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# Network News

The news that matters to  
English-speaking Quebecers



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### COMMUNITY INTERVENES TO PREVENT DEEP CUTS AT THE MONTREAL GAZETTE

By Eva Ludvig

QCGN President



The QCGN has learned that staff cuts at The Montreal Gazette will not be as deep as previously anticipated thanks in large part to the efforts of community leaders. QCGN, other leaders and businesspeople, banded together to prevent newsroom cutbacks that would have hobbled the future of our community's newspaper of record.

Postmedia recently announced it will be cutting 11 per cent of workers at its newspapers across Canada, but internal sources had confirmed planned cuts at The Gazette were the equivalent of 10 full-time positions. That would have been a quarter of the editorial staff. We have learned that this number has now been reduced to some 5.5 positions that will be cut. While this news is still unfortunate, it is somewhat less severe than anticipated.

The Gazette is an important and historic institution in Quebec that not only informs our community but reflects our issues, perspectives, and concerns to Quebecers including the many Francophones who subscribe to it. I was proud to be representing QCGN as one of the founding members of the Friends of the Montreal Gazette which was concerned that such deep cuts would have made it difficult for the newspaper to perform its role as a voice for English-speaking Quebecers across the province. The Gazette is an important institution of our community, and we should all be concerned about its survival.

Meanwhile, Postmedia announced members of a Community Advisory Council charged with helping to strengthen the sustainability of the 245-year-old newspaper. They include two QCGN Board members: **Joan Fraser**, a former Canadian Senator and past Editor-in-chief of The Gazette; and **Eric Maldoff**, a prominent lawyer and longtime community activist. Other members of the advisory council include **David Bensadoun**, CEO, ALDO Group; **Tiffany Callender**, CEO, Federation of African Canadian Economics; **Gurveen K Chadha**, Business operations lead, Shopify; **Jonathan Goldbloom**, Partner, Avenue Strategic Communications and co-founder of Friends of the Montreal Gazette; **Tasha Lackman**, Executive director, The Depot Community Food Centre; **Andrew Molson**, Chairman, Avenir Global; and **Michael Prupas**,

Owner, Muse Entertainment. They will be joined by **Angelo Pacitto**, Postmedia's regional director of media sales for Montreal and **Bert Archer**, Editor-in-chief of The Montreal Gazette.

Soon after the cuts were announced, prominent businessman and lawyer **Mitch Garber** said he believed the Montreal Gazette needs local ownership. He offered to buy a stake in the newspaper, but Postmedia ignored his very public pleas saying it does not intend to sell.

The Montreal Gazette is part of the Canadian media empire Postmedia Network, which owns and operates the National Post, the Financial Post and other properties once run by Canwest. Some 66 per cent of the company is now controlled by the American media conglomerate Chatham Asset Management. Originally a bilingual newspaper, the Gazette was founded in 1778. Owned by Postmedia since 2010, the paper has undergone several waves of voluntary retirements in recent years. Increasingly slim and bleeding advertising revenues, The Montreal Gazette is now printed only five days a week with an online version on Monday.

We will continue to follow the developments hoping to see a secure, vibrant, and effective provincial English-language daily in Quebec.

## Bill to update Official Languages Act references Bill 96

I was greatly disappointed that the House Committee on Official Languages has allowed references to Quebec's Charter of the French Language to remain in the proposed new federal language legislation to amend the Official Languages Act. During the committee's clause-by-clause study of [\*Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts\*](#), a Liberal proposal to remove a reference to the Quebec language legislation was defeated. Members from the Conservative Party of Canada, the New Democratic Party, and the Bloc Québécois voted against. Instead, a motion put forward by the Bloc to further entrench Quebec's Charter into the Official Languages Act was adopted. A second Bloc motion further entrenching asymmetry between the way the federal government supports English and French linguistic minority communities was similarly supported and passed with support from the Tories and the NDP.

