

Alliance gets Director-General to expand revision of electoral rolls for June 14 school board vote

Montreal, May 28: Alliance Quebec President Constacne Middleton-Hope says she is far from satisfied with phone conference she had with Director General of Elections François Casgrain about the chaotic situation of school board electoral rolls.

Casgrain has adopted the Alliance Quebec demand for an extended revision period, adding eleven days to the schedule to allow voters to get themselves on the correct lists to vote in elections for English board members.

What he has not yet done however, Middleton-Hope acknowledged, " was approach the government to ensure everyone who wants to vote can vote. That can be done by ministerial decree and that decree should be passed right now.

"I am writing today to Education Minister Pauline Marois to urge her to support a request for a new decree one that allows eligible voters who come to the voting stations June 14 to vote, whether or not the revision system put their names on the correct list."

The full text of the letter to Madame Marois follows.

Letter to Mme Marois:

May 28, 1998

Madame Marois:

The voting in school board elections throughout Quebec is jeopardized because of the failure of the government to take account of the difficulty of registering so many voters whose desire it is to vote for candidates in the English boards.

The system provides for a revision period which has now been extended. And it is true that the Director General has decreed there be more facilities and more personnel to handle all the applications for revision. But the locations for revision are in themselves insufficiently near all the voters. No one knew the law and its application in the weeks and months before, which would have allowed a proper media campaign of information that would give voters their rights.

There can be no sufficient explanation of the existing limits on registering voters now. Alliance Quebec has reason to fear that half of all eligible voters would be excluded from the process under present decreed procedures. This is not in any way acceptable in a western democracy of the sophistication of Quebec.

It is in short intolerable.

For this reason, Alliance Quebec joins other concerned parties to urge you to propose, without delay, that the council of ministers adopt a change in the decree covering voting. This change may be made by emergency legislative measure, if that is required. The effect of the change we propose would be to allow any eligible voter to vote in the English school board elections for the candidates of his choice by simply attesting under oath to his capacity at the polling station on voting day..

This change would assure that 100% of those eligible to cast ballots who are present during voting hours would cast ballots in this most crucial election. No other change provides for that assurance of the right of the voter who through no fault of his own is trapped in a system that will disenfranchise thousands.

Ways and means can be found in the period after the voting to initiate an adequate program to ensure the compilation of a proper, comprehensive list of voters eligible to vote for English board candidates.

I communicated our urgent request today to Mr. François Casgrain, and he has appraised us of the bleak situation Quebec faces at this time.

Your earliest response would be most gratefully received.

Sincerely,

Constance Middleton-Hope President