

Association des comités de parents anglophones English Parents' Committee Association



Press Release
For Immediate Release

EPCA LAUDS NEW MONIES, LIFTING OF BUREAUCRATIC CONTROLS DISAPPOINTED IN LACK OF OPTION FOR PARENTS

Quebec, QC. August 17, 2020 - The English Parents' Committee Association welcomes the announcement of new monies and support programs for the coming school year, announced by Education Minister Jean-François Roberge on Monday.

The infusion of new envelopes for increased hiring of teachers, Special Education technicians, therapists and support staff, along with the necessary flexibility to allow local boards and schools to spend the funds according to their own priorities, is good news.

If individual boards in schools can decide how to best spend the \$20 million in new funding – in addition to earlier announcements made in March and last year – it will help to reassure parents and educators that they can proceed with increased, tangible support.

Funding for remedial activities and homework help is crucial, as is better and more direct support for struggling students and those with learning disabilities, and we are pleased with the news that an estimated 350 new staff can be hired – in addition to 750 announced last year – whether for speech therapists, teachers or Special Education technicians, all according to individual community needs.

We further encourage efforts to reduce bureaucratic controls over spending, allowing parents and educators more control over these resources since it is at home and in schools that these decisions should be made, rather than in Quebec City.

EPCA favours efforts to deliver more control for our communities over our institutions and expect this to continue to allow for schools at a regional level to be flexible in their decision-making.

Our special needs community will note the new hours (560,000) announced for direct support to the most vulnerable students, as the government has committed to renew *unconditionally*, all budgets associated with disabled students or students with social maladjustments or learning difficulties.

It is wholly appropriate that the first few weeks of school for remedial teachers, psycho-educators and other professionals and staff will now – as pledged by the Minister – be spent directly with vulnerable students rather than completing administrative tasks.

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While we laud the introduction of a broad, Quebec-wide public campaign to value education, we remind the government and all our partners that organizations like EPCA do so every day, and we are ready and available to participate in any measure that supports student success and families.

However, as the official voice of parents of students in Quebec's English public schools, EPCA is disappointed that there was no announcement for expanded access to online learning for those parents who prefer it, and this sentiment will not disappear with these announcements.

Rather these new measures, and the previous measures announced, can instead ease the anxiety of many parents and educators who feel that they alone shouldered the burden of this unprecedented return to school.

Many of our stakeholders expressed anxiety about their children returning to school, and we continue to make representations to the ministry, Minister Roberge, and all officials that those sentiments must be carefully considered in all deliberations and in all instances.

Although Quebec parents did not hear that they would get the ultimate choice of in school or online learning, EPCA is hopeful that our school boards will use these monies to help with whatever issues individual schools determine as priorities. More control for local boards translates into reducing the pressure many families feel, while supporting educators in their commitment to the well-being and success of their students.

The government has clearly said that they are not alone, and it is delivering the people and resources to support them.

We are watching very closely to ensure that this is so.

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About the English Parents' Committee Association (EPCA)

The English Parents' Committee Association represents eight Quebec English-language school boards. With a team of Directors chosen by member Parent Committees, it is the official voice of Quebec's English public school parent community, representing almost 100,000 students. Speaking with one voice for parents and their children, EPCA represents parent interests in all dealings with the *Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES)* and across all levels of government.

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