

New French-immersion EMSB school in NDG one step closer to becoming reality



'I hear nothing but positive reaction from the schools': Officials say the community supports the proposal

Isaac Olson · CBC News · Posted: Jan 08, 2019 10:27 AM ET | Last Updated: January 8



If a plan for a new elementary school is approved, the EMSB would like it to be housed in this building on Coronation Avenue in NDG. (Google Maps)

The English Montreal School Board is approaching the final hurdle in establishing a new school in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce — first consulting the public Wednesday and then voting on the proposal next week.

The EMSB wants to turn the former St. Ignatius of Loyola school, at the corner of Somerled and Coronation avenues, into a French-immersion elementary school it hopes will help reduce overcrowding in other west end schools.

Parents, teachers and school officials can share their thoughts on the proposal at a public consultation at the EMSB's headquarters in NDG Wednesday at 6 p.m. Public consultations are required by the province.

From there, the board will vote on the proposal on Jan. 16. Because the building is already in decent shape, a new school could open as early as the 2019-2020 school year, it says.

Two alternative high schools operate out of the building that would house the new school.

- [English Montreal School Board wants to open new elementary school in NDG](#)

The EMSB has recommended those schools — Outreach and Focus — relocate to James Lyng High School in Montreal's Saint-Henri neighbourhood.

That means the governing boards of all the schools involved must be consulted before moving forward, explained EMSB spokesperson Mike Cohen.

High demand for French-immersion programming

"We feel this would be a draw," said Cohen. "There might even be people that are considering the private system that may want to opt for this new school."

Cohen cited parents lining up at Royal Vale overnight to sign their kids up for its popular immersion program as an example of why there's a need for a new French-immersion school in the area.

According to an EMSB announcement made in October, the new school will be the board's first "Français Plus" immersion program that operates from kindergarten to Grade 4 (instead of from kindergarten to Grade 2).

Grades 5 and 6 will be taught an equal amount of French and English.

The old St. Ignatius school was originally designed for elementary-aged students and can accommodate 12 or 13 classrooms, according to EMSB commissioner Joseph Lalla.

- ['A new beginning': Modern home for Mackay Centre, Philip E. Layton Schools inaugurated in NDG](#)

Edinburgh, Willingdon and Merton schools, he said, are presently near or over capacity and this new school may still not be enough to meet the demand.

The EMSB says Edinburgh is at 127 per cent, Willingdon 90 per cent and Merton is at 107 per cent of its capacity.

More solutions are needed, Lalla said, adding he is proposing an annex be created for Edinburgh in Montreal West where, just this year, some 40 or 50 applicants were turned away.

Lalla, who first brought up the issue this summer, says he will make a formal request for an annex at next week's meeting.

Until then, however, he says the proposed new school is quickly gaining support from the community.

"I hear nothing but positive reaction from the schools, certainly, in my district," Lalla told CBC on Tuesday. "It's going to be a great addition."

Edinburgh pushes for annex in addition to new school

Michael Rodger has two sons at Edinburgh School in Montreal West and he chairs its governing board. He told CBC has around 400 students, but the capacity is 330.

There is currently no music room, the library was reduced to add a new class and, to teach science, a supply cart is rolled from room to room, he said.

Therefore, the governing board supports opening the new school in NDG, but he said Lalla's proposed annex is needed as well.

"The school that is being proposed would actually be quite small," he said, "and when you factor in the demand for bilingual and French-immersion places in the west end, this new school is not going to be the complete answer."

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The governing board would like to see the Mountainview School turned into an annex. Mountainview, located on Côte-Saint Luc Road and Sunnybrooke Avenue, like St. Ignatius, houses an alternative program for teens.

Displacing those teen students is not ideal, he said, but they are not using the building to its fullest potential. It could instead be filled with primary school students from the area.

"We think Mountainview, combined with this proposed school, is a more optimal solution," he said. "There's a clear interest in being able to walk to school in close proximity to Montreal West and the far west part of NDG."

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