

3. Education, Literacy & School Reforms

Key Takeaways:

- 1. One-of-a-kind Bilingual University (Laval, Quebec City); High School of Montreal reboot.**
- 2. Improving School Ventilation; retrofitting aging school buildings.**
- 3. Repeal of Bill 40, coupled with common sense school governance reforms.**
- 4. Achieving educational freedom of choice in Quebec by adhering to internationally recognized norms and treaties (UN).**
- 5. Province-wide symposium to address Quebec's chronically low youth and adult literacy rates; high school graduation rates.**
- 6. Rescind Quebec Liberal Party-CAQ three French course requirement in English CEGEPs (Bill 96). Full reinstatement of Dawson College expansion project. Immediate lifting of Bill 21-imposed teacher hiring ban throughout Quebec.**
- 7. Better resources, support for Quebec children with Learning Difficulties.**

3.1. Reinvigorating Quebec's Educational Infrastructure.

3.1.1. Provincially-chartered Bilingual University.

Europeans jokingly say that to be merely bilingual is to be badly educated. Nevertheless, practical and effective bilingualism in schools will make all Quebecers smarter and more in tune with the world.

Quebec has the best French-English bilingualism numbers in both percentage and absolute terms, despite fifty-three years (and counting) of state-sponsored language discrimination. The *Canadian Party of Quebec* will continue to champion bilingualism (**Party Principle 3**), especially in the educational context.

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CaPQ Recommendation: A new institute of higher learning, with main campus in Laval; satellite campus in the Quebec City region.

- Modelled after l'Université d'Ottawa to some extent, but aiming to become the benchmark for authentic, French-English, bilingual university education in Canada.
- Laval, a provincial region of over 440,000 people, deserves a first-class university.
- **Faculties:** Engineering, Law, Liberal Arts, Medicine.
- **Start date of first classes:** Liberal Arts in **Fall 2027**; professional schools: **Fall 2029**.

Basic criteria:

- Undergraduate degree: Minimum 40% of credit total must be achieved in the student's Second Official Language Spoken (**SOLS**).
- Graduate, doctoral, post-doctorate programs: **Course work:** Minimum 40% of credit total must be achieved in the student's SOLS. **Theses, Research:** No language requirements per se. However, dissertations must be defended in both of Canada's official languages.

3.1.2. Rebirth of the High School of Montreal.

- Downtown or Westmount location to accommodate a growing English-speaking youth population, as well as francophones - pending application of **Section 23.1(a)** of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in Quebec.
- Local lobbying efforts a few years back proved unsuccessful, but the need for a downtown/West End Montreal English high school remains.

3.1.3. Condition of School Buildings & Issues with Ventilation.

The overall condition of Quebec's school buildings is appalling, and the CaPQ echoes *Fédération autonome de l'enseignement (FAE)* concerns last February about the lack of transparency re. CO₂ monitoring and data collection by the *Ministère de l'Éducation*.¹

The *Canadian Party of Quebec* demands full transparency re. the rollout of CO₂ monitors in schools, their proper installation and use, and full transparency re. the Ministère's data collection methodology.

CaPQ Recommendation: A classroom air quality strategy that closely matches that of the Province of Ontario and other jurisdictions, i.e., HEPA filters in every classroom and child centre in Quebec, as well as recalibrated HVAC systems to increase fresh air flow wherever possible. (N.B. Health Canada recommends a long-term indoor exposure limit of **1,000 ppm**; the Party is prepared to advocate for a lower limit as more research becomes available).

¹ Joe Lofaro, (2022, February 23). Teachers' federation demands transparency from Quebec on school air quality data. <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/teachers-federation-demands-transparency-from-quebec-on-school-air-quality-data-1.5793228> Retrieved September 3, 2022.

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This policy will go alongside a badly needed retrofitting plan for aging schools that will improve their energy efficiency and make for healthier, more breathable buildings and consequently, healthier students and teachers.

3.2. Commitment to repealing Bill 40.

School boards have an important role in organizing quality education within their districts, and contributing to the socio-cultural and economic development of their communities.

In addition to managing educational services from the elementary to adult levels, they provide daycare services, create community learning centres, and offer internship opportunities for individuals, especially in the education and healthcare sectors. These services were created as required by their community, and were achievable through local networks built with other community organizations including health and social services, the police, and other professional organizations. School boards are thus heavily integrated within communities, English and French, rural and urban².

