# MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE ENGLISH MONTREAL SCHOOL BOARD

A Regular Meeting of the English Montreal School Board has taken place on Thursday, August 28, 2025, at 7:00 P.M. in the Laurence Patterson Room, 6000 Fielding Avenue, Montreal.

#### **Commissioners Present**

Mr. Joe Ortona, Chair

Mr. James Kromida, Vice-Chair

Ms. Maria Corsi, Commissioner

Ms. Chelsea Craig, Commissioner

Mr. Julien Feldman, Commissioner

Ms. Jessica Houde-Woytiuk, Parent Commissioner

Ms. Paula Kilian, Commissioner

Ms. Julie Kristof, Parent Commissioner

Mr. Pietro Mercuri, Commissioner

Ms. Sharon Nelson, Commissioner

Ms. Susan Perera, Commissioner

Ms. Merika Ramundo, Parent Commissioner, via Teams

Ms. Jennifer Rutt, Parent Commissioner

Ms. Paola Samuel, Commissioner

## **Commissioners Not Present**

Mr. Mario Pietrangelo, Commissioner

#### Administrators Present

Mr. Nicholas Katalifos, Director General

Ms. Pelagia Nickoletopoulos, Assistant Director General, Education

Me Jack Chadirdjian, Assistant Director General, Administration

Me Nathalie Lauzière, Secretary General

Mr. Jimmy Giannacopoulos, Regional Director, West

Ms. Darlene Kehyayan, Regional Director, East

Ms. Angela Spagnolo, Regional Director, AEVS

Mr. Mario Cardin, Director, Material Resources

Ms. Sandra Léveillé, Director, School Organization

Ms. Livia Nassivera, Director, Financial Services

Ms. Julie René de Cotret, Director, Student Services

Ms. Anna Sanalitro, Director, Educational Services

Me Magdalena Sokol, Director, Legal Services

Mr. Charalambos Thomas, Director, Information Technology Services

Ms. Ann Watson, Director, Human Resources

Ms. Marilyn Ramlakhan, Assistant Director, Human Resources

Ms. Angela Vaudry, Assistant Director, Human Resources

Mr. Michael Cohen, Manager, Marketing and Communications

Ms. Brigida Sellato, Consultant, Secretariat General

## 1. <u>Land Acknowledgement</u>

We/I would like to acknowledge that the English Montreal School Board is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka\*. We are grateful to live, learn, and work in Tiohtiá:ke\*, which has long been a site of meeting and exchange for many First Nations, and is currently home to diverse groups of Indigenous and other peoples.

As a School Board, it is important that we acknowledge the historic and ongoing role of educational institutions in perpetuating injustices against Indigenous communities. We are committed to:

- Educating staff and students about the true history and current realities of the Indigenous Peoples of what we now call Canada.
- Celebrating the cultures, contributions, and knowledge of the many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.
- Listening to and amplifying Indigenous voices.
- And partnering with local Indigenous community members.

We offer this acknowledgement as a first step and public commitment to our ongoing process towards reconciliation and justice for Indigenous peoples and communities.

## 2. Question Period

Questions from Mr. Chris Eustace were read and addressed by the Chair, Mr. Joe Ortona, regarding the following:

- > Two Question Periods during the Regular Board Meeting
- > Implementing a question period during the Regular Executive Committee Meeting

Questions from Ms. Christine Gravel were read and addressed by the Chair, Mr. Joe Ortona, regarding the following:

- > The humanitarian crisis affecting victims in Gaza
- > The support given to the victims in Gaza

Questions from Mr. Irwin Rapoport were read and addressed by the Chair, Mr. Joe Ortona, regarding the following:

- ➤ Legal fees spent on the challenge against Bill 21
- Legal fees spent on the challenge against Bill 96

### 3. Approval of Agenda

On a motion moved by Mr. James Kromida, the agenda was amended to include item 14.1 Amendment to By-Law #1 and By-Law #4.

