



Parents' Committee Guide



A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
The English Parents' Committee Association



The English Parents' Committee Association (EPCA) represents the interests of English-speaking parents to decision-makers and educational partners across the province of Quebec. It advocates for the rights of parents and children in public elementary and secondary schools so that they can receive a quality education in a safe and healthy environment.

Contact EPCA if your Parents' Committee needs assistance learning more about a topic or locating the appropriate tools or resources.

We can provide:

- Training
- Information
- Tools
- Advice

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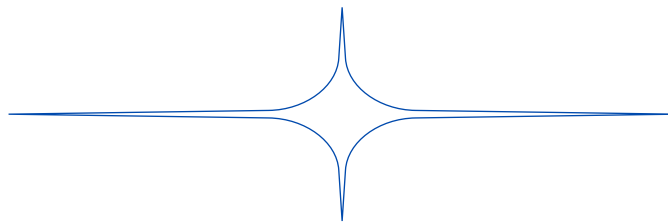
Introduction

Welcome to your School Board's Parents' Committee, and congratulations on being elected to this important position representing your school's parents! Parent participation in School Board activities is essential. As stipulated in Section 189 of the Québec Education Act, each School Board must establish a Parents' Committee (PC). (EA, s. 191).

The Parents' Committee's mission is to represent the interests of your territory's parents to the School Board so that the services provided best meet the needs and expectations of the parents. We know that the parent representation role may seem daunting, but we are here to help! Your Parents' Committee and all of its members are critical collaborators in the success of children in your community and across Quebec!

The school network can rely on parents' active participation in various committees. The parent participation bodies and the links between them are summarized below.

Note: The numbers correspond to the relevant sections of the Education Act.



Laws and Regulations

According to the Quebec Education Act, parents and guardians have a right to participate in the activities of their School Board and to be represented on various School Board committees. Several laws and regulations govern the activities of the Parents' Committee. However, it is the Act sur l'instruction publique (PII), that provides for the creation of a Parents' Committee in each School Board and establishes its composition as well as its functions and powers.

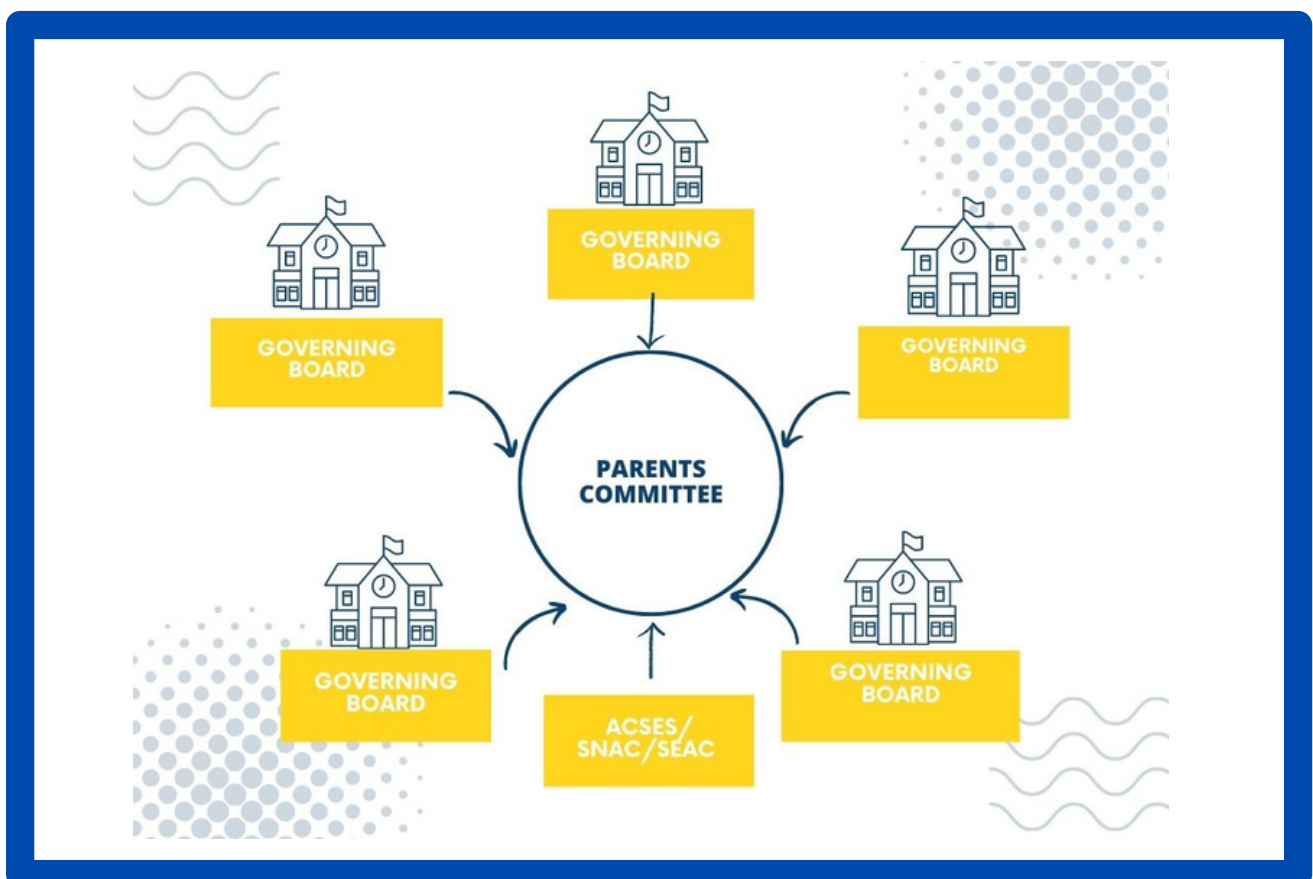
You will find the sections of the Education Act that deal with the Parents' Committee referenced in this guide.

