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QUEBEC FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

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BRIEF CONCERNING REGULATION SIX

1. The present submission was prepared as a result of a two-part Resolution passed at the Annual Meeting of the Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations on May 14th, 1971, The Resolution in question reads as follows:

"WHEREAS parents may, under Bill 63 (Order in Council # 674 of February 18th, 1970) choose English as the language of instruction for their children: and

WHEREAS Regulation 6, approved by Order in Council #115 of January 13th, 1971, Section 4 states:-

"The French language will, progressively become the teaching language for other subjects at the elementary and secondary levels for all pupils affected by the present Regulation"

RESOLVED that since Regulation 6 is in direct violation of the rights guaranteed for English instruction, the Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations oppose this regulation in its present form and to this end a study committee be set up by Federation and participating Home & School Associations to adequately document the changes necessary to the present form of the Regulation.

WHEREAS Regulation 6 approved by Order in Council # 115 of January 13th, 1971 has many far reaching implications regarding the character and form of English language education of the Province of Quebec affecting both students and teachers, and

WHEREAS no formal expression of opinion has been sought or obtained from member associations of the Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations;

RESOLVED that the Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations in conjunction with its member associations undertake a well structured survey and subsequent study and analysis of opinions expressed, with the objective of preparing a definite brief to the Department of Education on Regulation 6.

A MEMBER OF THE CANADIAN HOME AND SCHOOL AND PARENT-TEACHER FEDERATION



2. Very soon after the Annual Meeting a Special Committee was established which decided to re-examine some of the studies and polls which the Federation undertook recently on the question of teaching French to students who attend English schools and on the question of Regulation 6 itself. On the basis of the said re-examination a draft submission was prepared which was distributed to all of the member associations for the purpose of receiving their comments. After the comments had been received, the submission was written again with a view to incorporating the general trend of the comments received from the member associations and the present submission reflects the views of our members.

3. The year 1960, is the year in which what has sometimes been referred to as the "quiet revolution" began in Quebec. The quiet revolution has generally manifested itself in an attempt by the majority of the population of Quebec to assert itself positively, to achieve the greatest possible progress in all fields of endeavour and particularly in a new pride in its uniqueness and its language. Although the "quiet revolution" has not always been quiet and has sometimes expressed itself in frightening ways, it has generally been positive and progressive and has also generally received the support of the English minority. In addition to receiving the support and sympathy of the English speaking community, the new pride in its language by the French majority provoked the English speaking community into needing and desiring a greater capacity to understand and speak French. There developed rather

quickly a dissatisfaction on the part of many English speaking parents with the type and quality of French instruction in English schools. Many English speaking parents in Montreal began to express their dissatisfaction very strongly and began to apply pressure on the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal and other school boards in the province to increase and improve the quality of French instruction in English schools.

4. A number of school boards responded to parental pressure and made improvements in their programs of teaching French. Programs of teaching conversational French with the use of new audio visual methods and experimental programs of total immersion in French in kindergarten classes as well as at the seventh grade level were introduced. The program of teaching French within Greater Montreal generally exceeded the minimum standards set by the Provincial Department of Education.

5. In September, 1969 the Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations and the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal jointly prepared and distributed a questionnaire to all parents of elementary school children in the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal schools in order to know their views on French instruction for their children. Parents were requested to complete one questionnaire for each child with their responses relating to that particular child. There were 25,830 questionnaires returned from an elementary school population of 40,380. Of these 2,028 were not

completed sufficiently for analysis so that the analysis of the questionnaire was based on 23,802 responses or 59% of the population.

6. About 75% of the parents responding to the questionnaire wanted their children to have sufficient fluency in the French language to be able to earn a living using the French language. Two-thirds of the responding parents considered the French language instruction program of the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal then in existence to be inadequate to meet their children's needs.

7. It is quite clear then that in 1969 an overwhelming majority of parents of children attending English schools wanted their children to become fluent in French and wanted better and increased instruction in French for them. English speaking educational authorities were attempting to satisfy the demands of the parents. The educational authorities had not always reacted as many parents wished but there is no doubt that they had begun to respond. It is fair to say that they could not always proceed as quickly as they wished because there were budget restrictions as well as a limited supply of good and qualified French teachers.

