Advisory Board on English Education
SEPTEMBER 2013

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL:
Distinct solutions for distinct needs

Brief presented to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports

UN QUÉBEC POUR TOUS

Québec

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Distinct solutions for distinct needs

ADVISORY BOARD ON ENGLISH EDUCATION

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The Minister names the members to the Advisory Board. The term of office is normally three years. Candidates are nominated by various English education associations and organizations that represent, among others, teachers, parents, school and board administrators and commissioners, as well as individuals involved in postsecondary education. Nominations can be received at any time.

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Translation:	DC-SL Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS)

Advisory Board on English Education
600, rue Fullum, 11e étage
Montréal (Québec) H2K 4L1
Tel.: 514-873-5656
Fax: 514-864-4181
cela-abee@mels.gouv.qc.ca
www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/abee

Previous publications of the Advisory Board are available on: www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/abee

ISBN 978-2-550-69621-6 (Print)
(Édition française : ISBN 978-2-550-69620-9)
ISBN 978-2-550-69622-3 (Online)
(Édition française : ISBN 978-2-550-69587-5)

Legal Deposit – Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2013

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INTRODUCTION

Education for all students in public schools in Québec is governed by the Education Act, a law that prescribes a common set of rules for all public school boards, schools and centres. The Act is supported by the Basic School Regulations and further sustained by the Budgetary Rules with the intention of ensuring a level playing field for all students.

But there are realities in the Québec education system that are unique to the English sector. Since the genesis of linguistic school boards, English-language boards have evolved and have adapted what they do. Their recognition of the distinctiveness and diverse needs of the English community have made English-language school boards more creative and flexible and, within the parameters of the law and its attendant regulations and budgetary provisions, they have suited education to the needs of their communities and their students, recognizing that one size does not fit all. In the words of Ms. Gretta Chambers, founding Chair of the Advisory Board on English Education (ABEE), "English education is not a translation of French education—it's a separate culture." The English education sector is, in a sense, a distinct society within a distinct society. Moreover, each school board is different, one from another, and there are distinctions within each school board.

The English education sector is anxious to maintain its vitality and to preserve the things that it does well. In the course of its meetings, it is always informative and exciting for the Advisory Board to hear about the variety of activities taking place within the English sector, both in and out of school, to promote student success, retention, and the bilingualism of its students. A common theme is the determination to suit education to the students' needs. With ongoing budgetary compressions, this is becoming more difficult, but it still remains a priority of the English school boards to be able to do what they do well.

In this report to the Minister, the Advisory Board on English Education is taking the opportunity to review the themes and concerns identified in earlier correspondence, reports and briefs that continue to describe English education in Québec accurately, and to update them with current examples of both concerns and successes. We emphasize that there is no intention to promote one system over another, nor to assign fault. We believe that many of the inherent difficulties faced by English school boards, schools and centres could be mitigated if MELS were to take better account of the differences between the two sectors in its policies and their implementation. It is hoped that a description of the distinctiveness of the English sector and how it functions differently from the French sector will provide some insight as to how the English system is frequently constrained by many of the Ministry's policies, especially in their application, and indicate the need for flexibility in implementing policy. This will ensure that the English education system can continue to prepare its graduates to participate fully in the life of Québec society.

Given the fact that both English and French language school boards and schools function within the same prescriptive regulations, why do English school boards claim that there are differences between the two systems, and what is it that constitutes these differences?

And why do they claim that they have needs that differ from those of their French language counterparts?

The distinctiveness of the English education system, the danger of losing the system, and the need to preserve it are the crux of this brief. This will be elaborated in the following, often overlapping, sections.

Section 1 of this brief will outline some of the distinctive features of the English system. Section 2 will describe the effects of distance on the system. Section 3 discusses the system's demographics and Section 4, its diversity. Section 5 describes the distribution of resources and some of the innovative ways that these resources have been used to benefit the student communities. Section 6 is a short discussion of governance in the English sector and the brief ends with the Advisory Board's requests to the Minister in Section 7.

1.0 Distinctiveness of the English-language system

1.1 Factors noted in previous reports

The Advisory Board on English Education was established by the Minister of Education in January 1993, following a recommendation made the previous year by the Task Force on English Education. In its report to the Minister of Education, the Task Force based its recommendations on a series of principles, including the following one:

"The English-speaking community must control its education system within a broad policy framework in order that it may transmit its language, values and culture and meet the learning needs of young English-speaking Quebecers."[1]

Based on research conducted by Lamarre,[2] Bourhis[3] has recently concluded that "the education system in jeopardy in Quebec is the English school one not the French one," and "bureaucratic uniformity" continues to be a concern for representatives of the English sector.

In its 1999 brief, the Advisory Board had already advised the Minister that:

… Quebec's English fact is more often than not portrayed as a linguistic threat of alarming proportions. … English institutions are rarely recognized as having missions different from those of their French counterparts. … rules, regulations, policies and priorities are set for Quebec as a whole, that is for the majority, and it is simply taken for granted that the English components of this network are as well served by these political and administrative decisions as those for whom they have been drawn up. The fact that this is often not true is lost in the shuffle of bureaucratic uniformity. …[4]

Noting a "difference in ethos" between the two systems, the 1999 report says:

Every English school in Quebec is a microcosm of the community it serves. … Quebec's English schools can be almost as different from each other as they are from their French-language counterparts. English schools are a product of their surroundings and of who attends them. They are not monolithic. The linguistic and cultural affinities they share do not form a mould into which they all fit. They are shaped by their clients and the communities in which their clients live, the newspapers they read, the radio stations they listen to, the associations they belong to, the churches they attend, and the cultural and demographic mix of their neighbourhoods."[5]

Observation of French-language and English-language schools suggests that, in broad terms, they have different organizational cultures. It was the impression of Board members that while French-language schools seem to be more hierarchically structured, more reliant on top-down decision-making, and have a more distant relationship amongst staff and parents, English-language schools, with the historical need to deal with diversity, have always been more flexible, have dealt with change less rigidly and more quickly, have been more independent of authority, and have encouraged the involvement of parents as volunteers and participants in school life. One Advisory Board member summarized these differences as philosophy and pragmatism.[6]

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1 Task Force on English Education (Québec: MEQ, 1992), p 2.
2 P. Lamarre, "English Education in Quebec: Issues and Challenges," in *The Decline and Prospects of the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec,* ed. R. Y. Bourhis (Ottawa: Canadian Heritage, 2012) pp. 175-214.
3 R.Y. Bourhis and P. Foucher, *The Decline of the English School System in Quebec* (Moncton, NB: CIRLM, 2012), p. 43.
4 Advisory Board on English Education, *Culture and English Schools in Play* (Québec: MEQ, 1999), p. 27, http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/cela/pdf/culture_a.pdf
5 ABEE, *Culture and English Schools in Play*, p. 32.
6 Advisory Board on English Education, *Educating Today's Québec Anglophone* (Québec: MELS, 2010), p.12, http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/publications/index.asp?page=fiche&id=1816.

1.2 The need for graduates to be bilingual

There are two main reasons why English schools are different from French schools. The first is that English schools put enormous emphasis on turning out bilingual graduates. This emphasis is aimed at more than job market readiness. It is also connected to the survival and health of English Québec's community institutions, which must strive to retain their Anglophone character and culture but whose integration into the wider community depends on their perceived usefulness to society as a whole.[7]

Bourhis writes: "Québec Anglophones are the most bilingual students in the Québec school system."[8] We might also cite:

- National assessments of English reading achievement show that English-speaking children in Québec score on a par with children in the rest of Canada, although they may have only half as much instructional time in English.
- French immersion and bilingual programs have produced a high percentage of bilingual students and are models for other countries….
- English-language schools are versatile and adaptable to changes, whether in their student population or in the curriculum;
- English-language schools teach subjects other than language arts in French, thereby contextualizing the second language;
- Although far from exemplary, the drop-out rate in English-language schools is lower than in French-language schools.[9]

English school boards are constantly looking for second language programs that provide the tools that link students to their future employment needs. This means that there may be several programs within one board to satisfy the needs and demands of students and their parents. The possibilities include Core French (the minimum required in the curriculum), but few English schools teach as little French as this. More common in elementary schools are immersion programs, with up to 80% of the curriculum taught in French, depending on the grade level; bilingual programs, with 50% of the curriculum in English and 50% in French; or "français plus" (an extension of early immersion to Cycle Two); French immersion plus another language such as Spanish, Italian or Mandarin. Secondary schools may also offer "français enrichi" or "français, langue d'enseignement" for students who already speak French fluently. Recently, the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) has launched a French-only Web site and increased the time spent on core French instruction. In reality, English schools are bilingual schools and their graduates function well in both English and French as they move towards biliteracy and biculturalism. English school boards suffer because there is no specific funding for immersion or bilingual programs despite the extra cost of running multiple programs, especially in small schools, but this is such a priority for them that they channel their resources to promote bilingual education.

