



Monsieur Philippe Couillard
Premier Ministre du Québec
Assemblée nationale du Québec
Hôtel du Parlement
1045, rue des Parlementaires
Québec (Québec) G1A 1A3

May 22, 2015

Mr. Premier,

At our recent Board of Directors meeting, the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA) discussed your government's plans to eliminate school board elections in Quebec. Leaders from across the country feel that this direction fails to recognize the vital role that school boards have as the only publicly elected body with the sole responsibility for the education of our children, a role they have successfully carried out for more than 100 years. On behalf of our association and every provincial member at our table, I write to you to express our strong support for the continuation of elections for school board commissioners in Quebec.

Jeff Johnson, Chair of the Council of Ministers of Education Canada when the most recent OECD results were published, acknowledged that our Canadian students perform at a high, above-average rate and that Canada boasts "*one of the most equitable education systems in the world - where students perform well regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds*". Clearly reflecting Canadian values and the envy of many nations, Canada has ranked among the top 10 performers of the countries that make up 80% of the world economy and in some cases, this achievement advantage is even more pronounced among Quebec students. Commissioners in your province govern a school system which is recognized as a world leader in student achievement as well as in equitable opportunity. Despite funding cuts and many challenges, school boards and their commissioners have continued to demonstrate effective stewardship of education resources in the best interest of students and the community as a whole.

School boards have a distinct and democratic relationship of accountability to their communities. As education leaders across the country, we are deeply disturbed by the ongoing dilution of local elected school board authority and the erosion of every community's exclusive right to manage and control its education system. The democratic right to choose the representatives whose decisions and actions directly affect you where you live is put at risk by centralized decision-making structures and processes that often impact negatively on effective community-based governance of local schools.

Low turnout at elections is not necessarily mean disinterest or does it mean dissatisfaction with the present system. Rather, local control provides the balance to a centralized bureaucracy that oftentimes does not reflect the varied and diverse nature of our communities. Voter turnout in school elections and related costs could conceivably be measurably improved in Quebec were these elections to be held at the same time as municipal elections as is the case in all other provinces.

Elected school board commissioners are passionate about reaching out to all of their communities, about equity for all those who contribute inside and outside of the classroom, about ensuring the voices and needs of our children are being heard, and about reform, visioning and results. Their objectives and priorities are the constant in education in the face of changing governments, ministers and provincial policy directions.



School board commissioners are the interpreters and messengers for government initiatives, providing for and allowing for citizen perspectives to shape educational opportunities at the local level and acting as advocates and ombudsmen for the students and the communities which they serve.

Our collective success in education is due to the hard work of teachers and administrators and to the support given them by our elected school boards. Our organization and each province provides continual professional development to improve school boards' capacity to govern better and continue to impact our students positively. Elected school boards are a model of local governance and accountability that truly works. We strongly urge you, Mr. Minister, to reconsider your proposal to eliminate the election of commissioners in your province and to work with our Quebec partners towards strengthening local voice and decision-making to support student success in schools.

Sincerely,

Janet Foord
President
Canadian School Boards Association

c.c.: M. François Blais, Minister of Education, Higher Education and Research, Quebec
Presidents and Executive Directors of Provincial School Board Associations
Fédération nationale des commissions scolaires francophones
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Ken Cameron
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