Vote: 14-0-0, Adopted

IT WAS MOVED BY MS. CHELSEA CRAIG AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT the agenda be approved with the amendment.

Vote: 14-0-0, Adopted

Resolution # 25-08-28-3

# 4. Adoption of Minutes

## 4.1 Regular Board Meeting held on June 17, 2025

IT WAS MOVED BY MR. PIETRO MERCURI AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting held on June 17, 2025, be approved as presented.

Vote: 14-0-0, Adopted

Resolution # 25-08-28-4.1

## 4.2 Special Board Meeting held on July 9, 2025

IT WAS MOVED BY MS. JENNIFER RUTT AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Special Board Meeting held on July 9, 2025, be approved as presented.

Vote: 14-0-0, Adopted

Resolution # 25-08-28-4.2

### 4.3 Special Board Meeting held on August 11, 2025

IT WAS MOVED BY MS. MARIA CORSI AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Special Board Meeting held on August 11, 2025, be approved as presented.

Vote: 13-0-1, Adopted (Ms. P. Kilian abstained)

Resolution # 25-08-28-4.3

## 5. Business Arising Out of Minutes

None.

### 6. Chair's Report

Presented by the Chair, Mr. Joe Ortona:

- Attended Michelangelo International Elementary school graduation with Commissioner, Mr. Pietro Mercuri.
- Attended James Lyng High School graduation on June 19<sup>th</sup> with Commissioner, Mr. Julien Feldman.
- Attended the Grade 6 graduation for Leonardo da Vinci Academy with Commissioner, Mr. Pietro Mercuri.
- Attended Lester B. Pearson High School graduation. Noted the presence of the Member of Parliament for Honoré Mercier, Mr. Eric Sampier, and the Commissioner for Montreal North representing Lester B. Pearson High School, Susan Perera, was present as well.
- Mr. Ortona acknowledged that throughout the summer he held several meetings with some elected officials, including the Member of Parliament for Honoré Mercier, Mr. Ericsson Pier, and Commissioner, Mr. Pietro Mercuri. They discussed the government's position on Bills 21, 96 and 40. Even though the matter does not concern the federal government as much, Mr. Pier was very open and understanding.
- Throughout the summer, Mr. Ortona along with the Director General, Mr. Katalifos, took the time to organize a meeting with the member of the National Assembly for Darcy McGee, Ms. Elizabeth Prass, the official opposition critic for relations with the English-speaking Quebecers, and the Member for Bourassa-Sauvé, Ms. Madwa-Nika Cadet, who is the official opposition critic for education. The main focus was to talk specifically about the budget cuts that school boards have been dealing with.