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[7] ABEE, *Culture and English Schools in Play,* p. 31.
[8] R.Y. Bourhis, "The English-Speaking Communities of Quebec: Vitality, Multiple Identities and Linguicism," in *The Vitality of the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec: From Community Decline to Revival,* ed. R.Y. Bouhris (Montréal: CEETUM, U de M, 2008), p. 136.
[9] ABEE *Educating Today's Québec Anglophone,* p. 23.

1.3 Parental involvement

There is a long and proud tradition of parents volunteering in English schools and schools are welcoming of parental involvement. In addition to the Governing Boards and the Parent Participation Organizations which are established in law and empowered under the Education Act, 81 English schools belong to the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations (QFHSA) which is, in turn, part of the Canadian Federation of Home and School Associations (CFHSA), founded over 100 years ago. There is extensive evidence from research that, for a variety of reasons, students do better in schools where there is parental involvement. The Home and School Associations in schools have played an active and valuable part in the education of several generations of students.

The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations Inc. (QFHSA) was officially inaugurated in May 1944 and was incorporated by Letters Patent under the Quebec Companies Act in August 1959.

The QFHSA is an independent, incorporated, not-for-profit volunteer organization dedicated to enhancing the education and general well-being of children and youth and to providing a caring and enriched educational experience for students.

The QFHSA promotes the involvement of parents, students, educators and the community at large in the advancement of learning and acts as a voice for parents. Members of Home and School Associations come from all sectors of society and from all over the province. They represent the cultural diversity within the minority English-language school system and cooperate with other associations that share their goals and objectives, such as Community Learning Centres, and other community organizations.

1.4 Teacher involvement

There is also a long tradition of teacher involvement in extra-curricular activities and of teachers giving time for additional remediation, field trips, fund raising and philanthropy, variety shows, fashion shows, and coaching. Until recently, this was done without remuneration. One guest suggested to the Advisory Board that this was a result of the teachers' willingness to "stretch" the rules regarding working conditions and to blur any separation between the constraints of the contract and the needs of the students. When teachers are involved in student activities outside the classroom, the teacher's relationship with the student is deepened. Students and teachers interact outside of the confines of the classroom, the students' sense of affiliation with the school is strengthened, and there is considerable research showing that this improves their chances of success. In small communities, the teachers are regarded as community leaders and when something needs to be done, residents turn to the teachers to do it.

1.5 Graduation and retention rates

In recent years, the graduation rates and retention rates have been consistently higher for English-language school boards in spite of the difficulties these boards report. The Advisory Board theorizes that some of the reasons for these successes are that English school boards, schools and centres are dedicated to taking local needs into account, are open to diversity, are flexible, and put the student at the centre of their endeavours. One recent example, reported in April 2013, is the dramatic reduction in the drop-out rate among students in the Eastern Townships School Board (ETSB). The school board claims that this is attributable to the intensive use of technology in the classroom, a strategy designed to implement a learning platform more relevant to students. The school board took a pedagogical and financial risk in developing this policy but is pleased that their actions have proved successful in meeting the needs of its students.

The most recent results from an ongoing independent research project conducted at the Eastern Townships School Board by Dr. Thierry Karsenti and his colleagues of the Université de Montréal demonstrate that the innovative approach taken by the ETSB for the use of technologies in the classroom has played a pivotal role in the development of students' competencies that in turn are central to student engagement and achievement.[10]

1.6 Delivery of services

There is a shortage of qualified professionals such as psychologists or speech therapists in the province, and it is especially difficult to find qualified professionals willing to work in English in the regions further away from Montréal. For the English sector, the problem is compounded by the French proficiency requirement for all members of professional orders, although they will be working with English-speaking students, and although they are usually able to communicate easily in French with other professionals. Some latitude in applying this rule would allow English boards to recruit from outside the province, increase the complement of much needed professionals, and give primacy to the well-being of the children.

Even when off-island school boards have professional staff to help school personnel work with students with special needs, the distance between schools in the large school boards make it unlikely that the schools and students will receive the help they need in a consistent and timely manner if the boards apply the provincial model of services delivered by region. Because a regional model of service delivery is inappropriate, the English school system has developed a network of Centres of Excellence to help address the problem.

The Centres of Excellence have operated since 1998 as an alternative to the support and expertise offered regionally to the French language boards and with the same mandate. Entirely funded by MELS, they are housed and managed by four different school boards with the mandate to provide support to the nine English school boards and their schools, organize and deliver ongoing professional development, carry out research and development activities, and contribute to the development of province-wide expertise on inclusion to promote the integration of students with special needs into the regular school setting. Each Centre of Excellence is required to plan its annual activities and report on them to the Directors General of English boards.

The Centres cover the following areas of need:

- **Inclusive Schools Network for students with learning difficulties, reading difficulties**
- **Autism spectrum disorders**
- **Behaviour management**
- **Mental health**
- **Speech and language development**
- **Physically, intellectually, and multi-challenged students**

As provincial service hubs, the centres operate under a common philosophy: all children can belong to and can learn in a regular school with program adaptation and support within the classroom or resource room setting. Five of them are modeled on a team-based approach rather than having one professional as coordinator. The Centres are responsive to the diverse needs of the English community. They help build the capacity of schools and their staff to meet the needs of their students in an inclusive environment, and promote collaboration and sharing among boards, schools and other community agencies, while offering an array of resources and professional development opportunities.

[10] http://etsb.crifpe.ca/

1.7 Collaboration and cooperation

The small size and low density of the English-speaking population mean that all stakeholders must cooperate, rather than work in isolation from each other, to serve the population more efficiently and effectively. Collaboration and dialogue among the stakeholders is needed to identify clearly mutual problems and to identify or provide the appropriate agencies to solve the problems.[11]

Cooperation cannot be mandated, but it is a salient characteristic of an attitude prevalent in the English-language school system. This may be partly due to necessity, given the limited capacity of small boards to "go it alone," but the Advisory Board has heard of many examples of collaborative ventures within school boards, across boards, with parents, across associations, with unions, and at all levels (see Sections 1.3, 5.4.2, 5.4.4, and 6.2 for examples). One guest offered the opinion that "we are culturally less hidebound by the rule book."

There is close collaboration between the youth sector and the adult and vocational sectors within the English boards so that students are guided as efficiently and effectively as possible on paths to success.

In the Lester-B.-Pearson School Board, collaboration between the youth and adult sectors has been accomplished by creating two consultant positions. They work together to help students choose the most appropriate pathway in the youth sector, such as work-study, or create a transitional plan for students who might be better served in adult education. The students, and often their families, are guided and supported in this move and the Transitions consultant follows the students as they continue in adult education to prevent them from dropping out and may even visit the student at home. The Advisory Board heard of a case where the professional had promoted the adult program so well that the student's parents also enrolled. In addition, the consultants do many activities in the youth sector showcasing vocational programs, such as a demonstration of video clips, student testimonials, teacher interviews to all the high schools.

Collaboration, such as sharing of facilities and programs, takes place among partners in English school boards and also with French school boards in the same region in an attempt to reduce costs. FACE School has offered an integrated Arts program shared by Commission scolaire de Montréal (CSDM) and EMSB since 1998. For pedagogical reasons, the French and English school boards in the Eastern Townships worked together with local elected officials to address the problem of a high drop-out rate. One example of an exciting exchange between boards, previously described in a brief,[12] is Option-Étude.

[11] Advisory Board on English Education, *High-Quality Teachers and Administrators for English-Language Schools in Québec: Preparation, Induction and Support* (Québec: MELS, 2009), p. 30.
[12] Advisory Board on English Education. *Response to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports. Request for Advice on Implementation of Intensive English Instruction for Francophone Students in Elementary 6* (Québec, MELS, 2011), p.5

The Option-Étude program is run jointly by the New Frontiers School Board and Commission scolaire des Grandes-Seigneuries with the support of the City of Châteauguay, the Office of the local MNA, Emploi Québec, Carrefour Jeunesse-Emploi, the Châteauguay Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and other business partners. The aim of the project was to diversify the curriculum in high school by offering specialized concentration options to motivate and revive student interest in school. In 2007 it offered the first iteration of an exchange of 32 Secondary I students from each of two neighbouring schools in which they followed a program based on sports and athletic activities.

The program has been evaluated as a success both linguistically and socially. A research study by Benoit Côté of the University of Sherbrooke showed a positive response from students, parents and school personnel; increased linguistic ability and friendships; mutual aid and positive perceptions between both linguistic groups. Some features of Option-Étude leading to its success include its focus around a wide selection of sports activities; small groups; interest from parents; enthusiastic support from the schools' administrators and Governing Boards involved; emphasis on social integration as a means of language learning. As one measure of its success, interest in the program has been sustained and waiting lists have existed for each new year of the program.[13] The program will admit another cohort in September 2013, indicating that its commitment will continue until at least 2015.

