

Quebec announces \$2.3B in funding for school renovations

More than \$620 million will be spent on the island of Montreal, said education minister Jean-François Roberge.

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Updated: September 22, 2019



Jean-François Roberge *CHRISTINNE MUSCHI / MONTREAL GAZETTE*

The Quebec government will invest \$2.3 billion in 2019-20 to renovate schools across the province,

Education Minister Jean-François Roberge announced Sunday.

Of that, more than \$620 million will be spent on the island of Montreal, he said at a news conference in a newly renovated elementary school in east-end Pointe-aux-Trembles.

Roberge also said he would decide within the next two or three weeks whether to place the English Montreal School Board under full or partial trusteeship (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/quebec/government-report-says-emsb-is-dysfunctional-should-be-stripped-of-powers>) following a damning report released Sept. 13.

“It will take a few weeks to look at the report in its entirety, to consider the impact of having an observer, corrective action, partial trusteeship or full trusteeship,” he said.

“So the reflection and the analysis are still going on. Within a few weeks we will be able to say exactly what we are going to do. Obviously it will not be the status quo, because the report has made it clear that the status quo is unacceptable.”

Roberge denied that the timing of the scathing report was linked (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/emsb-commissioners-weigh-in-on-governments-scathing-report>) to his government’s plans to introduce legislation abolishing school boards, or to the EMSB’s recent court challenge against Bill 21 banning the wearing of religious symbols by teachers and other authority figures.

The report was due to be submitted on or around Sept. 10 and “in all transparency, we made its findings and recommendations public,” he said.

When asked whether his decision will be influenced by figures released Friday showing that despite its internal struggles, the EMSB achieved the highest success rate among public school boards in Quebec, the minister said better management at the board can only improve those results.

“Imagine if the EMSB would be well managed,” Roberge said. “They can do better if they use the money in a better way.”

He also said his government has no plans to transfer any more English schools to the French sector.

“There was an exceptional situation in recent years at the same time that negotiations were blocked,” he said.

While there’s no telling what urgent situations and communication breakdowns might arise in the future, he said, the government “does not plan to transfer schools. It’s not something that we plan to repeat.”

Roberge made the funding announcement with Treasury Board president Christian Dubé and the minister responsible for the Montreal area, Chantal Rouleau.

Roberge said 60 per cent of the schools across the province would benefit from the \$2.3-billion investment, which represents a 156-per-cent increase over last year. It comes on top of [1.7 billion in spending the government announced in June](https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/quebec-announces-1-7-billion-in-funding-for-elementary-and-high-schools) (<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/quebec-announces-1-7-billion-in-funding-for-elementary-and-high-schools>) to build new schools and enlarge existing ones.

School boards will have three years to complete the work. The government is planning a small amount of additional funding over the next three years to help with renovation planning and for maintenance.

How funds will be allocated to Montreal-area school boards

- Commission scolaire de la Pointe-de-l’Île: \$71,921,151
- Commission scolaire de Montréal: \$299,579,681
- Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys: \$115,093,221
- English Montreal School Board: \$82,908,175
- Lester B. Pearson School Board: \$55,150,968

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