committee:

This team receives nominations for the QFHSA Board of Directors and recruits qualified individuals to sit on the board. The group is especially active in the months leading up to the Spring Annual General Meeting.

Getting Involved at the Board Level: Interesting Discussions, Impactful Decisions

Non-profit organizations thrive when guided by a strong and dedicated board of directors. The job of a board member is endlessly interesting and a wonderful learning opportunity, too.



The QFHSA's board meets about eight times a year, alternating between Saturday morning and week-night meetings. The discussions are varied and thought-provoking. As a board member, you may:

- Discuss Home and School policy,
- Delve into issues related to education and rights,
- Explore new projects for Home and School students, parents, and families,

- Offer best practice advice to local Home and School Associations,
- Participate in community round tables, ensuring that the parent's perspective is heard,
- Help to draft resolutions and briefs that are shared with the federal and/or provincial governments, or
- Help to plan QFHSA events (or some combination of the above).

If you or someone you know is interested in joining the volunteers who further the mission of our federation, either at the committee or board level, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Call the QFHSA office at 514-481-5619 or email info@qfhsa.org.

Karen Henchey,
Communications Officer



\$1500 Grants Available for English Quebec Elementary and Secondary Schools

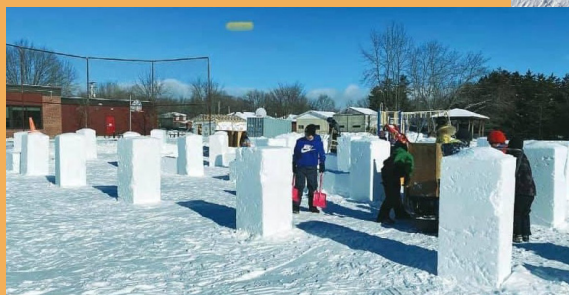
Since 2019, the English Language Arts Network (ELAN) has been connecting schools with artists from Quebec's English speaking community. The result? Special art activities at our schools!

The goal of the Artists Inspire funding is to develop students' cre-

ativity through artist-facilitated arts and culture experiences. The application process is straightforward and—best of all—ELAN's Art-Ed Team is happy to assist schools through the process.

Be sure to let your school know about the Artists Inspire Grant program. Visit <https://artistsinspire.ca/school-grants/> for more information.

The deadline for applications for the 2023-24 year is February 29th.



Students at Onslow Elementary School became snow sculptors in January 2021 thanks to an Artists Inspire Grant. (See the article in the Spring 2021 issue of the QFHSA News, which is available on our website.)



Safety in School Zones: An Ongoing Concern for Home & School



ON AUGUST 26TH, Transport Minister Geneviève Guilbault was joined by Education Minister Bernard Drainville to announce the \$180-million Road Safety Plan. This was welcome news for many. Despite various initiatives over the years, there still seems to be unacceptable risk to our students in school zones.

Part of the new plan includes reducing the maximum speed limit to 30 km/hr in nearly every school zone in Quebec for more hours of the day and to improve signage. Right now, the speed limit of 30 km/hr applies to a large majority of school zones in the province, but there are some where drivers are allowed to drive up to 50 km/hr. The school day may be 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., but with kids in-after school programs, the likelihood of kids still being in the school zone later in the day is high. Drivers must always drive 30 km/hr in a school zone, whether children are present or not.

"The scientific studies are very, very clear on this: If you bring down the speed limit, you will also bring down the risk that there will be casualties around the school zones," said Drainville.

The three main pillars of road safety have been *engineering*, *education*, and *enforcement*. Airbags and seat belts have dramatically reduced car accident injuries for persons inside the car. Yet very little investment seems to be made in such systems as reducing speed limits in all

school zones and enforcing them. As there can never be a patrol car on every street corner and in every school zone, what is the answer? It involves a variety of things coming together.