THE PARENTS' COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

Each school must hold an Annual General Assembly (AGA) of parents with children attending the school no later than 30 September of each school year. It is during this AGA that the parents must also elect a Governing Board and, from parent members of the Governing Board, a Parent Representative to the Parents' Committee. The members of the Parents' Committee represent all of the parents and guardians whose children attend the school. The term of office for the Parent Representative is one year.

The Parents' Committee is composed of:

- A Parent Representative from each of the schools represented by the School Board
- A parent delegate from the Advisory Committee Services Education Students (ACSES), Special Needs Advisory Committee (SNAC), or Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) - depending on the set-up of the local school system



Elected Positions

The Parents' Committee shall elect one of its members to serve as Chair of the committee on an annual basis (sec 191). The Chairperson will preside over committee meetings and serve as the committee's spokesperson. The Parents' Committee shall also elect those of its members who will serve as Parent Commissioners on the School Board's Council of Commissioners, representatives to Transportation Advisory Committees, and Directors to EPCA.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Some Parents' Committees choose to have an Executive Committee to help them run smoothly. The composition and functions of the Executive Committee are governed by the Parents' Committee's internal rules and procedures, as established by the Committee. It is important to remember that the Executive Committee is not mentioned in the Education Act and thus cannot exercise the functions and powers that the Act grants to the Parents' Committee.

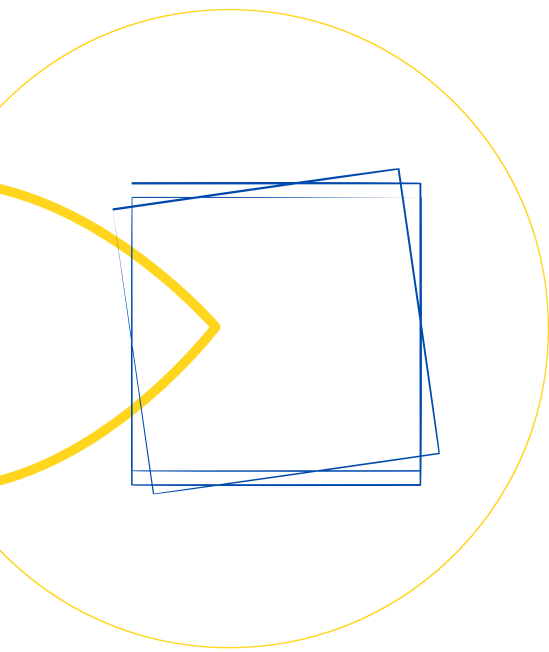
PARENT COMMISSIONERS

What is the mandate of the Parent Commissioners?

The Parent Commissioners attend all regular and special meetings of the Council of Commissioners and Parents' Committee, in addition to their Governing Board meetings. The Parent Commissioner speaks on behalf of the Parents' Committee in accordance with its directions.

When the Council of Commissioners discusses a topic that contradicts the expectations of the Parents' Committee, the Parent Commissioner may request time to consult with the Parents' Committee.

The Parent Commissioner must ensure that the Parents' Committee is consulted and that this consultation is respected. At each Parents' Committee meeting, the topics discussed at the Council of Commissioners are summarized and provided, along with any relevant information.



What characteristics should parents look for when choosing Parent Commissioners?

At the first Parents' Committee meeting, the committee must elect Parent Commissioners to sit at the Council of Commissioners. At that time, representatives should be selected who are:

- available to attend meetings;
- informed on education matters;
- amenable and diplomatic;
- experienced on various Parents' Committees or with parental governance;
- honest and able to reflect the views of the Parents' Committee; and
- able to share and represent parents' priorities and concerns.

