

TABULATION OF GRASS-ROOTS OPINIONS
RE PROPOSED RE-STRUCTURING OF EDUCATION IN MONTREAL

PRESENTED TO
COUNCIL FOR SCHOOL REORGANIZATION

March 1968

PRESENTED BY
THE QUEBEC FEDERATION OF PROTESTANT HOME & SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS
4795 St. Catherine Street West, Montreal, Quebec

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At the request of the Council for School Reorganization, Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations secured answers to a questionnaire based upon specific recommendations of the Royal Commission on Inquiry on Education, better known as the Parent Commission. Quebec Federation feels that the results, presented below, give a valid summary of opinions. Locals in all parts of the island took part, representing all socio-economic levels, and the results should reflect the views of a representative cross-section of the membership.

The numbered recommendations are from Volume 4 of the Royal Commission report.

RECOMMENDATION 32

We recommend that a school committee be set up for each elementary or secondary public school.

Recommendation 32: Agreement - Yes 75%; Disagreement - No 25%

Comments: The minority group who were opposed to this recommendation based their opposition on their concern for local detrimental parent interference, and not because the school committee was not a good idea.

RECOMMENDATION 33

We recommend that each school committee consist of five members, elected annually by the parents of the pupils and by the students enrolled in courses for adults, and that, in addition to all those having the right to vote, any person of full age resident in the region shall be eligible for membership on it.

Recommendation 33: Agreement - Yes 67%; Disagreement - No 33%

Comments: The minority opinion expressed here would in large measure be changed to agreement if the terms of office were staggered to two, three and even five year terms, any many felt that the whole community should elect - not just the parents of the school.

RECOMMENDATION 37

We recommend that a single regional school commission administer all education, Roman Catholic, Protestant or non-confessional, in the French or in the English language, within the boundaries of a given area.

Recommendation 37: Agreement - No 40%; Disagreement - Yes 60%

Comments: The real consensus everywhere in the answers was the desire not to retain the status quo, but to accept reorganization along language lines so that the English language and culture could be retained. Those in agreement consistently stressed protection of minority language rights either within the school commissions or with two separate regional school commissions, English and French.

RECOMMENDATION 38

We recommend that the commissioners of the regional commission be elected by an electoral college made up of delegates from all the school committees of the area under the jurisdiction of the regional commission, the number of delegates appointed by each school committee to sit in the electoral college being proportional to the enrolment in that school.

Recommendation 38: Agreement - Yes 67%; Disagreement - No 33%

Comments: The sizeable minority opinion of 33% who disagreed suggested that regional commissions be subject to community election rather than through an electoral college, and that provision for appointments be made to insure minority representation, when minority is 10% or better. Disagreement on linguistic grounds was also very evident.

RECOMMENDATION 42

We recommend that the law entrust the following functions to the regional commission:

(a) to organize and administer kindergarten classes, elementary education, composite secondary education - i.e., general and technical - and special classes for exceptional children, on behalf of all the children within its territory and of adults requesting education;

(b) to ensure the required services in all schools under its jurisdiction, including medical, social, psychological, educational and vocational guidance, and pastoral services;

(c) to select and engage the teaching and administrative personnel of the schools under its jurisdiction, determine the posts they are to occupy and ensure inspection of the schools;

(d) to present to the Department of Education, whenever possible through the agency of the council of school development, and in co-operation with the other regional commissions associated with that council, recommendations for determining or amending standards for services and expenditures to be applied in the schools;

(e) to prepare and submit to the Department of Education, whenever possible through the good offices of the council of school development, the budget needed for the effective operation and progress of its schools;

(f) to levy the real estate tax on its territory and to receive grants from the Department of Education;

(g) to execute necessary school construction projects after approval by the Department or, as the case may be, by the council of school development, to ensure building maintenance, to purchase any required supplies, to arrange for the transportation of pupils;

(h) to take an annual school census of all children and adolescents to the age of eighteen inclusive and to assign the needed schools and classrooms to the types of education provided in response to the desires of parents expressed therein;

(i) to appoint a director general, as well as a director for each of the types of education to be organized in accordance with the cultural and religious diversity of the community, thus providing for the proper administration of each.

Recommendation 42a: Agreement 55%; Disagreement 45%

Comments: Those who disagree want guarantees for linguistic rights and representation on regional commissions. All through these questionnaires the desire seems to be that the minority voice have a legally guaranteed right to be represented. With guarantees for linguistic rights and representation on regional commissions, it is possible that the results would have been more like 80% to 20% in favour.

Even those in agreement made consistent note that they do so on the basic premise that the regional commission is on linguistic lines.

Recommendation 42b: Agreement - no comments.

Recommendation 42c: Agreement - no comments.

Recommendation 42d: Agreement - no comments.

Recommendation 42e: Agreement.

Comments: A large minority felt that the Council of School Development should act as an arm of the Department of Education and with authority to pass on budgets, etc., but not act at a further level, otherwise excessive delays could be experienced.