Research over many decades has proven that educational campaigns (*Watch for cars, slow down for kids, wear a helmet, or don't text and drive...*) rarely result in the desired behavioural changes. Our children can be taught cautious behaviour, but if these campaigns do not appeal to the personal responsibilities of adults, it will not protect our children from the rising tide of reckless drivers.

A Look Back at Home & School's Work on School Safety

Home and School parents were eager to address the issue of school zone safety as far back as 1950. They were big supporters of the Elmer the Elephant Safety Campaign, which was believed to be effective in helping students and parents become more traffic safety conscious. We recommended that member associations actively promote the extension of this campaign, which was initiated in Quebec by the Westend Traffic Safety Council of Montreal.

In 1952, the QFHSA adopted a resolution that supported the inclusion of traffic safety in the school curriculum as a subject, distinct and separate from other subjects.

In 1956, we turned our attention to

school bus safety and the problem of cars passing buses embarking and disembarking students in loading zones. School buses were not always clearly marked as such nor were school bus stops clearly identifiable for passing vehicles.

By 1959, all vehicles were required to come to a complete stop when approaching or passing a stationary school bus. (The flashing red and yellow lights, which we now take for granted, were still not part of the system.)

In 1962, Home and Schools were singing the praises of the School Brigadier System of pedestrian control, which had already been in place for many years and had proven its value. However, school boards did not have the resources to supply paid brigadiers for every school with crossing hazards.

Our 1962 resolution expressed some frustration that opposition to the School Brigadier System appeared to be based primarily on a lack of proper information about the responsibilities involved. We resolved that our local associations be asked to obtain and study information on the system, with a view of requesting that the School Brigadier System be introduced in all Protestant elementary schools as a supplement to normal protection. It was understood that local associations would be seeking the advice and consent of the local school boards and police departments for the School Brigadier System.

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School Safety

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In 1972, the QFHSA developed a resolution to underline how critically important it is for students to have safe access to their schools. At the time, the QFHSA resolved that any existing regulations applicable to school access safety be researched and collected, that any deficiencies in these regulations be rectified, that a common code applicable to school access safety be promulgated and applied to all schools, and that the common code referred to above be binding upon both school boards and municipalities for effective joint action.

In 1977, the Montreal Urban Community Transit Commission (MUCTC) buses were by law used to transport the school children of the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal (PSBGM), and it had been established that the MUCTC safety measures met a minimum compliance with Section 44 of the Highway Code. However, these buses were not readily recognized as school buses nor were the school bus stops and loading zones identified.

At the time, Home and School resolved that the Department of Transport insist that:

- The MUCTC immediately institute obvious markings for their buses while transporting school children,
- A public awareness program be developed to alert the public at large and the MUC Police that MUCTC buses are carrying school children,
- School bus stops and loading zones be identified with equal

clarity to public bus stops as regard to signs and no parking, and

- School boards must have a say on bus contract renewals, which would be based on compliance with the safety measures.

The QFHSA equally urged the Department of Transport to promote the policy that the direction of flow of traffic on one-way streets adjacent to schools where a school bus is stopped be such that the school bus can stop there with their exits parallel to the sidewalk.

In 1986, the Quebec Touring Club, in conjunction with the *Régie de l'assurance automobile du Québec*, had organized a program of traffic safety school brigades. This program demonstrated that the brigades developed safety awareness in students. Moreover, belonging to school brigades help children to learn to accept responsibility and develop care and concern for others.

The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations encouraged all local Home and School Associations to establish traffic safety school brigades in their schools. (In the traffic brigade system, senior elementary/high-school students are trained to act as monitors on school buses and at school crossings on streets with a traffic count insufficient to warrant a regular paid crossing guard.) These brigades had been organized by the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) since 1976 and were called school safety patrols. This Quebec program was an expansion of the CAA program.

