





Quebec walks back plans to force students to submit English CEGEP eligibility certificates









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After the English CEGEPS had told the Quebec government that they could not make the necessary changes to their staffing and curriculum to accommodate the new language law, Bill 96, it seems the province has listened.

The Quebec government said it will delay the application of some parts of the new language law on English CEGEPs.

As a result, students currently enrolled in English high schools, or who have previously attended an English elementary or high school in Quebec, will not need to present their eligibility certificate when applying to CEGEP.

Pascale Déry, the Minister of Higher Education, has sent the colleges a letter giving them more time to implement French courses and testing.

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Bill 96 caps eligibility to attend English CEGEPs and requires that all students attending English CEGEPs take more French courses before graduating.

That was supposed to begin in the fall of 2023, but has now been delayed to the fall of 2024.

And for francophone and allophone students who already have a lot of French, they will only have to do two instead of three extra core courses in

French beginning in the winter of 2025, instead of the fall of 2024.

Courses to prepare for the French exit exam can also be delayed until 2024.

There is also welcome news for [parents and students scrambling to track down letters](#) of English school eligibility before the March 1 deadline to apply for school next fall, even if their children attended English elementary and high schools in Quebec.

The minister says it will now provide access to its database that identifies students that have exercised their right to attend English elementary or high school to simplify the process.

Joe Ortona, the chair of the English Montreal School Board (EMSB), which legally opposes Bill 96, says that is something that should have been thought of much sooner.

"Now we're seeing, yet again, another example where it has to get to the point where people are frustrated because of this mess and all of a sudden, finally, you see the government coming with some simple common sense solution that didn't just fall from the sky. These are proposals that they could have enforced and applied many months ago," Ortona said.

"It's unfortunate that it has to come to that and we've been saying that all along."

The government has now decided that the priority of admission for anglophone students will now only begin in January 2024, instead of next fall.

This gives French-educated students another semester to get into English CEGEPs — a short win but a welcome one for francophones who wants to further their higher education in English, said EMSB Chair Joe Ortona.

"Some CEGEPs have different programs, and CEGEPs have better programs than others. Students make those choices not necessarily because of language. So we're seeing [with] Bill 96, as much as it's hurting the English community, it's hurting the French-speaking community as well," Ortona said.

The heads of many English CEGEPS are relieved the government is providing students with eligibility certificates, but want to remind students who have a right to attend English schools because their parents were educated in English — but attended French elementary and high schools — they will not be recorded in the government database.


Those students will still need to find and submit their eligibility certificates if they want to be exempt from the French exit exam at the end of their time at CEGEP.

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