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## BILL 96 RETAINS ATTENTION OF QCGN AS ENGLISH-SPEAKING QUEBECERS WORRY ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS AND THE VITALITY OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

By **Marlene Jennings**  
QCGN President



A little more than a year ago, I became President of the Quebec Community Groups Network. And what a year it's been! The last few months have been particularly hectic with our campaign against **Bill 96, An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec** which would have serious negative impacts on our community. Matters came to a head two weeks ago as Premier **François Legault's** inaugural speech pledged to make identity and language central to his remaining time in office as well as his subsequent remarks on his definition of "historic anglos". Clocking in at one hour and 14 minutes, the Premier spoke 58 words in English where he

described Quebec's English-speaking community as "the best served minority in Canada" and noted he is "proud" of that. View the Premier's **inaugural speech** and his promotional **video** – in French. Read our **press release** as well as coverage by **The Montreal Gazette** and this follow up story by **Philip Authier** where he asked Premier Legault to clarify his definition of historic anglos. Also **view** that video of Premier Legault answering Authier's question.

Legault's use of the term "historic English-speaking community" is deeply problematic because it drastically reduces the number of English-speaking people eligible for services in English. Applying that concept for eligibility for education is one thing. Applying this notion for access to health and social services is quite another and simply put, reprehensible. Read our **press release** and this **CTV Montreal** story about Who Counts as an Anglophone. Also read this column by **Thomas Mulcair**.





comments by spearheading an **open letter** originally signed by 96 community leaders and members. Now endorsed by more than 3850 English-speaking Quebecers, the letter sends a clear message to Premier François Legault and his team that English-speaking Quebecers are full and contributing members of Quebec society.

“As proud Quebecers, we reject your government’s impractical and ill-advised decision to label our community as “historic

Anglophones” and your plan to limit government services to citizens who are eligible to attend English schools. We are not some folkloric ‘historic’ group. We are full-fledged Quebecers, who are committed to building an inclusive Quebec where French is the common language,” states the open letter published on the QCGN website. Read the full text of the letter and consult the list of signatories on the QCGN website at this address: <https://qcgn.ca/open-letter-legault/>. I strongly encourage you to sign and share the letter widely within your networks to help send a strong and unequivocal message to this government. You can endorse the letter by sending your full name to the following email address: [fullfledgedquebecers@qcgn.ca](mailto:fullfledgedquebecers@qcgn.ca) The list of signatories will be updated regularly as names continue to pour in. For an update on the campaign please read our **press release** from last Friday.

## Follow-up Resolution on Bill 96

At the end of last week, the QCGN began circulation a **companion resolution** encouraging organizations and institutions – especially those that serve English-speaking Quebecers – to endorse the principles in the open letter. The resolution, already endorsed by more than a dozen groups, determines that “Any attempt by the Government of Quebec to define the English-speaking Quebecers as an ‘historic’ community or limit their right to receive government communications and services in English is profoundly objectionable. Furthermore, rights and services should never be based on eligibility for English instruction.” If you belong to an organization that would like to adopt this resolution, please contact our Director General, **Sylvia Martin-Laforge** at [sylvia.martin-laforge@qcgn.ca](mailto:sylvia.martin-laforge@qcgn.ca).

## QCGN at Bill 96 Hearings



On September 28, I led the QCGN’s delegation that appeared before the Committee on Culture and Education. I was accompanied by our legal counsel **Marion Sandilands**, former Minister **Clifford Lincoln**, and human rights lawyer **Pearl Eliadis**. During a somewhat tense

promote French as Quebec's common language. (Read our [brief](#) and view our [testimony](#) on QCGN's YouTube Channel. You can also consult transcripts and briefs on the Committee on Culture and Education page of the [National Assembly website](#).) You can also consult our [press release](#) and view extensive coverage of our appearance by [The Montreal Gazette](#), [Global Montreal](#), [CTV Montreal](#), the [Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph](#), [Le Journal de Montréal](#), [La Presse](#), and [Radio Canada](#). Also read our [opinion piece](#), this [editorial](#) in The Montreal Gazette, this [column](#) by Peter Black in the Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph, as well as this [editorial](#) by the McGill Daily.