1.8 Culture of lifelong learning

There has been a long tradition in the English sector of learning throughout the whole life span of the individual. This goes far beyond what occurs in adult education centres in both language groups. A notable leader is the Québec Association for Lifelong Learning, whose Web site has links to the McGill Community for Lifelong Learning, the Concordia School of Extended Learning and the Thomas More Institute. Each of these organizations offers courses to adults or seniors and are an indication of an interest in education and in continuing to learn after formal education is finished, an interest that is evident in the sometimes passionate way that Anglophones defend their education system. In many communities throughout Québec, community groups are gathering together in community theatre. For example, Theatre Wakefield, an all-volunteer organization, is developing English-language arts and culture activities with a focus on theatre. This is an excellent way of fostering lifelong learning in the Gatineau region. Throughout Québec, many similar activities are being organized which not only help develop talent on an individual basis but the community itself becomes a cradle of lifelong learning. This sort of practice also emphasizes to the youth that learning doesn't stop when one leaves school.

1.9 Summary

It is difficult to give a global characterization of the English education community, but some themes identified in earlier briefs continue to pertain. Among these are the diversity within the system, adaptability to circumstances, cooperative ventures, an unfailing commitment to teaching the French language and, in general, an interest in promoting and sustaining high quality education. All these themes are affected by the distribution and demographics of the English-speaking population.

[13] Benoit Côté, "Options-Études Châteauguay," Final Report, 2007-2012 (paper presented at the Symposium on Education Within a Changing Linguistic Dynamic in Québec: Transformations and Challenges Within English-Speaking Communities, Montréal, Concordia University, January 25, 2013.

2.0 The effect of distance

2.1 Size of school board territories

With 17 administrative regions in the province, all but two English school boards (Riverside and New Frontiers) extend over the territory of several of the MELS administrative regions and even they cover several municipal regional councils *(Municipalités régionales de comté)* (MRCs).

Even a geographically compact board like the Lester-B.-Pearson Board covers two administrative regions. Central Quebec School Board must send representatives to six regional councils if they are to make the case for their share of available funding, to learn from and share with their French counterparts, or to obtain MELS information in a timely manner. New Frontiers School Board is on the territory of five Municipal tables *(Conférence régionale des élus)* (CRÉ). The CRÉ, whose territories may not match those of MELS administrative regions, control substantial funding that is accessible to school boards, and school boards must be present at their meetings in order to access this funding or to participate in decision-making. Since there is a concern that funding decisions at these meetings are made by people who have no pedagogical background or knowledge of the particularities of the English school system, it is even more imperative that English school board personnel be present (see also Section 5.3).

It is clear that the need to attend meetings in several overlapping jurisdictions has an impact on the use of human resources. If administrators are attending meetings in multiple jurisdictions, they are not attending to other aspects of their appointment. In effect, many employees of English-language boards have multiple appointments. This unfortunate reality is not reflected in the budgetary rules, and recent cuts at the administrative level, due to budgetary compressions, are further restricting the school boards' ability to participate at the regional level, thereby cutting them off from much needed resources.

2.2 Distance between schools in off-island boards

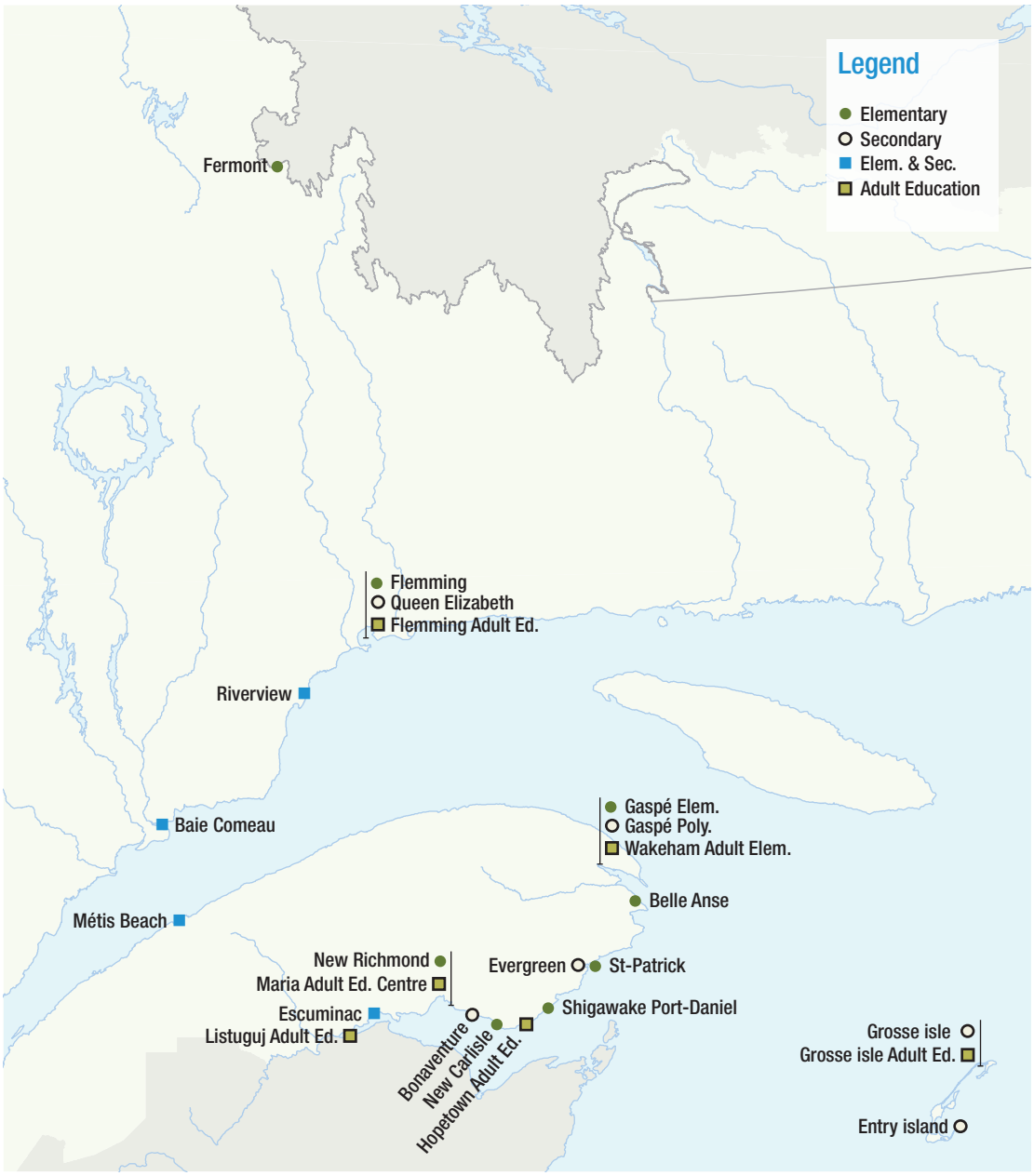
The distance between schools in rural areas makes it difficult for them to have face-to-face contact with the school board, with other schools within the board, and with schools in other English boards. The Eastern Townships School Board covers the same land area as Belgium. Eastern Shores School Board has nearly 1 700 students spread across 14 elementary schools, eight secondary schools and six adult education centers. The school board head office in New Carlisle is 350 km from one school in Baie-Comeau, and 825 km from another in Grosse Isle. Travel from Baie-Comeau to the school board office requires a minimum of seven hours of travel by ferry and automobile.

English school boards' consultants work on the assumption that their job is to spend most of their time in schools supporting school personnel to deliver the curriculum, with concomitant travel costs. The use of video-conferencing helps to alleviate the problem of schools communicating over a distance, and also reduces the absence of personnel from the school, but it has its own costs and does not allow for personal contact or for effective team building. Furthermore, it does not allow the schools easy access to professional support, and English schools in the regions rarely see psychologists, speech and language pathologists, or other professionals, even when they can be hired to work in remote regions. It is also difficult to offer the services of a music teacher, a physical education teacher or other specialized services in small, remote schools. This is an example of the fact that even though the law and regulations purport to level the playing field, service delivery is clearly being affected by budgetary constraints that have made the playing field very uneven. It appears that MELS has not fully anticipated the impact of budgetary decisions in these contexts.

The distance between schools and the school board head office places greater importance on the community to support school-based initiatives and on remote schools as centres for community activities.

New Frontiers School Board serves a number of isolated English-speaking communities and its schools serve as a hub for community activities; fitness for seniors (Howick Elementary), Scouts & Guides (Ormstown Elementary), meeting rooms for volunteer groups (Heritage Elementary), craft fairs (all schools), historical society archives (Hemmingford). These community-based activities are long-established and continue to be strengthened by the Community Learning Centres in the schools (see Section 5.4.2).

