

Minutes of the **Special Council of Commissioners** meeting held on May 7, 2020 via Zoom videoconferencing at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Chair Guy, Commissioners Brunke, Daly, Dionne, Schaler, Egan, Graham, Young, Garbutt, Labadie, McCrank, Larventz, Parent-Commissioners Boucher, Davis, Brennan, and Cornforth.

Personnel:

Director of Buildings, Technology, and Transportation P. Proulx

Director of Complementary Services L. Falasconi

Director of Finance S. Cox

Director of Education S. Aitken

Director of Human Resources T. Kharyati

The Director General, M. Dubeau, the Secretary General – Director of Corporate Services, G. Singfield, and the Assistant Director General / Director of Education, Adult Education/Vocational Training, R. Ahern were also present.

Call to Order:

Chair Guy called the meeting to order at 7:19 pm

C-19/20-120 Adoption of Agenda

IT WAS MOVED by Parent-Commissioner Davis that the agenda be adopted as presented.

Carried unanimously

Chair's Report

Chair Guy presented his verbal report. Topics discussed included:

- The massive responsibility that the WQSB had to plan for the reopening of schools on May 11, while ensuring the health and safety of all students and staff across **its** large territory.
- Thank you to the WQSB staff and administration for their due diligence and resilience in delivering such a monumental plan in such short time.

Director General's Report

The Director General, M. Dubeau, delivered the WQSB's readiness presentation for the Covid-19 School reopening.

Excerpt from Presentation:

Dear Chairman Guy and all commissioners,

On the afternoon of Monday, April 27, the Minister of Education Mr. Francois Roberge announced that elementary schools outside of the Greater Montreal area would open on Monday, May 11. Premier Legault and Minister Roberge have repeated this directive on several occasions through various media reports, press conferences as well as official correspondences from the Ministry of Education.

*Since that time our team has worked feverishly and cautiously to prepare our schools for the safe return of our students and staff. *It is important to note that the decision to open our schools is a government decision supported by **Santé publique Québec** – The decision to open schools was NOT a school board decision nor a school decision. As educational leaders, it is our responsibility to respond to the government directives and, to the very best of our abilities, ensure that our students and staff return to a safe, supportive learning environment, regardless of how we personally feel about the decision being made by the Government of Québec.*

The Québec English Schools Boards Association has made it publicly known that we will only open our schools when we have met the safety standards provided to us by the Government of Québec. As educators in the public education system, I am sure I speak for all of my colleagues in saying that we will never compromise on the safety and security of our students and staff. It has been and continues to be our first priority.

Based on safety criteria provided to us by the Government of Québec, the following report will highlight our capacity to open our schools on May 11th, as per the Ministry of Education's directives.

The report presented information on the following topics:

- Safety and security of students and staff
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Protocols for possible Covid-19 cases in a school/centre
- Physical Organization
- Staffing
- Student attendance and registration
- School organization/ scheduling
- Pedagogy and evaluation
- Cleaning and maintenance
- Transportation
- Communication plan
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WQSB Elementary Schools Reopening During COVID-19 Pandemic

WHEREAS all schools in the province of Québec were placed in complete lockdown as of March 13, 2020 by a decision taken by the Government of Québec due to the COVID-19 Pandemic;

WHEREAS the Government of Québec has announced a target date of May 11 outside the Montréal Metropolitan Community and May 19 for the island of Montréal to reopen elementary schools;

WHEREAS the Western Québec School Board (WQSB) has the responsibility first and foremost to ensure the health and safety of all its students and staff;

WHEREAS the WQSB has the legal authority to manage its schools and centres included in its constitutional rights, and to manage and control its minority language institutions;

WHEREAS the WQSB adheres to the principle of subsidiarity by evaluating the needs and capacities of each of its learning communities in order to ensure an enlightened decision as to the reopening or not of any particular school or centre;

WHEREAS the government of Québec has declared that the return to school of all elementary school students is not considered mandatory, but rather a voluntary decision to be made by the student's parents or legal guardians;

IT WAS MOVED BY Commissioner Labadie that the Western Québec School Board assess, evaluate, and determine, on the recommendation of their senior administration, if schools and centres in their territory can safely reopen according to recognized health and safety standards and the organizational requirements in order to respect various Government of Québec guidelines.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the WQSB inform the proper authorities of the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES) which schools and centres can safely open by the date announced by the Government of Québec;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the WQSB inform the proper authorities of the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES) which schools and centres cannot meet the requirements to safely open on the date announced by the Government of Québec and why;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Director General of the WQSB be authorized, should the need arise due to health and safety concerns indicated and reviewed by the proper health authorities, to close a school in short notice, and inform the Council of such decision, as well as the proper authorities of the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES).

C-19/20-121 Motion to Postpone Definitely: WQSB Elementary Schools Reopening During Covid-19 Pandemic

IT WAS MOVED by Commissioner Daly to postpone the motion on the elementary schools reopening during COVID-19 pandemic until the next regular scheduled Council of Commissioners meeting to be held on May 26, 2020.

For: 9
Against: 4
Abstention: 1

Motion carried

C-19/20-122 Adjournment

IT WAS MOVED by Commissioner Larventz that the meeting be adjourned at 9:39 p.m.