The QCGN has spent the better part of the last year opposing changes to the Official Languages Act that will impact the rights of our minority community here in Quebec. Over the past month, I have been working with Board members **Marlene Jennings** and **Eleni Bakopanos**, both former MPs, as well as the [Township's Association](#) and [Seniors Action Quebec](#) to reach out to Ministers and MPs to inform them of our grave concerns about the inclusion of Quebec's Charter of the French Language in this quasi-constitutional legislation which currently protects the right of both English- and French-speaking minorities throughout Canada.

Despite the best efforts of Liberal MPs led by **Anthony Housefather**, **Patricia Lattanzio**, and **Marc Garneau**, it is clear to us that the deck is stacked against English-speaking Quebec. We saw how the Conservatives and NDP have clearly abandoned linguistic duality and are working hand in hand with the Bloc to rip apart 50 years of federal official languages policy. This is a major setback for the rights of English-speaking Quebecers as noted in this persuasive [editorial](#) in The Montreal Gazette, which states that those heaping scorn upon MPs who have raised concerns about Bill C-13 are also heaping scorn on the concerns of English-speaking Quebecers.

We are deeply frustrated by comments made by **Francis Drouin** – the eastern Ontario Liberal MP who slammed his English-speaking Quebec colleagues for speaking up against Bill C-13. And while debate in committee is on hiatus for March break, I am sad to see the language divide continues to widen.

## QCGN responds to attacks

We responded to a column by **Paul Journet** in La Presse who said Housefather, Garneau, and fellow MP **Emmanuella Lambropoulos** were anti-French because they were opposed to the inclusion of Quebec's Charter in federal legislation. Contrary to what some political commentators have claimed, the attempt by Liberal MPs to remove mention of the Charter of the French Language from Bill C-13 was an attempt to correct a serious flaw in the bill that would have constitutional effects for linguistic minorities across the country, and not the act of a "crusade against French", I wrote in this [commentary](#). Still more pundits have waded into the debate including multiple Quebecor columnists who attacked the motives of MPs, the integrity of the QCGN, and the very existence of our community. Among them were **Chantal Hébert** in The [Toronto Star](#), who suggested MPs get their facts straight; **Michel C. Auger** in [La Presse](#) who argued a

"false equivalence" between Quebec's English-speaking minority and minority French-speaking communities elsewhere in the country was the crux of the debate; and **Michel David** in [Le Devoir](#), who labelled Housefather, Garneau and his colleagues "a handful of angryphones". Toronto Star columnist **Andrew Phillips**, a former Montrealer, was the lone wolf with an opposite spin, actually arguing that [English-language rights need protection in Quebec](#).

In the meantime, Indigenous Affairs Minister **Marc Miller**, the MP for Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs, mused about whether or not he would vote for his government's bill. Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** responded swiftly, telling reporters that all his ministers will vote in favour of Bill C-13. Is this an indication that opposition to the bill is hitting its mark?

## Committee resumes examination of Bill C-13

After a two-week break, the Committee on Official Languages will meet again next week to discuss the bill. This is its last scheduled meeting to examine the bill, but with two-thirds of the legislation still to consider, the Committee may vote to extend the clause-by-clause study before it gets handed back to the House of Commons for a new vote. It remains unclear if the Liberals will "whip votes" forcing the entire caucus to vote in favour of Bill C-13.

Once the bill is passed by the House of Commons, it will go to Senate where Quebec Senator **Judith G. Seidman** suggested to her colleagues that give the bill a sober second look. "Should the government attempt to rush this legislation through our chamber on the grounds that a pre-study has already been done, I believe we must object and insist that we take the time needed to carefully study and reflect." View Sen. Seidman's intervention on the QCGN YouTube page [here](#) where she argues that Bill C-13 "introduces a legislative asymmetry between the rights of the minority linguistic community in Quebec and those in the rest of Canada, thereby abandoning over 50 years of official language policy."

