

The Suburban

QUEBEC'S LARGEST ENGLISH WEEKLY NEWSPAPER
ESTABLISHED 1963 • VOL. 60, NO. 10

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Pearson and Laurier school boards should join EMSB in court challenge on Bill 96

Last week Mount Royal MP Anthony Housefather dramatically joined his voice to the condemnations of Bill 96 and the need to protect minority language rights already so passionately and eloquently expressed by several of his colleagues notably NDG-Westmount MP The Hon. Marc Garneau, St. Laurent MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos and Ville-Marie MP The Hon. Marc Miller.

Housefather warned that "The English Community has no allies! We are very much alone in this fight." He aimed his comments not only at Bill 96 but also at the proposed changes to the federal Official Languages Act through the Liberals' Bill C-13. He spoke at a presentation staged by B'nai Brith's League for Human Rights. Host Marvin Rotrand, former Dean of Montreal's City Council called the MP's words "chilling."

Chilling indeed. But we have become sadly almost immune to provincial and federal parties pandering to nationalist elements in Quebec for votes or even for the chance to win — or at least not lose — a couple of seats in the Quebec regions. The question of allies however raised another concern in our minds. Why have we — the Anglo communities and institutions — not had the courage to come together and fight back?

Much of the debate over the infringement of our Constitutionally guaranteed language rights — and the future of our communities — centres on education. Many legal scholars are of the opinion that if the education provisions of Bill 96 can be defeated in the courts, other elements of the legislation will fall like dominoes.

It is time for the Pearson and Laurier School Boards to stand with the EMSB in its court challenge on Bill 96. A challenge that has actually produced results. It is inexplicable why those Boards are standing on the sidelines.

The English Montreal School Board (EMSB) — the largest English-language school board in the province — filed its 47-page lawsuit last June. The lawsuit states the language law violates the Canadian Constitution in "at least three ways" and directly interferes with the governance of English schools.

The first, is that the Quebec government is overstepping its power by "impermissibly" infringing upon the Charter of Rights and Freedoms by imposing the use of French in English-language school boards. In doing so, the EMSB argues the new law goes against section 23 of the Canadian Constitution which protects the right of Quebec's anglophone minority to be educated in English.

The second, is that English boards would be required to use French or both French and English in certain circumstances, such as internal communications and external dealings with other anglophone organizations. The EMSB argues that only English-language school boards have the power to make those decisions as part of "the right to management and control" outlined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The third is that the Office québécois de la langue française (OQLF), the province's language watchdog, would have oversight of the use of French in English school boards. The EMSB says school boards would have to submit an analysis of their "linguistic situation" and if they fail to do so, could be investigated by the OQLF and may have to implement a compliance program if they aren't meeting the standards of the French-language charter.

What in these three major heads of challenge could the Pearson and Laurier Boards not get on side with? If those Boards were opportunistically waiting for results before committing, well those results came pretty quickly.

Last August, just two months after the EMSB first filed suit, a Quebec Superior Court judge suspended parts of Bill 96. Justice Chantal Corriveau suspended those sections of the law that will require any legal proceedings filed in English in Quebec to be accompanied by a French translation. This has already been the case for Bill 40 dealing with the abolition of school boards. The EMSB contestation also included this very issue.

Right now is the time for us in this community to come together. The fact that the English community has few allies on the political level is one thing. But if we don't come together within our communities, we will have no one to blame but ourselves. Three times Quebec Superior Court judges have suspended parts of Bill 96 until the full challenges are heard. The EMSB has done a lot of the hard sledding. It's time for the Pearson and Laurier Boards to come aboard. Anything less is cowardice and submission.



Letters to the Editor

Jealousy fuels hatred

Various fabricated comments and beliefs of hatred are expressed, but the primary reason groups of people and some organizations are hated is jealousy by others. The jealousy can be related to the successes of the targeted people or organizations.

The New England Patriots football team was hated by fans beyond New England due to its successful seasons. The New York Yankees baseball team has been hated by fans of other baseball teams.

Successful people are hated by those who are less successful. Various races, ethnicities and religions in the world are targeted with hatred, some because of their high success rates in fields of endeavor. In the U.S. Asian and Indian (from India) Americans have experienced hateful acts and speech by jealous people. Jews have been the recipients of hatred over the ages due to jealousy of their successes. Successful Christians have experienced physical violence and hatred in Muslim countries.

Many haters have had failing experiences, such as bad childhoods, or failed marriages, or sexual inabilities, or poor performances in school or their work, or financial difficulties.

Maybe the jealous people should stop trying to lift themselves up by putting others down; and work at improving their positions in life.

Donald Moskowitz
Londonderry NH

Montreal Agglo tax abuse:

An open letter to Premier Legault and the Minister of Municipal Affairs

I have always wondered why the outcry that follows the release of the City of Montreal's annual budget never leads to anything. Recently I realized that it is because it is released just before Christmas as the National Assembly is recessing, followed by the holidays, and everything is forgotten. This is why I am writing to you at this time as the National Assembly is now back.

I received my 2023 tax bill recently from the City of Dollard des Ormeaux. Once again the Montreal Agglomeration (chaired by Mayor Plante) has increased its assessment to Dollard des Ormeaux residents, this time by 15.2% (\$7,439,500). Last year the increase was 10.2%, more than double the inflation rate and five times the rate increase to Montreal residents. That's a 26.7% increase in two years!

Mayor Plante was proud to announce last year that she was keeping her promise to citizens who had endured two years of the pandemic's effects on their finances by keeping the city of Montreal's tax increase to two percent.

For 2023 the City of Dollard des Ormeaux has kept its increase in local expenses to 4.5% while the Montreal agglomeration has increased its assessment by 15.2%.

The result is an average increase in

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Funded in part by the Government of Canada
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