Commission scolaire English-Montréal

English Montreal School Board

Bureau du Président
Office of the Chairman

Montreal, March 12, 2026

Ms. Katherine Korakakis
Chair
English Montreal School Board Parents' Committee

Dear Ms. Korakakis,

Thank you for your letter regarding the public question period at meetings of the Council of Commissioners. The Board appreciates EMSBPC's role in representing parent perspectives and welcomes input on matters affecting community participation.

It is important to note that no change was made to our by-laws or internal rules regarding question period. The rule has always been to limit public questions to those present in person during the designated period and was implemented to ensure orderly, efficient, and focused proceedings at Council meetings. This aligns with the Board's authority under the *Education Act* to establish rules of procedure for its meetings, including the conduct of public consultations.

To address your specific questions:

1. The adjustment was handled as an administrative procedural matter within the Chair's oversight of meeting conduct, in accordance with the Board's rules of procedure and relevant provisions of the *Education Act*. It did not require a formal policy amendment or full Council vote, as it pertains to the operational management of the question period. No prior public notice or consultation was mandated for this as we are conforming to the by-laws and rules of procedure that are in place.

2. The Board is mindful of accessibility considerations for all members of our community. The primary intent of the change is to promote direct, real-time interaction and accountability during live meetings, which are open to the public and webcast for viewing. To support broader participation, accommodations continue to include the ability for individuals to submit written comments or concerns outside of the question period (e.g., via email to the Board or individual commissioners), which are reviewed and addressed appropriately. The Council will monitor the impacts of this change and remains open to evaluating additional measures if patterns of exclusion emerge. I do note, however, that in the last 4 years, parents seldom sent in questions in writing, and when they did, rarely was it related to education or school matters.

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3. Questions during the public question period are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to relevance to EMSB matters, time limits, and decorum requirements as outlined in our by-laws. Criteria include avoiding repetition of previously addressed items, ensuring questions are directed appropriately (not personal attacks or matters under litigation), and maintaining order. These guidelines are applied consistently by the Chair and are clearly outlined in our by-laws and rules of procedure.

4. At this time, the Board does not plan to reinstate mail-in or remote question submission for the public question period, as the in-person format supports more immediate dialogue and clarification. However, parents and community members may continue to raise issues through other established channels, including direct correspondence with commissioners, Governing Board participation at the school level, EMSBPC advocacy. The Board will review the effectiveness of the current approach after several meetings and consider adjustments if warranted.

5. While the EMSB territory is geographically expansive, Council meetings are livestreamed to enable remote viewing by families in our territory and beyond. The in-person requirement for speaking during the question period is balanced by these access tools and alternative avenues for input noted above. The Board encourages participation through these multiple pathways to ensure geographic barriers do not unduly limit engagement.

The EMSB remains committed to inclusive governance and values the contributions of parents in shaping our educational system. I am confident that the accessibility of commissioners will remain unchanged and remind parents that the appropriate communication channels for the handling of complaints, through the school principal and the regional office, is unaffected. We are open to ongoing dialogue on this matter.

Should you wish to discuss this in more detail or arrange a meeting, please contact my office.

Thank you for bringing these concerns forward.

Sincerely,

Joe Ortona
Chairman
EMSB

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