Finally, in 1988, the law called for school bus drivers to signal with their red flashing lights, but only after the bus had stopped and when they were about to let children on or off the bus. Unfortunately, the driver of a vehicle following a school bus could never be certain, on perceiving the bus's brake lights, whether the bus was merely slowing down or was, in fact, stopping for students. The QFHSA felt other drivers needed a visual indication that a school bus was intending to stop for the purpose of picking up or letting off school children, so we advocated for all school buses to be equipped with yellow lights that could be flashed when the bus was slowing down to pick up or let off students, thus giving advanced warning to oncoming or following drivers.

In 1992, we were advocating that the entire fleet of school buses be converted into flat-nosed models that made it much easier for bus drivers to see the small children passing below them in front of their buses.

The Quebec Department of Transport had carried out a comprehensive study of bus safety equipment, such as stop retractable side arms, sensors, and other devices that enabled the driver to be aware of children close to the bus and flashing yellow warning lights positioned next to the flashing red stop lights.

Also included in our list of measures to be taken was to mandate that a driver training program of at least 40 hours be a condition of employment for every bus driver.

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News from the Board

School Safety

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In addition, bus drivers would be required to re-certify annually. Further, the QFHSA believed that each bus driver should conduct a safety awareness session for the children on his/her bus. The QFHSA also recognized the importance that drivers are able to communicate in the language of the students.

And now here we are in 2023, still trying to find ways to encourage those people who drive in school zones and approach buses to set their own personal agendas aside and give student safety their total attention. We have all seen the madness at school drop-off time with a plethora of cars dropping off kids in the morning or picking them up at the end of the school day. Thrown into the mess is local traffic trying to get to and from work.

What do we need to do to impress upon those who drive in school zones that they must slow down? Paint the road surface in the school zone a different colour to indicate where the school zone starts and ends and include 30 km/hr markings? Do we need a school brigade system for each school? Should there be more funding for paid school crossing guards?

No doubt, multiple initiatives will be necessary to ensure (1) that drivers take the utmost care in school zones and (2) that our children can get to and from school safely—whether by walking, by bike, by bus, or by car.

Carol Meindl,
Executive Director

Spotlight on the QFHSA Board of Directors: *Natasha Drysdale*



Natasha Drysdale was appointed as an interim director on the QFHSA board on October 25, 2019, with the expectation that she would be officially elected to the position at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in the coming spring. With the arrival of the global pandemic, many things in the 2019/2020 year did not happen as planned—including the QFHSA's AGM. The spring in-person meeting was replaced by our first-ever online AGM held later in the summer. At the August 22nd meeting, delegates finally had the opportunity to elect Natasha to the board.

Although she joined our board in unprecedented times, this did not dim Natasha's enthusiasm for her work for the QFHSA. In fact, at the time of her election to the board, Natasha was already an active volunteer on both the QFHSA's Rights and Resolutions Subcommittees.

Her deep interest in the Quebec education system and the laws that govern it, her dedication to the Home and School movement, and her determination to be a strong advocate for our students and families make Natasha a perfect fit for the QFHSA's Rights and Resolutions Subcommittees. As Rights Subcommittee Chair, Natasha has led discussions on Law 21, the New Culture and Citizenship course, the teacher shortage, and much more. It is a busy and extremely productive committee!

In addition to her committee responsibilities, Natasha serves as a vice-president on the QFHSA board, a role she first assumed in 2021/2022.

Like many, Natasha's career in the Home and School movement began the day she stepped up to volunteer at her son's school. From casual volunteer to executive member on Lakeside Academy's Home and School Association and member of the school's governing board to her tenure on the Lester B. Pearson School Board's Parents' Committee (as secretary and then vice-chair) to her current work with our federation, Natasha has been and continues to be an outstanding advocate for our schools and the Home and School movement.

A very belated, but warm welcome to Natasha Drysdale, the last of our pandemic-elected board members!



What Is Bill 40 and Why Is It So Important for the Future of English Education in Québec?

