

Minister has abused her power in English school transfer: AQ

MONTREAL, JULY 3, 1998 - Education Minister Pauline Marois has patently abused her authority in grabbing 21 school properties from the English Montreal School Board and transferring them to the city's largest French board.

It was only two days ago that Quebec's new system of language-based school boards officially came into being. "For almost three decades, English-speaking Quebecers have fought for control of our own school network," AQ President William Johnson noted in a statement on behalf of the organization. "It's taken this PQ government all of two days to begin to destroy that network.

"The Education Minister, like many Education Ministers before her has preached the importance of local control of education. Well, English-speaking Quebecers came out in record numbers during recent elections to show that they intend to exercise that control. Through this outrageous decision, Mme Marois has made it clear that she expects to keep calling the shots."

Alliance Quebec wants the Minister to explain why the French board was handed these properties, valued at some \$26 million when it apparently has its own inventory of close to \$175 million in unused properties. "Some of the buildings to be transferred have been part of our educational heritage." Johnson noted. (Among the schools grabbed is legendary Baron Byng High, which has played such an historic role for so many in the English-speaking community.) "Furthermore, the hope is that these buildings will eventually be needed as schools again. In the meantime, they represent important rental revenue that the English Board can use to support its active network of schools and programs."

Alliance Quebec pledged its support to the English Montreal Board in its efforts to have this unjust expropriation of property reversed.