Bill 40, *An Act to amend mainly the Education Act with regard to school organization and governance*, abolishes school boards in favour of government-directed *service centres*. The Legault government promised that parents would have more power and that taxpayers would save money. Yet, in reality, parents and other members within these services centres have limited powers due to the carryover of various collective agreements, policies, and strict budgetary regulations³. These service centres essentially centralize power in the hands of the minister⁴.

By contrast, school boards can, and have previously challenged government regulations (e.g., *English Montreal School Board re. Bill 21*). In addition, while school boards do account for 5% of education management costs⁵, less than that of other public organizations, the conversion of school boards into service centres does not guarantee that money would be used more efficiently. So, claims of spending efficiency via Bill 40 are dubious at best.

Finally, the most critical question in assessing Bill 40's merits is whether it benefits student education. A research report commissioned and published by the Quebec government in

² Dr. Ghada Sfeir (Organizer), (2020, November 27). Bill 40: The Future of English Language Education in Quebec. [Webinar] Concordia University, Montreal. <https://doe.concordia.ca/techoffice/bill-40-the-future-of-english-language-education-in-quebec/> Retrieved September 3, 2022.

³ Dr. Ghada Sfeir (Organizer), (2020, November 27). Bill 40: The Future of English Language Education in Quebec. [Webinar] Concordia University, Montreal. <https://doe.concordia.ca/techoffice/bill-40-the-future-of-english-language-education-in-quebec/> Retrieved September 3, 2022.

⁴ Jonathan Montpetit, (2020, February 10). Quebec just killed its school boards after 175 years, but will students benefit? <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/bill-40-kills-school-boards-after-175-years-1.5458564>

⁵ Rapport du comité d'experts sur le financement, l'administration, la gestion et la gouvernance des commissions scolaires. Mai 2014. http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/PSG/politiques_orientations/rapport_comiteCS_mai2014v3p.pdf

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2014 found that students in education systems with school boards tended to perform better. Graduation rates improved, and dropout rates were reduced⁶.

The *Canadian Party of Quebec* believes that school boards are integral to communities and contribute positively to student education, and as such reiterates its call for the repeal of Bill 40. This necessarily means the reinstatement of school boards within French sectors, and maintenance of school boards within English sectors.

Education is dynamic and any institution should be re-evaluated and improved in order to best meet community needs. School boards must be held accountable to their community, managed in a cost-efficient manner, and aim to provide quality education. For these reasons, the following policies are recommended in order to improve school board services:

1. Tie in school board elections with municipal elections.

School board elections consistently have low voter turnout. Improving awareness about them while facilitating voting would improve voter turnout. Elected representatives would be held more accountable to the voting population. These elections would occur for both English and French sectors (as opposed to *Bill 40* which abolishes school board elections for the French sector only)^{7,8,9}.

2. In addition to elected members, ensure there are positions in which voices of other community members are present.

Education is a societal benefit. Parents, students, and teachers are integral. However, members of professional organizations (e.g., doctors, nurses) or marginalized groups (e.g., indigenous peoples) should also have a say in how education services are provided within society. School boards then must be organized in a way that balances viewpoints across the spectrum so that the best policies are adopted for society's benefit.

⁶ Rapport du comité d'experts sur le financement, l'administration, la gestion et la gouvernance des commissions scolaires. Mai 2014.

http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/PSG/politiques_orientations/rapport_comiteCS_mai2014v3p.pdf

⁷ Quebec English School Boards Association, (November 2019). Brief presented by the Quebec English School Boards Association to the National Assembly Committee on Culture and Education on Bill 40, An Act to amend mainly the Education Act with regard to school organization and governance. https://qesba.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Brief-QESBA_Bill40-2.pdf

⁸ François Carrier, (2019, December 12). Loi 40 : des répercussions négatives au sein des milieux ruraux? <http://www.bulletinaylmer.com/loi-40-des-r-percussions-n-gatives-au-sein-des-milieux-ruraux>

⁹ Rapport du comité d'experts sur le financement, l'administration, la gestion et la gouvernance des commissions scolaires. Mai 2014.

http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/PSG/politiques_orientations/rapport_comiteCS_mai2014v3p.pdf

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3. Provide training to school board members to support effective action.

