

EMSB, French board sit down to talk about overcrowding, school transfers

The Commission scolaire de la Pointe-de l'Île needs more space, but the education minister should talk to the EMSB first, Angela Mancini says.

KATHERINE WILTON, MONTREAL GAZETTE ([HTTPS://MONTREALGAZETTE.COM/AUTHOR/KWILTONMONTREALGAZETTE](https://montrealgazette.com/author/kwiltonmontrealgazette))

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Now that Quebec's education minister has shown he is ready to [transfer schools](https://montrealgazette.com/news/quebec/quebec-to-close-riverdale-high-school-building-will-go-to-francophone-system) (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/quebec/quebec-to-close-riverdale-high-school-building-will-go-to-francophone-system>) to ease overcrowding, discussions between the English Montreal School Board and its counterpart in the city's east end will ramp up over the next few weeks to find a solution to the problem there.

A spokesperson for the Commission scolaire de la Pointe-de l'Île confirmed that the French board has been having discussions with EMSB representatives and the Education Ministry to deal with the overcrowding issue.

"We have had an important increase in the number of students over the past three years and the ministry is aware of the problem," board spokesperson Valérie Biron said in an email.

EMSB chairperson [Angela Mancini](https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/emsbs-mancini-returns-to-board-after-3-months-to-find-salary-slashed) (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/emsbs-mancini-returns-to-board-after-3-months-to-find-salary-slashed>) acknowledged that the CSPI needs space in the east end, but added that Education Minister Jean-François Roberge has not asked the English board about the availability of specific schools.

“There is certainly concern — we are watching,” she said. “Are we going to discuss this as a council in the future weeks? Absolutely.”

Roberge announced on Monday that he was transferring Riverdale High School (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/lets-slow-down-transfer-of-riverdale-high-pearson-school-board-says>) in Pierrefonds to the Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys because the French board’s high schools in the West Island are bursting at the seams.

The EMSB has four elementary schools in the east end with less than 200 students, according to the board’s enrolment numbers.

St. Dorothy in St-Michel has 125 students, General Vanier in St-Léonard has 190, Our Lady of Pompei in Montreal North has 158 and Dalkeith in Anjou has 166 students.

Roberge said Wednesday that he is aware the two school boards are in talks.

“It is not in my plan at this time to accelerate the discussions. From what I understand things are proceeding well enough,” he told the Montreal Gazette. “We are not in the same crisis situation as we were in Marguerite-Bourgeoys. If I am informed differently I could use the powers I have, but it’s not something I do lightly and it is not something I will do each time there are negotiations.

“It’s not a tradition,” he said. “It is an exceptional situation and it will stay an exceptional situation.”

Roberge, a former teacher, has said that the long-term solution to overcrowding problems in French public schools is a better distribution of school buildings between the francophone and anglophone networks.

“I think it is just good management of public buildings and resources to guarantee the right to education for all,” he said.

Philip Authier of the Montreal Gazette contributed to this report.

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