



Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec  
Quebec English School Boards Association

# School Board Democracy

## Proposed changes in Quebec's Education Structures

**Marcus Tabachnick**, Executive Director

**Kim Hamilton**, Director Communications & Special Projects



Line Beauchamp – 2010/12



Michele Courchesne – 2012



Marie Malavoy – 2012/14

# QUEBEC EDUCATION MINISTERS 2010 - 2015



Yves Bolduc – 2014/15



François Blais – 2015/??

## Québec School Boards – Current Situation

- Commissioners (Trustees) elected by universal suffrage
  - Board Chairs elected by universal suffrage
  - Board composition:
    - 1 Chair
    - 9 – 12 Commissioners
    - 3 – 4 Parents (elected at a general assembly of parents)
    - 2 – Reserved for co-opted community members
    - 2 – Some boards have added student representatives
- TOTAL: 17 – 21 Council members
- Chair and elected Commissioners have voting rights

## English School Boards – Some Stats

Enrolment: 1975 - +/- 250,000

Enrolment: 2014 - +/- 98,000

School Boards: 1975 - 18

School Boards: 2015 - 9

School Buildings: 1975 - 350

School Buildings: 2015 - 300

Commissioners: 1975 - 172

Commissioners: 2014 - 104

Success Rate: 2014 – 83%

Overhead Cost: 2014 – 4%

## School Board Elections 2014

- 2014 Voter participation rate 5.54%  
French Boards: 4.87% - English Boards: 16.88% (50% registered)
- # of Chairmen: 69  
French Boards: 60 (28 acclaimed) – English Boards: 9 (3 acclaimed)
- # of Candidates for Board Chair: 123  
French Boards: 106 – English Boards: 17
- # of Commissioners: 712  
French Boards: 617 – English Boards: 95 (49% acclaimed)
- # of Candidates for Commissioner: 1360  
French Boards: 1193 – English Boards: 167

## Québec School Boards – What's the problem?

- 1) Cost of running elections
- 2) Low voter turnout
- 3) Public attitude towards school boards
- 4) Underperformance of certain boards

## School Boards – Questions framing the issue

- ✓ Do we measure democracy by cost?
- ✓ Do we measure democracy by voter turnout?
- ✓ Do we measure democracy by number of acclamations?
- ✓ Do we measure democracy or do we value democracy?
- ✓ Are minority language communities protected by the Canadian Constitution?
- ✓ Who determines the interpretation of constitutional rights?

## Québec School Boards – Government proposal

- ❖ The Minister has declared the end of school boards as we currently know them
- ❖ The Minister has declared an end to Commissioners elected by universal suffrage
- ❖ The Minister is suggesting a form of Electoral College with only certain, designated, groups eligible to name members
- ❖ New Board of Directors to include more parents, teacher, principal, municipal representative, specialty competencies (accounting, engineering, legal, etc.)



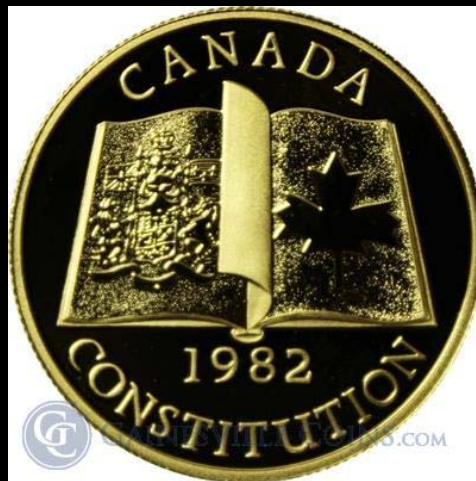
## Québec School Boards – Government proposal

- ❖ Create a single tax rate for the province, no accounting for regional differences or available tax base
- ❖ Taxes to be collected and managed by municipalities
- ❖ 'Encourage' school boards to merge – try to eliminate boards of under 10,000 students
- ❖ Give responsibility for educational infrastructure to municipalities
- ❖ Give responsibility for student transportation to municipalities

# The attitude of the current Minister of Education



# What's the problem – for the government?



# Government proposal – What can we do?



## Government proposal – What did we do?

Proactive  
~~Reactive~~



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Canadian School Boards Association

Congress 2015

# Election Systems Study Panel



Hon. Marlene Jennings P.C., LL.B.

The Election Systems Study Panel was formed as an independent group to study election formats and enhancements. The 4 sponsoring associations are:

- Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA)
- Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations (QFHSA)
- English Parents Committees Association (EPCA)
- Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN)

## Election Systems Study Panel – Mandate

- 1) Review past elections and make recommendations on how to improve the process
- 2) Identify options for electing Commissioners
- 3) Seek out the views of English-community groups and individuals
- 4) Make recommendations that can be presented to the Minister of Education, the Premier of Quebec, and community groups
- 5) Deposit the final report and recommendations to the 4 partner groups on/before September 7, 2015

## Election Systems Study Panel – Information

- Everyone is welcome to submit a brief to the Panel
- Experience with government on governance issues is sought
- Briefs should be maximum 25 pages, double-spaced, in Times (or similar) 12-pt font
- Last date to submit briefs is July 24<sup>th</sup>
- Hearings will take place by teleconference, videoconference, or Skype/FaceTime – can be from anywhere
- All submissions should be sent electronically only to:

**[electionspanel@gmail.com](mailto:electionspanel@gmail.com)**



## Québec School Boards – Quality & Competence

- ❖ The Minister claims that one of the reasons for making change is to ensure that leaders of “quality and competence” are in place to govern \$11-billion of taxpayers’ money.

**What did we do?**

**Again QESBA took a proactive approach**

- ❖ QESBA is surveying all Chairs and Commissioners to determine education, work, community commitment, and other factors that will allow a data-backed detail of the people who make up the elected Councils.
- ❖ Preliminary results (40% response) show 90% have post-secondary level education – 60% professionals or management – 80% give more than 20 hours per month to representation duties.

# What's missing from discussion?



## What's missing from discussion?

The one overriding and critical factor related to Trustees (Commissioners):

### **MOTIVATION**

The desire to ensure that all students get the best education possible and that each student has the opportunity to succeed to their full potential.

## Why should you be concerned?

- Education Ministers talk to each other (CMEC, etc.)
- Trend is for one province trying something new
- Who has rights – the minority language community
- What are the rights – Supreme Court jurisprudence

## What are the lessons and what needs to be done?

- This can happen in any Province
- Need to define what Trustees do and what is their value added to education system
- Need to find new ways to reach out to community
- Need to stop being modest about school board accomplishments

## Contacts

- For Briefs and input to Election Systems Study Panel  
[electionspanel@gmail.com](mailto:electionspanel@gmail.com)
- Marcus Tabachnick, Executive Director QESBA  
[mtabachnick@qesba.qc.ca](mailto:mtabachnick@qesba.qc.ca) / (514) 705 5900
- Kim Hamilton, Director Communications QESBA  
[khamilton@qesba.qc.ca](mailto:khamilton@qesba.qc.ca) / (514) 919 3894