Recommendation 42f: Disagreement.

Comments: While only a few schools spoke on this question, the tenor was that taxation would be the role of the Council of School Development.

Recommendation 42g: Agreement - no comments.

Recommendation 42h: Agreement - no comments.

Recommendation 42i: Agreement.

Comments: Here again the basic premise for agreement is on the establishment of separate English and French language regional commissions each with their own Directors-General. Comments were made that if only a single regional board were approved, there should be two Directors-General, one French and one English where the minority language exceeded 10%.

RECOMMENDATION 46

We recommend that the law entrust the following functions to the council of school development:

- (a) to define, jointly with the regional school commissions, the basic standards for services and expenditures throughout its territory and to have them accepted by the Department of Education, thus establishing the development plan for the school system of the entire area;
- (b) to negotiate, after consultation with the regional commissions, the salary and wage scales and the working conditions for all the teaching and non-teaching personnel in its territory, or, as the case may be, to participate in provincial negotiations with the Department of Education;
- (c) to study the budgets which the regional school commissions must submit for its approval and to present these budgets as a whole, as well as its own budget, to the Department of Education;
- (d) to share in the determination of uniform tax rates to be levied by all the regional commissions in its territory; prior to the equalization of real estate assessments by the central authority, to take steps to equalize assessments within its own territory; to authorize, when necessary, the levying of a supplemental tax by individual regional commissions;
- (e) to co-ordinate the school development of its territory by exercising all necessary supervision over land purchases and building projects of the regional commissions;
- (f) to operate for the benefit of the regional school commissions in its area those services which can more economically or more effectively be organized in common such as: legal service, architectural and engineering bureau, statistical and

forecasting service, transportation service, and provide for the organization of certain joint educational services for some categories of exceptional children;

(g) to appoint, for all these purposes, a director general, and as many assistant directors general as may be needed to co-ordinate the development of each of the different forms of education to be found in the regional commissions, and to assure proper management of the finance and school equipment services.

Recommendation 46a: Agreement 45%; Disagreement 55%

Comments: We refer back to recommendation 42(c) and repeat that it is felt that the Council of School Development should be an arm of the Department of Education, not a separate entity which could duplicate to a large extent, the work of the Department of Education thereby adding to expense and causing delay.

Recommendation 46b: Disagreement.

Comments: Disagreement was very strong here. The suggestion is made that the Council of School Development, in consultation with its Regional School Commissions would set the overall hiring, salary and wage scales and working conditions of the teachers, and there would be no Provincial negotiations with the Department of Education - in other words without Bill 25.

Recommendation 46c: Disagreement.

Comments: Disagreement only because the role of the Council of School Development is disagreed with - not the idea of the budgets.

Recommendation 46d: Agreement.

Comments: Surprisingly enough, many who disagreed with the Council of School Development in principle qualified it with acceptance of this sort of function for it. General impression seemed to be that equalization of monetary distribution was fair and acceptable.

Recommendation 46e: Agreement - no comment.

Recommendation 46f: Disagreement.

Comments: There seems some confusion about this - a number omitted replying to this question, but those who did, wished for a clear-cut distribution giving administrative powers only to the Council of School Development.

Recommendation 46g: Disagreement.

Comments: Here again the linguistic division shows up very clearly. Two Directors-General are recommended, one French and one English, with required staff under each.

RECOMMENDATION 56

We recommend that all the present school commissions on the Island of Montreal be replaced by seven regional commissions, each having jurisdiction over all pre-school, elementary and secondary public education given within their territories, whether confessional or non-confessional French or English.

Recommendation 56: Agreement 33%; Disagreement 67%.

Comments: In view of the basic premise of division on linguistic lines, the division into seven areas as at present suggested is impractical. The boundaries at present recommended would create very real problems for the English-speaking school population, and are not representative of this group. With linguistic

divisions within commissions and other firm guarantees of minority language rights, the percentage would probably swing in favour.

RECOMMENDATION 57

We recommend that a council of school development be created immediately for the Island of Montreal and that, in addition to the powers with which we have already recommended that such bodies be vested, this council be empowered to receive the proceeds of the real estate tax levied throughout the island, as well as the government grants to which each of the school commissions is entitled, to pay the wages and salaries of the teaching and non-teaching personnel of all the school commissions in its territory, to arrange for the transportation of pupils whenever necessary, to provide the auxiliary services essential to proper administration of the school commissions; statistical services, legal service, an architectural bureau, etc.

Recommendation 57: Agreement 45%; Disagreement 55%.

Comments: Those in agreement qualified their agreement on linguistic conditions already referred to, and limiting of powers to taxation and administration. Those disagreeing based their views on need for linguistic right guarantees, and if these were confirmed, would probably change to 'yes'. Others disagreeing added that they see the Council of School Development as a duplication of the Department of Education and feared further delays, and still others felt the Council should be responsible only for the collection and distribution of tax monies.