A Commentary By Brian Rock

ON AUGUST 2ND, 2023, the Honourable Sylvain Lussier, Justice of the Superior Court of Québec, delivered his long awaited 129-page judgment on Bill 40: *An Act to amend mainly the Education Act with regard to school organization and governance*. Introduced by the Coalition Avenir Québec government, Bill 40 was passed in the National Assembly of Québec by a vote of 60 to 35 with no abstentions on February 8, 2020. It received assent and went into force with some exceptions later that day. The government bill was sponsored by Jean-François Roberge, who was Minister of Education and Higher Education at the time.

In his decision, Judge Lussier presented a detailed review of the jurisprudence regarding minority language education rights in Québec and Canada centring around Article 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982, and referring all the way back to Section 93 of the British North America Act of 1867.

Judge Lussier mentioned that 57% (over 161,000) of eligible electors in English school board elections reside in the territories of the English Montreal and Lester B. Pearson school boards. These figures indicate that the other seven English school boards share just over 69,000 electors, who reside in vast geographic territories in the rest of the province.

As an example, the Western Quebec School Board (WQSB) territory, which covers the Outaouais, Pontiac, and Abitibi-Témiscamingue regions, has only 16,684 electors residing in 147 municipalities within 8 regional county municipalities (RCMs). WQSB administers 13 elementary schools, six high schools, six combined elementary and high schools, and six adult education and vocational training centres.

Congratulations are in order for the excellent work of the team of Juristes Power Law of Ottawa: Me. Giacomo Zucchi, Me. Perri Ravon, Me. Mark Power, and Me. Audrey Mayrand, who represented the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA), the plaintiffs in the case.

QESBA and its nine English school board members must be admired for their commitment and courage for insisting that the Ministry of Education and the Government of Québec respect the minority language education rights outlined under Article 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982.

This judgment strengthened the minority language education rights of francophones in the other nine provinces and three territories as well as anglophones in the Province of Québec.

Disappointing in the eyes of many was the announcement on September 8th, 2023, by the Government of Québec that it intended to appeal the decision rendered by Justice Lussier.

Stay tuned...

Brian ROCK, B.A., M.Ed., is a retired school principal and a former secondary teacher of English Language Arts and the History of Québec who now resides in Aylmer, Québec.

*Brian chairs the **COalition For the Future of English Education in Québec (COFFEE-QC)** as well as the **Committee for the Enhancement of the Curriculum of the History of Québec (ComECH-QC)**.*

A past president of the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations Inc. (QFHSA), Brian recently returned as a member of its board of directors. He chairs the QFHSA Nominations Committee and the QFHSA Resolutions Subcommittee. He is also the vice-chair of the QFHSA Rights Subcommittee.

Note: The opinions expressed in this commentary are those of the author and not necessarily those of the QFHSA.

News for You



Your Amazing Science Adventure Awaits! Apply for a 2023/24 Youth Exploring Science Grant Today

Hydroponic gardens, simple machines, volcanoes, constellations, bearded dragon lizards... These are some of the fascinating science projects Quebec elementary and high school students explored in recent years with the help of a QFHSA Youth Exploring Science (YES) grant.

What will your school's science adventure be? The QFHSA is accepting YES proposals for the 2023/24 school year until **December 20th**. Science teachers are invited to apply for a grant as soon as possible. Each grant covers up to \$1000 in equipment and materials to conduct an experiment or science activity.

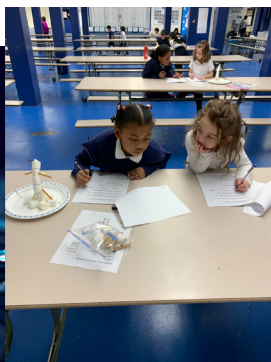
To apply, please visit the QFHSA website, www.qfhsa.org, where you will find the grant application form

and more information about the program. From the menu on our Home page, select "Projects," then "Youth Exploring Science." You can also use this link: <https://bit.ly/3123ylo>.

If you have any questions about this program, please call the QFHSA office at 514-481-5619 or email carolmeindl@qfhsa.org.

