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Quebec education minister says CSDM, EMSB may be allowed to speak at hearings

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MONTREAL – Quebec Education Minister Jean-François Roberge said Thursday he may allow the Commission Scolaire de Montréal (CSDM) and the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) to speak at the upcoming school board reform hearings.

This comes after the government previously left the two school boards -- the largest in the province -- off its list of potential speakers for the hearings, which are set to run from Nov. 4 to 12.

The Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) stated Wednesday it wanted to have a limited committee hearing, which means only groups that are invited will be able to speak.

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The four parties in the National Assembly -- the CAQ, Quebec Liberal Party, Parti Québécois (PQ) and Québec Solidaire -- have been tussling since Wednesday to reach common ground on who will be invited to the hearings.

The three opposition parties have proposed a total of around 200 possible speakers, while the CAQ is offering about 40.

"We think it's important that a wider consultation, or at least that a number of boards, particularly in the English sector, including ours, would be consulted," said Noel Burke, Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB) chairperson.

The government has suggested that 31 groups be chosen to attend the hearings. That has left opposition members accusing the CAQ of trying to bulldoze procedures and use its majority to quickly adopt the motion.

The Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA), Appèle-Québec and the Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec (FCSQ) were included on the CAQ's list.

Bill 40, which [aims to turn school boards across the province into service centres](#), was tabled Oct. 1 by Roberge.

It's a move the government has called "the end of school boards as we know it," aiming to give more power to the ministry.

PHOTOS



Stock photo of a classroom. (skynesher / iStock.com)

Under the bill, the French system will lose its right to hold elections to choose commissioners and directors. The English system will keep that right, as Roberge acknowledged the [community argued strongly to protect its minority language rights](#).

The government says it wants to adopt the reform before the end of the current session in early December.

The legislation proposes that school boards cease to exist by November 2020.

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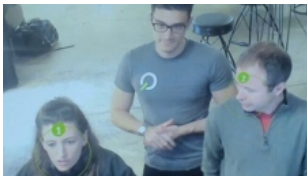
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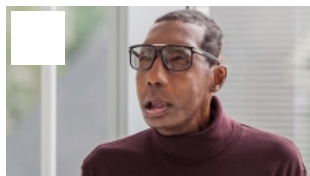
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