I would like to thank Senator Seidman personally and on behalf of Quebec's English-speaking community for her intervention. We strongly support her suggestion that Senators take a sober second look at this bill. And we repeat our plea to Parliamentarians to remove all references to the Quebec Charter of the French Language from this legislation and to ensure that all language rights created by Parliament are equitably extended to both official languages – English and French.

## Open letter

Meanwhile I encourage English-speaking Quebecers to stand up for their rights by supporting the work of Senator Seidman and our MPs fighting for us in Ottawa. If you also oppose these changes to the Official Languages Act, please reach out to your MP and let them know how you feel and encourage everyone you know to [sign our open letter to David Lametti](#) and fellow parliamentarians which has been some 3000 signatures and counting.

For up-to-date news on Bill C-13 and other news that impacts English-speaking Quebecers, I encourage you to sign up for our [Daily Briefing](#). Recent bulletins from our Director General to those who signed the letter led to a sudden surge in subscriptions which will ensure a greater number of English-speaking Quebecers are aware of the issues that impact our community. Also, if you are active on social media, please like and share the posts of our #OuiBelong social media campaign on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

## Renewal of QCGN well underway



Last week, the QCGN Board of Directors approved the final membership and nomination policies and processes to lay the foundations for the renewal of our organization. Over the coming weeks and months, the QCGN will focus on closer engagement with our Network while we add new Members to our ranks. New organizations are being admitted and we will soon expand our ranks with the addition of Individual Members who will include a broad cross section /of English-speaking Quebecers from across the province.

Work on Renewal is slated to be completed by our 2023 AGM with processes and tools ensuring that all our members – both Community Groups and Individuals – will have ways to contribute to the strength of our advocacy efforts and the vitality of our community. New tools include the creation of a members portal on our website that streamlines the application process while giving our members a space to interact. We are also completing a Directory of our members for the public to access. These initiatives aim to foster closer relationships among community stakeholders.

The nomination process for the board will begin with a call for nomination in early April. As part of renewal, candidates for the Board must be individual members to be considered. Stay tuned for more details on membership and recruitment in the next Network News.

## QCGN and EPCA host webinar on Bill 96

The QCGN partnered with the [English Parents' Committee Association](#) (EPCA) to host a webinar on the ongoing impacts of Bill 96 this past Wednesday. Some 300 parents from across Quebec tuned into this virtual event to hear from **Marion Sandilands** of Conway Litigation, who provided an informative presentation on some of the impacts the language law will have on the Education and Health and Social Services sectors. While the main subject of the presentation was Bill 96, some attention was also paid to the federal Bill C-13, which, as it currently stands, aims to enshrine the Quebec Charter of the French Language within federal law, and subsequently compound the Charter's negative impact on Quebec's English-speaking community.



The presentation ended with a call to action for concerned community members, and information was provided on how individuals can get involved in the fight against the erosion of our rights in Bill 96. A Q&A period was also held, where participants asked Marion a number of questions about how new language requirements will impact children with disabilities, students in English CEGEPs, and eligibility requirements for English schools.

Though the bill was passed into law more than nine months ago, significant confusion remains around the full impact that the law will have on English-speaking communities. The QCGN will host more information sessions as we continue to learn more about what challenges and changes Bill 96 will bring for various sectors of activity. We are extremely grateful to EPCA and its president, **Katherine Korakakis**, for mobilizing the community to take part in this week's event and look forward to many more collaborations in the future. The full information session is available for viewing on the QCGN's [YouTube Page](#).

## QCGN Director General Sylvia Martin-Laforge featured in The Montrealer



I was proud to see our Director General **Sylvia Martin-Laforge** feature on the cover of the **The Montrealer** this month. Sylvia, who has been at the helm of the QCGN for 15 years, insists that linguistic issues must not be seen as a zero-sum game, and says she believes this is a "watershed moment" for our community. "We feel disenfranchised, she explains. "But we need to step up and propose solutions. We have to work with all political parties. Over the next 12 months we have to shore up what we want and need. That's why I asked for 15% of the government funding that goes to cultural organizations – because the English-speaking community is 15% of the Quebec population."