Through the Youth Exploring Science initiative, the QFHSA helps to nurture an interest in science. Today's enthusiastic students are sure to be tomorrow's brilliant scientists!

Carol Meindl,
Executive Director



On the Topic of Projects... Do You Know FabZone?

Located in the Plaza Pointe-Claire Shopping Centre (245-S Boul. St-Jean), FabZone gives students (high school and post secondary) a space to create interesting projects. This community organization offers the following:

- A sewing room with heavy duty and overlock machines and a large cutting table.
- A craft and digital arts room with 3D printers, Cricut Makers, 24" vinyl cutter, laptops with all needed software installed, and lots of work space.
- A workshop with laser cutter, soldering stations, hand tools and more work space.
- A wood shop with band saw, drill press, belt sander, and sliding compound miter saw.

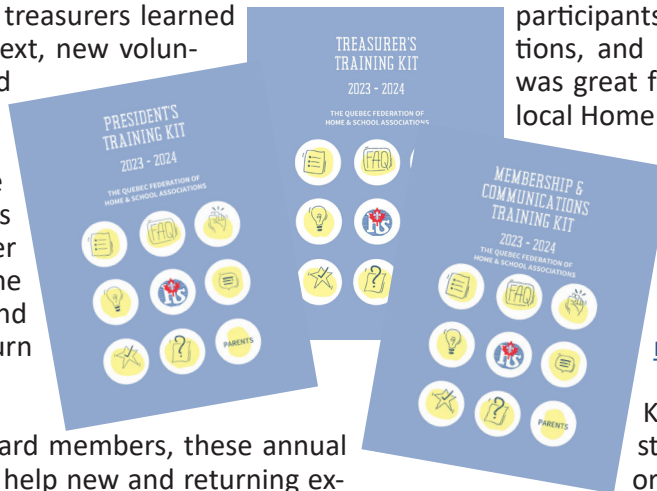
Group activities are available, too! FabZone welcomes groups to work on projects connected with their school studies. For more information about using FabZone's amazing set up (and the fees involved), call 514-373-1775 or email info@fabzone.org.



The QFHSA's Executive Training Workshops: *Showing the Ropes to New Home & School Executives*

THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF INTEREST in this year's Executive Training Workshops. On Tuesday, September 26th, new and prospective treasurers learned all about their positions. Next, new volunteers filling membership and communications duties at their local associations learned more about the expectations of their roles on Thursday, September 28th. Finally, new local Home and School presidents and vice-presidents had their turn on Monday, October 2nd.

Led by QFHSA staff and board members, these annual workshops are designed to help new and returning executives ease into their new roles within their local associations.



For the fourth year in a row, the workshops were held on Zoom. Presenters shared news from the QFHSA, walked participants through the duties of their positions, and answered questions. As always, it was great for the QFHSA to get together with local Home and School volunteers.

If you were not able to attend, you can request a copy of the training kits provided. Please email Membership Services Coordinator Marlyn Brownrigg at marlynbrownrigg@qfhsa.org.

Keep in mind, too, that the QFHSA staff is always just a quick phone call or email away. Call 514-481-5619 or email info@qfhsa.org. ***We're here to help!***

Welcome to the New Home & School Associations

This past spring, the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations was very pleased to welcome three additional Home and School Associations to our federation: **Queen Elizabeth Elementary** (Western Quebec School Board), **two Terry Fox Elementary Schools**, one in Pierrefonds (Lester B. Pearson School Board) and one in Laval (Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board).

Then this summer, we had the pleasure of welcoming **John F. Kennedy Elementary** located in Laval (Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board).

Welcome to the federation!

Image from Adobe Stock

News for You



Creative Ways to Change Things Up in 2023-24



A glance through the 2022-2023 President's Activity Reports once again demonstrated the amazing creativity within our Home and School Associations. They have organized and/or supported all of the initiatives listed below. The list was shared at our executive training workshops. For more information about the activities, please contact Marlyn at marlynbrownrigg@qfhsa.org.