- Mr. Ortona and Commissioner Maria Corsi were present today to welcome the students on the first day of the new school year at F.A.C.E.'s new location. As always, the staff welcomed them, and everyone seemed hopeful and excited for the new school year.
- Mr. Ortona took the opportunity to provide an update on the financial challenges that the school board is facing due to the provincial budget directives. The priority has always been and remains to be delivering high quality education and support to all our students, and we have always worked diligently to navigate throughout any circumstances, with minimal disruption.
- In June 2025, the government introduced budgetary measures requiring school boards and service centers across the province to reduce their spendings by a total of approximately \$570 million. For the EMSB, this would translate into a mandated reduction of approximately \$10.6 million in its operating budget. Additionally, restrictions on the use of accumulated surplus, which amounts to \$7.8 million, would prevent the EMSB from accessing these funds under the current rules. This brings the total financial impact to around \$18.4 million. Add to that, the penalty if the EMSB does not meet the targets set by the government for the new funding announced and injected into education system which is conditional. These implications are obviously significant, particularly for support staff roles that assist students with special needs. EMSB had planned to add positions to enhance these services and instead difficult adjustments have been made, including reducing some planned hires and having to reallocate resources. Despite this, our dedicated teams have been committed and have worked throughout the summer around the clock to ensure that core educational programs can continue without compromise and said repeatedly, exploring all of our available options to mitigate the effects on classrooms.
- ➤ On August 11<sup>th</sup>, the EMSB Council unanimously voted to join the Quebec English School Boards Association legal challenge seeking a judicial stay on these cuts. This action, which was supported by all the English school boards, aims to protect the resources needed for student success in the immediate term for the stay and to uphold our constitutional rights to manage our finances effectively. We believe these steps are necessary to advocate for fair funding that reflects the unique needs of our diverse community. So, I do want to take the time because throughout the summer people have expressed concerns. Where we stand, what to expect on day one, and I understand the parents' concerns, I feel for them. I said throughout the summer that I had all confidence that we would get a decision very quickly. The courts are very sensitive to the fact that when we are seeking a stay, it is urgent, it needs to be heard right away. I have full confidence that the case will be heard and decided before September 26<sup>th</sup>, in time for us to be able to adopt a budget. To add to the improvisation of the government, they have now extended the period for which a budget can be passed from September 26<sup>th</sup> to October 30<sup>th</sup>. We are obviously going to monitor the situation very closely. As there are developments, I will continue to keep this Council and the public informed, and I just want to thank everyone and the community for your ongoing support throughout these very difficult times. I see a lot of support and understanding from the community who understand why we have to find ourselves in court. I do want to say one last thing before I move on. When you have 5 open court challenges against the government of Quebec, it could perhaps be easy to take on the viewer, interpret that as being overly litigious or running quickly to the courts. I do want to say that going to court is always a last resort and if we find ourselves having to go to court, it is because every other option has been exhausted and did not lead us anywhere. I do want the public to know that there have been many occasions where we were able to manage and control our school system because we fought to protect and to defend our constitutional rights. There have been many times when we pushed back and did not find ourselves in court because we told the government we were not going to accept certain things, and they had no choice but to relent. So aside from the five current challenges, we achieved many, many small wins because we defended our rights and we stood up for the community.

## 7. Director General's Report

Presented by the Director General, Mr. Nicholas Katalifos:

- ➤ Mr. Katalifos took a moment to mention that regardless of all the financial challenges that the EMSB is facing, it is important that we acknowledge the work being done by all of the employees at the EMSB. The Administration has worked very hard during the summer, including our Finance Director, our Human Resources Director, our Legal Counsel and many others to try to make sense of all the directives coming from the ministry regarding our budgetary situation, and we will continue to work on it and pending what happens with the court case, the plan is to have a budget by October 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Mr. Katalifos took a moment to point out the importance of celebrating our strengths and victories and to remind ourselves that the EMSB has once again achieved the highest success rate in the province at 93.2%. Congratulations to everyone who puts so much effort into our students, our administrators both here at the Board and in schools, and most certainly our teachers, all of our professionals, our support staff, caretakers, everybody that works very hard to make everything come together so that the students can succeed. Whether they are in pre-K or in AEVS, all the students are succeeding.
- Mr. Katalifos wished all staff the very best for another successful school year, regardless of the challenges and most of all, welcomed back the students. A lot of our adult students started this week, but our students in the youth sector will be back next week and we look forward to seeing them.

# 8. In Memoriam

## 8.1 Tribute for August 2025

WHEREAS the Board values the contributions made by its employees;

WHEREAS the Board wishes to take official cognizance of the passing of any member of its large family of employees;

IT WAS MOVED BY MR. JOE ORTONA AND RESOLVED THAT the Board note with regret the passing of:

Nancy Gamble, Retired PAB Teacher, Shadd Health and Business Centre Beverley Glennis Gregor-Pearse, Retired Chief Planning Officer, PSBGM Florence Nelson Lobo, Retired Teacher, EMSB

and that an expression of sympathies be sent to the bereaved families.