Fig 1. Eastern Shores School Board Schools and Centres



Metis Beach School, with 68 students from Pre-K to Secondary V drawn from a 60 km radius, promotes its physical education program, including a biannual 15 km ski challenge. Many of the activities promote outdoor education because the school has no gymnasium.

Queen Elizabeth High School in Sept-Isles has 78 students from Secondary I to Secondary V. Its students combined with a local Seniors Club to form a choir that practiced and sang together before Christmas, 2012. Its Secondary IV and V students interviewed and photographed a local community member for a French-language project under the aegis of the Blue Metropolis Literary Festival.[14]

Gaspé Elementary School, with 107 students from Pre-K to Elementary 6, is a member, with Belle Anse Elementary School (27 students) and Gaspé Polyvalent School (90 students) of the Tri-school Community Learning Centre, whose philosophy is to help others. Like the other schools in the board, they all take part in the Terry Fox Run and Gaspé Elementary School has raised money for books to send to a school in Africa. The Elementary 2 students' project on owls involved a videoconference visit to a zoo in Kansas, and other students communicate via Skype with children in Australia and Africa.

Grosse Isle School has 77 students from Pre-K to Secondary V. The parents also take part in the Terry Fox Run, and some fathers helped students in a project to build model ships. Students helped their community by clearing the shoreline and collecting food for needy families.

Riverview School in Port Cartier has participated annually in the Terry Fox Community Run since 1980 and, starting in 2006, has joined forces with the two much larger French-language elementary schools for the National School Run Day. The students are highly motivated to be part of a large group with a common cause, and the francophone students and teachers have commended the students' degree of bilingualism.

These examples of involvement with the community have not detracted from the school board's mission to educate and graduate students. Indeed, they might have contributed to it. In two years, the board has improved its success rate from last place to the top ten school boards in the province, while still integrating 100% of students with special needs into regular classrooms.

2.3 Transportation costs

Urban and suburban schools benefit from the availability of public transport to supplement school transportation for students and staff alike. Rural boards pay more to transport personnel for participation in meetings or professional development, and for taking resource personnel to the schools.

Providing students with extra-curricular activities and additional academic support by school board personnel outside the regular school day requires additional student transportation costs, otherwise students would be unable to participate in these activities, being limited by their means of transportation home.

The addition of "late bus" routes to the main bus stops of an outlying region requires increased funding and places an increased need on school fundraising, parent fees, and school board transportation budgets. In some cases, the school is too small to initiate the activities and the students participate in the sports teams of the larger community. But in many other cases, the school provides activities for students that are otherwise unavailable in small communities, even forming co-educational teams for basketball and soccer tournaments, where there are too few students for same-sex teams. This participation in sports improves students' attitude and involvement in school.

Socialization is one of the three missions of education identified by MELS. For many secondary school students who live at great distance from each other, this socialization occurs only at school. Adolescents who get involved with a sports team, school club or activity are more likely to stay in school.[15]

All students need affiliation with the group. This sense of belonging begins in elementary school, is important in the transition from elementary to secondary school and acts as the focus of attention for adolescents. Successful students are often the most involved and participate in the most clubs and sports activities. [Advisory] Board members cited examples of weak students who joined a school activity where membership was predicated on schoolwork and behaviour, and whose attitude, attendance, and performance at school improved because of the attraction of membership in a team or group. It has long been known that a correlation exists between sports excellence (or participation in other types of specialty or extracurricular programs) and student retention.[16]

[14] Blue Metropolis, http://bluemetropolis.org/?com.dotmarketing.htmlpage.language=2
[15] http://www.cea-ace.ca/publication/2012-wdydist-research-series-report-one-relationship-between-student-engagement-and-academic-outcomes
[16] Advisory Board on English Education, *Fostering Student Success in Québec's English Schools* (Québec: MELS, 2011), p. 12, http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/publications/index.asp?page=fiche&id=2214.

Regional high schools provide a sense of engagement for these students that must be preserved. Providing opportunities for adolescents to connect with their school, peers and teachers outside of the classroom is an important component of school engagement and motivation, and must be one of the priorities in school budgets.

2.4 Summary

Covering a territory as big as Western Europe, Québec's size presents challenges for anyone obliged to travel within the province. The large territories and small numbers of schools are a particular concern for English school boards that also cover several overlapping jurisdictions. Representation at key partnership tables is crucial yet it adds a financial and human burden on school board personnel. Students are also affected by distances travelled and schools must be creative in providing opportunities for student involvement beyond the academic timetable.

3.0 Demographics

3.1 Change in English schools' enrollments since the 1970s

Since the 1971-1972 school year, there has been an overall decrease of 39% in the number of students in Québec public schools, representing a drop of 35% in French-language schools, and a disproportionate decrease of 68% in English-language schools.[17] The restrictions placed by the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101) on Francophone and Allophone choices and the out-migration of Anglophones have been important reasons for this. The most remarkable change was in the total number of Allophone students in the province, an increase of 120%. Of these, as a result of Bill 101, there were 36 953 (65%) fewer Allophone students in English-language schools and an increase of 104 183 (1 079%) Allophone students in French language schools. The impact of these changes has been enormous, especially in urban areas where immigrants are more likely to settle. At the same time, adding to the impact of a declining population, there was an increase of over 3 000 (19%) students who were eligible for instruction in English who enrolled in French-language schools. The drop in enrollments is matched by a drop in per capita funding and in school taxes, yet the cost of infrastructure does not change—costs for janitors, a principal, a secretary, a photocopier, energy, maintenance, telephones and heating remain the same whether there are 200 or 400 students in a school—the funding does not.

MELS' predictions seem to show that the decreases in the populations of off-island English school boards will be much smaller (0.1% to 6.1%) between 2010 and 2014. The two boards on the Island of Montréal, however, are predicted to lose a worrying 11.5% of students,[18] and this is compounded by a demographic shift. Both the English Montreal School Board and the Lester-B.-Pearson School Board are faced with closing schools in areas where young families are moving away and with the need for building or enlarging schools in other areas, such as the rapidly expanding region to the west of the Island of Montréal.

Not only is there a small number of English-speaking students in the province, but they are unevenly distributed. On the Island of Montréal and the surrounding "450" region, there is a concentration of English mother-tongue families, so that although school populations have dropped, and some schools have closed, the communities are still viable. In the regions, the situation is very different, and other factors, such as the closing of industries and migration to the cities, contribute to the closing of schools.

> **"The territory covered by Eastern Shores School Board is very diverse with a wide range of economic capacity. We have schools in highly industrialized communities such as Sept-Iles and Baie Comeau, as we have others very dependent on the increasingly unstable fishing industry on the Magdalen Islands. We also have schools in communities recently destabilized by the closure of mills, Chandler and New Richmond. … we can consider the Eastern Shores School Board a NANS district with sixteen of its eighteen schools being recognized as part of the NANS strategy."[19]**

This reduction in population, combined with the closure of churches and the reduction in social services can mean that young families leave the area and the community may eventually die.

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[17] Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Indicateurs linguistiques dans le secteur de l'éducation,* 2011 - Annexes (Québec: MELS, 2011), p. 2, http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/publications/index.asp?page=fiche&id=2056 Table 1.

[18] http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/previsionsPrimaireSecondaire/pdf/2011/Resume.pdf Sources : Direction de la recherche, des statistiques et de l'information; Entrepôt de données ministériel (EDM).

[19] Eastern Shores School Board, *Strategic Plan 2008-2011* (New Carlisle, QC: ESSB, 2011), pp. 8-9, http://www.essb.qc.ca/plan/essb_strategic_plan.pdf

The town of Franklin has had a long history as an English-speaking community founded by United Empire Loyalists. The last English church was closing, leaving the English school as the only English-language focus in the community. With fewer than 60 students left, the school was slated to close, but the parents rallied and persuaded the school board to maintain it. What was it that the parents valued? Sending children to another school would involve long bus rides along country roads, especially unpleasant in winter, but there were deeper issues. Given the distances between homes, school was the place where children socialized with each other during the day, and parents had the opportunity to socialize at parents' night meetings and other school activities. With the closing of the school, young families would move away from the community to be closer to schools, and the vitality of the English-speaking municipalities served by the school would suffer. This had an impact on the finances of other schools in the board, which had to sacrifice to keep the school open, but at the time, there was more money available, there was a political will to maintain the school, and a tremendous community effort.

3.2 Some consequences of declining enrollment

It is impossible in a small school with few students and correspondingly small numbers of teachers to offer the same range of courses, such as a choice of three levels of mathematics in each of Secondary IV and V, that are available in a large school. One way of addressing this has been the development of on-line courses by LEARN (see Section 5.4.1). On-line courses have helped increase the curriculum options for many students, but it should be remembered that they require students to be relatively independent and self-motivated. These are not always the learning characteristics of the students who require the option of on-line courses. Students still need in-school supervision which, in the long run, does not reduce the amount of staffing required to provide additional course options.

