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# Network News

The news that matters to  
English-speaking Quebecers



## BUILDING BRIDGES VITALLY IMPORTANT, VIBRANT AGM TOLD

Report from QCGN President Eva Ludvig



As we head into the summer, it's great to get some reassurance from important places that the QCGN is on the right track in focusing on finding common cause with Quebec's francophone majority population.

And we heard that twice in recent days – not only from the federal Minister of Official Languages **Randy Boissonnault**, who delivered an energetic address to our Annual General Meeting on June 20, but also from the **Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (OCOL)** two days earlier, which delivered an [encouraging report on the English Speaking Community of Quebec](#) (ESCQ) and its relations with the French-speaking majority (see separate item below).

I was delighted by the AGM, which drew about 20 voting delegates online and over 50 more delegates, partners and stakeholders to the St. Jax Community Centre in downtown Montreal. A summer solstice celebration followed the business meeting with a rousing and supportive speech

from Boissonnault.

We paid tribute to two outgoing Board members – former Senator **Joan Fraser** and former QCGN President **Marlene Jennings** – for their selfless service and immensely valuable contributions over the years, and welcomed an incoming Board member, well-known retired broadcasting executive **Rob Braide**.

Members also passed a resolution in support of five guiding principles English-speaking Quebec feels are necessary in the development of new regulations related to Part VII of the revised federal Official Languages Act (Bill C-13). Part VII is a critical lifeline between the government of Canada and our linguistic minority. The new regulations will better define the responsibilities of federal institutions to consult with and support our community.

Returning Board members include **Alix Adrien**, **Matt Aronson**, **Eleni Bakopanos**, **Katherine Korakakis**, **Eric Maldoff**, **Chad Bean**, **Grant Myers**, **Peter Starr**, and me (heading into another year as QCGN President). Other board members, representing individual members, are **Chelsea Craig**, **Jordan Black** (also elected Board Secretary), and **Maria Kyres**.

Our Director General **Sylvia Martin-Laforge** reminded the assembly that QCGN's task is "to ensure the voices of English-speaking Quebecers are not only heard but heeded.

"We have spent considerable time and effort over the past year to put in place the framework and resources needed to get there through a broadening of our communications efforts as we also sharpen our message. The QCGN remains committed to advocating balanced, symmetrical policies that protect minority-language rights and promote linguistic duality in Canada."

In closing remarks, I focused primarily on the very interesting OCOL report that talked about the importance of bridge-building between Canada's official-language communities. Finding common cause is one thing that can work to help Quebecers better understand each other, and demonstrate in particular that the English-speaking community of Quebec is not a threat to the French language the way it is often portrayed.

"We need to hammer home the notion that English-speaking Quebecers are part of the glue that holds this country together," I explained. "This is not just a glib phrase; it's actually important, and we should attempt to ensure all political leaders at whatever level understand this point and are persuaded to listen more carefully to our suggestions."

One suggestion, made earlier this year following the presentation of the Quebec government's Action plan for the French language, is our proposal that the English-speaking community be included as a 10th priority so that we might contribute in a more concrete and recognized way in the effort to protect and promote French, both within Quebec and in the rest of Canada – something supported by both Boissonnault and the OCOL report.

I noted there are important factors that will help us counter the nationalist fiction with the facts, and the bridge-building report identified them. Both francophone (89%) and anglophone Quebecers (81%) report they're interactions with each other have been positive. That's a huge statistic.

And there is another ray of hope that I said experienced Quebec observers and the OLCO have spotted: our youth.

"This younger generation, it is noted, is more open to the world, less frightened about the future of French and not afraid of being able to speak more than one language.

They are more likely to reject xenophobia and ethnocentrism. They aren't playing **François Legault's** blame game aimed at immigrants and minorities of all kinds. It doesn't bother them to work largely in French, do a Zoom call in English with American clients, and then watch a global blockbuster in the evening in whatever language, while feeling immense pride that it was directed by a Quebecer."

My thanks to all those in attendance, both in-person and virtually, and to Minister Boissonnault for his kind and encouraging words. Read the press release from our AGM [here](#).



