

For immediate release

## QCGN Calls on Premier Legault to Support English-speaking Community

**Montreal – February 15, 2019** – Meeting with Premier François Legault on Friday for the first time since his election in October, the Quebec Community Groups Network called upon the Coalition Avenir Québec government to work in a collaborative environment to ensure a more vital and sustainable future for English-speaking Quebecers.

In a cordial face-to-face meeting, QCGN representatives told Premier Legault, who is the Minister Responsible for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers, that our community is concerned about the zealous application of the Charter of the French Language, including a demand to remove English signage in hospitals. Members of our diverse community are also deeply troubled over the proposed ban on religious symbols.

The QCGN reaffirmed that the English-speaking community of Quebec is an integral part of Quebec’s past, present and future, and a fundamental element of Quebec’s culture, history and heritage. “As full citizens of Quebec, English-speaking Quebecers must have an equal opportunity to fully participate in, and contribute to the social, cultural, economic, and political life of Quebec,” said QCGN President Geoffrey Chambers.

“We told the Premier that our community needs access to government programs and services in English and that our community and language must be treated with dignity and respect,” said Chambers. That, he asserted, means the English-speaking community is entitled to manage and control the health and social service and educational institutions it has built and supported for many generations.

A major sticking point during the meeting was the Premier’s insistence that school boards should be eliminated and replaced with service centers. Chambers said the community is open to a discussion about constructive education reforms, but insisted it is vehemently against abolishing democratically elected boards. “We maintain that we have a constitutional right to control and manage our schools.”

QCGN Vice-President Gerald Cutting, who is also President of Townshippers’ Association, pointed out that English schools – especially those in the regions – are a cornerstone of the community that act as a

hub for a wide range of activities that go far beyond the classroom. He said input from the community through school boards is essential to ensure schools maintain their indispensable role as mainstays that breathe life into rural communities.

Tiffany Callender, Executive Director of the Côte-des-Neiges Black Community Association and a member of the QCGN's Priority Setting Steering Committee, told Premier Legault our community also needs greater access to employment and educational opportunities, including more French-language training. Callender also asked the Premier to consider the plight of vulnerable English-speaking Quebecers who are members of minorities within our minority. She said many have a hard time accessing French classes and that vocational training is often unavailable due to low enrolment numbers.

Chronic underrepresentation in the provincial civil service must be finally be addressed to ensure a greater voice for our community in government, said Eric Maldoff, a longtime community activist who now heads QCGN's Health and Social Services Committee.

Maldoff added that the Secretariat for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers was designed as a device to address our community's underrepresentation in the civil service. "It must serve as a conduit to ensure our community representatives have full access to government ministries and agencies as they develop regulations, programs and policies that may have an effect on English-speaking Quebecers."

QCGN looks forward to meeting regularly with Premier Legault and taking him up on his offer to open the door to meetings with other ministers charged with portfolios, such as health, education, and immigration, that impact Quebec's English-speaking community.

The Quebec Community Groups Network ([www.qcgn.ca](http://www.qcgn.ca)) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 59 English-language community organizations across Quebec. Its mission is to identify, explore and address strategic issues affecting the development and vitality of English-speaking Quebec and to encourage dialogue and collaboration.

**For further information:**

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