



National School Boards Association
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Alain Fortier
President
Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec
1001 Avenue Bégon
Québec, QC G1X 3M4, Canada

Dear Mr. Fortier,

I am pleased to write this letter in support of your efforts to preserve and protect school boards in Quebec. At the outset, I want to acknowledge that I am responding to a request from colleagues whom I admire greatly and am pleased to help. Yet, this letter is about much more than doing a personal favor. It is about standing together for a vital institution in a democracy.

Public schools in Canada and the United States are linked directly to the success of representative government. Indeed, the very concept of selecting persons to hold office and make decisions on our behalf is predicated on ensuring that such decisions are informed – in other words, that the voters are well-educated.

This process of providing educational opportunities for every citizen is, inherently, a local activity. Schools are critical parts of the towns and cities where they are located. Most importantly, they are where students learn, and how that happens is of special concern to everyone, not just the children and their parents or guardians. Schools, then, are part of the lifeblood of a community, which is why they need to be governed by representatives of the public in that community and not be viewed as simply another service to be provided. It is why school boards – whose charge is to represent the interests of all stakeholders – are so essential. These officials help ensure that all taxpayers who fund the schools are heard as decisions are made.



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This model of public schools led by locally-elected school boards is a well-tested and proven one, in both Canada and the United States. It has spawned innovation as well as facilitated ways to address local needs. Abolishing school boards may appear to be a more efficient approach, since it allows a central government to dictate what happens in every school every day. Yet, we know from experience that such control does not work well and can become a means for a political party in power to impose its will. More than that, eliminating local elected governance removes the community's direct and most accountable connection to its greatest asset, its schools.

We at NSBA believe your work to protect the institution of school boards in Quebec is vital to the continued success of your public education system. We are honored to stand with you in this important effort.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Gentzel

Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer



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