

Legault Government Must Backtrack on Dawson Decision: QCGN

MONTREAL, January 31, 2022 - The Quebec Community Groups Network is utterly dismayed with the Quebec government's decision to cancel funding for construction a new pavilion at Dawson College.

The long-planned and long-delayed proposal to build a new facility to house Dawson College's seven health-care training programs on the college's campus was quashed on Friday when administrators received an unexpected call from Danielle McCann, minister of Higher Education. She urged Dawson to explore other options, including leasing. McCann also remarked that the government aims to "prioritize the needs of Francophone students."

"Dawson's space shortage has long been documented and recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education," says QCGN President Marlene Jennings. According to college officials, the Ministry recognized that Dawson suffers from a space deficit of more than 11,000 square metres – the equivalent of more than 10 typical office floors. This determination was made by Education Ministry officials in 2014, based on the norms applied to all CEGEPs.

"The new facility is critical in order to significantly improve the learning environment for students," she says. The project was approved by the past Liberal government before it was repeatedly attacked in the media by French-language commentators and activists who opposed such as large investment in an English-language institution.

"Dawson, like other English CEGEPs, has an enviable record of welcoming Quebecers of all backgrounds including a large number of students who completed their secondary-school education in French," Jennings adds. "These young people attend English CEGEPs to be more comfortable in English and to be better prepared for the job market."

Graduates of Dawson's health-care training programs work across Quebec's health-care network – not only in the English sector. They represent an important part of the answer to the province's longstanding shortage of qualified workers, an issue which has been particularly evident during the pandemic.

"Cancelling this project represents yet another example of the Legault government's persistent and relentless attack on the vitality of Quebec's English-speaking community," Jennings concludes. The QCGN calls on the government to restore funding for this project and for Quebecers of all backgrounds to come to the defence of our network of English-language CEGEPs.

The Quebec Community Groups Network (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.

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