

For Immediate release

**QCGN Reacts to *An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act***

**MONTREAL, March 1, 2022** – Today, Minister Petitpas Taylor’s 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*, was tabled in the House of Commons. Like its predecessor C-32, an *Act for the Substantive Equality of French and English and the Strengthening of the Official Languages Act*, that died on the order paper before the last election, the new legislation contains some positive measures. However, it must also be acknowledged that in several areas the federal government has abandoned 50 years of commitment to the national vision of linguistic duality and equality in federal law between our official languages from sea to sea to sea.

The QCGN has been an active participant in the national discussion to modernize Canada’s *Official Languages Act*. “We are particularly proud of the consensus that was reached between Canada’s English and French minorities in 2019 on a way forward to modernizing the Act,” said QCGN President Marlene Jennings.

Unfortunately, that consensus was lost when the Government of Canada signalled a new policy on official languages in 2020.

“There is strong language in the Act that recognizes the importance of Canada’s English and French linguistic minority communities, and we fully support the Government of Canada’s obligations to support these communities in a way that recognizes each of their unique needs and challenges,” said former Senator and QCGN Board Member Joan Fraser. “The QCGN will study C-13 in detail over the coming days and weeks. However, it is clear that C-13 contains fundamental flaws, particularly in the light of the Quebec government’s proposed amendments to the *Charter of the French Language*. We will have more to say on this as our analysis develops,” she added.

“We are particularly supportive of the federal government’s role in helping Canadians learn both official languages,” noted QCGN Director General Sylvia Martin-Laforge. “The QCGN recognizes the national importance of protecting and promoting the French language, whose use is declining outside of Quebec. We also support the need for positive and immediate action to address population decline in French linguistic minority communities. We believe that these critical challenges can be addressed without abandoning Canada’s traditional approach to linguistic duality, which keeps both languages on an equal legal footing throughout Canada while giving special financial and material help to Francophone communities outside Quebec,” she concluded.

The QCGN has long advocated that federally-regulated businesses be subject to a federal language regime that imposes language of service and work obligations for our two official languages. We are therefore dismayed that the federal government has chosen to create new language rights with respect to the use

of French in federally-regulated businesses operating in Quebec, where the use of French is not threatened, ignoring 1.1 million English-speaking Quebecers and postponing help until some unspecified date for Francophones outside of Quebec.

Martin-Laforge noted: “We are pleased with the new powers afforded the Commissioner of Official Languages, and the additional clarity the President of the Treasury Board will provide regarding the implementation of Parts IV, V, and VI of the Act. The QCGN remains particularly focused on the implementation of Part VI obligations for many federal institutions in Quebec. We are engaged in a positive consultative process with Treasury Board to ensure the equitable participation of English-speaking Quebecers in the federal civil service in Quebec.”

The QCGN is also very pleased to see that funding for the Court Challenges Program is included in the bill, although this funding remains optional. This is a resource for Canadians exercising and advancing their equality and language rights.

The QCGN remains a leading voice for English-speaking Quebec in the modernization of Canada’s Official Languages Act and looks forward to engaging with C-13 as it makes its way through the legislative process.

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.