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## MINISTER CHARMS AGM AUDIENCE WITH PLEDGE OF SUPPORT

Federal Official Languages Minister **Randy Boissonnault** delivered an energetic message of support for the English-speaking community of Quebec (ESCQ) following our AGM on June 20, vowing he is firmly in our corner

– not just as language minister, but also through his other portfolio, Minister of Workforce Development, or, as he calls it, Minister of Jobs.

"I am not just interested, but invested in growing Quebec's linguistic duality, something that both English- and French-speaking Quebecers support," he said, noting he is addressing issues like higher unemployment rates and lower standards of living among English-speaking Quebecers compared with their francophone counterparts. "We mean it; I raise your issues every time I meet with a Quebec minister, and will continue to do so," the Franco-Albertan minister said to applause.



"Defending Canada's linguistic duality and official languages isn't just the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do – for the economy, for inclusion, for competitiveness" because it gives Canada a leg up on our closest competitors.

"I also want you to know that you are not alone in your efforts. I want to make clear that our government is with you – vous n'êtes pas seul dans vos efforts. Because it takes everyone to make sure that our linguistic-minority communities are not only getting by, but thriving."

Making reference to the latest federal [Action Plan for Official Languages 2023-2028: Protection-Promotion-Collaboration](#), which got an infusion of \$1.4 billion more in the 2023 budget, Boissonnault said that in concrete terms this means:

- Pursuing learning and education in your official language
- Accessing employment opportunities in your official language
- Receiving health care in your official language

Boissonnault also found reason for optimism in the bridge-building report presented earlier last week by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages that focused on positive aspects of English-speaking Quebecers' relations with the francophone majority in Quebec.

"I know that it takes a team and a community... to come out on top – it takes teams like the QCGN. Because when teams pull together in the face of adversity, it can give rise to a profound change, not only on the ice, but in the community. That, no doubt, applies to you."

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## POSITIVE FINDINGS IN RECENT OCOL REPORT



There is a lot of good news in a new report from the Office of Commissioner of Official Languages **Raymond Th  berge** (OCOL) that confirms two key things about the English-speaking community of Quebec (ESCQ), the QCGN said in a [news release](#).

The report, titled [\*Building Bridges: Perceptions and realities about the English-speaking communities of Quebec and their relationship with French in Quebec and bilingualism in Canada\*](#), shows clearly that on an individual basis, English- and French-speaking Quebecers get along, far better than discourse in the chattering classes would have us believe. It is also very clear that there is an important role for the ESCQ to play in building bridges, not only within Quebec, with our Francophone friends and neighbours, but with the rest of Canada, even in helping promote the

importance and value of French to the rest of the country.

"These conclusions reflect what our organization has been saying for a long time," QCGN President **Eva Ludvig** said. "We are heartened to see this confirmation of the positive role we play in promoting the historic rights and access to services our community of 1.3 million Quebecers has enjoyed as well as in our steadfast position in support of the protection and promotion of the French language in Quebec and Canada, so long as those rights and that access are not diminished."



The QCGN is also glad to see some solid numbers that help distance the modern ESCQ from old stereotypes that, unfortunately, are still relied upon in some media and political discourse to denigrate Anglophones and the contributions they make on a daily basis to Quebec.

Today's English-speaking Quebecers are more than likely able to speak French (71 per cent) and use it regularly at work (65 per cent), the report says. Most of their school-aged children who have English as a mother tongue have French as a language of instruction at school. Unfortunately, only a minority of the francophone population is aware of these statistics, the report suggests.

"We use and embrace French far more than we are often given credit for," Ludvig said. "It has been a significant source of frustration for us, especially when we are blamed for a perceived decline in French in Quebec. "We are not the problem. We are part of the solution."

Read more of the QCGN's reaction to the findings in this study on our [press release](#).

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## A BUSY TIME FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

By Riley Dalys-Fine

QCGN Director of Community Engagement and Strategic Alliances

It has been a busy month for our community group members, many of whom have also hosted AGMs in the past few weeks. The QCGN would like to congratulate all our members and partners on their hard work this year, as well as to those who were elected to serve on their boards of directors.

In fact, June is sometimes referred to as "AGM season" by folks who are active in the community sector. As many of you know, community groups are accountable to their members and the AGM is the place where members have a direct say in electing directors to boards and approving important governance decisions.