Sylvia has vast public service experience in Ontario and on Parliament Hill where she was active with organizations dealing with Official Language Minority Communities, women's issues, and First Nations. Over the years she has been involved in policy and program development in a variety of files including employment equity and linguistic duality. Read the full article by Montrealer publisher/editor **Peter Kerr** [here](#).

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## MARCH FORUM TO SHARE STRATEGIES FOR A MORE VITAL COMMUNITY

By Riley Dalys-Fine

Director, Community Engagement and Strategic Alliances

On **March 10**, the Quebec Community Groups Network will host the ***Sharing Strategies for a More Vital Community***. This full-day event continues the ongoing dialogue led by the **Community Vitality Roundtables** to identify the major themes that shape the development of the community sector serving English-speaking Quebecers. These themes include suitable, sufficient, and stable funding; the need for more robust data; representation of the community in decision-making processes; and the wellbeing and resilience of our organizations and networks.

The Community Development Forum is an annual event that brings together a diverse group of community stakeholders, representatives, and partners to work toward our common goals. Much of this work is carried by the [Community Vitality Roundtables](#), which include close to three dozen organizations which serve Quebec's English-speaking community. Together, the Roundtables have created a shared strategic community development plan for Quebec's English-speaking community to achieve together what we cannot accomplish on our own. Consult the [Working Together for a More Vital Community, the 2022-2027 Community Development Plan for English-speaking Quebec](#).

As we approach the end of the first year of this plan, the forum provides a chance to reflect on the progress we have made while ensuring our efforts continue to align with the needs and priorities of our community. The theme of this year's forum is how we, as a community, can take positive steps to increase collaboration among stakeholders and tap into the resources required to ensure that shared action leads to a collective impact and the social change we wish to achieve. As part of this theme, we are pleased to

welcome back **Laura Schnurr**, Director of Climate Transitions at the [Tamarack Institute](#) as our keynote speaker.

## Action Plan

In the weeks following the forum, the Government of Canada is expected to release the next Action Plan for Official Languages. The current [Action Plan for Official Languages – 2018-2023: Investing in Our Future](#) represents an investment of **\$2.7 billion** in programs and projects to support Official Language Minority Communities (OLMC). This summer, the QCGN and the Community Vitality Roundtables worked to help organizations across Quebec's English-speaking community to participate in consultations with the Minister of Official Languages, **Ginette Petitpas Taylor** to develop the next five-year plan. These efforts led to the development of **Report on the Priorities of Quebec's English-speaking Community for the 2023-2028 Official Languages Strategy**, which you can read on our [website](#).

For the last 20 years, the Action Plan has served as one of the most important policy instruments through which the Government of Canada carries out its obligations to strengthen the vitality of Canada's two OLMCs, including Quebec's English-speaking community. With the Act to modernize Canada's Official Languages Act, Bill C-13 still before committee, there is a persistent uncertainty surrounding whether we can continue to expect our government to provide the same support we have received historically in the future. As we navigate these changes, it is imperative that English-speaking Quebec's community organizations to work together, and to be able to speak with one voice on those challenges which we all face.

Meanwhile, our community is eager to see how the Quebec government will respond to our challenges in accessing provincial funding, which the QCGN and others raised at a pre-budget consultation on Jan. 17. As we have stated, Quebec's English-speaking community receives a disproportionately low share of the total provincial budget allocated to the community sector. During the consultation, QCGN Director-General **Sylvia Martin-Laforge** asked for funding allocated to organizations serving the English-speaking community to be increased to be equivalent to the community's share of Quebec's population, currently close to 15 per cent. The Community Vitality Roundtable on Funding spent the last year looking more closely at the funding needs of community organizations in particular sectors of activity and will share some of its findings on March 10.