## Concerns About Health and Social Services

One of our concerns that was handily dismissed by Language Minister **Simon Jolin-Barrette** and MNA **Christopher Skeete**, Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier for Relations with English-Speaking Quebecers, is the impact of Bill 96 on the delivery of health and social services to English-speaking Quebecers in their own language. Both categorically deny the proposed legislation will have an impact on our access to these services, but our reading of the Bill says otherwise. QCGN is also concerned about proposed changes to the regulation that sets parameters for the Provincial Committee for the Provision of Health Services and Social Services in the English Language, which reveals the systemic erosion of our rights and attacks on our institutions by the Coalition Avenir Quebec government. For more information about proposed changes to the Provincial Access Committee, read this [column](#) by Allison Hanes in [The Gazette](#) as well as coverage in [The Sherbrooke Record](#) and [The Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph](#). Also listen to this [CJAD interview](#) with my Board of Directors colleague **Eric Maldoff**, chair of the QCGN's health and social services committee.

## QCGN Views Shared by Many

Our opinion about Bill 96 has not changed. The proposed legislation is deeply flawed and must be withdrawn. And we are not alone in thinking the bill is unsound. Read the QCGN's [statement](#) and our recent op-ed in the [Montreal Gazette](#).

The QCGN has repeatedly urged the government to withdraw Bill 96. With the clause-by-clause study of the bill expected to begin shortly, that seems highly unlikely, so we are going to advocate strongly to ensure the most problematic parts of the legislation that have serious negative repercussions on our community are removed or lessened.

To achieve that, QCGN leaders and staff have been reaching out to various organizations that have taken positions similar to those in our brief. Those groups include the **Conseil de patronat** and the **Conseil québécois du commerce de détail**, the **Quebec Bar Association**, the **Association of Suburban Municipalities** and the **Union des municipalités du Québec**, the **Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse** and the **Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes**, and education groups such as the **Quebec English School Board Association (QESBA)**, the **Fédération des cégeps**, and the **Consortium of English-language CEGEPs, Colleges and Universities of Quebec**.

Among the issues on which share common cause with other groups are concerns about red tape and bureaucracy for small and medium sized businesses; access to English schools for temporary workers; the six-month limit to access government services in English for newcomers; quotas for CEGEP admission; access to justice in English; and access to services in English from bilingual municipalities. We are also apprehensive about the limited definition of who is an English-speaking Quebecer; access to health and social services in English; as well access to government services of all types. Finally, we are alarmed about the use of the Notwithstanding clause to override both the provincial and federal Charters of rights; the new powers accorded to the Office Québécois de la langue française (OQLF); and proposed changes to the Constitution of Canada. Full details about Bill 96, including the QCGN's brief can be found on the [QCGN website](#).

## QCGN's Parallel Hearings on Bill 96

96 which were a resounding success with more than three dozen groups and individuals presenting their concerns and recommendations about the legislation. Hundreds of stakeholders tuned in to listen or viewed the hearings on QCGN's [YouTube](#) channel. Consult the full [playlist](#), view the hearings and consult their written submissions on the [Language Rights](#) page of our website. All of the submissions and briefs we received we appended to the QCGN brief to the National Assembly.



Meanwhile I want to sincerely thank our panel of volunteer commissioners including QCGN Board member Hon. **Joan Fraser**, the former Senator and Editor of The Gazette; former MP Hon. **Eleni Bakopanos**, the Chair of Equal Voice and a member of QCGN's renewal committee; **Thomas Ledwell**, a communications and governance strategist who was a Senior Director with the Trudeau Foundation and a former journalist at CBC and The Gazette; and **Marcus Tabachnick**, former President and Executive Director of the Quebec English School Board Association. Read my [opening remarks](#) and [closing remarks](#) by QCGN Vice-President **Kevin Shaar** (pictured above).

