



English Parents' Committee Association



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SPECIAL EDITION:

QUEBEC ELECTION - EPCA Asks
the Parties Questions About Our
Children's Education



Katherine Korakakis is the President of the English Parents Committee Association (EPCA). In addition to this vital role in the Quebec educational sector, Katherine has spent most of her life working alongside start-ups in various verticals. For 10 years, she was responsible for the development of entrepreneurial initiatives and projects under the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, a Youth Secretariat program of the government of Quebec. Katherine is Head of Entrepreneurship at ProMontreal Entrepreneurs (PME), an early stage VC fund that has been around for 22 yrs, and is currently the vice-president of PME MTL Centre-Ouest and on the investment committees of PME MTL Centre and PME MTL Centre-Ouest. Katherine has also authored and co-authored guidebooks on entrepreneurship education and has served on the Boards of numerous corporations.

President's message

Upcoming Provincial Election is Important

Dear Parents,

With the angst over the upcoming Quebec election looming not far away, we sometimes forget that a new school year has started. EPCA wants to know how it's been for you and your children so far. We will be launching an online survey to find out so stay tuned for that survey and for our next newsletter. The results help us know what your concerns are and help us make sure we can align our services to meet your needs. There will be many more surveys to come throughout this school year, so we can stay attuned to the reality you are your children are facing.

As soon as the election was announced, we asked all five political parties present at the national assembly eight questions. The questions were put together after months of consultations with English-speaking parents across the province of Quebec. In this newsletter you will find the answers we received. Note that no answer is an answer in our books.

In closing, I want to urge each and every one of you to turn out and vote. Whomever you are voting for, it is imperative that our community makes their voices heard loud and clear on Election Day. This election is an important one for our community, so please vote! Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions, we are very responsive and eager to help.



EPCA Presents - Questions on Educational Issues to Political Parties in the Upcoming Quebec Provincial Election



As the official voice of Quebec's English public-school parent community, EPCA felt that the Quebec provincial election was an opportune time to put the questions of the English community to the political parties currently operating in Quebec. We have heard many concerns over the past year from parents, students, Parents' Committees, and communities on the state of the English language education system and wanted to raise these concerns to the political parties and have the opportunity to understand where they stand on specific issues. In particular, concerns were shared with EPCA regarding mental health, recent Bills put into effect in the province, pervasive teacher shortages, and educational success.

In the interest of getting first-hand comment and commitment on the issues that are of concern to our educational community, EPCA reached out directly to the provincial political parties in the National Assembly to ask them eight questions pertaining to these topics and our children's education. We believe that their responses will help us to both understand their platforms and hold them to account for the term of their engagement at the Assemblée Nationale.

The answers below were the only answers received. A lack of response is a response unto itself.

Q1: Pervasive teacher shortages

The pervasive lack of teachers in Québec is aggravated by several factors including career incentives, comparatively low salaries to neighboring provinces (particularly in the Outaouais) and unattractive working conditions. Tell us how your party intends to address the driving factors for the dramatic shortage of teachers in Québec.



The labour shortage is a major issue in Quebec. The education network is not spared, on the contrary. We must act on several fronts. We will facilitate access to qualifying master's degrees. In addition, we will work with service centers and school boards to establish the number of professionals they need in each job category, and we will promote the training of these professionals to better meet the needs identified.

More generally, in order to combat the labour shortage that is hindering Québec's economic development and the delivery of accessible, quality public services, we have put forward a series of measures that will help mitigate its effects:

- First, we will promote the retention and return of experienced workers to the labour market by:
 - Providing a contribution vacation to the Quebec Pension Plan for those 62 and over;
 - Doubling the tax exemption for people 65 and over to \$30,000
- We will continue efforts to retrain workers in sectors where demand is highest.
- We will promote the return of young parents to the workforce by introducing child care spaces for all at \$8.70;
- We will ensure that we support immigration that helps fill job vacancies in the regions and sectors most affected and work to accelerate the recognition of the diplomas of workers who come from another province or country.



The CAQ government has made historic salary increases for teachers: 15% on average. We have also added three new qualifying master's programs: this represents a potential of over 800 additional teachers per year. Already, the number of students enrolled in faculties of education has increased by 9%.

Thanks to a financial incentive, the call for retired teachers to return to teaching has been heard, with over 700 teachers coming on board to help out for the 2021-2022 year.

If we are re-elected to government, we will continue to implement pragmatic and effective measures to address the labour shortage in the education sector.

