

# EMSB requests meeting with Mayors on Bill 96

By Joel Goldenberg  
The Suburban

English Montreal School Board chairman Joe Ortona has asked to meet with Mayor Mitchell Brownstein and his fellow members of the Association of Suburban Municipalities regarding Quebec's new language law, Bill 96.

Ortona made the request at the March CSL council meeting—he pointed out that the EMSB has four schools in the city, including Merton Elementary, the Wagar Adult Education Centre, John Grant High School and Mountainview Alternative High School.

“At the EMSB, we take great pride in standing up and defending the rights of our community and that’s why we played an important role in challenging Bills 96, 40 (abolishing school boards) and 21 (not allowing teachers to wear religious symbols on the job). We expect a decision soon from the Superior Court on Bill 40. We currently remain in place right now because we were successful in getting a stay on the application of Bill 40 for English-language school boards.”

Ortona pointed out that the EMSB was the first to challenge Bill 96, in terms of its violating “several aspects of the Canadian con-

stitution.

“Since CSL has taken a public stand on Bill 96, as have other municipalities, I am here tonight to ask Mayor Mitchell Brownstein if you can facilitate a meeting with you and your colleagues of the Association of Suburban Municipalities with us,” he said. “I would like to have a full discussion with them on Bills 40 and 21, but especially on Bill 96 to obtain further support regarding repressive pieces of legislation which negatively impact all of our constituents.”

Brownstein replied that he is proud of the efforts of the EMSB.

“The courts are our best avenue right now, and really, that’s what’s left. We, as the city of Côte St. Luc, have been meeting with the ASM on the issue of Bill 96. We’re also meeting with all of the 89 bilingual municipalities on the court challenge that we are planning for bilingual cities. It would be a pleasure to try and facilitate a meeting with you on behalf of the English Montreal School Board.”

Brownstein asked Ortona to prepare a letter to present to the ASM “outlining the issues that you’re contesting in the bill as they relate to the English Montreal School Board as well as a list of schools that exist in the various municipalities within the ASM, the schools and school boards and your desire, obviously, for not only the EMSB to



EMSB chairman Joe Ortona addresses the March 13 CSL council meeting.

contest Bill 96 with respect to the schools in your body but also for the other school boards to do the same. With that type of letter, it will be clear what you’re asking and what you’re doing.

“Hopefully, we can all work together to fight this law, which is extremely important.”

Councillor Steven Erdelyi, who’s leading CSL’s contestation of Bill 96 as it affects municipalities, provided an update on that effort.

“We’ve set up three Zoom conference calls with the 89 other bilingual municipalities and the next step is that we’re working on a letter of intent that will be going out in the next few weeks,” he explained. “In an ideal situation, we’re hoping to [involve] all 89 municipalities, we’re hoping to get several of them to join us in our fight. Côte St. Luc is a city that doesn’t back down.”

Asked what a meeting with the ASM would involve, Ortona told *The Suburban* “we will start with a discussion about Bill 96, and talk about what we are contesting.

“We’ll see if there is any common ground, if there is any overlap. We are also attacking the unilateral amendments of the Constitution, the issue of the bilingualism of the courts. One main goal also is to raise awareness within other municipalities and the other school boards of our efforts. We are hoping that others are going to join in.” ■

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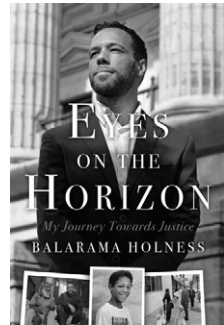


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