Also read coverage in The Gazette [here](#) and [here](#), these columns by [Allison Hanes](#) and [Fariha Naqvi-Mohamed](#), as well as coverage by the [Low Down to Hull and Back](#) and this report by [City News](#). Also listen to my [interview](#) with CJAD's **Elias Makos** and read this [op-ed](#) by **Christopher Neal** and **Julie Barlow** of the Quebec Writers' Federation.

## Language Concerns Widespread

There are concerns about Bill 96 and promised changes to the federal Official Languages Act throughout our Network and English-speaking Quebec. The board of [Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network](#) passed a resolutions stating its [position on Bill 96](#) and the [modernization of the Official Languages Act](#). If your organization has passed similar resolutions, keep the QCGN posted by sending a copy of your resolutions to [info@qcgnc.ca](mailto:info@qcgnc.ca).

## no2notwithstanding Campaign Generates 4500 letters



Meanwhile more and more Quebecers are saying no to the use of the Notwithstanding Clause in Bill 96 to set aside the fundamental rights of Quebecers. Our no2notwithstanding letter-writing campaign is gaining momentum with some 4,500 letters generated to Premier **François Legault**, Language Minister **Simon Jolin-Barrette** as well as MNAs and MPs expressing concerns about the use of the

notwithstanding clause to override the rights and freedoms of Quebecers. We want to thank those of you who have taken the time to share their concerns, but we still have a long way to go. To join this campaign, we invite you to click on [no2notwithstanding.com/](http://no2notwithstanding.com/). We also invite you to share this link widely within your networks and encourage your friend and colleagues to send a letter.

## QCGN's 26th Annual General Meeting

Amid an unprecedented public health emergency and the dawn of new language debates, QCGN's 2020-2021 fiscal year was eventful as was attested at our Annual General Meeting last month. Despite pandemic challenges, we accomplished a great deal and finished the year in good financial

Acclaimed to sit on the Board during the meeting was returning director, Lawyer **Eric Maldoff**, and two new directors: **Katherine Korakakis**, President of the **English Parents' Committee Association** (EPCA); and **Valerie Gordon-Williams**, Program Director of the **Quebec Board Of Black Educators** and Treasurer on the Board of the **Black Community Resource Centre**. Kathy brings to the table a wealth of knowledge from the parents' perspective on English-language public education in Quebec. She is a regular contributor to a multitude of government committees and partners' associations on behalf of EPCA and is a leading voice in driving collaboration between different groups. Valerie has a wide experience designing, developing, managing, and implementing programs and projects for both profit and non-profit organizations including the United Nations Development Program/Global Environment Facility Small Grants Program; OXFAM UK; the U.S. States Peace Corp; Family Day Care Services in Toronto; and the Grace Kennedy Foundation in Jamaica. (Read the **Nominating Committee** report.)

Dr. **Clarence Bayne**, who has completed three two-year mandates was not up for re-election. I personally want to thank him for all of his support and hard work over the past six years. I also want to thank **Olivier Dickson** who stepped down after a first mandate for personal reasons. I wish you both good luck in your future ventures. As noted in my AGM report, I also thank all our Network members and partners for helping the QCGN successfully navigate an unprecedented and enormously challenging year. We count on your continued participation, partnership, and support to capitalize on this momentum as we continue to build together.

## QCGN Renewal Process Forges Ahead

Following our business meeting, **Matt Harrington**, the chair of our Renewal Committee, and our Director General **Sylvia Martin-Laforge** gave a progress report on the QCGN's renewal process. To sum it up, our talk and future work revolves around four key initiatives: 1) **QCGN Renewal**: Achieving a deeper understanding of the role we play, role we should play and how we could better support our network and community through a new membership and governance structure that ensures collective representation and institutional strengthening. 2) **Community Development Plan**: Creating a collective plan to address key community issues and challenges that is designed by and for community stakeholders through a consultation process. 3) **QCGN Strategic Plan**: Developing a plan that, when fully operationalized, will ensure that the organization's mission, vision, values, and priorities represent the needs of the English-speaking communities in Quebec and that the network delivers the services they need. 4) **Surge Campaign**: As a result of our multifaceted stakeholder and media relations program over the past several months, the QCGN strengthened its positioning as the central address of Quebec's English-speaking community and became the community reference for information and counsel.

## COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLES HOLD FIRST MEETINGS NOVEMBER 2

By Riley Dalys-Fine

### QCGN Manager of Community Outreach and Engagement

After nearly two years of extensive consultation with community stakeholders, the community roundtables held their first meetings on November 2. With QCGN guidance and support, members of the roundtables will work together to design a Community Development Plan for English-speaking Quebec.

"The community roundtables respond to the need for a platform for priority-setting that reflects the realities of Quebec's English-speaking community," explains **Sabrina Taran**, QCGN's Director of Strategic Community Initiatives. "The needs of our community evolve over time along with its demographics, and the organizations serving our population must continually revisit its priorities in order to have a clear road map for success."

Thirty-one community representatives took part in the online event which included a plenary session for all participant followed by individual roundtable sessions. These roundtables are tasked with building an action plan centred on one of the following themes: funding, data needs,



presented to the wider community at a forum in spring 2022.

## Community Development Plan: Towards 2027

Slated to be finalized by spring 2022, the Community Development Plan will be the third one undertaken by the English-speaking community. The most recent Community Development Plan ran until 2017 and was developed under the leadership of the Priority Setting Steering Committee, a standing committee of the QCGN mandated to collect and represent the common priorities of the community.

Through the Community Growth Plan, an initiative supported by the department of Canadian Heritage, the QCGN has worked with dozens of organizations to establish community roundtables as a way of including more stakeholders in creating the framework for collective action. Consultations held over the previous two years were instrumental in building consensus between stakeholders around their common needs, said Taran.

“Forming a shared community development plan can be challenging because of the many disparate realities lived by English speakers throughout the province,” Taran added. “By exploring the underlying issues through an ongoing dialogue, we were able to establish that our organizations do in fact share many of the same challenges.”

For example, most organizations serving Quebec’s English-speaking community rely on funding from different levels of government. Work is needed between all stakeholders to ensure that community needs are considered effectively by decision-makers. In addition to providing a space where organizations can address these issues directly, the roundtables provide participants with a chance to network, share knowledge and develop new skills.

Roundtables will meet twice in winter 2022 to further develop the respective action plans they began on November 2. Community organizations providing services to English speakers anywhere in Quebec are invited to join one of the roundtables for the chance to work with their peers to bring about positive change in their community. All roundtables are held via Zoom. If you have any questions or wish to participate, please feel free to contact me at [Riley.Dalys-Fine@qcgnc.ca](mailto:Riley.Dalys-Fine@qcgnc.ca).

## ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN ENGLISH IN QUEBEC PROJECT MAKING STRIDES ON JUSTICE, RIGHTS

**By Matt Harrington,  
AJEQ Steering Committee Chair**

At a time when language rights in Quebec face their biggest threat in a generation, the QCGN’s Access to Justice in English project is working to shed light on access to justice and public services in English. A main objective is to help English-speaking Quebecers exercise their right to receive services in their own language.

The project aims to raise awareness about access to justice in English in Quebec; engage the justice system to improve access to justice in English in targeted areas; mobilize community resources across the province to improve access to justice in English in Quebec; and refer English-speaking individuals and groups to appropriate resources. It also aims to enhance the QCGN’s analytics and reporting capacity about the state of access to justice in English in Quebec and the progress being made to improve it.