Training topics would include: aspects of political engagement, good governance, and public communication¹⁰. They would be provided to assist members perform their roles better, rather than limit their abilities.

4. Provide greater flexibility in how school boards choose to utilize resources in improving education services and meet community needs.

A decentralized education system enables school boards to tailor their policies to meet their community needs. While the education ministry may provide general goals, providing school boards with the flexibility to implement these goals as they see fit is associated with better outcomes¹¹.

5. Merge services to improve cost-efficiency¹².

School boards should be allowed to determine the best way to improve their cost efficiency. This may include merging services as they see fit depending on community needs. This way, quality education and services can be provided without compromising these needs.

6. Accommodate relationships between school boards and municipal governments in order to optimize school board resource access.

Whereas *Bill 40* forces municipalities to accommodate schools as the education minister sees fit¹³, allowing school boards to build relationships with municipal governments would help improve community relations while allowing both school boards and municipal governments to optimize community resources (e.g., libraries, arenas, etc.)¹⁴ to save money.

¹⁰ Rapport du comité d'experts sur le financement, l'administration, la gestion et la gouvernance des commissions scolaires. Mai 2014.

http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/PSG/politiques_orientations/rapport_comiteCS_mai2014v3p.pdf

¹¹ Rapport du comité d'experts sur le financement, l'administration, la gestion et la gouvernance des commissions scolaires. Mai 2014.

http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/PSG/politiques_orientations/rapport_comiteCS_mai2014v3p.pdf

¹² Rapport du comité d'experts sur le financement, l'administration, la gestion et la gouvernance des commissions scolaires. Mai 2014.

http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/PSG/politiques_orientations/rapport_comiteCS_mai2014v3p.pdf

¹³ Jonathan Montpetit, (2020, February 10). Quebec just killed its school boards after 175 years, but will students benefit? <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/bill-40-kills-school-boards-after-175-years-1.5458564>

¹⁴ Rapport du comité d'experts sur le financement, l'administration, la gestion et la gouvernance des commissions scolaires. Mai 2014.

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Education is fundamental to a well-functioning society. Quebec's school boards have played a central role in improving education services and meeting community needs for over a century. **CaPQ** opposes *Bill 40*, and instead propose ways to improve school boards in line with community interests and evidence-based policies, such that student success equates to societal success.

3.3. Educational Freedom of Choice.

The *Canadian Party of Quebec* supports *educational freedom of choice (CaPQ Principle 4)* for all Quebec parents and their children, as guaranteed by the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* ("Convention").¹⁵ The *Government of Canada* is one of 196 signatories to this convention.¹⁶

Quebec's future prosperity and social cohesiveness depends on its ability to educate its children. The international community has recognized the importance of raising a child in an environment of happiness, love, and understanding. Education is critical for ensuring a child's ability to assume responsibilities within the community.

To ensure that children are raised "in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity," as stated in the Convention, Canada along with other 195 signatories of the Convention, agreed to provide children with access to education that is directed to "the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own," as per **Article 29.1(c)** of the Convention.

Quebec children come from many cultural and linguistic backgrounds. While the First Official Language Spoken (**FOLS**) for 82.2% of Quebecers was French, according to the 2021 Census¹⁷, the percentage of FOLS English (13.0%) is significant.

To encourage non-francophone children of non-native speakers of French to contribute to Quebec's prosperity, it's vital to provide them with access to education that respects their cultural identity, language, and values like responsibility and respect for others. Moreover, respecting the cultural identity, language, and values of non-francophones shouldn't be a numbers game.

¹⁵ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. Convention on the Rights of the Child. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

¹⁶ Government of Canada. (2021, November 05). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/national-child-day/united-nations-convention-rights-of-the-child.html>

¹⁷ Statistics Canada. Census Program: Census of Population. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm> Last modified August 9, 2022.

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Quebec politicians who pander to the linguistic majority's insecurities by suppressing minority voices don't show respect, but rather devalue the lives of refugees, landed immigrants, permanent residents, and in most cases, fellow Canadian citizens.