Notable Events

- African Drumming and Dancing
- Welcome Sign Craft Night
- Book Fair open to the community
- Bingo and Chili Night
- Cultural Movie Day
- Bread and Beyond family event
(Making sandwiches for the homeless)
- Staff treats on World Teacher Day in October
- Dinner for staff on Meet-the-Teacher Night
- STM Visit for Grade 6 students
- Unplug and Play event
- Adult Cribbage Tournament
- In-School Easter Egg Hunt
- Food Drives for charitable organizations
- Spring Cleaning *(Parents drop off unwanted games and art/school supplies at the school)*
- Dog Literacy Day *(Reading to therapy dogs)*
- Fun Day featuring Superheroes!



- Spaghetti-to-Go 
- St. Viateur Bagels
- First-Aid Kit
- Fruit-Me-Up *(Fruit Cup fundraiser)*
- Change Wars *(Dedicated fundraiser for outdoor equipment)*

Notable Purchases

- A mascot costume
- Butterflies and chickens
- An outdoor storage shed
- Reusable cups for school events
- Tomato plants for each student
- Walkie-Talkies for the whole school
- Sport equipment library
- Shade structures
- Christmas ornaments with the school's name for all students



Notable Fundraisers

- FlipGive – partnering with online retailers
- Cocktail Bomb Shop™

And Other Initiatives!

- Parent survey about Home and School activities and fundraisers
- Bug Hotel ecology project



Planning to Organize a Holiday Basket Collection at Your School this December?

We Have Books for You!

Once again this year, the QFHSA has a very nice selection of books to donate to vulnerable families during the holiday season. Some of the books are from a generous donation we received from First Book Canada; others were purchased by the QFHSA.

Later this fall, the QFHSA team will send out an e-bulletin to local Home and School Association presidents with more information about the book give-away. This initiative is organized by the QFHSA's literacy group within our Education Committee.

Last year, 250 books were distributed to 12 Home and School Associations from across the province. We hope to do the same or even better this year!



ORANGE SHIRT DAY 2023

Orange Shirt Day reminds us that **Every Child Matters**. It is a day to remember all of the children who attended Canada's residential schools and the generations of Indigenous families affected by those schools. Thank you to Beacon Hill Elementary, Clearpoint Elementary, Crestview Elementary, Dorval Elementary, Forest Hill Senior Elementary, Grosse Isle School, Honoré-Mercier Elementary, La Tuque High School, Mount Pleasant Elementary, St. Charles Elementary, and Wilder Penfield Elementary for sharing photos from the day.





A Few Words From Membership Services: Fall Reminders



Greetings to returning executives, new members to the team, and especially to our newest association—John F. Kennedy Elementary in Laval (SWLSB).

Fall Reminders:

Overdue: The 2022-2023 President's and Treasurer's Reports are now overdue. They should be completed by last year's team. Samples are available.

Due September 30th: The executive list, local association renewal form, and the yearly \$50 administration fee were due by the end of September. All forms are available on the QFHSA website at www.qfhsa.org.

Mid to Late October: Please send in the first batch of membership fees (\$20 per family) and the first edition of the membership list before the end of October.

Voting: As a rule, the QFHSA recommends that voting privileges for 2022-2023 members be extended to September 30th of the new school year. By your October meeting, the membership campaign should be in full swing, thus allowing you to achieve quorum and give the vote to your 2023-2024 members.

Fundraising with a Purpose: If your association (in partnership with the school administration) has not identified projects to support or materials to purchase this school year, make this a priority. Parents are asked to fundraise for other organizations/activities and with

stretched family budgets, it is a good time for your members to determine what you are fundraising for. In addition, volunteer time is limited so it might be a good time to streamline some Home and School activities.

QFHSA Office Support: Please use the QFHSA resources to answer your questions. Carol, Mimi or Marlyn are in the office from Monday to Thursday and monitor emails constantly. No question is too small!

