



QUEBEC FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS INC.
LA FÉDÉRATION QUÉBÉCOISE DES ASSOCIATIONS FOYERS-ÉCOLES INC.

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Montréal, le 9 septembre 2016

Monsieur Sébastien Proulx
Ministre de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport et
Ministre de la Famille
Édifice Marie-Guyart
675, boulevard René-Lévesque Est
Aile René-Lévesque, bloc 4, 3e étage
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Cher Ministre,

The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations (QFHSA) appreciates this opportunity to share their opinions with M. Sébastien Proulx, Ministre de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, and with La Commission de la culture et de l'éducation, as a response to *Bill 105: An Act to amend the Education Act*.

The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations (QFHSA) enjoyed the opportunity to present a brief on Bill 86 to the Minister and the Committee on Culture and Education in March of this year. We were looking forward to an exchange of opinions on Bill 105 and were disappointed when QFHSA did not receive an invitation to present at the hearings in September.

However, we have given Bill 105 careful consideration and would like to take this opportunity to share with you our opinion regarding its recommendations.

Firstly, we applaud the government for taking into consideration so many of the concerns expressed during the consultations on Bill 86, including many of our own 16 recommendations, and incorporating many of them into Bill 105. Among our recommendations presented in March, we requested that the Government of Quebec withdraw Bill 86, modify the number of Parent Commissioners, give them the right to vote and maintain the Act Respecting School Elections. We were pleased that the Government has seen fit to do all of these. We requested that the position of the Director General on a school board remain *ex officio* and report to the school board council, not to the Ministry of Education. We also requested that the government maintain the policy of universal suffrage for the election of school board commissioners and we are particularly pleased to see that the Government of Quebec acknowledges the English school system of Quebec as an excellent model for improving student retention and success rates. And lastly, we agree with the decision maintaining the current term of four (4) years for school Board Commissioners.

However, there remain several recommendations that we wish the Minister had addressed more fully:

1. To improve the school board election system by introducing electronic voting, to mandate *le Directeur général des élections du Québec (DGEQ)* to run the elections and to explore ideas of enticing voters to exercise their franchise through tax credits or tax deductions. Interest in voting in school board elections has diminished greatly over the years for a variety of reasons. Funds for running school board elections currently must be drawn from general operational budgets and this makes it difficult to adequately promote and run elections. The elections should be run by *le Directeur général des élections du Québec (DGEQ)* and not by the school boards themselves. Today's technology would make running elections *electronically* very feasible and would greatly increase participation, while cutting costs, as successful models in other provinces have demonstrated. Offering incentives or credits for voting would also increase participation.
2. To create Student Commissioners and mandate that they have the right to vote. We were pleased to see that Parent Commissioners were mandated and were granted voting privilege, but we also desired to see Student Commissioners mandated in all school boards. *The QFHSA is dedicated to promoting the involvement of parents, students, educators and the community at large in the advancement of learning.* We wish to see the school boards share that same mandate.
3. To assist current school boards by instituting standard training, *mandatory for all commissioners under the law*, concerning their roles and responsibilities. Commissioners are drawn from many sectors of society and come with a variety of skill sets. It would be desirable for all commissioners throughout Quebec to receive the same standard instruction in the duties and responsibilities of their position as they start their term of office.
4. To decentralize the offices of commissioners to local schools, particularly in regions where vast geographic territories are under the jurisdiction of a single board such as Eastern Shores, Central Quebec, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Western Quebec School Boards. With video-conferencing technology, commissioners could participate in committee and council meetings remotely, thus reducing the travel time and costs inherent in these duties.
5. To take into account the cultural and linguistic nature of our communities and respond to our repeated requests for recognition of our unique needs in preserving the number, nature and character of the English-Speaking communities of Quebec. We believe there is still much work that needs to be done to secure the vitality of our unique English-speaking communities.
6. To amend the regulation de-listing graduated English students and their families from the English electoral lists and placing them automatically on the French electoral lists, in order to preserve the constitutional right of all members of the English-speaking community to vote for representatives on their English language school boards. Despite

repeated calls for reform to this regulation, the English Speaking communities continue to be underrepresented on their electoral lists, as their names are continually shifted to the French Voting lists.

In addition to these recommendations we proposed in March to the Committee on Culture and Education, we would like to address the current amendments to Section 143 and Section 193 of the Education Act, as proposed in Bill 105.

Regarding co-opted commissioners (Section 143), it is our opinion that school boards should not be required to appoint a co-opted commissioner from the health and sports sector specifically. The choice of sector from which a co-opted commissioner may be drawn should be at the discretion of the council of commissioners and should reflect the unique needs of their school board. In addition, the process for choosing a co-opted commissioner should be determined by the council of commissioners themselves and not by Ministry regulation.

Regarding the creation of Resource Allocation Committees (Section 193), it is our opinion that the current system of councils of commissioners consulting the various school board departments and determining resource allocation, is preferable to the Ministry's proposal of a Resource Allocation Committee made up of a majority of principals as well as individuals responsible for educational services to handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities/difficulties. Although these principals could be drawn from primary and secondary schools, adult education and vocational centers, these acting principals would already have an enormous administrative burden resting on them and would then be required to sacrifice additional pedagogical time to fulfill their duties on a Resource Allocation Committee. In addition, as knowledgeable as they may be individually about the needs of their own school, they may lack sufficient knowledge of the system as a whole. We fear that the selected would continually be lobbied and pursued by everyone, requesting extra funding for their departments or schools. Elected by a college of their peers, and not by universal suffrage, they would not have the same legitimate mandate as do the current council of commissioners.

We sincerely hope that the Minister will consider our requests and incorporate these ideas, along with those of our colleagues at the hearings on September 21-22, into the final version of Bill 105.

Respectfully submitted,



Brian Rock,
President, Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations





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The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations (QFHS) was officially inaugurated in May 1944 and was incorporated by Letters Patent under the Quebec Companies Act in August 1959.

QFHS is an independent, incorporated, not-for-profit volunteer organization dedicated to enhancing the education and general wellbeing of children and youth. QFHS promotes the involvement of parents, students, educators and the community at large in the advancement of learning and acts as a voice for parents. We are a federation of local Home and School Associations driven by one objective: to provide a caring and enriched educational experience for students. The over four thousand (4,000) family members of Home and School Associations come from all sectors of society: working parents, stay-at-home parents, grandparents, educational professionals and other ordinary citizens with an interest in maintaining a high level of education in this province.