When selecting their representative, parents should take the candidate's availability, interest and experience into account.



Role and Responsibilities of the Parents' Committee Parent Representatives

- Parent Representatives represent the parents of their school.
- Parents' Committee Representatives are responsible for attending Parents' Committee meetings on a regular basis to ensure quorum; if unable to attend, they must notify the Chair or Secretary and notify the Alternate.
- If they cannot attend a meeting, Representatives must stress to the Alternate the importance of the school's representation and forward all pertinent documents to them. They must take note of the documentation received prior to the meeting and ensure that the parents in their school are adequately represented in the discussions.
- Each Representative should be able to rely on the Parents' Committee's support when they are unable to attend a committee meeting to ensure that their Alternate has all of the necessary information.
- Representatives must clearly relay to the Parents' Committee the positions or resolutions adopted by the parents of their school (by parents on the Governing Board and the Parents Participatory Organization (PPO), where applicable) and report back to their school.



ETHICS OF THE DELEGATES

Members of the Parents' Committee shall exercise the care, prudence, and diligence that a reasonable person would exercise in comparable circumstances, with honesty, loyalty, and in the best interests of the School Board and the population it serves, within the scope of their duties and powers.

Functions of the Parents' Committee

The legislator's delegation of responsibilities to the Parents' Committee is significant. The Parents' Committee is responsible for encouraging and supporting parent participation in education, in addition to serving as an important advisory body to the School Board.

The Parents' Committee is charged with the following duties under the Education Act (sec 192):

(1) to raise awareness of the value of public education among all the parents of students attending one of the school board's schools;

(2) to propose to the School Board ways of supporting parents' involvement in their role with their child in order to foster their child's success at school;

(3) to propose to the School Board ways of facilitating communication between parents and school staff members;

(4) to promote parents' participation in the activities of the school and of the School Board and, to that end, to designate parents to take part in the various committees established by the School Board;

(5) to inform the School Board of parents' needs, especially their training needs, as identified by the school representatives and by the representative of the advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities;

(6) to develop, with the School Board support, a policy on financial contributions and propose the policy to the School Board for adoption; and

(7) to advise the School Board on the special school projects offered or considered in its schools, on any matter likely to ensure the best possible operation of the School Board and on any matter on which it must be consulted.

Parents' Committee Consultation

The following is a list of topics on which the School Board is required to seek input from the Parents' Committee (sec 193):

- The division, annexation or amalgamation of the territory of the school board;
- The School Board's commitment-to-success plan;
- The three-year plan of allocation and destination of the immovables of the School Board, the list of school, and the deeds of establishment;
- The policy adopted under section 212 on the continued operation or closure of schools and on other changes made to the educational services provided in a school;
- The distribution of educational services among the schools;
- The School Boards by-law on the complaint examination procedure established under section 220.2;
- The criteria referred to in section 239 for the enrollment of students in schools;
- The dedication of a school to a special project pursuant to section 240 and the criteria for the enrollment of students in that school;
- The school calendar; and
- The childcare provided at school.



OPERATION AND INTERNAL MANAGEMENT

As prescribed by the Education Act, the Parents' Committee is required to meet at least three times a year. The Education Act mandates each Parents' Committee to establish its own rules of procedure. Ideally, a presentation of these operating rules should be made to the Parent Representatives at the beginning of each year.

HERE ARE SOME ELEMENTS THAT YOU SHOULD FIND IN THE INTERNAL RULES:

- Code of Conduct;
- The specific rules for regular and special meetings;
- The deadlines for sending documents related to a Parents' Committee meeting;
- The public nature of the meetings and the in-camera sessions;
- The form and content of the minutes;
- Voting by email;
- The budget;
- The composition and functions of the Executive Committee, if applicable;
- Amendments to the rules of internal management; and
- The election procedures.



BUDGET

The Education Act requires the Parents' Committee to be given an annual budget for its operations. The School Board determines the amount of the budget. In addition to its budget, the Parents' Committee benefits from the School Board's resources: it can meet in its facilities for free, use its equipment, and receive administrative assistance.

The Parents' Committee budget should be used to:

- encourage and support member participation;
- ensure that parent volunteers receive all of the information and training they require to perform their duties effectively; and
- reimburse expenses incurred by members while attending sessions, including travel and babysitting costs (note that internal rules contain information on the amounts allocated as well as how to obtain reimbursement).

IN CONCLUSION

It is critical that Parents' Committee Parent Representatives have access to all of the information and training they require to perform their duties on the Parents' Committee.

The budget of the Parents' Committee can be used to provide training for Parents' Committee members or the School Board can provide training for them. As well, there are a variety of additional resources available at epcaquebec.org and we remain available to support as needed.



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