Fun fact: Quebec law requires non-profit organizations to have their annual financial statement approved within four months of the end of their fiscal period. Because so many organizations follow a standard fiscal year ending March 31, they often end up holding their AGM in June to meet this deadline. Of course, it's not just business; the start of summer is a great time to catch up with friends and colleagues and celebrate shared achievements before breaking for the holidays.

The QCGN tries to attend as many of our members' AGMs as we can, although we cannot be everywhere. Taking part in an organization's AGM gives us the opportunity to learn more about the critical work our members are doing in English-speaking communities across Quebec to provide services and strengthen community vitality. It is also a great way to connect with the volunteers who are the life force of these organizations and reinforce our partnership with member groups. This month, we attended the AGMs of QCGN members including [Seniors Action Quebec](#), the [Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network](#), [Chez Doris](#) (where our Director-General, [Sylvia Martin-Laforge](#), serves on the Board), and the [Townshippers' Association](#).



Regrettably, we were unable to attend events hosted by the [Black Community Resource Centre](#), [English-speaking Catholic Council](#), [HEAR Quebec](#), [Literacy Quebec](#), and the [West Island Family Resource Centre](#).

The QCGN would like to again congratulate and thank these organizations on another successful year, working on behalf of our official language-minority community. For those who are taking a well-deserved break this summer, we wish you a restful holiday and look forward to working together again soon.

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## CARE CONFERENCE THIS FALL



The Quebec Community Groups Network has been supporting the [Quebec English School Boards Association](#) and other community stakeholders in organizing a conference called CARE (Community + Action + Resolve = Education), set for **September 25 and 26, 2024**. The aim of the Conference is to strengthen the vital link between the education community and the wider official language minority community and society it serves, share knowledge and develop innovative ways to make the public English education system more effective.

Other community and education partners involved in the planning of the conference include the [Association of Directors General of English School Boards of Québec](#) (ADGESBQ), [Québec Provincial Association of Teachers](#) (QPAT), [English Parents' Committee Association of Québec](#) (EPCA), [Association of Administrators of English Schools of Québec](#) (AAESQ), and the [Quebec Association of Home and Schools Association](#) (QFHSa).

The CARE Conference is being developed around five themes:

1. Sustainability
2. Programs and expertise
3. Strengthening links between the education community and other communities within the English-speaking Community of Quebec
4. Best practices in working cooperatively with government and positively contributing to the development of legislation, regulations, policies and programs; and,
5. Government support to the English school system in Quebec.

CARE will take place at the Holiday Inn China Town, 999 rue Saint-Urbain, Montréal between September 25th and 26th. Organizers are anticipating an audience of about 250 education and community leaders. We believe your voices will be a critical addition to these important conversations, and we would love to see you there! Please register with **Suzanne Keough** either by calling **514-849-5900, ext. 221** or via email at [skeough@qesba.qc.ca](mailto:skeough@qesba.qc.ca). We have secured a very competitive nightly room rate of \$249 at the Holiday Inn, which can be booked online [using this direct link](#).

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## WISHING YOU A HAPPY CANADA DAY



We at the QCGN would like to wish you all a safe and happy Canada Day! Current weather reports predict a warm and sunny Monday – a perfect day to be spent outdoors celebrating with family and friends.

During this polarizing time in our provincial and federal politics, we look forward to a day where Canadians of all languages, cultures and political stripes can come together and celebrate this country that we all work so hard to make great. It was very encouraging to read [this column](#) in the Gazette this morning by **Toula Drimonis**, which emphasizes the fact that one can be both a proud Quebecer and a proud Canadian. We should all be able to proudly don a fleur-de-lys on St. Jean-Baptiste Day and a maple leaf on Canada Day without having any qualms about it.

Have a good long weekend and a happy Canada Day!

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## HAVE A WONDERFUL SUMMER!

This is the last Network News bulletin until the fall. On behalf of the QCGN, our Board members and our staff, I want to wish you a happy, safe, restful and restorative summer season! See you in the fall!

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*Thank you for reading our regular newsletter. For up-to-date news about the Quebec Community Groups Network you can visit our website at [www.qcgn.ca](http://www.qcgn.ca) or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram.*



## Quebec Community Groups Network

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