The small populations of English-speakers in the regions also make it difficult to provide and support adult education and vocational training. The delivery of quality English-language vocational training services across the province of Québec is a challenging mandate for the nine English public school boards.

Vast geographical distances separate centres within and among the boards. In its 2011 brief,[20] the Advisory Board summarized its perspective on the needs of the Anglophone sector in vocational and technical training as follows:

1. More resources directed to *Services d'accueil, reference, conseil et accompaniment (SARCA)* to help extend its work
2. More systematic recognition of acquired competencies [especially for instructors]
3. Greater choice for Anglophone students
4. Improved access for Anglophone students using imaginative strategies
5. A faster process for authorization of programs and agreements
6. Better promotion of vocational opportunities in English to students
7. More English content in regional career fairs
8. More guidance counsellors available to promote vocational career choices
9. Inclusion of Anglophones at all decision-making tables
10. Access to qualified English-speaking vocational teachers
11. Access to complementary services
12. Opportunities to improve French language skills appropriate to the needs of the job.

To address these realities, in-service training and contact with experienced personnel in various sectors and programs become important elements in assuring high quality training wherever it is offered and led to the development of Centres of Expertise in vocational education centres.

[20] Advisory Board on English Education, *Bridging the Gap Between Training and Employment to Meet Labour Market Needs: Issues Affecting the Anglophone Sector* (Québec: MELS, 2011), p.25

The Centres of Expertise Network (CEN) is a network of 19 school board vocational training centres representing employment sectors in which English training programs are offered that allows the pooling of resources. Recognition as a centre is based primarily on the extent of involvement in a given sector, including the number of program authorizations, years of sector delivery and demonstrated leadership. For example, the Lester-B.-Pearson School Board (LBPSB) offers professional cooking, pastry, cuisine du marché, boulangerie, sommellerie, and retail butchery. As a result, LBPSB was designated as the Centre of Expertise for the food sector and is expected to provide provincial leadership and support with regard to the quality of teaching and program implementation in all English centres delivering programs in the food sector. The same model occurs in the others sectors such as health and administration in six of the nine English school boards in the province.

While the Centres of Expertise address some of the 12 items identified by the Advisory Board, we reiterate the necessity for the Minister to address the issues in vocational training systematically so that the Anglophone sector may better contribute to the economic success of Québec. Many of the needs identified in the 2011 brief are still unaddressed. SARCA is a service designed to ensure a first diploma for all students. It needs to become a fully-resourced, efficient and thorough process if it is to accomplish its goals.

There is still a need for a more systematic recognition of acquired competencies for instructors. The process for approving authorizations and inter-board agreements continues to frustrate, and potential students are often lost because it is too slow and not affected in a timely manner. For example, the Eastern Shores School Board had a cohort of students interested in the Electricity program and wished to enter into an agreement with the Lester-B.-Pearson School Board. By the time the approval process was complete—requesting permission for this agreement to be approved by each board, then the regional tables of both boards, then the Anglophone table, and, finally, MELS—many of the interested students had moved on to other endeavors.

3.3 Summary

Much has been written about the decline in numbers of English-speaking students in Québec schools, the need to increase the enrollments, and how English school boards are implementing initiatives to encourage their English speaking students to stay in their schools. An increase in the student population would have the double effect of maintaining English education, especially in the regions, where small schools–and their communities–are constantly under threat, as well as the pragmatic effect of maintaining their funding base. The impact of demographic shift and decline in English schools needs further study, as does the problem of adult education provision, and the difficulties involved in the timely formation of cohorts of students for vocational programs, which are presently compounded by bureaucratic delays.

4.0 Diversity in the English system

4.1 Demographic diversity

The term [Anglophone] is easier to describe than to define. The Anglophone community in Québec, especially on the Island of Montréal, is among the most diverse of any in Canada, and the static view of what constitutes an English community or a French community in Québec no longer applies. In Lifelong Learning and Québec's English-Speaking Community *(2005) we read: "Québec's English-speaking population at the beginning of the 21st century is a heterogeneous, multicultural blend of First Nations, descendents of early settlers, multi-generation immigrants and new arrivals from every part of the planet."*[21]

In 2010, the Advisory Board noted that:

… there have been changes in the attitudes of Québec society, in the composition of the traditional Anglophone society, and in the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the population of the schools of Québec. As a result, it has become more difficult to define "Anglophone culture," "English schools," or even "Anglophone." The "New Anglophones" of 2010, and the schools they attend, are both very different. Typical of institutions serving minority language groups worldwide, the English-language school boards have served the role of protectors and transmitters of the culture. . . . Their pragmatic, rather than philosophical, approach has allowed English-language schools to adapt to the cultural diversity of their clientele. Changes in the demographics of the schools make it difficult to define what "culture" is to be protected and transmitted, yet the first professional competency identified for teachers is "to act as a professional inheritor, critic, and interpreter of knowledge or culture when teaching students." (MEQ, 2001, p. 57)

The Education Act *defines linguistic school boards solely in terms of language of instruction. Boards can play community and cultural roles, which are referred to in the* Education Act*, but the characteristics of the school boards are not defined in law.*

To what extent should or can schools be an instrument of community growth when communities are both linguistic and geographic? Since 1999, "the cultural heritage of the English-speaking community" has become harder to define as the community has evolved. There is no longer a single "Anglo" community. The idea of preserving the English-language school system was to preserve the rights of Québec's traditional English speaking population. That population has little relation to those currently in the English school system.[22]

Recognizing the diversity of its population, the English Montreal School Board's mission statement includes: "To fulfill its mission the EMSB will … recognize and value the diversity of its community"

The Italian community on the Island of Montréal has been a vibrant force in the English education system. The Italian-Community Foundation presented the EMSB with a donation on January 23, 2013 at Pierre de Coubertin Elementary School in St-Léonard to assist students who study the Italian language, one of the languages taught as part of the Programme de l'enseignement des langues d'origine (PELO), which aims to improve the students' knowledge of their heritage language. Italian courses are offered during instructional time for four EMSB elementary schools offering the integrated program: Pierre de Coubertin, Dante, East Hill and General Vanier. PELO classes are also offered in other elementary schools, either during the lunch period or after school to students from Elementary 1 to 6. Among these are Tamil at Coronation School and Hebrew at Royal Vale School.

Lester-B.-Pearson School Board has an international program that welcomes students from over 20 countries, including students from China, in a residential program. The funds this program generates have been a welcome supplement to the board's operating funds.

[21] Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Lifelong Learning and Québec's English-Speaking Community:Report and Recommendations.* May 2003 Study Mission to Europe (Québec: MELS, 2005), p. 30, quoted in ABEE, Educating Today's Québec Anglophone, 2010, p.6, http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/publications/index.asp?page=fiche&id=1816

[22] ABEE, *Educating Today's Québec Anglophone,* p. 5.

4.2 The current composition of "English-language" schools

Even the declining numbers of students, the variability in population density, and the movement of families from the regions or from downtown Montréal does not describe all the subtle demographic challenges faced in English-language schools, some of which have a substantial population of students whose home language is French, but who are eligible for English instruction.

Table 1. Mother tongue of English school board students for the school year 2012-2013 (P)

	CQSB	ESSB	ETSB	RSB	SWLSB	WQSB	EMSB	LBPSB	NFSB
English (%)	29	67	58	48	49	88	52	84	80
French (%)	69	33	41	43	28	9	8	6	19
Other (%)	2	1	1	9	23	3	40	10	2

Source: Source : MELS-DSID, Charlemagne system, data from 2013-01-25 / produced on 2013-06-05.
1. The data excludes vocational education students from the youth sector. P. These data are provisional.
Note: The sum of the percentages may be different from 100 as they have been rounded up.

Even this chart masks some differences within school board populations. For example, while it records the French mother tongue of students in New Frontiers School Board as 19%, this value is closer to 80% in the Valleyfield area of the board. In one school in the Eastern Shores School Board, 97% of the students have French as a mother tongue. This variation has a profound effect on the programs in the schools within a board, especially the variety of French language courses offered.

4.3 Diversity in the classroom: Inclusion of students with special needs in regular classes.

The English school system has always had the tradition of looking at research and resources on a global scale. For example, in the area of special needs, trends in the US and around the world for children with disabilities to leave the special education stream and be included in the regular classroom were influential in developing the inclusion model in English-language schools. Inclusion was addressed in the Advisory Board's 2006 brief,[23] and reiterated in its letter to the then Minister of Education in October 2010.[24] In its 2011 brief, the Advisory Board wrote:

On the one hand, there are deeply held philosophical reasons for integration, but on the other hand, in small schools, it is a necessity to have all children in the same class. Unfortunately, this is often done without adequate support.[25]

[23] Advisory Board on English Education, *Special Education: Issues of Inclusion and Integration in the Classroom* (Québec: MELS, 2006).
[24] Advisory Board on English Education, Letter to Line Beauchamp, Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports (Québec: MELS, October 29, 2010).
[25] ABEE, *Fostering Student Success,* p. 3.

