



Major work at FACE

Update on the work of the *Comité de Vigie de FACE* (CVF - FACE Monitoring Committee)

December 2018

Dear parents and members of the FACE community,

We would like to update you on the activities of the *Comité de vigie* since our last communication with the school community in the spring of 2018. We wanted to have some concrete answers to offer you, so we thank you for your patience.

First a bit of background. As many of you know, the beautiful heritage building that houses École FACE is in need of major renovations. A request for the \$120 million project has been submitted to the Quebec government by the Commission scolaire de Montréal (CSDM), which owns 3449 rue University, supported by the English Montreal School Board (EMSB).

In preparation for this massive undertaking, a *Comité de vigie* (CVF) made up of parents, teachers, staff, students, representatives from the Service de garde, Milton-Parc afterschool program, the *Conseil d'établissement* (Governing Board, hereafter referred to as CÉ), and the direction was struck during the 2017-18 school year. The CVF has an advisory role and represents the interests of the FACE community, revolving around an exceptional, unique and complex institution.

The CVF had numerous meetings over the previous school year with officials from the CSDM in charge of the project, representatives from the EMSB, commissioners from both school boards, architects and engineers from outside firms involved in the planning of the work, and members of the CÉ.

As a committee, the CVF has outlined its priorities and shared them with all stakeholders. These can be summarized as following:

- Given the magnitude of the work, all members of the CVF are in agreement that a relocation from 3449 University must occur during the reconstruction, because of the noise, dust, disruption and potential safety hazards, not to mention the fact remaining on the premises would complicate the renovation and likely prolong the project.

- Given the dynamics of FACE, all members of the CVF are in agreement that our priority is keeping the entire school community of 1,400 students and staff together at one site during a temporary relocation that could last six to eight years.
- If this proves impossible, the CVF would prefer that the school be split among two locations maximum; one for CSDM and EMSB high school students; and one for both CSDM and EMSB elementary students. For a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the unique partnership between the two school boards and spirit of cooperation that reigns at FACE, we do not want to see our school divided by school boards, even temporarily.
- Given the profile of our school community, ascertained through a poll of FACE families last winter, the temporary location must be as close to 3449 University and the centre of the city as possible, and/or must be in proximity to public transit.

### **New developments**

This September, the CVF sought a reaffirmation of its role. Both the CSDM and EMSB renewed the CVF's mandate so that the work of reflection by and representation of the FACE community can continue in 2018-19.

The CVF has met once so far this school year and has another meeting scheduled in December. A new member has joined the CVF: Anne-Karine Tremblay, who just finished her mandate as president of the CÉ and will bring her wealth of knowledge and experience at FACE to our important work.

### **The Renovation Project**

The first challenge for our project is getting the necessary government approvals to move forward. The \$120 million to renovate FACE was not among those approved by the Quebec government last spring. But the CSDM was invited to resubmit the project again this year.

As you know, since then a new government has been elected. The Coalition Avenir Québec has named education as one of its top priorities. It has also promised to address the deterioration of school infrastructure across Quebec with a major reconstruction blitz. While renovations are usually given a green light on annual basis, there is a chance the new government will begin to accelerate action.

Given the need province-wide, the CÉ, backed by the CVF, has extended an invitation to both Education Minister Jean-François Roberge and Culture Minister Nathalie Roy to visit FACE during our concert season, in order to experience our unique program and character themselves, in hopes of helping them understand our realities and our needs.

## The Relocation

The work of finding a temporary home for FACE during the renovation was, and remains, a significant challenge for the CVF. It quickly became apparent from our consultations with the schools boards that neither the CSDM nor the EMSB have any appropriate sites in terms of size and location to accommodate 1,400 staff and students in their real estate portfolios. Even the undesirable scenario of dividing the FACE community among multiple sites within the city would pose difficulty for the two school boards, not to mention be logistically unworkable for FACE.

The CVF expended a lot of effort last year thinking “outside of the box” for a solution and pushing the school boards to do so as well.

As you will remember, a call went to the FACE community last year seeking suggestions on potential sites for temporary relocation. You answered in great number and for that we thank you. From those suggestions and our own detective work, the CVF spent the better part of last year developing a list of vacant buildings that might be suitable to accommodate FACE, researching the square footage to ascertain whether the sites might meet our needs and looking into the ownership. We were able to pass on a list to the CSDM Material Resources department for further investigation.

After much discussion with both school boards, the CVF has continually advocated for the fact that renovating and temporarily relocating a school as special and unique as FACE will require special and unique measures.

The good news is that this fall, CSDM president Catherine Harel-Bourdon officially communicated with the chair of the Montreal executive committee Benoît Dorais, on one hand, and with Health Minister Danielle McCann, on the other hand, formally requesting the use of buildings outside the CSDM real estate portfolio as possible temporary sites to house FACE during the reconstruction. As per our evaluations, each one of those buildings would be vast enough to host all of FACE school, are close to our current address, and are both accessible easily by bus and metro.

Those buildings are:

- The Institut Raymond-Dewar/ former Institut des Sourdes et Muettes, on the block bordered by St-Denis St., Roy, Berri St. and Cherrier St., right next to the Sherbrooke metro.
- The former Hôpital Jacques-Viger/ Sœurs de la Miséricorde on the corner of René-Levesque Blvd. and St-Hubert St. near the Berri-UQAM metro.

Just recently, the City of Montreal answered, concerning the Sourdes & Muettes building, that a technicality prevents them from responding positively to our demand "for now". A formal response from the Health Ministry is expected in the coming months concerning the Miséricorde

building.

It is worth noting that both buildings would require renovations to make them inhabitable and suitable for FACE's needs. Such work could take up to two to three years, during which time FACE would remain in its current home. Thus any renovation of and relocation from 3449 University would not occur until at least 2021 at the earliest.

Rest assured that FACE remains safe and secure for the time being. The CSDM has invested some \$25M since 2012 to keep up the building, and as long as funds haven't been secured to bring our exceptional building back to its former glory, the CSDM will keep a dedicated person in charge for maintenance purposes, in order to address any issues we might face and thus support our school staff, reduce any irritants and ensure safety for us all.

While much work has been done, much remains to be done given the magnitude of the reconstruction and relocation process and the CVF remains committed to seeing this important project through.

Regards,

The members of the Comité de Vigie de FACE  
December 5, 2018

Federico De Medina, Geneviève Dodin, Allison Hanes, Anne-Karine Tremblay (parents)  
Julie St-Pierre, Marie-Ève Arseneau (teachers)  
Taowa Munene-Tardif (student)  
Lise Leblanc (school daycare), Hélène Brousseau (Milton-Park daycare)  
Annie Lamarre, Nadine Perreault, Despina Michakis (administration)

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