

For immediate release

French Language Study Program: Immigration and Education Officials Need to Find Solution, Not Cast Aspersions on Students and English School Boards

Montreal – April 18, 2017 – It’s unacceptable that the future of hundreds of immigration candidates is in limbo despite graduating from French courses that were approved by Quebec’s Ministry of Education. It is up to the provincial Ministries of Immigration and Education to find a remedy rather than sacrificing the future of would-be Quebecers and tarring the reputation of Quebec’s English school boards.

The Programme de l’expérience québécoise (PEQ), a vocational and French-language study program, provides foreign students with a Quebec selection certificate - the first step towards becoming a permanent resident. But 18 months after passing their classes, many of them are being called in for interviews by Quebec’s Ministry of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusiveness (MIDI) to evaluate their French. Hundreds of those who graduated from the Lester B. Pearson School Board and the English Montreal School Board have had their immigration applications rejected.

“Just testing some of the graduates is discriminatory,” commented QCGN Vice-President Geoffrey Chambers who co-chairs the QCGN’s Education Working Group, noting that if the program needs to be reviewed, it’s the responsibility of Education and Immigration Ministries.

One Montreal law firm has filed an application for a review in Quebec Superior Court on behalf of four students who had their selection certificate rejected. The students were called in for an oral exam because “the MIDI has motive to believe they supplied false or misleading information or documents regarding their level of French knowledge.”

“If they – MIDI and MELS – believe fraudulent certificates are being issued, they should take that up with the school boards and not be discussing it in the media without offering proof,” Chambers said. “They should not be throwing the students under the bus, and portraying English school boards as corrupt. They should go in and fix it.”

The Quebec Community Groups Network (www.qcgn.ca) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 51 English-language community organizations across Quebec. As a centre of evidence-based expertise and collective action it identifies, explores and addresses strategic issues affecting the development and vitality of the English-speaking community of Quebec and encourages dialogue and collaboration among its member organizations, individuals, community groups, institutions and leaders.

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