Office Phone Number: 514-481-5619

Email Addresses:

Marlyn (Membership Services):
marlynbrownrigg@qfhsa.org

Mimi-Anna (General emails, accounting, and insurance):
info@qfhsa.org

Carol (Executive Director, Youth Exploring Science, QFHSA committees):
carolmeindl@qfhsa.org

Karen (QFHSA News, general communications):
news@qfhsa.org



Have a great fall!

Marlyn Brownrigg,
Membership Services Coordinator



Update from the QFHSA Literacy Subcommittee

In August, QFHSA board and staff members collected approximately **300 free books** from First Book Canada. The QFHSA thanks First Book Canada for its generosity. These books are destined for holiday baskets and the QFHSA's Reluctant Readers initiative.

Holiday Baskets:

In November or early December, watch for news about books for the 3rd Annual Holiday Basket Book Give Away.

Born-to-Read:

In this age of screens, consider adopting the Born-to-Read Program for your school community. The program is a great way to introduce babies and toddlers to books and the love of reading. The QFHSA will donate the first 10 bags of books to your Home and School to get the project up and running. For more information, please contact the QFHSA office at info@qfhsa.org.



Focus on the Locals

In the **Focus on the Locals** section, we share news and information from our local associations. **Thank you to all of the Home and Schools that contributed to this issue.** We would love to hear from our other Home and Schools too! Before sending photos, please make sure you have the permission of those appearing in the photos. We invite Home and School Associations to send their news to news@qfhsa.org.

Welcome Back Day at East Hill Elementary a Huge Success!

There were so many fun things to do at East Hill Elementary's **Welcome Back Day** on September 8th!

Home and School volunteers were out in full force to help the children enjoy Twister, Mini Putt, surprise guest appearances from Princess Elsa and Super Mario, and loads of bouncy fun!

Students and staff were also treated to a nice lunch.

What a great start to the school year!

*Submitted by Tania Mendonca,
East Hill Elementary Home and School Association*



Background image from Adobe Stock

Focus on the Locals

It's

CARNIVAL

Time!

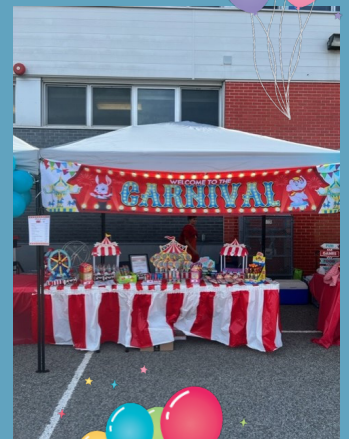


On September 15th, St. Vincent Elementary Home and School hosted its annual Welcome Back Carnival. The event brings together the community to celebrate the start of the school year and new beginnings. It unites our community as it gives families an opportunity to mingle, develop friendships, and raise funds for our school. The funds raised at this event are used for activities, events, and school initiatives throughout the year.

The families enjoyed an evening of carnival games, entertainment, and a clown show for all ages. There were many food stations, including pizza making with volunteer dads from the school, a candy station, sandwiches, pasta, and hot dogs.

Carnival goers also enjoyed a snack truck with popcorn, cotton candy, and slushes. There were treats for everyone!

This event could not have been possible without the support from our school, volunteers, and sponsors. We would like to thank everyone for their dedication and collaboration.



*Submitted by Lisa Testa,
St. Vincent Elementary Home and School Association*





The New Playground for St. Pats: A True Labour of Love



For the past decade, the St. Patrick Elementary Home and School Association has worked hard to raise funds for a new playground. “There was a lot of work that went on behind the scenes,” remarked Principal Dean Graddon at the playground dedication ceremony on September 1st. Principal Graddon describes the process: “We

had a committee of parents and staff members working together for a couple of years to survey kids and parents, and what we wanted was an obstacle course.” St. Pats students will be able to use the new obstacle course both at recess and during outdoor physical education classes.



options, permits, construction companies, and grants to make the new playground dream a reality.

