



APPELE-Québec Slams Quebec Government for Flip Flop on School Board Elections

Montreal: November 14, 2020 – APPELE-Québec – the Alliance for the Promotion of Public English-language Education in Québec – called upon the Quebec government to release the opinion it received from Public Health officials recommending that it reverse its decision of a month ago and sanction the holding of elections for contested positions for English school boards on December 19 and 20.

“On October 8, Premier Legault announced that on the advice of Public Health he was postponing English school board elections,” noted Joan Fraser, Vice-Chair of APPELE-Québec. “At the time he was clear that he always follows their advice and so we are simply asking him to confirm that the government’s flip flop reflects the recommendation from public health officials.”

“We find the timing of the announcement incoherent with other public health messages in that earlier in the week the Premier suggested that due to the rise in the number of Quebecers who have tested positive for the coronavirus his government is considering closing schools. Yet his government is now calling for elections in red zones while putting severe restrictions on mail-in voting.”

At 6:30 on Friday evening Jean-François Roberge, Minister of Education, without prior consultation issued a news release announcing elections will be held on December 19 and 20 for nine vacant positions, including two board chairs. The Government is also limiting those eligible to vote by mail-in ballot to Quebecers living in seniors’ residences or those in quarantine due to COVID-19 restrictions.

“Forcing people to vote in person on the two weekends prior to Christmas in the middle of a pandemic is not the best way to encourage a high level of participation,” concluded Ms. Fraser. “As we have argued for many months, we should be doing everything we can to facilitate voting by mail.”

“Despite all the obstacles the government has put in place in recent months the school boards are now up and running, and there is no urgency to hold elections. Our leaders should be focusing on meeting the needs of our students and their families during this pandemic, not on elections.”

Of the 95 commissioner positions, 83 were elected without opposition, and these commissioners took office earlier this month. Of the remaining positions, seven must be decided by election. The contested positions include elections for the Chairs of the Lester B. Pearson and Sir Wilfrid Laurier school boards. In the case of the five vacant positions, the Quebec government has indicated that a new election process will be undertaken at a later date.

About APPELE-Québec:

APPELE-Québec – the Alliance for the Promotion of Public English-language Education in Québec – is a broadly-based, Quebec-wide community coalition to promote the continued existence of English school boards, to ensure they are governed by commissioners who are democratically elected by the English-speaking community at large. Our Alliance is comprised of 16 supporting organizations and nine observer groups.

For more information about APPELE-Québec, go to www.appelequebec.org.

Avenue Strategic Communications

For more information, please contact:

Jonathan Goldbloom

Tel. 514 923-7779

Jonathan.Goldbloom@communicationsavenue.com