Table 2. Proportion of students with handicaps or learning and behavioural difficulties integrated into a regular class in the public sector, for each administrative region and by language of instruction.

	2002-2003		2005-2006		2009-2010 (P)	
Administrative region	**French (%)**	**English (%)**	**French (%)**	**English (%)**	**French (%)**	**English (%)**
Abitibi-Témiscamingue (08)	64.2	100	67.0	100	72.5	89.4
Bas-Saint-Laurent (01)	62.4	100	68.8	100	71.5	100
Capitale-Nationale (03)	66.2	100	67.7	100	67.5	95.1
Centre-du-Québec (17)	50.0	100	64.4	100	71.1	100
Chaudière-Appalaches (12)	60.3	100	61.3	100	66.8	100
Côte-Nord (09)	55.7	100	61.2	100	63.0	98.6
Estrie (05)	62.5	90.2	63.4	89.5	67.1	73.0
Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine (11)	57.0	100	67.3	100	77.4	86.8
Lanaudière (14)	63.0	96.9	66.5	100	63.1	83.2
Laurentides (15)	53.7	70.7	58.4	78.5	61.7	87.6
Laval (13)	41.2	77.9	46.0	57.5	51.4	73.1
Mauricie (04)	52.0	100	53.7	100	62.7	100
Montérégie (16)	54.2	83.7	55.9	89.4	59.5	90.6
Montréal (06)	59.7	73.3	62.7	84.6	61.3	85.5
Nord-du-Québec (10)	65.5	13.5	63.9	31.5	66.1	32.4
Outaouais (07)	66.1	100	69.0	99.9	67.2	89.3
Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean (02)	57.5	100	58.6	100	56.8	100
Total	**58.2**	**82.9**	**61.1**	**87.1**	**63.0**	**85.7**

Source: Québec, MELS, Direction de la recherche, des statistiques et de l'information, Direction de l'adaptation scolaire, Charlemagne system, information portal, as of January 31, 2010.
(P) These data are provisional.

We have already described the extra cost associated with implementing bilingual programs in English schools (see Section 1.2). Inclusion of students with special needs in "regular" classes also adds an extra cost for support personnel that exceeds the MELS' targeted funding envelopes for special education and must come out of the school board's general fund. Writing to the Minister of Education, the Advisory Board noted:

Strategies for children with special needs must be based on the needs of each child. While a provincial policy is useful in broad terms, it will encourage a tendency to consider all children with special needs as an entity. One size does not fit all, and there must be room for accommodation of individual differences as well as for local variation. Differentiated instruction must be encouraged and teachers provided with appropriately adapted materials.[26]

4.4 Diversity within and between school boards

Beyond the variety of French language programs offered, schools within a single school board in urban areas usually offer special programs to attract students and to satisfy the requests of parents. These may include *"sports études,"* the International Baccalaureate program, music, the arts, or a focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), giving a wide range of options within a school board.

The motivation behind these programs is often to offer an alternative to a neighbourhood French language school or to a private English or French school that is attractive to students and their parents, and puts schools in competition with each other. But, in some cases, schools have adapted to meet the more pressing needs of the local community and its children.

Riverdale High School exemplifies the English school of today—it has transformed itself in order to better meet the community's needs and stay viable in a time of declining enrollments and changing demographics. Once a large traditional high school within the former Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal, with a capacity of 2 000 students, it has now become a hub for English-language education and community development with 700 students from Secondary I to Secondary V. It is a culturally diverse school, owing to a high Southeast Asian, Caribbean and Middle Eastern population. Its catchment area has a substantial middle class population as well as pockets of significant poverty because it includes the second largest social housing complex in Canada.

It offers the usual graduate-track programs, and has a graduation rate of around 80%. It has adult and vocational programs, as well as work-study youth sector programs such as the Centre de formation en entreprise et récupération (CFER), a non diploma program that leads to the workplace, where students who have not yet attained Elementary 6 level recycle electronic equipment. The school has implemented an alternative program for each cycle where small groups of students are supported academically and emotionally. It has a diverse resource department and staff that emphasizes caring, but also teaches self care skills like grocery shopping and cooking and uses technology to engage students in their learning. Riverdale High School also houses an active Community Learning Centre (CLC) ***(see Section 5.4.2)***

4.5 Summary

This section has indicated the difficulty of trying to define a single Anglophone community. There is as much variability within the English education system as there is between English school boards in Québec and any other jurisdiction. There are small schools and large schools; rural, urban and suburban schools; schools that offer more or less French language instruction, depending on their French language populations. But there are some basic tenets that they all share: an acceptance of differences among children; a commitment to matching the education to the needs of the child; a belief in inclusion; the need to find the funds to maintain these tenets and promote success for all students.

[26] ABEE, Letter to Line Beauchamp.

5.0 Distribution of resources

5.1 Amount of funding

Given the particularities of the English school system, per capita funding represents equality but not equity. MELS is responsible to the whole community and has recognized this by modifying allocations to some extent according to factors based on size, distance, socio-economic factors and three- and five-year historic windows.

System costs are non-negotiable but increase on a yearly basis. While school boards have a 2% budget increase in 2013-2014, real costs will increase by 4%. Less money represents less opportunity for innovation and creativity.

One Advisory Board member described the situation using the metaphor of a T-shirt. We are all given a one-size-fits-all T-shirt. At one time, we had the money to buy different accessories to make it fit better. We are no longer able to buy new accessories—our accessory drawer is empty. And the T-shirt is also shrinking. As another member added, "It's like trying to stay warm wearing nothing but a tank top."

To give two examples:

- The negative adjustment for school board fusions dating back to the implementation of linguistic school boards increases annually, despite decreasing enrolment and the resulting per capita funding.
- Costs for students with special needs have not been indexed, and funding for inclusive education is built on a statistical formula and not on real costs.

5.2 Accountability and targeted funding

The budgetary rules are out of step with a needs-based model of education and should be simplified, without sacrificing accountability. School boards are using resources that would normally be designated for 'regular' students to fulfill the needs of the students with special needs and should be allowed flexibility in budgeting at the local level.[27]

The requirement for quarterly reporting represents a huge increase in workload for school and school board administrators, but, more importantly, it reduces the length of the budget cycle and the opportunity for creativity. Principals report that the accounting rules tie their hands for deciding the most appropriate distribution of funds to meet their needs. In the words of one of the Advisory Board's guests this year, distribution of funding from MELS to the school boards "is a system based on mistrust."

School boards would develop long-term plans more easily if the budgetary period were longer. In a letter on governance, the Advisory Board recommended that:

School board funding should be in a single envelope, that budgets be spread over a longer time period, and that boards be given permission to use surpluses for local priorities that they establish, as long as Ministry priorities are respected overall.[28]

When funding is not specific, it is transferable and school boards can decide on how it is spent to meet their particular needs based on their annual adoption of the Equitable Distribution of Resources. Targeted funding in the "measures" restricts the school boards' latitude to adjust and adapt. Restricting the use of funds within certain envelopes mitigates against fiscal responsibility and the creative use of unused funds to benefit students.

[27] ABEE, Letter to Line Beauchamp, 2010.
[28] Advisory Board on English Education, *Response to the Minister of Education Regarding School Board Governance: Consultation on School Democracy* (Québec: MELS, January 16, 2008), http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/cela/pdf/ConsultDemoScol_a.pdf

5.3 Funding through regional tables

All English school boards are concerned about the number of government-funded organizations that appear to be involved in educational projects. Funding has been proposed for projects, such as those in literacy, that appear to be within the responsibility, expertise, and primary mandate of schools, yet school boards must compete with other community institutions for these grants.

This adds to the administrative burden of the school boards and too much time is spent in applying for small amounts of money that the boards feel should be allocated within the normal budgetary process and that, combined with existing funds, could have greater impact. Furthermore, at regional tables, there is often not enough money in the token amounts available to make it worthwhile to apply for them.

Rules applying to the use of monies from these applications are often too restrictive. For example, there are not many Anglophones on the list of artists in the Culture in the Schools program, so boards do not see the value of applying for the program, yet allowing English school boards more flexibility in bringing in resources, or materials, such as ordering books from Chapters or Amazon, rather than from prescribed suppliers, would result in better use of the available funds.