Q2: Law #21 and educational institutions

While not entering a discussion of the merits of bill 21, we would like to understand your position on enforcement specifically in educational institutions. *Would your party repeal the application of Law #21 to educational institutions?*



No. We believe that Bill 21 is a reasonable and balanced law, adopted democratically, which reflects the choice of the secular state made by Quebecers.



Bill 21 on the secularization of the State proposed by the Caquist government goes too far, particularly with regard to the ban on religious symbols for teachers. This is why we will abolish this ban as soon as we take office.



Q3: Completion rates in CÉGEPS

Students in CÉGEPS have an elevated dropout rate. The imposition of additional French graduation requirements will only aggravate this situation, combined with a lack of French language support in primary and secondary English feeder schools. *What is the strategy of your party to support educational advancement of students attending English CÉGEPS?*



The Liberal Party of Quebec believes that it is important to provide adapted French language training for students attending English-language CEGEPs. An adequate mastery of French is the key to entering the job market. However, we believe that these resources must accompany students and must not jeopardize their graduation or their chance to join the university program of their choice. In this sense, we believe that the additional French courses added by Bill 96 should be optional.



We will continue to support all colleges, both French and English, to help all students succeed. Several initiatives are underway and we are open to implementing others.

Furthermore, in response to concerns raised by the anglophone community in particular following the adoption of an amendment proposed by the Liberal Party, we have amended Bill 96 to allow all anglophone CEGEP students who do not have the linguistic capacity to take three courses taught in French to substitute three French courses.

Q4: Educational Success

With one of the statistically lowest achievement scores in North America, what measures would your party take to improve educational success for schools in Québec?



To improve academic success, the CAQ government has put in place several concrete measures to improve the educational success of young Quebecers.

- We have introduced the first national tutoring program in the country to help our young people in difficulty.
- We have entered into a partnership with Allô Prof to improve the resources available to students;
- We've made massive hires of professionals to give more help to students with French language difficulties;
- We have added hundreds of special classes to better support students with learning delays;
- We're cutting red tape to free up thousands of hours for professionals to focus more on helping the most vulnerable students.

These are important changes that will pay off in the long run. In a second mandate, we propose to develop a single platform of professional services to better support children with difficulties. We also want to offer all preschool and elementary school teachers \$300 per class to the purchase of Quebec books to encourage a taste for reading. It has been proven time and time again that fostering the development of a taste for reading in elementary school improves the chances of success in high school.



We need to do a better job of encouraging student retention and success. To do this, we will provide free access to a specific educational project in public schools, such as a concentration or sport-study, up to a maximum of \$5,000. We will also make the tutoring program permanent and introduce a tax credit of up to \$500 to allow families to cover costs incurred to promote academic success, such as speech therapy or remedial education, when these services are not available to them through the school.

Q5: Mental Health

The pressures on our children and young people have been aggravated by a lack of resources and the impact of isolation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. *What is your party's strategy for supporting mental health in Québec schools?*



Collectively, we have avoided talking about mental health for too long. Taboos persist and mental health has not been considered as it should have been by society. Although initiatives have been undertaken in recent years, there is still a long way to go, considering that approximately 20,000 people are still waiting for mental health care. It is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to an increase in psychological distress and mental health issues in a more global way. Quebec will feel the full impact in the next few years, but with growing waiting lists, significant costs for private services and difficulties in recruiting the workforce, we are at a crossroads. We need to avoid a mental health crisis following the COVID-19 pandemic. So a Liberal government will:

- implement a public psychotherapy program to ensure universal access
- ensure that CLSC workers are better utilized in the implementation of mental health solutions;
- ensure better funding for community organizations that work in mental health;
- undertake an emergency awareness plan on social and traditional media to promote positive measures, prevention measures and options for people in need.

In addition, we will work with service centers and school boards to determine the number of professionals they need, in each job category, and we will promote the training of these professionals, to better respond to the needs identified, particularly for the needs to better accompany students who have needs.



The CAQ government has put in place several specific measures to significantly increase resources in schools and thus better intervene, notably through the Inter-ministerial Action Plan on Mental Health. The Minister of Education also tabled an ambitious plan for success, of which 19 million of which was specifically earmarked for mental health services for students in Quebec students.

We have also invested to support student mental health in higher education and have tabled a \$95 million plan to improve the health and well-being of students and staff in this regard. This is in addition to the 14M invested in Spring 2020 and the additional \$10M for student mental health in response to the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis.

The results have been very positive: as of September 1, 2021, more than 125 resources have been hired, nearly 23,000 students have received services, at least 8,000 students have been assessed and thus provided access to academic accommodations, and 69,000 hours of assessment and psychotherapy services were provided.

