

## **QCGN HOSTS VIRTUAL TOWN HALL WITH DOMINIQUE ANGLADE**

**August 24, 2022** – The Quebec Community Groups Network last night hosted a virtual town hall with Quebec Liberal Party Leader Dominique Anglade. This online forum provided Quebecers an opportunity to ask questions and convey their concerns to her ahead of the Oct. 3 provincial election.

Anglade opened the discussion by focusing on her party's values. This election, she said, Quebecers face a sharp choice. She stated that while her party stands for inclusion and unity, the past four years under François Legault's Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) have created acute divisions between Quebecers: Francophones vs. non-Francophones; immigrants vs. non-immigrants; and urban vs. rural.

### **Rights and Access to Justice**

Anglade was asked why her party did not come out in opposition of Bill 96 (Quebec's recently enacted language law) in the earlier stages of the legislation's drafting and review. She responded that her party voted against all of the CAQ's major and controversial laws – Bills 21, 40, and 96. She repeated that Bill 96 goes against many values she holds dear as the daughter of immigrants to Quebec, including democratic values and respect for the rights of minorities.

She was asked whether her party would repeal Bill 96 in its entirety if elected. She responded by declaring she supports certain elements of the new law, such as free government-funded French courses for any Quebecer wishing to improve their French-language skills. She did, however, commit to repealing many portions of Bill 96 that she and her party oppose. These include the six-month cap for newcomers to receive government services in a language other than French; the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause; and the new search-and-seizure powers granted to the Office québécois de la langue française.

### **Education**

When asked about her party's stance on Bill 40 (which abolishes school boards in Quebec and replaces them with school service centres), Anglade reiterated her party's opposition to this legislation. She expressed her support for the right of Quebec's English-speaking community to manage and control its schools and oversee the cultural and language education of its children, including the right to preserve English-language school boards.

Anglade was then asked if the "three CEGEP courses taught in French" amendment during the clause-by-clause study of Bill 96 was introduced by the Liberals to appease the CAQ. She

responded that her party had not adequately consulted members of Quebec's English-speaking community and educational experts prior to proposing that amendment. Once the party realized this oversight, she added, the Liberals worked to modify the amendment. She also said her party would be committed to restoring the Dawson College expansion project cancelled by the CAQ, and ensuring that all CEGEP students in Quebec, whether French- or English-speaking, receive the same resources.

Anglade also committed to repealing the portion of Bill 96 which places an enrolment cap on English-language CEGEPs. She said her party would consult various groups and members of the English-speaking community to ensure that students allowed to study in English-language CEGEPs under Bill 101 will have sufficient openings available to them. This initiative, she said, is something Legault has thus far refused to implement.

### **Health and Social Services**

After calling the CAQ's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic "a disaster," Anglade stated that Legault's party has dismissed the severity of Quebec's labour shortage, including in the health sector. The number of Quebecers without a family doctor has quadrupled since the CAQ was elected in 2018, she added.

To counter this, Anglade said, her party would work to guarantee access to a family doctor for every Quebecer. She said her party would achieve this goal via three measures. First: increase the number of doctors and nurses by providing more training and higher pay. Second: recognize the equivalence of medical and nursing credentials obtained outside Canada. Third: lighten doctors' hospital duties to allow them more opportunities to tend to patients in clinics. She said these steps are important to fill the many empty positions in Quebec's healthcare institutions.

### **Vitality of the English-speaking Community**

When asked whether the Quebec Liberal Party would provide more funding for and support to Quebec's English-speaking communities and their organizations, Anglade committed to doing so. The CAQ, she said, "doesn't care" and "doesn't have the political will" to assist English-speaking Quebecers or their communities.

Anglade was then presented with a statistic. According to the most recent census data, while English speakers comprise 14 per cent of Quebec's population, they constitute only one per cent of the provincial public-service workforce. She was asked whether she believes this disproportionate representation is, in part, due to systemic discrimination against English-speaking Quebecers in the public sector. Anglade replied that systemic racism is a serious problem in Quebec's public institutions that must be addressed and resolved. This, she added, is something Legault and the CAQ have so far refused to do. However, she did not commit to ensuring fair representation of English-speaking Quebecers in the public service.

In her concluding remarks, Anglade expressed solidarity with Quebec's English-speaking community. She said that while Legault has stated he only represents those who voted for him, she wishes to represent all Quebecers and bring them together. She emphasized this guiding principle as part of the core values of the Quebec Liberal Party: inclusion, unity, and appreciation of diversity.