

Association des comités de parents anglophones English Parents' Committee Association



August 17, 2020

Dear Parents,

The announcement by Education Minister Jean-François Roberge today sought to assure parents and educators that we are not alone in shouldering the burden of the return to school next month.

Many of you have expressed anxiety in varying degrees about the return to school, and I want to assure you that those sentiments have been dutifully related to the Minister, the Ministry, and all of our education partners.

While the English Parents' Committee Association is disappointed by the lack of expanded access to online learning for those parents who want it, EPCA is satisfied that there are new monies and measures coming to help our diverse population.

The \$20 million in new funding announced is supposed to allow individual boards and schools to hire more teachers, Special Ed technicians, and professionals that will help individual schools address their own needs.

We are pleased to see the government shun a “cookie-cutter” approach in this regard, as our network, indeed, our province is diverse: French and English, urban and rural, large and small – our schools, classes, and students are diverse, as are our needs.

The funding is meant to organize remedial activities, recovery and homework help and provide better support for struggling students and those with learning disabilities. This is good news for the special needs community – hiring an estimated 350 new staff, whether it goes to speech therapy, teachers or Special Ed techs, it is part of an overall \$100-million package since last year to put in measures according to individual community needs.

Many of the initiatives have already been implemented, since announced in March, but we welcome these new programs and funding pledged before the start of the school year.

The government is right to ease controls over how schools spend previously earmarked dollars for student support, instead allowing parents and educators more control over these resources, since they know their students, and children, best. This will also allow for schools at a regional level to have flexibility in their decision-making with the money being spent as they see fit, to cater to their own communities.

We will always favour continued efforts and measures to give our communities more control over our institutions and expect this to continue.

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Also announced today was 560,000 hours in direct support to the most vulnerable students, as the government committed to renew unconditionally, all budgets associated with disabled students or students with social maladjustments or learning difficulties.

EPCA also welcomes the news that this will allow the first few weeks of school for remedial teachers, psycho-educators and other professionals and staff to be spent directly with vulnerable students rather than completing administrative tasks.

As the official voice of Quebec parents in the English language school system, EPCA understands the crucial importance of engaged community organizations and how vital our role is in assisting families in their pursuit of educational success. That is why we are also pleased to see a plan and funding for getting students who have dropped out, back *into* the system with the assistance of community organizations.

Although we did not get the choice about sending our children back that many hoped for, we are hopeful that the school boards will use these monies to help with whatever concrete issues individual schools are facing. It is our belief that more control for local boards translates into reducing the pressure many families feel, while supporting the educators who are asked to do the job.

I want to assure you that EPCA is here at every step of the way, and we will continue to represent and speak for parents, and *only* parents, with transparency and diligence, and continue bringing that unwavering commitment to all representations with all levels of government and our educational partners.

Katherine Korakakis - President

About the English Parents' Committee Association (EPCA)

EPCA is a coalition of parent committees from English-language school boards across Quebec, representing nearly 100,000 students in the English language youth sector.