If Quebecers once again place their trust in us, we will continue to build on this momentum for the benefit of all Quebec youth.

Q6: Social Cohesion

The passage of Laws #21 and #96 have served to deepen the cleavages and divisions within our schools and in our communities. *What measures would your party adopt to support more diverse and inclusive schools where all Quebecers are made to feel that they belong?*



As mentioned above, we believe that Bill 21 is a reasonable and balanced law, adopted democratically, which reflects the choice of the secular state made by Quebecers.

Bill 96 aims to bring Quebecers together around the only official and common language of Quebec: French, while guaranteeing respect for the historical rights of English-speaking Quebecers.

In this sense, we will continue to support inclusive schools, while protecting the French language and the secular nature of the State. Strengthening the status of French in Quebec will not come at the expense of the rights of English-speaking Quebecers.



For the Liberal Party of Quebec, it is fundamental to ensure that government actions do not result in unjustified restrictions on individual freedoms. Any limitation of these freedoms, to be acceptable, must be justified by a greater good, which must be conclusively established.

A Liberal government will not pre-emptively apply the notwithstanding clause to these bills without clear guidelines. The notwithstanding clause, by its very nature, must not be used lightly, let alone in a way that divides the population.

It is important to bring Quebecers together to face the many challenges that lie ahead. We do not have the luxury of dividing ourselves. The Quebec Liberal Party will always support initiatives from our schools to promote diversity and living together.

Q7: Rattrapage

What is your party's strategy to support children – particularly those already experiencing learning difficulties – to catch up for the learning that was lost during the Pandemic?



As mentioned earlier, we will make the tutoring program permanent. In addition, we will introduce a tax credit of up to \$500 to allow families to cover costs incurred to support academic success, such as speech therapy or remediation, when these services are not available to them through the school.



We want to increase professional services for special needs students in all regions of Quebec, notably by hiring more professionals and creating an easy-to-access online platform. This platform will allow virtual meetings with a professional, as well as offering a tool bank for parents.

Q8: Law #96 and English CÉGEP enrollment

The law regulating who can study in English is strict at the elementary and secondary levels. Law #96 artificially imposes caps on spaces in English CÉGEPs for Quebecers having studied in English throughout elementary and secondary school. *Would your party repeal the provisions of Law #96 that further restrict access for them to English CÉGEPs?*



It is not true that Bill 96 imposes a cap on English-language CEGEP seats for Quebecers who have studied in English at the primary and secondary levels. On the contrary, Bill 96 obliges colleges offering English-language instruction to give priority in admission to students who have been declared eligible to receive instruction in English.

The choice we have made is a balanced one. Students who wish to attend an English-language institution will still be able to do so, but these institutions will have to prioritize eligible students first. English-speaking citizens are protected so that they can continue their education in their language.



The Quebec Liberal Party will restore the right of students to attend the college of their choice.



Parent Resources

To find out how you can get more involved as a parent, check out EPCA's Back to School Guide to Involvement for Parents.

The Government has introduced new rules and regulations for **daycares**. More information can be found at the following link (in French only).

Tutoring



Homework Help



Supporting the journey to bilingualism, the Canadian Parents for French has many resources on their website to foster French second language learning.

EPCA MISSION STATEMENT

The English Parents' Committee Association (EPCA) is a coalition of parents' committees of Quebec's English-language public school boards, representing more than 100,00 students in the youth sector.

EPCA advocates for a strong and sustainable English-language public education system to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for our children, while respecting the culture and language of anglophone Quebecers.

To do so, EPCA seeks to engage and motivate parents across Quebec to contribute to strong, representative and effective parent governance, to foster positive relationships with stakeholders across the educational spectrum, and to provide guidance and support to all member organizations.

What would you like to see in
our upcoming editions?

[TELL US HERE](#)

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EPCA STRATEGIC PILLARS

INFORM

Using all communications tools at our disposal, offer up-to-date information on public education initiatives, parent governance interests, best practices and issues management to ensure a healthy, well-engaged anglophone parent community.

CONSULT

Ensure strong, high-quality and consistent feedback mechanisms with members and partners across the English-language public school network through both electronic and in-person methods.

SUPPORT

Provide training and professional development at all levels of parent governance, optimize the sharing of best practices and provide multiple support services for parent committees, governing boards and parent delegates in need.

ADVOCATE

Push for appropriate policy change and improvement through enhanced partnerships with like-minded organizations, Government working groups/tasks forces, and related organizations, through well-considered political positions on behalf of English- Language parents committees across Quebec, taking into account regional difference and the urban/rural divide.