3.3.1. Applying International Standards to Quebec Education.

To uphold the Convention's guiding principles, countries like Norway – with a smaller population (5.4 million, approx.) than Quebec and in the proximity of more populous neighbours - offer special protections and education accommodations to ensure the educational well-being of the minority-background students¹⁸, including measures like mother tongue instruction, bilingual subject teaching, and introductory schools to students until they're sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to follow standard school instruction.¹⁹

This mandate for equal educational rights in Norway is consistent with the Convention principle of working in the child's best interests when enacting laws. By contrast, both Bill 96 and Bill 21 infringe on this principle, leading to negative consequences.

Laws like Bill 96 and Bill 21, that aim to suppress minority linguistic, religious and cultural identities and values, deny freedom of choice. This lack of freedom manifests itself into feelings of social exclusion and the lack of motivation to study a language against one's own will. So, instead of encouraging individual responsibility, discriminatory laws make them feel subjugated to the whims and judgment of the state.

Bill 96 and Bill 21 are already perceived by minority communities as clumsy attempts at assimilation, in contrast to inclusive laws like the *Norwegian Education Act* that promote collaboration, respectful power negotiations, as well as cultural and linguistic exchanges. Most importantly, inclusive laws and policies uphold "the principle of *social justice*, as referred to in García and Flores (2012, p. 242)²⁰, whereby educators promote an inclusive and respectful attitude towards all languages and their speakers"²¹

3.3.2. Application of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to Quebec.

The *Canadian Party of Quebec* will push the Government of Quebec to strive and uphold the social justice principles and the best interests of the child in the enactment of laws. Quebec children are entitled to rights and freedoms under the Convention signed by Canada in 1991

¹⁸ Multilingual Pedagogies in Norwegian Schools. <https://encyclopedia.pub/entry/24552> Updated June 29, 2022.

¹⁹ Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, (1998, July 17). Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education and Training (the Education Act), section 2.8. https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/1998-07-17-61#KAPITTEL_2 Last updated June 24, 2020.

²⁰ García, Ofelia, and Nelson Flores. 2012. Multilingual pedagogies. In *The Routledge Handbook of Multilingualism*, 2nd ed. Edited by Marilyn Martin-Jones, Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese. London: Routledge, pp. 232–46.

²¹ Multilingual Pedagogies in Norwegian Schools. <https://encyclopedia.pub/entry/24552> Updated June 29, 2022.

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regardless of their “race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,” as stated in the Convention preamble.

The Convention preamble also states that children should have the freedom to a “harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding”. Children should also be entitled to harmonious development.

Article 2, section 1 of the Convention: All children are entitled to the above regardless of his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s [...] language.

Article 5 states that parent responsibilities and duties must be respected to provide “appropriate direction and guidance”.

Article 6, section 1 explains how children have the right to have their identity and nationality preserved.

Article 28 section 3 states that all children, including Quebec children, should be encouraged to cooperate at the international level regarding matters in education thus extinguishing ignorance and illiteracy.

The Party notes that English is still the world’s most spoken language (N.B. French is fifth), and third most-spoken first language, preceded only by Mandarin Chinese and Spanish.²²

Article 29, section 1, focuses on how children’s development should be nurtured to their fullest potential by respecting fundamental freedoms, including respecting the child’s parents own “cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living”. Subsection (d) states that the “preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance”.

Article 29, section 2 specifies that there are minimum standards that may be specified by the State (Quebec’s *Ministère de l’Éducation et de L’Enseignement Supérieur*), and that sections 28 and 29 may be subject to changes, but must adhere to paragraph 1.

Article 30 refers to children belonging to linguistic minorities who must have the right to use his or her own language.

3.3.3. Consequences of Denying Educational Freedom of Choice.

Canada and consequently, Quebec, as a Province of Canada, are both responsible for upholding the Convention. According to sections 2, 5, 6, and 28-30, Canadian children living in Quebec, including linguistic minority children, are being denied the right to choose their language of education, or at the very least, the language most closely aligned with their parent’s culture and/or identity.

²² The World Factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/world/#people-and-society> Last updated August 18, 2022.

