

Lalla spearheads EMSB's push against new provincial history curriculum

BY ISAAC OLSON

Representing NDG and Montreal West, English Montreal School Board (EMSB) commissioner Joseph Lalla has taken aim at the provincially proposed history curriculum for high school students across the province.

This year, the new curriculum is being piloted in grade 9 and grade 10 (secondary III and IV) next year, but many say the new program does not reflect Quebec's richly diverse history. A recent study shows nearly 70 percent of EMSB's grade 9 history teachers feel the course does not adequately reflect Quebec's native history.

In response to a growing concern, Lalla proposed the EMSB officially call on Quebec's Education ministry to improve the curriculum.

In September, the EMSB unanimously approved a motion asking Sébastien Proulx, minister of Education, "that the new secondary III-IV history course include the historical contributions made by the First Nations communities, as well as those made by the anglophone and allophone communities."

Not hearing anything in the months that



Commissioner Joseph Lalla in October 2014.

followed, Lalla proposed that EMSB pass another motion on the topic. In the subsequent motion, which passed in January, the EMSB is a little bit more forceful, Lalla said, as it states that some 20 percent of the program should explore the contributions made by non-French speaking inhabitants of the province. This second motion passed unanimously as well.

"We are also asking that students that

take the course in English have the same resources as the French students," said Lalla, noting the French students have two, possibly three text books to choose from, as well as a workbook. "Students that follow the course in English have one textbook and no workbook yet."

Lalla said he thinks it important for the EMSB to make a statement and "a strong one" on this issue. The EMSB, he noted, is acting fast on this issue before the new curriculum is officially and fully adopted by the province. At this point, he said it is

believed that there is still time before the curriculum gets final approval. However, he noted, there is concern that the text books have already been printed and now officials are asking if the province plans on printing new ones that better exhibit the province's historical diversity.

"This was given a lot of exposure three or four months ago in the media and since then it has died down," said Lalla, noting the curriculum is still in the pilot phase. "I still feel there's time until the final approval is given."





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