

For immediate release

QCGN Supports Commissioner's Call for a More Effective Official Languages Act

Montreal, May 9, 2019 – The Quebec Community Groups Network welcomes the Commissioner of Official Languages' recommendations for a modernized Official Languages Act that further the vitality of linguistic minorities and direct federal institutions to comply with their obligations to the Canadian public.

Commissioner Raymond Th  berge today proposed legislative changes and new regulatory frameworks in such areas as justice, communications with and services to the public, governance, compliance, and the advancement of Canada's two official languages.

The QCGN welcomed Th  berge's call for more clarity and definitions of Part VII of the Act, which sets out the obligation of federal departments and institutions to support the vitality of official language minority communities; and Part VI, which commits the Government of Canada to ensure that English- and French-speaking Canadians have equal opportunities for employment and advancement in federal institutions.

However, we were somewhat disappointed that Commissioner Th  berge limited his suggestions to enhancing existing rights. QCGN and our sister organization in French Canada, the F  d  ration des communaut  s francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA), go much further in seeking fundamental changes that would expand the application of the Act and reinforce our rights.

"We believe now is the time for bold thought, and we would have hoped the Commissioner could have pushed his recommendations further," commented QCGN President Geoffrey Chambers. "It is critical that the Commissioner's voice on modernization be heard now, so his input can be part of the national effort to update the Act as we head into a fall federal election."

“We would like to acknowledge the role that the Commissioner’s consultation process played in helping our community focus on common positions related to modernizing the Act,” Chambers said. But the QCGN is disappointed that the Commissioner’s annual report, also released today, continues to present a one-sided portrait of linguistic-right challenges faced by federal civil servants.

“All is not well for English-speaking Quebecers in the federal civil service in Quebec. The Commissioner is looking at national figures, which distort the experience of English-speaking workers in the federal civil service here in Quebec,” Chambers said. He noted that the Commissioner’s own data point to an inordinate number of complaints coming from Quebec individuals unable to work in the official language of their choice. “When reconciled with data from the Public Service Employee Survey, it is clear that English-speaking Quebecers are facing challenges using their official language in the workplace.”

“This is a critical matter for our community,” said Chambers. “This is about jobs and opportunities for young English-speaking Quebecers who are effectively locked out of major federal employers like Corrections Services Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.”

Read the QCGN’s brief on modernization [here](#) and the FCFA’s brief [here](#).

The Quebec Community Groups Network (www.qcgn.ca) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 60 English-language community organizations across Quebec. Its mission is to identify, explore and address strategic issues affecting the development and vitality of English-speaking Quebec and to encourage dialogue and collaboration.

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