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Successive PQ, QLP, and CAQ governments have pitted French children against other language learners, and denied educational choice to all children vis-à-vis public educational institutions, thus threatening their sense of identity and nationality. Quebec governments' decades long disdain of the Convention articles referenced above has bred middle-class and working-class francophone suspicion towards the world's most spoken language – to the detriment of Quebec's social cohesion and *rapprochement* (*goodwill and cooperation*) (**CaPQ Principle 6**) between the province's two major linguistic communities.

Although specific obligations under the *Convention* for provincial governments may be debatable, the Quebec government as an institution has nevertheless failed to adopt a *child-centred focus* on education.^{23 24} Beyond education, this has implications for children in family law, divorce law, and youth protection cases as well.

3.3.4. Access to English Schools in Quebec.

Ever since the passing of Bill 63, *the Act to Promote the French Language in Quebec*, the so-called 'grandfather of language laws' in Quebec on 1969, access to English schools has been a contentious issue. Bill 96 introduces new uncertainties in the education domain, even though on the surface, the Government seems to maintain clear eligibility requirements for attending public (or subsidized private) English schools²⁵, i.e.:

- children with a right under law to attend an English school;
- children with serious learning difficulties who are given special permission;
- children facing a serious family or humanitarian situation who are given special permission;
- children in Quebec temporarily;
- Indigenous children who live (or lived) in an Indigenous community, or on Cree or Naskapi lands First Nations communities other than the Cree and Naskapi nations, who have exemptions from Quebec's language laws from the *1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* and the *1978 Northeastern Quebec Agreement*, respectively.

N.B. Chapter 6, *Indigenous Reconciliation & Compensation Claims*, will deal with First Nations education.

²³ Jean-François Noël, *The Convention on the Rights of the Child - Topics in Family Law: A Collection of Articles*. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/fi-lf/divorce/crc-crde/conv2a.html>

²⁴ Government of Canada, (2021, November 5). *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: An Overview for Children and Teenagers*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/national-child-day/united-nations-convention-rights-of-the-child.html> Retrieved August 31, 2022.

²⁵ Éducaloi. *Access to English Schools in Quebec*. <https://educaloi.qc.ca/en/capsules/access-to-english-schools-in-quebec/>

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3.3.5. UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights²⁶:

The Party's fourth principle also draws major inspiration from the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), driven in large part by the efforts of John Humphrey, former McGill Law Professor and director of the United Nations *Human Rights Division* from 1946 to 1966. In particular, two sections that every candidate in the 2022 Quebec election should read:

- **Article 26, section 2:** Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
- **Article 26, section 3:** Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

3.3.6. Measuring Efficacy of Language Instruction in Quebec's schools.

How well do Quebec students speak, read and write Canada's two official languages after high school graduation?

The *Canadian Party of Quebec* believes that all Quebecers regardless of mother tongue should graduate as at least functionally bilingual and bi-literate in both French and English. English system? French system? Shouldn't matter.

CaPQ Recommendation: In order to critically and dispassionately assess the efficacy of the programs in both French and English, an Education Ministry-funded pilot project to come up with and test *bilingualism metrics*. It would then apply these metrics to successive graduating classes in both the French and English sectors to measure real-world bilingualism performance. Only then can stereotypes and media biases be countered, language instruction strengths and weaknesses be recognized.

²⁶ United Nations. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

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3.4. Addressing Quebec's chronically low youth and adult literacy rates; high school graduation rates.

Quebec needs a focussed action plan to reduce its low youth and adult literacy rates, and its low high school graduation rates²⁷, consistently ranked amongst the worst in North America (especially among francophone boys).²⁸

The *Canadian Party of Quebec* is prepared to seize the initiative on the following controversial topics in a province-wide education symposium:

- Correlating drop-out rates to poverty, family situation, social background, etc.;
- Studying what private schools do better than public schools;
- Studying what public schools do better than private schools;
- Addressing public subsidisation of private schools in Quebec and its impact, if any, on the current state of public schooling in the province²⁹

CaPQ Recommendation: Education is not only learned from books, but also through lived experiences. The *Government of Canada* with its spending power and the provincial/territorial governments – including the Government of Quebec – with jurisdiction over secondary education, should work together to create a unique pan-Canadian high school program to enhance youth education with a view to improving literacy and gaining a better understanding of the country.