5.4 "Entente" funding

There is a misconception that English school boards are privileged by having access to funding from the Canada-Québec Agreement for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction (Entente funding). But this money, transmitted to the Ministry of Finance and distributed to projects approved by the *Secteur des services aux anglophones, aux autochtones et aux communautés culturelles (SSAACC)*, has been crucial in helping to pay for such basic necessities as translation costs and professional development in English. It has also contributed to the development of innovative special projects to improve instruction. The Leadership Committee for English Education in Québec (LCEEQ) has produced a position paper based on a round table meeting held in November 2012, in which they listed a number of examples of how the funding has been spent, and stressed the importance of maintaining the funding as "an essential support for the needed adaptations in the English education community and to meet emerging needs."[29]

5.4.1 LEARN

LEARN (Leading English Education and Resource Network) is a non-profit educational foundation supported in part by funding from the Quebec-Canada Entente for Minority Language Education that:

- offers e-learning services and support to all English school boards, private schools, community organizations and the private sector in rural and urban settings;
- supports and promotes pedagogical collaboration and innovation using information technology, and works to model best practices; and
- publishes quality learning materials to support educators who are implementing competency-based practices in the classroom.[30]

SOS LEARN is a free Web-based online homework help and tutoring service provided by experienced classroom teachers during the school year. Students use ZenLive, an on-line tool that features an electronic whiteboard, live chat, voice, and other interactive features. Registration is free and tutorials are offered on Monday through Thursday evenings to help Québec students in English Schools with study and homework.

Students can log in from any Internet-equipped computer using their LEARN username and password, available from their school. As well as the teacher, a technician is able to assist with any problems that arise and lessons can be downloaded for future use.

Homework help is available for elementary students in Cycles Two and Three, and secondary tutorials are available in Math (all levels); History and Citizenship; Chemistry; Science and Technology; Français, langue seconde; Physics; and English Language Arts. A few thousand students across the province take advantage of SOS LEARN each year.

[29] LCEEQ, Position Paper on: *The impact of recent budgetary compressions and recurring financial cutbacks on student success and on the survival of English schools in Québec* (Québec: LCEEQ, 2013), p. 6.
[30] LEARN http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/about/

5.4.2 Community Learning Centres (CLCs).

This initiative of the English-language education sector began in 2006 in five English-language schools. In 2012-2013, there were 37 CLCs in urban, suburban and rural schools across Québec, coordinated from the LEARN office in Laval and supported by entente funding and local school boards.

The CLCs aim to transform existing schools into community schools in the hope that they can become "hubs" for English-language education and community development in the surrounding English-speaking community. Based on the world-wide community school reform movement, a CLC partners with community groups or agencies to accomplish a jointly-agreed mission and offers a wide variety of programs and services including youth development, lifelong learning, community engagement, and family support. A CLC views itself as a learning community where students, teachers and the community take an active, reflective and collegial approach to teaching and learning in a symbiotic relationship. Finally, it provides ongoing opportunities for students, school staff and community members to contribute to and benefit from a range of services, both inside and outside the school by having various agencies pool resources and share the responsibility of service delivery.

The CLCs are equipped with video-conference facilities and engage students and teachers in community-based learning. A facilitator acts as a coordinator to carry out links, projects and initiatives between the school and the community.

One noticeable feature of the CLCs is their great variety: they offer services and programs to meet the needs of their particular communities.[31] The following vignettes describe the CLCs in two contrasting locations.

St Paul's River CLC in the Littoral School Board began in 2007. Its first three years were evaluated with the following results: - Overall satisfaction from parents and students for tutoring session, that had a large proportion of students participating consistently; overall satisfaction with youth centre that offered Mad Scientist Club, youth local action group, cooking classes, library, daycare for 4- to 12-year olds, music and drama, etc. . . .; 80% student attendance in sports and recreation events; correlation between participation in sports and recreation, music and theatre, and improved school performance; dramatic decreases in student drinking, drug use, smoking, sexual activity, and vandalism; community programs in exercise, gardening, seniors sharing skills with students; videoconference sessions with other agencies.

"The overall discoveries from this report show that the CLC has improved the life of its residents. The community also expressed a greater sense of pride and felt that they were making accomplishment and could see a difference in the community."[32]

[31] Full version: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmFImrGxQs0&feature=youtu.be
Short version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A235KXOGiQ8

[32] Commission scolaire du Littoral, *St. Paul's School Community Learning Centre Evaluation Report,* 2010. http://www.learnquebec.ca/export/.../clc/.../St.Paulxs_School_Evaluation_Report.doc

Riverdale CLC defines itself as a partnership of schools and community organizations designed to enhance educational services, sports, leisure, and recreational activities for students, families and the community; a milieu that fosters student success, family and community engagement, youth development, and lifelong learning.

It lists among its partners: Literacy Unlimited, Born to Read, L.O.V.E (Leave Out Violence Everywhere), WIBCA (West Island Black Community Association), ASAC (Association of South Asian Communities), AYTF (Aditya Youth Trust Fund), Overture With the Arts, Youth Stars Foundation, Brookwood Basketball, local synagogue, Cricket Montréal, Dawson College.

These partnerships increase the school's capacity to respond to the needs of its students, families and community and create optimal conditions for success. They reflect the demographics of the neighbourhood around the school, help to mediate cultural sensitivities and celebrate the community's diversity.

CLC activities this year have included: Black History Month activities, anti-racism week, an intercultural family and community event, a youth exchange with the James Bay Cree community, video-conferencing in the classroom, "Ninja Kitchens," junior cooking skills, internships for Dawson College students, a supervised weight room with a personal trainer, girls' self-defense, martial arts, dance.

It identifies its successes as: increased youth leadership and volunteerism in school and community; increased opportunities for learning for all students; applied experience for older students, preparing them for the workforce; increased success rates because school is more engaging and fun; increased accessibility to educational and extra-curricular activities for students and families of low socio-economic standing; increased resources in school and community; mentoring and establishing relationships; a more vibrant school and community.

5.4.3 Leadership Committee for English Education in Quebec (LCEEQ)

LCEEQ is a unique creation of the English sector and an outgrowth and extension of the Implementation Development Committee that oversaw the implementation of the Québec Education Reform (QEP) in English schools. It is a grouping of representatives (such as teachers, administrators, professionals, Directors General, MELS) of many levels (youth, adult/vocational, post-secondary) of the education community. In this, it is a sister group to the Advisory Board on English Education, but is financed by Entente funding and its mandate is to address more ground-level issues pertaining to pedagogy. It works closely with the SSAACC and oversees the disbursement of funds such as PDIG grants (see Section 5.4.4).

LCEEQ organizes a province-wide conference every February to address current issues of concern to teachers (In 2013 the topic was Safe Schools) and in November 2012 it organized a round table where 115 delegates from all levels of the English education sector discussed issues of common concern.

This resulted in a position paper transmitted to the Minister identifying concerns about the 2013-2014 education budget and making recommendations that would reduce the impact of budgetary constraints on student success. This venture was an excellent example of the unique way the English sector tends to tackle problems: bringing together a broad selection of constituents who might contribute to a problem's solution and work in collaboration to reach a consensus so that actions can take place in concert.

5.4.4 Professional Development and Innovation Grants (PDIG)

Professional Development and Innovation Grants (PDIG) are available for teachers, school library personnel and administrators who are looking for ways to improve student achievement in Québec's English schools. These grants are administered by the SSAACC for MELS and are funded under the Canada-Québec Agreement.

PDIG projects must focus on the development of pedagogical expertise resulting in improved pedagogical practices or curriculum. Projects are initiated by teachers, library personnel, school administrators and/or school board personnel. The grants provide release time for school personnel to collaborate on and participate in professional development activities relating to the QEP, or to pilot an innovative project designed to promote learning and success.

Projects are submitted on-line through the LCEEQ Web site. The project and its outcomes are sustainable without future funding and shared so that all educators benefit from any resources produced via the LEARN Web site.

In 2012, the town of Baie-Comeau celebrated its 75th anniversary. Three teachers from Baie Comeau High School received $2 700 in PDIG funding for an ethnographic and inter-generational project entitled "In Search of Yesterday." The funds helped to defray the cost of substitute teachers when the teachers met for professional development sessions. The school teamed up with a number of partners including the school's Community Learning Centre, the North Shore Community Association, Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, Canadian Heritage, The Anglican Church of St. Andrew and St. George, la Société historique de la Côte-Nord, and seniors from the community. Through a series of workshops for teachers and students, the school team created a number of pedagogical activities that would record the Anglophone heritage and culture of their town.

A vast collection of photographs, stories, newspaper articles, archival materials and interviews with key community figures resulted in the creation of a twelve-panel bilingual display. Other activities included a live two-hour CBC radio broadcast, creation of historical posters complete with text and images, and a multitude of multimedia projects created by the students. Never before had such a project energized a community in recording part of its own history, and never before had it been documented, told, and celebrated in such an engaging manner.

5.5 Summary

Three main themes emerged when the Advisory Board considered the issue of funding. One was the inevitable discussion of budgetary compressions and diversions to other para-educational agencies and the fact that since so much has been pared from the operating budgets, an impact on the classroom will soon be inevitable. The second was the degree of mistrust built into the accounting system and the pressure on administrators to make frequent reports that stifles their creativity to spend money to the advantage of their students. Thirdly, the needs of the English school system for materials, professional development and support not available from MELS are addressed by funding from the Canada-Québec Agreement. This support must be maintained and administered as close to the recipients as possible.