8. Early in 1971, Regulation 6 was enacted. Mrs. Doreen Richter, who was President of the Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations at the time, wrote a letter to the editor of the Montreal Star dealing with Regulation 6. Mrs. Richter expressed generally positive views about Regulation 6. After Mrs. Richter's letter was

published, there were some who said that her views on Regulation 6 were not necessarily those of the Federation membership.

9. In order to deal directly with the controversy which began to develop about the views of the members of Federation on Regulation 6 a survey was undertaken by Federation with the aim of obtaining the opinions of members on Regulation 6. On March 2nd, 1971 all member associations received from Federation office a copy of Regulation 6, a copy of Mrs. Richter's letter and a questionnaire. The questionnaire posed the question as to whether there was anything in Mrs. Richter's letter with which there was disagreement and whether Regulation 6 needed clarification or modification. Replies to the questionnaire were requested by April 15th, 1971 and by that date replies had been received from 56 member associations. At the time there were 132 member associations. Of the 56 member associations which responded, 36 were Montreal island associations and 20 were off island associations. Replies were also received from some individuals.

10. Generally those responding to the questionnaire were in agreement with the spirit and tone of Mrs. Richter's letter. Only 9 of those responding felt that there was anything in Mrs. Richter's letter with which they could not agree.

11. Only 6 of the associations responding felt that no clarifications or modifications of the Regulation were required. All the others had question and doubts about various sections of the Regulation. The responses indicated concern about the kind of tests which would be

given in virtue of Section 5. Some associations suggested that the Minister have an advisory committee to work with him in administering section 7, such committee to be composed of parents, school board members and professional educators.

12. The aspects of the Regulation which caused the most concern were the following:

- (a) Newcomers: Many associations were of the opinion that newcomers arriving in the last years of high school would not be able to achieve the required standard of French, and that exceptions should be made for them.
- (b) Pupil-teacher Ratio: In the preamble to Regulation 6, it is specifically stated that the enactment of Regulation 6 would come under the existing budget rules and would in no way change the pupil-teacher ratio. This was considered by many associations a serious impediment to the effectiveness of improving the teaching of French:
- (c) Percentage of French in the Educational Program: The regulation was considered ambiguous concerning the amount of French which would be taught. Some associations thought 40% should be listed as a maximum and some thought that 40% was too high. The comments in the questionnaires reflected great concern about the possibility of section 4 eliminating English education as it has been known in Quebec;
- (d) Slow learners: Some associations thought that special consideration must be given to students whose slow progress might be seriously retarded if French were used as the teaching language;
- (e) Local versus Central Control: Many of the responses indicated that the French program must be flexible so as to allow for local decision based on the child's ability, the talents of the available teachers, and the nature of the particular community.

13. In addition to the concerns mentioned above, there were other concerns expressed. There were some who felt that there were not enough good French teachers available. There was some fear expressed about possible displacement of English teachers. There were some comments to the effect that the Regulation was illegal. Some eminent legal experts have stated that Regulation 6 is unconstitutional.

14. Spokesmen for the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal have stated that it was going very far in implementing the aims of Regulation 6 on a voluntary basis and that there was therefore no need for legislation on the subject to make obligatory what people were perfectly willing and eager to do on their own initiative.

15. We know that the Minister is aware of some of the uneasiness about Regulation 6 and did try to allay some of the fears by adding the word "certain" after the word "for" in the third line of section 4.

16. In the light therefore of the situation as it existed before the enactment of Regulation 6 and considering the many concerns and doubts about it as expressed by our members it seems clear to us, the Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations, representing 17,000 members, that Regulation 6 should be changed. There is no question at all that a certain amount of time in each school day must be devoted to the teaching of French as a language. This has always been the case in English schools in Quebec. It is clear that this minimum amount of French instruction has not been

satisfactory. However, considerable progress has been made in implementing the aims of Regulation 6 on a voluntary basis.

Regulation 6, by arousing anxiety and fear in the English speaking community, defeats its aim, upon which we are all agreed, and toward which we are all working.

17. In conclusion then, we strongly recommend that wherever French becomes a teaching language for other subjects in English schools, that it only be done with the consent and approval of those affected; to whatever extent this recommendation requires modification of Regulation 6, that such modification be enacted.