

# REPRESENTATION OF ENGLISH-SPEAKERS IN QUEBEC'S EDUCATION MINISTRIES AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network (QUESCREN)

By Nadine Ciamarra and Patricia Lamarre  
With Patrick Donovan and Lorraine O'Donnell

There is a longstanding underrepresentation of English speakers in Quebec's public sector (Cooper, Donovan, & O'Donnell, 2019). In 2019, 506 out of 53,570 regular employees (0.9%) in Quebec's public service were Anglophones, roughly one tenth of their proportion in the total population of the province (Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2017).<sup>1</sup>

This low representation is also found within Quebec's education ministries, the Ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ) and the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur (MES).

**In early 2020, there were only 25 Anglophones out of 1,335 regular employees in what was then a single education ministry called the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES),<sup>2</sup> or 1.9% of the total.**

To improve the representation of certain target groups in the public service, the Quebec government gave itself the goal that 25% of new employees be members of cultural communities, Anglophones, Indigenous people or persons with disabilities.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, MEES hiring rates for these groups were well below this target, and there was no increase of Anglophone regular employees. In the past two years, only 4 out of 354 new regular hires were Anglophone (1.1%) (MEES, 2019, 2020).

Anglophone Regular Employees in Quebec Public Service, 2019



Source: Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor, 2019

<sup>1</sup> Until recently, the provincial government defined "Anglophone" as someone for whom English is their first language learned and still understood. The statistics here reflect this definition of the English-speaking community, which excludes "Allophones" who are more proficient in English than French. See Cooper, Donovan, & O'Donnell (2019) for a historical overview of English speakers' participation in Quebec's public service.

<sup>2</sup> The Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES) split into the two ministries in June 2020.

<sup>3</sup> The 25% goal was established in 1999 for cultural communities, Anglophones and Indigenous people. In 2005, the target group was broadened to also include people with disabilities, and the same 25% objective was maintained. There is no specific target for Anglophones (Cooper, Donovan, & O'Donnell, 2019).

## Representation of Anglophone Regular Employees in MEES (%), 2016-2020



Source: Annual reports from MEES, 2016-2017 to 2019-2020

In the past, an Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) within MEES oversaw the Secteur des services à la communauté anglophone, providing Quebec's English-speaking community with direct representation in the ministry. The sector has been modified and has seen its responsibilities expanded to include Indigenous and cultural communities, becoming the Réseau éducatif anglophone, des relations interculturelles et des Autochtones. The English sector has in effect become a sub-department within this sector, now known as the Direction du soutien au réseau éducatif anglophone. As a result, not only have the functions of the ADM expanded, diminishing his or her role as representative of English-language education, but the number of professionals with work experience in the English education sector has diminished (Advisory Board on English Education [ABEE], 2018). While other groups clearly need representation in MEQ, this change may impact the ADM's particular role regarding the needs of English speakers and the role of the official language minority school<sup>4</sup> sector in meeting these needs.

<sup>4</sup> English-language schools in Quebec are legally recognized as official language minority (OLM) schools under section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, with a mandate to protect and promote the vitality of Quebec's English-speaking minority. In this and other briefs in this series, the terms "English-language schools" and "OLM schools" will be used interchangeably.

**Given that Quebec's English-speaking community has limited leverage within MEQ, it has had little influence on broader decisions impacting educational policy, as well as on program and curriculum development.**

In the view of some educational stakeholders including the Advisory Board on English Education (ABEE), this has led to "English education policy in Quebec [being] largely a translation of French education policy" (2018, p. 43) that does not consider the specific needs and challenges related to the official language minority.

ABEE has pointed out several issues flowing from this general point. In effect, in Quebec, the English-language educational program differs from the French-language program only in the language components of the curriculum (English as a second language, French as a second language, and language arts).<sup>5</sup> While many programs such as math and science are not necessarily problematic for use in English-language schools, other programs, particularly for subjects “that are laden with cultural content,” have potential impacts on identity development among youth from the English-speaking minority (2018, p. 70).

Furthermore, ABEE points out that English-language schools also face the challenge of supporting the content of Quebec’s curriculum with English-language textbooks. Publishers are little interested in developing materials in English for Quebec’s small English-language school population. Although using textbooks produced for other provinces could be an option, these usually do not correspond to the content or pedagogy of the Quebec curriculum (ABEE, 2018). Through Entente funding,<sup>6</sup> MEQ supports the Leading English Education and Research Network (LEARN), which offers resources and services including pedagogical support to educators in the province.<sup>7</sup>

Quebec’s English-language education sector has been further weakened by additional recent changes at the education ministry.

**The loss of regional offices, new hiring policies, intra-government transfers, and rigorous standards for French language proficiency seem to have contributed to the decreased numbers of English-speaking representatives in the ministry (ABEE, 2018).**

All these changes have an effect on the vitality of English-speaking Quebec. ABEE (2018) recommends that the ADM’s role be refocused on the English sector and on English-language education, and highlights the importance of having strong leadership at the ministry, so that the ADM and his or her department can be involved early on in decision-making stages relating to policy and curriculum changes.

<sup>5</sup> The current school curriculum has been progressively implemented since 1997 from the elementary level onwards and is under the control of MEQ.

<sup>6</sup> The Entente Canada-Québec (ECQ) supports official minority and second-language instruction and provides financial resources for various projects.

<sup>7</sup> This includes Community Learning Centres (CLCs). For more information on CLCs, see Research Brief 8 in this series.

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### Credits for this Brief

Authors: [Nadine Ciamarra](#), M.A., Grad.Dip., and [Patricia Lamarre](#), Ph.D., with [Patrick Donovan](#), Ph.D., and [Lorraine O'Donnell](#), Ph.D.

Management and production: [Lorraine O'Donnell](#) and [Patrick Donovan](#).

Linguistic revision: [Linda Arui](#)

Design template and layout: [Fabian Will](#)

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