Vote: 14-0-0, Adopted

Resolution # 25-08-28-8.1

#### 9. QESBA – 2025-2027

# 9.1 Nominee to Executive Committee

WHEREAS the Quebec English Montreal School Boards Association (QESBA), in a memo dated July 3, 2025, invited its member boards to submit nominations for positions on the QESBA Executive Committee;

WHEREAS nominations must be submitted to QESBA by October 6, 2025;

Nominations:

Ms. Paula Kilian nominated Mr. Joe Ortona, who accepted.

The nominations ceased, all were in favor.

IT WAS MOVED BY MS. PAULA KILIAN AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT Mr. Joe Ortona be nominated to the QESBA Executive Committee for 2025-2027, for a two-year term.

Vote: 14-0-0, Adopted

Resolution # 25-08-28-9.1

## 9.2 Nominees to Board of Directors

WHEREAS the Quebec English Montreal School Boards Association (QESBA), in a memo dated July 3, 2025, invited its member boards to submit nominations for positions on the QESBA Board of Directors;

WHEREAS nominations must be submitted to QESBA by September 12, 2025;

Nominations:

Ms. Paula Kilian nominated Ms. Paola Samuel, who accepted the nomination.

Ms. Maria Corsi nominated Ms. Chelsea Craig, who accepted the nomination.

The nominations ceased, all were in favor.

IT WAS MOVED BY MS. JULIE KRISTOF AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT Ms. Paola Samuel and Ms. Chelsea Craig be nominated to QESBA Board of Directors for 2025-2027, for a two-year term.

Vote: 14-0-0, Adopted

Resolution # 25-08-28-9.2

## 9.3 Nominee for President

WHEREAS the Quebec English Montreal School Boards Association (QESBA), in a memo dated July 3, 2025, invited its member boards to submit nominations for the position of President of the QESBA for 2025-2027, for a two-year term;

WHEREAS nominations must be submitted to QESBA by October 6, 2025;

Nominations:

Mr. James Kromida nominated Mr. Joe Ortona, who accepted the nomination.

The nominations ceased, all were in favor.

IT WAS MOVED BY MR. JAMES KROMIDA AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT the EMSB Council of Commissioners nominates Mr. Joe Ortona for the position of President of the QESBA for 2025-2027, for a two-year term.

Vote: 14-0-0, Adopted

Resolution # 25-08-28-9.3

10. Schedule of Governance Committee Meetings 2025-2026

This item was presented for information.

## 11. Committee Reports

## 11.1 ACSES (Advisory Committee on Special Education Services)

Item presented by the Parent Commissioner of the Committee, Ms. Julie Kristof:

There has been no meeting since the last report.

### 11.2 Transportation and Safety Advisory Committee

Item presented by the Chair of the Committee, Mr. Pietro Mercuri:

There has been no meeting since the last report.

## 11.3 EMSBPC (English Montreal School Board Parents' Committee)

Item presented by Parent Commissioner, Ms. Jennifer Rutt:

> There has been no meeting since the last report.

#### 11.4 Governance and Ethics Committee

Item presented by the Vice-Chair of the Committee, Mr. Julien Feldman:

There has been no meeting since the last report.

### 11.5 Audit Committee

Item presented by the Chair of the Committee, Ms. Paula Kilian:

There has been no meeting since the last report.

### 11.6 Human Resources Committee

Item presented by the Chair, Mr. Joe Ortona:

> There has been no meeting since the last report.

## 11.7 CGTSIM (Comité de gestion de la taxe scolaire de l'île de Montréal)

Item presented by the Representative Member on the Committee, Mr. Joe Ortona:

Next meeting is scheduled in September where a preliminary budget will be presented.

#### 11.8 EMSAC (English Montreal Student Advisory Committee)

Item presented by the Chair of the Board, Mr. Joe Ortona:

> There has been no meeting since the last report.