6.0 Decision-making

6.1 School Boards

The specific tasks of school commissioners are outlined in *The Education Act*. For example, the Commissioners set policy, are the stewards of school board budgets, approve major school change (such as rezoning, school closures) and are responsible for the hiring of their Directors General. The majority of English school board commissioners also participate in chairing and attending board-level committees, in addition to attending school-level governing board meetings, school and community events, educational workshops and conferences. In this way, they remain close to their constituencies and further their understanding of the needs of the communities they serve.

A few themes emerged in the Advisory Board's response to a previous Minister of Education's request for consultation regarding school board governance and a subsequent meeting with the Minister:

- The absolute need to maintain school boards as one of the essential institutions of the English-speaking community of Québec;
- The need to make school boards as effective as possible;
- The need for the Ministry to develop clear expectations for school boards, but with built-in flexibility for boards to deal with local issues;
- The need for more effective communication of responsibilities, regulations, and achievements to the general public, by Ministry and school boards.[33]

The Advisory Board takes this opportunity to reiterate these principles of managing boards by universal suffrage, effectiveness, flexibility, and transparency. With continuing budgetary constraints, some boards are examining the possibilities of sharing the cost of administrative services of various sorts although it is not apparent that they will be able to produce significant savings.

Small school boards need to exist to serve local needs and to maintain a viable English-speaking population to contribute to the welfare of all regions of the province. To survive, they have become creative in developing local solutions for local needs by adapting provincial initiatives and effecting them at the local level. They will need the flexibility to be able to continue to rely on innovation and creativity for solutions to their challenges.

The *Indicateurs de gestion* (management indicators) show that both English and French school boards were more fiscally responsible than health and municipal authorities. Even so, English school boards spent less on school board personnel than French school boards and in spite of extra costs, such as immersion programs, the cost of educating a student in an English school board is economical. As one example, the *Indicateurs de gestion* for 2008-2009, showed that the cost per student in the Central Québec School Board (CQSB) was $7 758, compared with an average of $8 005 per student for the 14 French boards that operate in the same territory as the CQSB and which could be assumed to have comparable operating expenses, and that the CQSB expenditure was at the median value for all 15 boards. Since they are already operating economically, can further cuts be accommodated? The Advisory Board supports the claim made by the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) that further cuts will affect classroom practice[34] and LCEEQ's concerns about the impact of financial constraints on student success.[35]

[33] ABEE, *Response to the Minister of Education Regarding School Board Governance,* January 16, 2008.
[34] http://www.qesba.qc.ca/en/News_21/items/96.html
[35] LCEEQ, *The impact of recent budgetary compressions and recurring financial cutbacks on student success and on the survival of English schools in Québec,* 2013, p.6

The present system, where everyone is placed on a French school board taxation list until they request otherwise, places the English school boards at a disadvantage. In regions off the Island of Montreal where the French school boards have a lower tax rate than the English school board, taxpayers often choose to place their names on the French school board's list in order to pay less taxes. David D'Aoust, Chairman of the Quebec English School Boards Association (see Section 6.2), has reminded the Minister that this deprives the original English board of electors from its voters' list, as well as school election funding and tax revenues (Dec 20, 2012).

6.2 Quebec English School Boards Association

The Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) provides a central voice for all the English Boards in the province. Representatives from each English School Board provide input and direction to the association by participating on the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee, and various sub-committees.

QESBA provides a vehicle for English school board commissioners to work collaboratively in sharing best practices to meet the goals of the English school board network. They exchange information about their boards' innovative programs, foundations, adult and vocational sectors, bilingual education, and success rates and generally maintain a positive and respectful relationship with the administrators and communities they serve. QESBA also provides weekly newsletters, workshops and conferences to assist commissioners in their work.

As another example of the collaborative nature of the English education community, every spring QESBA partners with the school administrators association (AAESQ) to organize a joint conference on educational leadership. This event brings together hundreds of commissioners, school administrators and school board administrators for professional development and networking.

6.3 Summary

The Advisory Board is convinced of the value of English-language school boards, whose presence is seen throughout this brief. They maintain the rights of English-speaking citizens, but they also contribute to the life and activities of the communities they serve.

7.0 Conclusions

All voices that represent different aspects of the English education sector have expressed their commitment to continuing the provision of high quality education and helping to strengthen the prosperity and success of the province of Québec. In the description of the sector outlined in this brief, the Advisory Board hopes that a picture has emerged of its distinctiveness, its ability to adapt to demographic differences, and examples of its needs, where these are different from those of the majority. Various bodies, such as the Advisory Board, QESBA, LCEEQ, and QFHSA have attempted to present this picture and this brief is another facet of the portrait. It is hoped that the timing of this brief will represent the beginning of a discussion of these issues between MELS and the English education community.

The Advisory Board respectfully asks the Minister to implement a policy analysis of the status and needs of the English education sector in Québec so that the English schools may continue their traditionally strong contribution to education in the province in a way that best serves its clientele.

One of the recommendations of the Task Force on English Education was the appointment of an Assistant Deputy Minister dedicated to the activities of the English sector. This has been an appointment of great benefit to English education and a post that has been filled by excellent educators, well-respected in Quebec's education community. The Advisory Board has been concerned lately that budgetary constraints at the Ministry have reorganized portfolios and that the Assistant Deputy Minister's function in the English sector has been diluted by extra responsibilities.

The Advisory Board respectfully asks the Minister to consider the mandate of the Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for the Anglophone sector and to refocus it on the concerns of the English education sector.

It also seems as if the English education community is called on to react to policy, rather than being closely involved in the development of policy. Yet, the Assistant Deputy Minister and his office are experienced educators with a strong background in the English sector and an awareness of its needs and expectations, and the Assistant Deputy Minister is well placed to bring the concerns and priorities of the Anglophone community to the Minister.

The Advisory Board respectfully asks the Minister to ensure the involvement of the Assistant Deputy Minister and his office in the development of policy and to provide them with flexibility in the application of policy and resource management.

Policy discussion of particular concern for the coming school year, and a proposed focus of the Advisory Board's activities, is the MELS' plans for new policies on the incorporation of technology into the classroom and the issues that relate to this. The English sector has made considerable progress in this regard and has demonstrated a long-standing expertise. Sections 1.5, 2.2, 5.4.1, and 5.4.2 give a few examples of this. The experience of the English sector with these and other innovations needs to be integrated into the Minister's priorities at the planning stages of the policy.

The Advisory Board respectfully asks the Minister to undertake extensive consultation with English-language school boards regarding the use of technology in education to capitalize on existing expertise and experience before developing policy on the issue.

A theme that has run through this brief is the need for flexibility based on distinctiveness. English-language schools and centres need flexibility to do things in the best interests of the students and their success. Traditionally, the English school boards and their schools and centres have used this latitude, where they are afforded in the budgetary rules, to meet local community expectations and mitigate, among other things, the effect of maintaining the last school in the community. This latitude to adapt has been sorely compromised over the last decade or so by ongoing declining enrolments, disbursement of budgets from the education sector to outside agencies, and recent severe budgetary compressions. While school boards' actions must continue to be transparent and rigorous with respect to the use of public money and boards must continue to be accountable for their actions, the demand for quarterly reports places an excessive toll on them.

The Advisory Board respectfully asks the Minister to allow English boards flexibility, tempered with an appropriate level of accountability, when they implement Ministry policy to manage their finances in ways that are of most benefits to student success.

The Advisory Board is aware that it would be difficult for the Minister to allow the flexibility and local autonomy it is requesting without a clear picture of the situation in English-language schools and centres and the issues and differences they face. Among these issues are those outlined in Sections 1 and 2 of this brief, problems relating to vocational training, and declining enrolments.

The Advisory Board respectfully asks the Minister to implement a policy analysis of the impact of budgetary cuts, especially on small school boards in remote areas, so that the English schools may continue their traditionally strong contribution to education in the province.

APPENDIX

Guests for this brief

Mr. Michael Canuel, Chief Executive Officer, LEARN

Ms. Debi Dixon, Vice-Principal, Riverdale High School, Lester-B.-Pearson School Board

Mr. Wayne Goldthorp, Director General, New Frontiers School Board

Ms. Carol Heffernan, Assistant Director General, Lester-B.-Pearson School Board

Ms. Audrey Ottier, Coordinator, Riverdale Community Learning Centre, Lester-B.-Pearson School Board

Mr. Roger Rampersad, Principal, Riverdale High School, Lester-B.-Pearson School Board

Ms. Ardis Root, Vice-Principal, West Island Career Centre, Lester-B.-Pearson School Board

Ms. Beverley White, Director of Studies and Community Development, LEARN

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