



News / Local News



# Future of English schools on the ballot for Nov. 3 elections

*The Legault government has been trying to abolish the province's nine English boards since 2020.*

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13 Comments



Students arrive on the first day of classes at the English Montreal School Board's Carlyle Elementary School in T.M.R. in August 2023. PHOTO BY PIERRE OBENDRAUF /Montreal Gazette files

Election signs are popping up across Montreal as voters prepare to decide on the future of Quebec's English schools on Nov. 3.

As of Tuesday, candidates who want to help govern the province's nine English school boards can submit their nomination papers.

The nomination period lasts six days, ending Sept. 29.

Nearly 300,000 people are on the list of electors, though that number may change as voters have until Oct. 15 to add their names to the list.

Since it passed Bill 40 in 2020, the Legault government has been trying to abolish English boards to give the government more control over the education system.

In August 2023, the Quebec Superior Court ruled [Bill 40 provisions related to English boards were unconstitutional](#). Quebec is appealing. The case is expected to drag on for years, including a probable Supreme Court challenge.

At a June "elections mobilization" conference organized by the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA), speakers emphasized the importance of a high turnout on Nov. 3 to preserve the institutions, described as [critical to the vitality of the English-speaking community](#).

Voters will cast two ballots — for the chair of their local school board and a commissioner to represent their district.

There are 95 commissioner positions and nine chair positions available across the province.

Only people registered on the electoral list of an English school board can vote.

To check if they are on the list, Quebecers should call Elections Quebec at 1-888-353-2846. A voter can learn which school board covers their area by entering their postal code on [an electronic form on the Elections Quebec website](#).

There are strict rules about who can cast ballots.

Voters do not have to be parents or have children in the school system.

A parent whose child is or has been admitted to an English school board should already be registered on the board's electoral list but should confirm their status.

Parents with a child currently in a French school service centre cannot vote in English board elections.

However, anglophones and francophones who previously sent their children to French schools but who now want to vote in English board elections can choose to register on the electoral list of their local English school board.

People who do not have children can choose to vote at their local English board.

English school boards manage updates to their electoral lists. Voters who want to add their names must complete a form and return it to their local school board. Boards have posted information about the process on their websites.

The QESBA said it will launch a three-phase publicity campaign focusing on candidate recruitment, updating the electoral list and getting out the vote.

The organization also plans to promote the election at a [two-day conference this week](#) that aims to "strengthen the vital link between the education community and the wider official language minority community and society it serves."

The Sept. 25-26 event will bring together school boards, administrators, teachers, parents and the Quebec Community Groups Network, a coalition of anglophone groups.

Citing low turnout rates, the Coalition Avenir Québec government in 2020 aimed to eliminate all elected school boards and centralize control of the school system within the provincial government.

French boards were abolished and replaced with service centres overseen by the province.

But English boards went to court to plead for an exemption, arguing that the law was unconstitutional because it infringes on the anglophone community's right to manage and control its schools.

In the last school board elections in 2021, many positions on English boards were filled by acclamation. Board officials blamed confusion over who could run, as well as pandemic restrictions and delays.

English boards traditionally had higher voter turnout rates compared with French boards. In 2014, for example, 21 per cent of eligible voters cast ballots in the EMSB election, compared with an average of five per cent for French boards.

Here are the key dates:

- Sept. 20: Start of the electoral period.
- Sept. 24 to 29: Candidates submit nomination papers.
- Early October: Voters on the electoral list receive a notice in the mail.
- Oct. 15: Last day to update the electoral list.
- Oct. 27: Advance voting, noon to 8 p.m.
- Nov. 3: Election day, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The nine English boards are:

- [Central Quebec School Board](#)
- [Eastern Shores School Board](#)
- [Eastern Townships School Board](#)
- [English Montreal School Board](#)
- [Lester B. Pearson School Board](#)
- [New Frontiers School Board](#)
- [Riverside School Board](#)
- [Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board](#)
- [Western Quebec School Board](#)

For more information, visit the Elections Quebec website

[www.electionsquebec.qc.ca](http://www.electionsquebec.qc.ca).

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