### 12. <u>Commissioners' Report</u>

Item presented by Commissioner, Mr. James Kromida:

The biggest item in Toronto papers was the Ontario Government takeover of school boards.

Item presented by Commissioner, Ms. Chelsea Craig:

- ➤ On September 11<sup>th</sup> between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., the Montreal Council of Women will be hosting an event at the EMSB titled "Education under pressure". Commissioner Ms. Maria Corsi and I will be participating as panelists in this important discussion, and it would be so great to see all of you there.
- Ms. Craig extended sincere thanks to Telus Canada and MP Anthony Housefather for the generous donations of five school bags filled with school supplies, which were donated to Coronation Elementary School. These school supplies really do make a big difference in our students' lives and their families.
- Ms. Craig extended best wishes to all the students in Ward 2 and all the students across the EMSB territory. Wishing you all a happy, successful and safe back to school season. I look forward to joining the celebrations at Hampstead School next week.

#### Item presented by Commissioner, Mr. Julien Feldman:

- Mr. Feldman welcomed back everyone and reiterated the EMSB's commitment to ensuring every family that their child attends school every day in a safe environment. He paid tribute to the teachers and administrators who make it possible.
- > Mr. Feldman thanked the legal counsel for their continued work to make the law accountable.
- A special mention to Westmount Public Works and Town Councilor Matt Aronson. Last year, a large group of students at Westmount Park School were not going outside the building during recess due to the major renovations at the school. Some students with special needs require enclosure so that they do not run into traffic. During the discussion, we all came to an agreement and Mr. Aronson announced that an enclosure is being installed. Thank you to everyone involved.

## Item presented by Commissioner, Ms. Jessica Houde-Woytiuk:

Ms. Jessica Houde-Woytiuk acknowledged the numerous student leaders who came in today prior to the start of their school year to organize and lead multiple stations to welcome the grade sevens. *Chapeau* to those young leaders who came in technically on their summer vacations to lead the next wave of students.

## Item presented by Commissioner, Ms. Paula Kilian:

- > JFK High School held their graduation ceremony on June 18<sup>th</sup> which I attended with Ms. Nickoletopoulos and the MNA for the area, Mr. Benjamin. Parents and staff were very proud of their graduates. Miss Alexia LaRocca was the 2025 Valedictorian, as well as the recipient of the Governor General's award and the Lieutenant Governor's award for Volunteerism. Her mother, Ms. Saisi, wrote me an email, I will share an excerpt with you: "I wanted to express my gratitude towards Mr. Vito Guerriero as well as CCW, Ms. Marietta Damiano. These two wonderful human beings have been a constant source of inspiration for my daughter and have always made her believe that she could do anything she set her heart on. They believed in her and all the children even when they lost faith in themselves and to show their incredible impact, my beautiful daughter had the privilege and honor of being valedictorian. They say it takes a village, and it is so true. The whole JFK teaching staff, Vice-Principal Mr. Guerriero and Ms. Marietta, were part of her village, and I was so lucky that both my daughters were under their care and guidance. Too many times, we are quick to point out the negatives, but I feel it is important to recognize the hard work and selfless dedication of incredible people always putting the wellbeing of the children first. I would like to thank the EMSB family and JFK family and although our journey is done, we will forever remain part of this beautiful community!".
- Ms. Lagodich from JFK Adult Education Centre sent me the following update: "The JFKAEC administration and staff have been working diligently to strengthen our connection with the youth sector. Last year, we launched a targeted campaign to promote the value of math for adult learners. A key focus of this initiative has been to improve HOW we teach math. It is important to adapt to the young adult learner and to help them overcome their math anxiety. We are

