

EMS B chairman defends 20-per-cent commission to private recruiter



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Angela Mancini, chair of the English Montreal School Board. ALLEN MCINNIS / MONTREAL GAZETTE FILES

The chairman of the English Montreal School Board defended on Wednesday a 20-per-cent commission paid to a private recruiter to attract students from China to study here in EMSB vocational education programs, saying it's a "venture that is valuable to the community."

"I think the payback for the English Montreal School Board has been far bigger than what we have paid her out," Angela Mancini said, alluding to Cui Wen (Cindy) Yao, who runs Can-Share Connection Inc.

"Last year, for example, we gave (back) over \$1 million, about \$20,000 per school was given for them to do a variety of projects."

Mancini made those comments as the EMSB braces for a visit by government auditors and the province's anti-corruption unit, UPAC (<http://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/west-island-gazette/quebec-anti-corruption-unit-investigating-two-montreal-school-boards>). Investigators are also probing allegations of irregularities in the handling of the international studies program by the Lester B. Pearson School Board (<http://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/international-students-stranded-as-quebec-investigates-vocational-programs-at-pearson-board>).

Speaking to reporters before the EMSB's monthly board meeting, Mancini welcomed the investigation by UPAC.

"We want them to get here as fast as they can so they can tell us if there is anything that we need to deal with," she said, adding that "right now there's a bit of a cloud over our board for things that we're not sure they're looking for at this time."

Mancini noted that the EMSB grosses about \$9 million a year from its

contract with Can-Share and “she (Yao) gets 20 per cent of that.” She explained that 90 per cent of the revenue that the board collects from Chinese students goes to the province — after Yao’s commission — and the EMSB keeps 10 per cent.

On Monday, the Lester B. Pearson School Board announced (<http://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/lester-b-pearson-school-board-cuts-ties-with-private-recruiter>) it has broken off ties with a private recruiter, Naveen Kolan, who runs LPB Vocational College.

Mancini confirmed that the EMSB has ended its association with Shim Youn Bo, a recruiter of South Korean students. The Suburban reported (http://www.thesuburban.com/news/emsb-blames-rogue-agent-for-korean-students-nightmare/article_9dd13293-10e5-5bb2-9a71-fe56f3a5b1b4.html) that students who had paid their tuition to EMSB Korea, run by Shim, ended up having to work illegally for \$6 an hour in Montreal restaurants.

“We have cut our ties with the Korean recruiter that we had, that has started a site that we found out about in Korea under (the name) EMSB Korea. So that particular link has been severed.”

Quebec school boards, including the EMSB, have taken advantage of international student enrollment as an added revenue stream, estimated to be in the tens of millions of dollars. But questions are being raised as to whether private interests are also profiting from the influx of foreign students, who seek to benefit from a Quebec program offering fast-tracked immigration.

The EMSB currently has 1,342 international vocational students (<http://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/recruiter-earning-millions-from-quebec-school-boards-to-bring-in-chinese-students>) enrolled from different countries paying an average tuition of \$24,000.

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