The forum will take place at Le Nouvel Hôtel with some parts of the event accessible in hybrid mode for those not able to attend in person. If you would like to attend, or would like more information, please contact me at [riley.dalys-fine@qcgnc.ca](mailto:riley.dalys-fine@qcgnc.ca).

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## ACCESS TO JUSTICE PROJECT SHINES LIGHT ON QUEBEC COURTS

By **Mitra Thompson**

**Project manager, Access to Justice in English**

Navigating the judicial system is rarely a straightforward process. When language is a barrier to access, the situation becomes even more stressful. To better understand where these barriers exist and how they may evolve, QCGN's Access to Justice project is looking into the barriers that exist to accessing Quebec's civil courts and administrative tribunals in English.

Over the past few weeks, the project team has been busy reaching out to many community and legal stakeholders, including **Robert Leckey**, Dean of McGill's School of Law. Information gathered from these interviews. The project has once again retained the law firm **Novalex** to provide an opinion on the issue, and has been working with **Léger** on a population survey on English-speaking Quebecers' experience with and understanding of the Quebec legal system.

The project team has now completed its research on two critical areas: access to senior care services in English, and access in English to Quebec government services offered online. A set of recommendations on each issue has been prepared and will be shared with government stakeholders and the English-speaking community in the coming weeks.

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# COMMUNITY INNOVATION FUND PROJECTS TRANSFORM THE LIVES OF VULNERABLE ENGLISH-SPEAKING QUEBECERS

By Johanne Larouche

Community Innovation Fund Project Manager



Programs funded under the second round of the Community Innovation Fund, dubbed CIF 2.0, are truly transforming the lives of many English-speaking Quebecers.

Financed by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program – Children and Families Component, and managed by the QCGN, this second round of CIF funding has injected \$1 million into 10 innovative projects for youth and seniors from communities that are often overlooked. These grants made it possible for community organizations to help reduce poverty and isolation; to promote inclusion; and to improve the socioeconomic reality of our community's most vulnerable members.

"This infusion of support not only helped feed more vulnerable citizens, prepare vulnerable young people coming out of care to reintegrate back into society, but it also helped marginalized communities to have access to services that deal with their specific needs," said **Sylvia Martin-Laforge**.

The 10 organizations that received support include: The NDG Food Depot; Weredale Summer Camp Project; Côte-des-Neiges Black Community Association; Gay and Grey Montreal; Suspicious Fish – Literacy Project; CASA; Project 10; Press Start; DESTA Black Youth Network; and the Montreal Jewish Museum.

Here are just a few examples of what our groups have been up to.

## Suspicious Fish

The Suspicious Fish Literacy Program has been working with participants to develop their storytelling and literacy skills through a variety of programs and engagements. This past year, four on-site on two online programs reached some 120 participants. With the support of other organizations, a network of volunteers, and the board of directors, they held a community launch in June to showcase the work of participants, including three anthologies and a documentary film.

In June, Suspicious Fish learned it was accredited and set to receive core funding from the Ministry of Education through a *Programme d'action communautaire sur le terrain de l'éducation* (PACTE) grant – a three-year term which is also renewable. They also launched a summer program through a grant with *Réseau réussite Montréal* (RRM) which allowed them to host a pop-up summer program in Verdun twice a week throughout July and August. This helped the organization to reach a broader base of their community and gave them the resources to train and support more facilitators for storytelling and community engagement. In addition to continuing partnerships with Reclaim Literacy, Literacy Quebec, the city of Verdun, and local schools, they partnered with PME Montreal, a support network for offering coaching, training, and financing for entrepreneurs, and McGill University's Education Department.

