



June 17, 2015

Mr. François Blais
Ministre de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement supérieur
et de la Recherche
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Mr. Blais,

The Leadership Committee for English Education in Quebec (LCEEQ) understands that a provincial government must be fiscally responsible in allocating public funds and that reasonable means must be adopted to keep expenses in line with revenues. However, we must go on record as stating that the annual compressions of education budgets are intolerable and totally unacceptable, particularly as they apply to English educational institutions.

It is undeniable that the English sector has a long record of student success. This does not make us complacent; indeed it drives us to strive for even better outcomes for our students. It is evident that one cannot expect to maintain these high standards of achievement if direct resources to students and professional development for teachers and administrators continue to be eroded as they have been over the last several years.

The implementation of several new initiatives and programs will require more resources and pedagogical support, not less. The changes that we are aware of include: Secondary 4 History, Compulsory Sex Education, Competency Approach to Social Participation (CASP), Compulsory concepts related to the Guidance Oriented Approach to Learning (GOAL), and Changes to the Mathematics CST program in Secondary 4 and 5.

The impact of declining enrolments, evident in many parts of the province but a major preoccupation for the English sector, magnifies the problem in that not only is the base allocation reduced but in addition, the already financially strapped institutions need to address annual budget compressions. As a result, the impact is doubled and has a greater impact on English boards with large geographic regions. Boards with large territories do not have the option of regrouping students and programs given the great distances between schools and centers. School Boards have worked hard to keep administrative costs to a minimum so to continue to expect a reduction in administrative services is a true hardship.

These funding cuts are imposed at a time where the norms for success established by the Ministry are more difficult to attain. The English sector is already beyond the target set for the majority of the province, but is expected to achieve even higher success rates. To attain the 88% goal requires that teachers differentiate instruction in order to target the needs of individual students. This requires supplementary support and teacher training resulting in additional costs, not less.

You are well aware that there are realities that are specific to the English community. There are numerous examples to illustrate this point. Most of our students do not attend a neighbourhood school because of the vast geographic area we serve. It is very common for youngsters to commute for two hours or more to and from the nearest English school. In addition, small schools often have multiple grade levels requiring additional staffing costs to respect contractual agreements. This cost increases considerably when students with special needs are included in the formula.

Our approach to serving our students with special needs is distinctively different from our Francophone counterparts, but our proven success with inclusion presents a delicate balance. Cuts to educational services coupled with concurrent deep cuts to the health and social services network greatly jeopardize the success of students with special needs and calls into question the government's own policy on special education. An emphasis on success for all students and an orientation towards the regular classroom requires that school-based services be in place for the students who are the most vulnerable. Student success is further threatened in rural regions where it is difficult to deliver such services in English due to a lack of qualified personnel. Our most vulnerable students are at the greatest risk as a result of these reduced budgets in education, as well as, health and social services.

Our students are often without basic instructional materials in English or are limited by a single approved source. This is particularly ironic as just beyond our provincial borders there is an abundance of quality instructional materials in English that address the demands of the Quebec Education Program but which we are not permitted to purchase.

We can point to many such examples, but our intention is not to belabour these realities; rather we wish to help find a solution.

The common adage, "one size fits all" simply does not apply when looking at the budgetary considerations required by English educational institutions; in fact, this view is extremely detrimental to the continued success of students with the right to English language education. It is essential that the Ministry develop equitable means to address the varying educational needs within the province. We welcome the opportunity to work with you and your representatives to develop and implement strategies that meet the needs of all students within the context of fiscal responsibility on the part of the government.

I await your response.

I remain



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LCEEQ President

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c. c. Mme Chantal Beaulieu, sous-ministre adjoint au *Secteur des services aux anglophones, aux autochtones et aux communautés culturelles*