- encouraged to see these efforts reflected in increased enrollment. Looking ahead, we will continue to: Emphasize the importance of math and science, expand flexible learning opportunities for adults, Strengthen outreach to both youth and adult learners. Our goal is not only to attract more students but also to challenge and change the stigma and misconceptions that too often surround adult education. We are also proud to share the success of the SEQUOIA Program, an alternative pathway designed for students who cannot graduate high school due to incomplete math or other academic credits. This year, we welcomed a second cohort, and we are already seeing remarkable progress. Many of our students face multiple challenges, including low motivation, organizational difficulties, and high levels of anxiety. These obstacles often stand in the way of traditional academic success. Through SEQUOIA, however, students are making visible gains not only in academics but also in resilience, personal growth, and self-confidence".
- > Town of Mount Royal broke ground on the long-awaited new recreation centre in July. With the construction of the new centre underway, TMR needed to secure alternative locations for summer programs. I would like to thank Mr. Chadirdjian and his staff for concluding an agreement with TMR that will allow the Town to rent Dunrae Gardens and Carlyle schools for the duration of the construction project. Mutual cooperation between our schools and the neighborhoods they are in is what creates strong communities. Speaking of TMR, I am pleased to report that the students of the CSSMB school, Académie Saint-Clément, were seen playing in their schoolyard today. The temporary classrooms were removed over the summer. Enrollment has declined and so a new school was not built after all, not in the Dunrae Gardens schoolyard, nor anywhere else. Heartfelt thanks from the parents and the staff of Dunrae Gardens to our chairman, our Director General, our Assistant Director General and the Regional Directors, as well as Mr. Peter Malouf's team for not giving in to the pressure.

## Item presented by Commissioner, Ms. Paola Samuel:

- Ms. Paola Samuel welcomed back all the schools in Montreal West, Hampstead and Côte St. Luc and was super excited to be attending the Hampstead Anniversary Party, especially since it is a school in her own Ward.
- ➤ She also briefly commented on the Ethics Commissioner's decision that was deposited for information on June 17, 2025.

## Item presented by Commissioner, Ms. Maria Corsi:

- It was a real pleasure this morning to tour the newly renovated F.A.C.E. elementary school. It is a beautiful school from the character of the outside of the building down to the brick and wood inside the building, to the big high ceiling classrooms, very bright, very airy. A beautiful gym, fantastic schoolyard with basketball courts, picnic tables, and a nice outdoor classroom.
- Ms. Corsi reassured the parents that the children were very happy and very excited. The teachers and the principals have really put out all the stops in ensuring that the wonderful F.A.C.E. program is alive and well in that building and will flourish. It was a great start to the school year for them, and I wish everyone well.
- ➤ Welcome back to all the students and families in Ward 4, looking forward to the first day of school next week for the rest of the schools in Ward 4.

# 13. Report of the Executive Committee Meeting held on June 17, 2025

• Awarding of Contract – Tender PS25-0310P – Open Contract – Supply of Grocery Products (Contrat à commandes)

#### 14. Other Business

14.1 Amendment to By-Law No. 1 (2025) and to By-Law No. 4 (2025)

	T WAS MOVED BY MS. SHARON NELSON AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT an amendment to the regular meeting of the Executive Committee and Board, scheduled for Wednesday, October 22, 2025, to be held at the EMSB Administration Building located at 6000 Fielding Avenue in Montreal, will be instead held at the St. Pius X Culinary Institute located at 9955 Papineau Avenue, Montreal, same day and time, as stipulated in By-Law No. 1 (2025) and By-Law No. 4 (2025) to affix the day, time and place of the Board and Executive Committee meetings of the English Montreal School Board.
	It was further approved to proceed with the amendment of said By-Laws accordingly and in conformity with the Education Act.
	Vote: 14-0-0, Adopted
	Resolution # 25-08-28-14.1
15.	Adjournment
	IT WAS MOVED BY MS. CHELSEA CRAIG AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT the meeting be adjourned at 8:02 p.m.
	Vote: 14-0-0, Adopted <u>Resolution # 25-08-28-15</u>
	Signed in Montreal,
	Mr. Joe Ortona, Chair Me Nathalie Lauzière, Secretary General