## **Montreal Jewish Museum**

Thanks to the support of the CIF Project, the Montreal Jewish Museum (MJM) has awarded three additional grants since last April. The MJM has also begun to launch the next cycle of micro-grants, which has enabled it to produce three events, as well as award eight projects with seed funding between November 2022 and March 2023. All projects and events are centred around Quebec's Jewish community, with topics focusing on Jewish culture, identity, and history.

All three events produced since April all have been well received by audiences and partners. Micro-grantees from past reporting periods have also formed an integral part of the MJM community, attending and participating in museum activities and events in various capacities.

## **Project 10**

During this year's summer camp, Project 10, along with eight collaborators, was able to host three workshops for queer, trans Black, Indigenous, and people of colour. This included a naloxone workshop, dancing class, a cooking workshop, and a barber shop activity with a total of 48 participants.

The youth who attended Project 10 summer camp activities provided positive feedback, noting they accessed services they would have never been able to get elsewhere. The barbershop activity was singled out because a need for queer racialized youth to have a safe and secure space where they can receive proper services for their hair.

## **Gay & Grey**

Thanks in large part to CIF funding, Gay and Grey was able to strengthen outreach strategies to incorporate lesbian and transgender communities. One of the most successful components was the development of workshops that dealt with the historical divisions within the LGBTQ communities. The CIF grant allowed the organization to organize a diverse array of community conferences. This resulted in impressive attendance rates, jump starting essential conversations to foster closer community ties.

Gay and Grey also facilitated intergenerational activities in collaboration with Project 10. This additional component to their projects was facilitated Community of Practice sessions organized by the Community Innovation Fund.

Over and above the funding for the specific program, CIF programming assists recipients to become more self-reliant and sustainable through the sharing of best practices and through training and mentorship by leading experts in our Network and community. These include workshops and support in areas like sustainability and fundraising; growing organizations capacity; the recruitment, orientation and management of successful governing boards; attracting and retaining talent in the not-for-profit sector; as well as successful marketing on a shoestring budget.

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## **PARENT SURVEY VALIDATES THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF LEARN ONLINE TUTORIAL PROGRAM**

**Submitted by Carolina Toteda**

**Marketing, Communications and Digital Media Manager, LEARN**



Results of an independent assessment for parents of students in [LEARN's](#) Online Tutoring program revealed that the program has an overall positive effect and increases the child's self-confidence, motivation, academic success, and self-esteem.

The survey, which was undertaken by the Canadian eLearning Network, also demonstrated that parents would continue using the program for their child(ren) in the future. The four key results from the survey demonstrate the following:

- 85 per cent of parents reported their child was more confident;
- 85 per cent reported that their child was motivated to learn after the tutoring program;
- 80 per cent saw direct improvements in grades or test scores;
- More than 97 per cent of parents responding to the survey indicated they would recommend the LEARN program to other parents.

Here are a couple of comments from the parent survey:

"Our daughter started last year in high school failing her math tests and ended the year with the 'Most Improved in Math' award, thanks to her tutor. :)"

"It was only three months since my children came to Canada, [and we] had a hard time because my children couldn't communicate at school, but I am proud to see my children's speaking skills improve gradually by going to school, taking classes, and receiving tutoring at LEARN."

Since its inception, demand has grown year after year, with over 35,000 tutorial sessions delivered last year. Demand for close to 50,000 sessions is expected this year, according to forecasts.

"Although the service has demonstrated popularity and a strong demand for the community, LEARN is still waiting on confirmation from the Ministry of Education that sufficient funding will be provided to meet this year's demand," said Dr. **Michael Canuel**, CEO of LEARN.

"This independent survey showed conclusively and quantitatively that certified teachers' one-on-one, 30-minute tutorials have a significant impact on numerous crucial criteria connected to academic success and student retention," Dr. Canuel said. "If sufficient funding is not provided for this year's anticipated tutorial sessions, it will directly impact the overall learning experience and success of children across Quebec."

Click [here](#) to download the full survey report. You can also view this [six-minute video](#) which describes the research and the survey results.

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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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