Government would cover most if not all costs for students (e.g., lodging, travel, tuition if necessary), who would be eligible for either one or two years of high school in another province or territory. Billeting families would be paid a negotiated rate for housing an out-of-province student (minimum age twelve).

Students who apply to this program must demonstrate a willingness to learn in different regions across Canada. Upon successful completion, they are credited with a full school year just as they would be in attending school at home.

Benefits: This would promote cross-training, bilingualism, and an appreciation for other distinct provincial cultures. Promotion of Canada as a travel/work/study destination and interprovincial friendships. An opportunity for youth to experience the country while fulfilling scholastic requirements.

²⁷ Quebec's high school graduation rate is lowest in Canada. (2018, May 02) CTV Montreal. <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/quebec-s-high-school-graduation-rate-is-lowest-in-canada-1.3911723>

²⁸ Savard, Simon et Homsy, Mia. (2018, avril). Décrochage scolaire au Québec : Dix ans de surplace, malgré les efforts de financement. Institut du Québec. <https://institutduquebec.ca/decrochage-scolaire-au-quebec-dix-ans-de-surplace-malgre-les-efforts-de-financement/>

²⁹ Stéphane Vigneault, The UN to hold Quebec accountable for its segregated school system. <https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Holding%20Quebec%20accountable.pdf> Retrieved September 1, 2022.

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3.5. Firm Opposition to the Quebec Liberal Party-CAQ three-French course CEGEP clause; Dawson Expansion Project cancellation.

After a mostly dormant Fall 2021 and Winter 2022 on the Bill 96 front, Quebec's English-speaking community was aroused by a Liberal Party proposal that would force students at English CEGEPs to take three core courses in French in order to graduate.

Justice Minister Simon Jolin-Barrette partially came to the PLQ's rescue by allowing the French courses required to be complimentary. Nevertheless, as of **Fall 2024**, an English CEGEP student will have to complete five French courses in a 2-year D.E.C. program to graduate.

The Canadian Party of Quebec continues to demonstrate strong and determined opposition to the CAQ-Liberals Bill 96 CEGEP clause, which risks jeopardizing the educational goals and careers of today's youth, diverting English kids out of CEGEP education, and destabilizing the English CEGEP system.

The recent QLP youth wing resolution to make the three French course requirements at English CEGEPs optional is non-binding and doesn't change the Liberals' official position (**Article 16** of *Because French is Our Language, Our Strength and Our Future*, published in April 2021) one iota.^{30 31}

Apart from the three French course debacle, the combined effect of:

1. "A hard enrollment freeze at English CEGEPs which by the government's own numbers will reduce their share of the student population from 17.8% in 2021-22 to 11.2% in 2039-40."³²
2. Explicitly favouring French CEGEPs over English CEGEPs in maintenance, expansion and upgrades (e.g., *Dawson College* \$100M expansion project cancellation).³³

will erode the trust and confidence of parents in the English CEGEP system, force some students to seek alternate routes to university (e.g., Grade 12 programs in Quebec or elsewhere), and make English CEGEP teaching a less viable career path for English-speaking Quebecers.

³⁰ <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/quebec-liberal-youth-wing-wants-bill-96-s-cegep-requirement-to-be-optional-1.6026135> Retrieved September 1, 2022.

³¹ Parti libéral du Québec, (2021, April). *Because French is Our Language, Our Strength and Our Future: The Quebec Liberal Party's position on the French language*, p.14.

³² Joel Goldenberg, (2022, February 25). Task Force slams proposed Bill 96 Cegep limits. *The Suburban*. https://www.thesuburban.com/news/city_news/task-force-slams-proposed-bill-96-cegep-limits/article_5a4ebab6-c3c1-57e8-a9a5-000ccf1928de.html Retrieved September 2, 2022.

³³ <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/dawson-college-expansion-project-shelved-quebec-to-prioritize-francophone-students-1.5761243> Retrieved September 2, 2022.

