

EMSB pushes for judicial review following denial of injunction

At a special meeting on Tuesday, the English Montreal School Board also expressed a desire to hear parents' wishes regarding the transfer of two schools.

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"Much still has to be done to make this an optimal transfer, but I think it's a start," EMSB chair Angela Mancini said Tuesday, following a visit by parents of General Vanier students to the school where their children will be transferred come September. *JOHN KENNEY / MONTREAL GAZETTE*

Following a court decision to deny the English Montreal School Board an injunction

(<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/court-rejects-emsbs-attempt-to-block-school-transfers>) to halt the transfer of two of its schools to a French board in the east end, the EMSB held a special meeting Tuesday to discuss the details of the transfer.

Come September, students from General Vanier elementary will be housed at Pierre de Coubertin and students from John Paul I junior high will be housed at Laurier Macdonald High School. The EMSB mentioned it will no longer be transferring students at Galileo Adult Education Centre to another facility.

In order for the schools to remain independent from the ones with which they will share buildings, their deeds of establishment must be redrawn. The EMSB will hold a 30-day consultation period in the context of redefining its three-year plan, in part to hear parents' wishes regarding the transfer.

"Part of the consultation is also to ask the parents what are the terms and conditions that they want to see happen for this cohabitation to be more palatable for them," said EMSB chair Angela Mancini. Parents at the meeting mentioned wanting to be given back \$25,000 they raised and put into the schoolyard at General Vanier just two years ago. "That's something that we will definitely be looking at and most probably be giving it to them," Mancini said.

Parents of children at General Vanier visited Pierre de Coubertin on Monday to get a feel for what the school is like. During the meeting's question period, one parent mentioned feeling better about the situation following the visit.

"I'm very happy to say that it seems to have given a little bit more of a calmness to the parents who were very anxious about going to Pierre de Coubertin," Mancini said. "The parents seem to be ... I wouldn't say happy, but certainly are more prepared to go to Pierre de Coubertin than, let's say, a week ago.

"Much still has to be done to make this an optimal transfer, but I think it's a start."

Mancini said the EMSB is asking the courts to consider a judicial review, to establish whether its constitutional rights have been violated.

Mancini told reporters that Quebec Superior Court Judge Dominique Poulin, who denied the injunction, “made it very clear that we raised issues that belong to our rights as a minority community under the charter, and that is part and parcel of what we would be asking the judge to review in terms of the decision of the (education) minister.”

“We feel that the only way to go forward at this time is through the judicial review, in order for us to be heard in court and to find whether or not we in fact are right about our constitutional rights,” she added.

Quebec Education Minister Jean-François Roberge ordered the transfer of the EMSB schools after he mandated the EMSB and Commission scolaire de la Pointe-de-l'Île to reach a cohabitation agreement, which never happened despite negotiations. The EMSB's request for an injunction was denied on the grounds that CSPI is seriously lacking space.

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