



Meet the English Montreal
School Board elections candidates

Description

Thomas Rolain, independent candidate for Ward 3 – Westmount/Southwest Montreal/downtown Montreal east to University Street

On September 9, candidates for **Ward 3** in the **English Montreal School Board elections** were invited by WestmountMag.ca to submit a text describing their platform for free publication, on a first-come, first-served basis. The articles are unedited and presented in their original format.

Here is the second article of the series, submitted by **Thomas Rolain, independent candidate**.

My name is Thomas Rolain and I have submitted my candidacy for Commissioner in Ward #3 (Westmount-Sud Ouest) to the English Montreal School Board (EMSB). I am dedicated to the field of education and I have a strong desire to positively impact our English school community. If elected as Commissioner of Ward #3, I intend to implement the following 5-pronged program:

1. **Covid-19:** A current issue for the start of the school year is the threat that the Covid-19 delta variant poses on the health of our children. We all know that the provincial government has not provided clear instructions on how to deal with Covid-19 in our classrooms. I believe that my PhD in Biological Sciences and my background as an infectious diseases specialist can be instrumental as the Covid-19 ministry protocols are implemented in our schools. I have the credentials to be a champion for our students and staff while ensuring a safe and enjoyable environment for all.
2. **Governance:** It is time to breathe new life into the Council of Commissioners, when it comes to implementing proper governance and controls, and setting high educational standards for our children. Unfortunately, during the last few years, the public perception of the Council has deteriorated due to the growing number of



headlines on governance issues. I strongly believe that we need to regain the public's trust and our community self-esteem by electing new council members and by establishing higher governance and educational standards. These changes are necessary for our community's ability to promote anglophone minority rights.

- 3. Graduation Rate, Bilingualism and French Immersion:** The EMSB has achieved the highest success rate, greater than 90%, among public school boards in the entire province of Quebec. While our community can be extremely proud of this achievement, there is still a lot that can be done, particularly when it comes to promoting bilingualism through our French immersion programs. It is thought that a substantial number of anglophone parents enroll their children in francophone schools rather than in our English schools, as there is doubt that our French immersion programs are adequate enough to ensure their children's future in Quebec. If elected, I intend to promote bilingualism in our school network by improving our current French immersion programs. Our goal must be to overexceed our community's expectations in regards to our children's future.
- 4. Special Needs and Bullying Prevention Programs:** I believe that every child's future is important and that as a result, no one should be left behind. While autism spectrum disorder, anxiety and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) diagnoses are increasing, and more emphasis is being put on the integration of children with special needs, there is still a lot to be done when it comes to proper resource allocation in order to promote inclusivity. As a Commissioner, I will be in constant communication with our parents' committees and associations to ensure that our school board is receptive to their improvement suggestions and current special needs program modifications.

In addition to special needs programs, I also believe that it is time to implement stronger bullying prevention guidelines in our public schools. Statistics Canada has performed research over the past several years and demonstrated that 25% of students were bullied, whether frequently or infrequently, from 2005-2009. Knowing that bullying can threaten students' physical and emotional safety, as well as negatively impact their ability to learn, this topic should be of utmost priority for our school board. Resources and training should be allocated to help our staff and students to address bullying when it happens, but more importantly, to prevent it from ever happening. If elected, this is something that I commit to work on tirelessly as every child deserves to feel safe at school.

- 5. Anglophone Minority Constitutional Rights and Communication Strategy:** Since the 2018 provincial election which saw the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) becoming the majority government in Quebec, there is no doubt that our Anglophone community has been intensely targeted through different Constitutional Bills (21, 40, and 96). While in a democracy where no one can deny the right of a majority party to implement new ideas to fit their perception of what a civil society should be, any changes should be done carefully and in a way that still respects the different minority communities' rights. So far, our anglophone community has demonstrated incredible resilience and has been vocal both in court and in public to address what they believed was discriminatory towards their members. While we have had some preliminary successes, it is not over yet and we will have to continue to express our opinion.

I strongly believe that the EMSB should urgently revise its public relations policies, which have been lacking so far. In my opinion, there is room to improve the way we manage our communications with the general public and the media, both in the anglophone and francophone communities. Failing to do so will only impair our community in the search for allies and lead us to be even more isolated. It is one thing to take legal actions on these issues, but it is another to communicate effectively on them. If elected, I intend to implement



a solid communications strategy to efficiently manage the wording and the timing of EMSB official communications, which in turn should help us avoid any unnecessary backlash on our community from the general public and the media.

For any questions, please do not hesitate to reach me at rolain.thomas@gmail.com

Feature image: courtesy of Thomas Rolain

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