Without the dedication from the parents, faculty, staff, and the kids (many of whom have graduated high school already), this playground might still be a dream. As Mimi-Anna commented, “for the families that have come and gone since its conception, it’s a gift of paying it forward to all the new little shamrocks who will enjoy and use it. Thank you, parents, for caring.”



*Submitted by Gina Giambalvo,
St. Patrick Elementary Home and School Association*



Focus on the Locals

At St. Charles, We're Off to a Great Start...

At St. Charles Elementary, the school year has begun, and Home and School is busy!

Welcome Back BBQ

The sun was shining on Thursday, September 21st and laughter filled the school yard as the St. Charles community gathered for the Welcome Back BBQ. The children had a fantastic time and families had a chance to catch up with familiar friends and meeting new ones, too.

Laughter abounded as the children danced, played, and ran around. The magician, the tattoo booth, the cotton candy stand, and the bake sale were all huge hits.



A real highlight of the evening was the visit from the firefighters. Students had the opportunity to tour fire trucks as well as play a few pick up games of champ with the firefighters.



At the event, hot dogs and hamburgers were barbecued on site by a team from On Rock Community Services. The team was blown away by the success of our non-perishable food drive. The donations helped to fill the shelves at On Rock's food bank.



As a perfect afternoon turned into a perfect evening, we were reminded of just how wonderful it was to celebrate the beginning of a new school year with new and old friends.



Focus on the Locals

...With More Fun to Come!

Fundraisers

The fall fundraisers are in full swing at St. Charles.

Here are some of this year's initiatives: chocolate sales, a St. Charles Sharks clothing sale, pizza lunches (back again at long last!), Oliver's Labels, and FlipGive.



There will also be a holiday market on Saturday, November 11th. The event will feature local vendors, craft activities for the children, and hot chocolate for all.



Plus... We Had our First Ever Used Clothing Sale!

In an effort to reduce our carbon footprint, St Charles Home and School Association launched its first ever used clothing sale. The community generously donated their gently used St. Charles clothing, which was washed and posted in the used clothing album on our Facebook Page. The response has been incredible, and we plan to continue this initiative next school year.



St. Charles Home and School executive and volunteers are excited to plan the many activities and fundraisers that the students look forward to each year, including Breakfast with Santa, Big Bang, Footloose, and special lunches. We are also looking forward to planning new events and activities, too! It is going to be a busy and fun school year.

Submitted by Talia D'Costa and Nadia Sears,
St. Charles Elementary Home and School Association

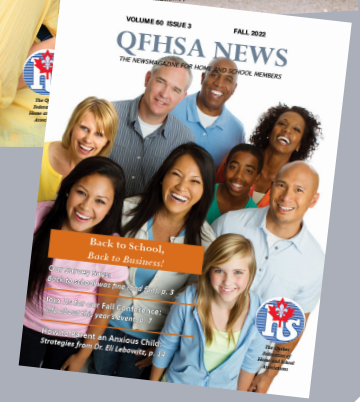
See You Soon in the "Focus on the Locals"?

We would love to see your Home & School in the "Focus on the Locals" section in an upcoming issue of the *QFHSA News*!

Here are this year's submission deadlines:

- Winter Issue: **December 18**
- Spring Issue: **March 11**
- Summer Issue: **June 19**

Tell us what you are up to... and please send photos! Email your news to news@qfhsa.org.



SHARE YOUR NEWS!



Photo from Adobe Stock

What is happening in your Home and School community? Fun fundraisers? Special events? Please let us know and we will be happy to share your news in our *Focus on the Locals* section in an upcoming issue of the *QFHSA News*. Send your submissions to news@qfhsa.org

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<http://www.qfhsa.org>



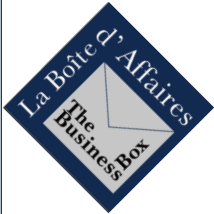
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