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CaPQ Recommendations:

- Languages are more easily absorbed earlier in life. Therefore, focus French language learning initiatives for non-francophones in *Early Childhood Education* (ECE) settings, kindergarten, and the primary school level.
- Promote the French language with positive reinforcement, modern pedagogy, and inclusivity. Coercion, time limits (e.g., 6 months) and rote learning stymie enthusiasm and breeds resentment.
- Stop hindering educational freedom of choice for francophone students who want to attend English post-secondary institutions.
- Remove the hard cap on English CEGEP enrollment prescribed in Bill 96.
- Reinstatement of the Dawson expansion project as a gesture of *rapprochement* between Quebec's two major linguistic groups (**Party Principle 6**).
- Eliminate the Quebec Liberal-CAQ mandatory three French course requirements at English CEGEPs, as it limits educational choice and will jeopardize university prospects for thousands of students annually.
- Full repeal of *Bill 21*; immediate rescinding of articles that deny teaching positions to people who wear religious symbols or clothing.

3.6. Resources, Support for Quebec Children with Learning Difficulties.

3.6.1. Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

The *Quebec Education Plan (QEP)* lists certain guidelines that are needed to complete elementary and secondary school education. Not all students who have IEPs are able to meet the criteria listed in the QEP, and there's little to no flexibility in this regard. The QEP isn't a legal framework, but it's often treated as one.

In the official document for *Differentiated instruction*, knowledge of the French language is listed as one of the core values needed regardless of one's linguistic ability. The granting of an official exemption for French Language studies on the basis of language-based learning disabilities is sparingly given, even in serious cases. The needs of a child's IEP aren't always respected, especially when it involves the French language. The QEP is still considered to be the template model of learning, even when one size doesn't fit all.

Section 19 of the *Education Act* under *Teachers' Rights* stipulates that teachers are entitled "to select the means of evaluating the progress of students so as to examine and assess continually and periodically the needs and achievement of objectives of every student

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entrusted to (their) care.”³⁴

Unfortunately, the French language is prioritized over the needs of students with disabilities, and the onus is on parents to organize files to make a claim for exemption or for English eligibility (in the case of immigrant families), and often applications are denied if the child is passing the relevant French course. However, passing is not the same as succeeding.

The Ministry of Education’s view re. primary schooling is that kids don’t need IEPs, because every child should be given pedagogical flexibility throughout their learning. This idea, however, is directly undermined by the framework for the evaluation of learning, as updated in 2005-2010. When the QEP was first written in 1999, holistic report cards and competency-based grading were recommended. This was replaced 10 years later with percentage grading starting in Grade 1.

The QEP is not a legal document, but is often treated as one. It’s the framework for the evaluation of learning that is the true legal policy schools must prove that they follow.

Conclusion: Bill 96 disproportionately affects students with disabilities and neurodevelopmental disorders. Learning multiple languages might not be possible if you have a language disorder, like dyslexia.

CaPQ Recommendation: Prioritize the needs of students with disabilities over the desire to impose French language teaching.

CaPQ Recommendation: More opportunities to get French Language exemptions for students who cannot learn a second language. The waitlist for people to get these exemptions is too long, and students suffer because of it. In the previous calendar year, the number of students rejected for French language exemptions due to disability increased substantially. If you have a valid IEP, you should be exempt from affected courses, regardless of whether you’re an Anglophone, Francophone, or ethnic minority.

Final CaPQ Recommendations:

- An independent *Secretariat of Neurodiversity, Adaptive and Differentiated Learning* that will work with the Ministry of Education to ensure that all students, regardless of mother tongue and ability, can receive a well-rounded pre-university education.
- Provide a more student-centred means of evaluating Secondary IV and V Matriculations for special needs students; move away from standardized testing.

³⁴ L gis Qu bec. Education Act. <https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/l-13.3?langCont=en#ga:l i-h1>

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- Working with the Ministries of Health and Education, all Quebec schools - both public and private – should screen students for learning disabilities from kindergarten to Secondary V. Private schools in Quebec already have aimsweb/aimswebPlus, which can universally screen learning/language disorders (e.g., reading, math).³⁵
- After a thorough review of provincial demand, the design and implementation of public schools for youth with specific needs, with the private *Vanguard School* in St-Laurent, Quebec serving as a model.³⁶

³⁵ <https://www.pearsonassessments.com/store/usassessments/en/Store/Professional-Assessments/Academic-Learning/Brief/aimswebPlus/p/100000519.html> Retrieved September 2, 2022.

³⁶ <https://www.vanguardquebec.qc.ca/about-en/mission-vision> Retrieved September 2, 2022.