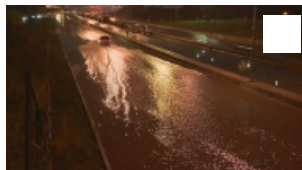


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## Quebec's school reform bill has a compromise for the English system

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MONTREAL -- On Tuesday, the one-year anniversary of the CAQ being elected to power, Francois Legault's government introduced its much-discussed school reform bill - and it contains a compromise for Quebec's English-speaking community.

**Bill 40**, which was tabled in the National Assembly Tuesday by Education Minister Jean-Francois Roberge, does away with Quebec's traditional school boards, replacing them with bodies named "service centres."

But while the service centres for schools in the French system will be run by 16-person boards - the members of which will all be appointed - the bill allows English centres to elect all but four of their 16 board members.

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Legault told reporters in Quebec City that the minority rights of Quebec's English speakers were indeed considered in the drafting of Bill 40, saying it was a "good compromise for everybody."

Roberge - who received a standing ovation from fellow CAQ MNAs when he tabled the 92-page bill in the Assembly - told reporters afterwards that he was "confirming the end of school boards as we know them."

He also acknowledged the compromise with Quebec's English-speaking community - which Roberge said "is more attached to school board elections than the francophone majority" - that would allow the English system to maintain some traditional elections is a "win-win."

### PHOTOS



Quebec Education Minister Jean-Francois Roberge announced \$2.3 billion Sept. 22 to help with renovations in the province's schools. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Jacques Boissinot

The CAQ says Bill 40 will also:

- reduce bureaucracy
- save roughly \$45 million over four years
- depoliticize school governance
- provide more autonomy for schools and proximity in decision-making
- ensure better management of resources

The education minister also used the day to criticize the English Montreal School Board.

"With the school boards, we have too much bureaucracy, too much petty politics at the expense of our kids, and too much money taken from the school," he said. "I am thinking about the EMSB and the report we have [from] the inquiry says it's a dysfunctional way to govern our schools"

But Russell Copeman, executive director of the Quebec English School Board Association (QESBA), had misgivings about the government's plan.

"Are service centers independent enough and are they controlled by the community through elections?" he said. He and other community leaders have argued that the abolition of school boards would infringe upon minority rights.

The government moved too quickly with its plan to abolish school boards, according to Marie-Josée Mastro Monaco, the commissioner of the Commission Scolaire de Montreal.

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"We're asking the minister at minimum to have a wider parliamentary committee, not just a couple of days. This is a major change," she said.