



*Western Quebec Teachers' Association
Association des enseignantes et des enseignants
de l'Ouest du Québec*

50 Noël, suite 4
Gatineau, Qc, J8Z 2M4
Tel.: (819) 777-1475

Open letter to parents

Dear parents of the Western Quebec School Board community;

As your children's teachers, we want to share our profound concerns regarding the government's unprecedented and unacceptable position in the present round of provincial negotiations. Although we, like all members of society, recognize the importance for governments to be fiscally responsible, we are convinced the Quebec government's demands on teachers will have a negative impact on our students, your children, the future of Quebec.

Presently, the public education system and the teachers who work hard to support it are under ever-increasing stress:

- More students with special needs are integrated in our regular classrooms **without additional support;**
- The increasing difficulty, if not impossibility, for teachers to respond to the needs of each student in an **increasingly diverse and complex classroom;**
- **More required meetings** are held with the school administration to meet bureaucratic requirements which take away time for planning and preparing courses and **does not add services for our students;**
- Continuous **cuts to school board funding** over the past 5 years that have already directly **impacted our services to students;**
- **Teaching staffs are under increased pressure** to meet targets set by the government in terms of success and graduation rates, all while dealing with the budgetary cuts mentioned above;
- **About 20% of newly hired teachers drop out of the profession in the first 5 years** despite having invested considerable time and money in university to enter an already devalued profession.

TEACHERS ARE THE ONES "HOLDING IT TOGETHER"!

However, the fault-lines are beginning to show. In a context where the burden of teaching is becoming greater than ever before with increasing work requirements and salary levels dead last among Canadian provinces and where substantial new investment in education is necessary to ensure Quebec's strength within a global economy, the government has tabled proposals that would only increase the stresses on the system and further devalue teaching, all of which is to the detriment of our students.

Teachers have been without a contract since the first day of April. Negotiations have begun but the offer of the government is nothing short of insulting as the austerity program of the Couillard government has attacked all parts of the teacher contract.

Here is what our provincial government wants to do:

- **Increase the student-to-teacher ratio** in the classroom making it even more difficult for teachers to support our students;
- **Eliminate the weighting of students with special needs integrated in the classroom without providing additional support for these children**, adding to the teachers' stress level and making it even more difficult to manage classes;
- **Substantially increase the assigned time within the teachers' workload for bureaucratic paperwork**, adding to their administrative burden and taking away time devoted by teachers to service students, communicate with parents, work on classroom strategies, and so forth;
- Jeopardize the efforts made over the past years to reduce the drop-out rate or to improve school perseverance by **increasing class size at the elementary and secondary levels**;
- **Substantially reduce teachers' salaries even more over the next five years once inflation is taken into account**, further devaluing the teaching profession and making it even harder to attract good candidates to support our students.

In other words, **the government's plan is further disinvestment in education**, thereby undermining the future of our students. This is why we are asking for your support in this difficult round of negotiations. We ask you to denounce their proposals and demand more, not less, investment in the Quebec education system so we can maintain the quality teaching we are providing.

The teachers of the Western Quebec Teachers' Association are proud to teach your children. We will continue to fight for the quality education they deserve and for the acknowledgement of the value of the teaching they receive. **But, we need your support.** We believe you want the same things for your children as we do and we urge you to speak out and help us secure the best possible future for them.

WHAT CAN A PARENT DO TO SHOW THEIR SUPPORT? EXPRESS YOUR CONCERNS BY:

1. **Forwarding/sharing this message with your school's parent community, using social media to express your concerns;**
2. **Calling/emailing your local MNA (Provincial Government elected official);**
3. **Calling/emailing your School Board;**
4. **Calling/emailing your School Board Commissioner/Chairperson so they can bring this message to the provincial level.**

You will undoubtedly notice that the teachers will be partaking in pressure tactics. We must show the government that they need to respect the collective bargaining process. We invite each parent to **stand with the teachers** in demanding a continued investment in education.

Thank you for your support.

Your partners in education,

The teachers of the Western Quebec School Board

