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French students being moved to English board site

By Joel Ceasu The Suburban
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School already houses French service centre students, as many English facilities have varying degrees of capacity

Hundreds of kids from a French Ahuntsic high school will be using an under-capacity English school in Saint-Michel for the next two years.

A portion of the century-old pavilion at Sophie Barat high school is at serious structural risk, and with work expected to take some time, Secondary 1 and 2 students along with staff will occupy classes and offices of St. Dorothy Elementary for two years following the emergency decision a few weeks ago by the Centre de services scolaire de Montréal (CSSDM).

While many English schools on the island of Montreal continue to remain underused to varying degrees, French schools are generally over-capacity, including all schools in Ahuntsic, which forced the CSSDM to look at St Dorothy.

The hasty decision did not sit well with many parents at Sophie Barat school, according to reports. They note the journey for many students is four times longer than usual, with no bus service provided, up to a 50-minute commute, compounding the stress of returning to school mid-pandemic.

But most vexing for critics is that students relocating to the English building are in the regular stream, located in the portion of the building not under threat. Instead, the enriched classes located in the affected areas will be taking over the safe facilities of the regular students, who are forced to move to St. Dorothy.

A large building with heritage value on a sprawling campus and sports centre on Gouin Boulevard, Sophie Barat requires an estimated \$100 million in repairs, according to the CSSDM.

CSSDM students have been present at St. Dorothy for several years, as the English board students have already been “twinned” at nearby Our Lady of Pompeii school according to an EMSB statement, which adds a new special needs program will be installed in St. Dorothy in the future, but offered no details.

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