

## Bill C-13 Weakens Federal Lifeline to English-speaking Quebec When it is Most Needed

**MONTREAL, May 31, 2021** – The Quebec Community Groups Network is calling on the Government of Canada to immediately remove all reference to Quebec’s Charter of the French Language from Bill C-13, the proposed legislation amending the *Official Languages Act*, and creating a new law that will impose language of work and service obligations for French only on federally regulated businesses.

Bill C-13 territorializes language rights, and explicitly recognizes the *Charter of the French Language*, a provincial Act that now operates notwithstanding the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

“Canadians expect the Attorney General to safeguard their fundamental rights and freedoms, something the revised *Charter of the French Language* takes away,” said QCGN President Marlene Jennings. “It is inconceivable that the Government of Canada would put forward legislation amending the quasi-constitutional *Official Language Act* which would recognize a provincial Act that as a result of Law 96 creates a Charter-free zone for more than 9 million Canadians.”

“Law 96 is one of the most significant derogations of human rights in Canadian history. Bills of rights protect people from abuse by the state,” added Jennings. “With the preventive use of notwithstanding clause, this protection is eliminated. The government has created a ‘Charter free zone’, where all citizens have lost their fundamental rights and freedoms in the application of the Charter of the French Language.”

“The Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada has a duty to do more than just monitor the implementation of Bill 96 as he promised last week,” Jennings insisted, noting that C-13 is not the bill that Canada’s official language minority communities asked for.

“In Bill C-13, the federal government is poised to abandon half a century of official language policy and turn the *Official Languages Act* into legislation aimed primarily at the protection and promotion of only one official language,” said QCGN Board Member and former Senator Joan Fraser.

“This bill pushes Canada toward a more asymmetrical federalism, creating a special language regime in Quebec and enshrining this framework into a quasi-constitutional statute,” said QCGN Secretary Eva Ludwig. “Bill C-13 further explicitly references the very provincial law that will seriously harm the English-speaking minority in Quebec. In so doing, Bill C-13 weakens the minority’s federal lifeline when it is most needed.”

The Quebec Community Groups Network ([www.qcgn.ca](http://www.qcgn.ca)) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 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.

**For further information:**

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