

For Immediate Release

Educational Institutions Must Tie Their Activities to the Vitality of the Communities They Serve

Montreal, September 21, 2016 - The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) recognizes that schools are a cornerstone of the vitality of English-speaking communities and believes that Education Act should enhance the responsibility of our educational institutions to serve their communities.

“We believe educational institutions must tie their activities to the vitality of the communities they serve,” commented QCGN Vice-president Geoffrey Chambers, noting that Bill 105 makes minimal reference to community and that the few references appear as an add-on rather than as a defined responsibility. “We believe that responsibility for community, social, cultural and economic development must be included in the Educational Projects of our educational institutions and the Commitment-to-Success Plans of our school boards.”

In a brief submitted to the Committee on Culture and Education this week, the QCGN argues that school boards, schools, as well as adult and vocational centres must support the development and vitality of their respective communities. QCGN, which represents 48 groups across Quebec, insists that this responsibility should be clearly defined within the Education Act rather than being discretionary on the part of educational institutions.

“As we stated in a previous brief on Bill 86, the purpose of all schools is to provide the best educational experience possible for its students. English schools – institutions of our linguistic minority community – have the added responsibility of preserving and promoting the unique culture of English-speaking Quebec,” said Chambers. “These are institutions of English-speaking Quebec, not institutions that provide services in English. Caring for these institutions, ensuring our children receive an excellent education, and reinforcing the school’s role as the centre of community life are responsibilities shared between the English-speaking community of Quebec and the Minister.”

In our brief on Bill 105, the QCGN also notes that dictating that co-opted commissioners must come from the health and sports sectors is restrictive and fails to recognize social and cultural aspects of communities. We recommend broadening of the definition and eligibility criteria of co-opted commissioners to include individuals from their respective communities with social and cultural backgrounds.

“We are also concerned with the extraordinary, two-thirds majority vote required by the Council of Commissioners to disagree with recommendations of the Allocation of Resources Committee,” said Chambers, noting that this advisory committee of education experts and administrators will already carry significant weight. “Imagine the National Assembly requiring a 2/3 majority to amend recommendations of an administrative council of deputy ministers.”

Furthermore, the QCGN brief recommends setting reasonable limits on the powers of the Minister to issue directives to school boards concerning administration, organization, operations and actions.

“The QCGN strongly cautions the Government that adoption of this Bill without modifications proposed by our community could render it unconstitutional,” concluded Chambers, adding that he is confident the QCGN’s recommendations are supportive of our English-language educational institutions and the communities they serve.

Chambers also remarked the QCGN was pleased with last week’s decision by the Minister of Education to hold public consultations on the future of education in Quebec. “We believe this type of consultation is long overdue,” he said. “The QCGN looks forward to being an engaged partner in this consultation, and working to improve the future of public education in Quebec for our children and our communities. “

The Quebec Community Groups Network (www.qcgn.ca) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 48 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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