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Local News

French in Quebec: New bill would restrict English studies for children of foreign workers

As part of changes to Quebec's language law, a cap would be placed on the number of years some children can attend school in English.

Katherine Wilton • Montreal Gazette
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Stock image. "Given the systemic remedies asked by the commission, this will certainly have an overall impact on every school board or service centre -- French and English -- in Quebec." PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

As part of changes to Quebec's language law, the government is putting a cap on the number of years children of temporary foreign workers or foreign students can attend school in English.

At present, the law grants children an exemption to study in an English school for a three-year period, but allows parents to apply to have the exemption extended.

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However, going forward, the exemption cannot be renewed after three years.

For instance, an American employee moving to Montreal for a temporary job would only be permitted to send their child to school in English from Secondary 1 to Secondary 3. After that, the student would have to attend French school if they remain in Quebec.

The Quebec English School Boards Association said it's very disappointed with the proposed change to the language law.

"It may affect the ability of Quebec to attract non-Canadians to temporary positions here and will likely reduce enrolment in English schools," said Russell Copeman, the QESBA executive director.

"The English system has been struggling with declining enrolments since the 1970s. These numbers may not mean much to the French system but they offer our community much needed oxygen. We hope that there will be proper consultation on these proposed changes."

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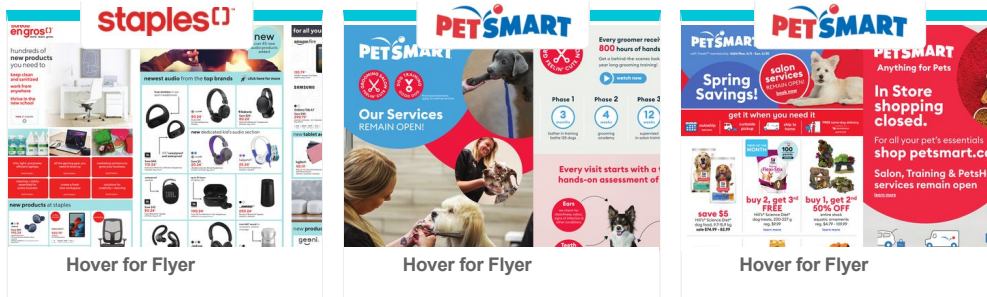
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