This initiative began with Community Forum in April 2018 which gathered practitioners, professionals, advocates, and community leaders from across the province working for the rights of the English-speaking communities in Quebec. The “No Justice Without Access: Working Together to Ensure Access to Justice in English” forum determined that administrative justice, youth and family matters, and seniors’ rights would be the main areas of focus. Since then, with funding from the Department of Justice Canada and guidance from a dedicated Steering Committee, the project has made important strides toward this goal. The past few months have seen a flurry of activity as the project gears up to take action.

legal consultant and former Quebec MNA. **Mitra Thompson**, who manages the project's day-to-day operations, hails from the opinion polling industry and specializes in quantitative research. The project's two Legal and Social Policy Researchers are **Souhila Baba**, who has clerked at the Superior Court of Quebec and worked at the Quebec court of Appeal, and **Anthony Portulese**, who has worked at the McGill Legal Clinic and as Citations Editor of the McGill Law Journal.

### Strategic intervention underway

A thorough investigation of English access to federal correctional services in Quebec over the last year revealed that delays in accessing programs and services in English can lead to delays in inmates' conditional release. Seeking to change this, the team recently presented its Strategic Intervention Plan to the Steering Committee and the QCGN Board. Following Board approval, we are reaching out to community stakeholders to share information and work collaboratively to influence change in this area.

**Choosing next issue:** By the end of 2021, the project will have chosen its next candidate issue for further research and intervention. To help guide this important decision, a survey of English-speaking Quebecers has been carried out, allowing the community to share their experiences about accessing a broad range of services in English, whether at the municipal, provincial, or federal level.

**Website Launch:** A key goal of the project is to develop a website that not only informs Quebec's English-speaking community of their rights to service in English in the province, but also invites them to provide feedback on the challenges they face, creating a two-way flow of information. Stay tuned for more details about the website launch in Spring 2022.

One of the project's driving ideas is that it works with partners in the community to leverage resources that already exist. We recognize the work that community organizations have done on improving access to services in English, and the knowledge they have developed.

Over the coming months, the team hopes to actively partner with organizations in a number of ways – be it by welcoming new members to our Steering Committee or collaborating on strategic interventions. Learning from their experience will strengthen our ability to provide useful, accurate information to Quebecers about their rights to public services in English – and to advocate for change to ensure these rights are respected.

## Introducing the Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT)

### Submitted by Chad Walcott Director of Communications & Engagement, Provincial Employment Roundtable

Founded in September 2020, the **Provincial Employment Roundtable** (PERT) is a non-profit multi-stakeholder initiative focused on addressing the employment and employability challenges facing Quebec's English-speaking communities.

Over the summer, PERT held an inaugural tour of Quebec's 17 administrative regions to research and publish a report on the state of employment and employability for Quebec's English-speaking populations.

"The regional tour was a great opportunity to meet and speak directly with employment service providers across the province and learn about the issues English speakers face that are unique to each region and universally experienced throughout Quebec," said Nicholas Salter, Executive Director of PERT.

PERT's plan to publish a Provincial Employment Report within the next few weeks. In the meantime, the organization has pivoted to reinforcing its consultative capacities.

As part of its mission, the Provincial Employment Roundtable has a mandate to create three **Sectoral Tables** to bring together employers, employment service providers and community

employability of English speakers across Quebec.

Members of the sectoral tables will collaborate to identify and address the gaps in the delivery of employment services, skills training programs and educational pathways, and use their findings to develop holistic policy solutions that aim to facilitate the integration of English-speaking Quebecers into the labour market.

To that end, PERT recently announced the formal creation of the Employment Service Sectoral table which will have a mandate to develop strategies to improve the delivery and effectiveness of English-language employment services.

The organization is now looking to proceed with the development of its remaining two sectoral tables. These tables will examine the question of employment and employability from the perspective of employers and the education sector, respectively.

PERT is looking for individuals who are interested in examining and developing solutions to the question of employment for English-speaking Quebecers. Anyone interested in tackling these issues can apply to be a member of the sectoral tables. **Apply Today.**

*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 and/or Twitter.*

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