

**For immediate release**

## **QCGN Welcomes Senate Report that Calls for Equality of French and English Language Rights**

**Montreal, November 17, 2022** – The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) is pleased that members of the Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages have heard the concerns raised by English-speaking Quebec about the government of Canada’s Bill C-13. This important bill is designed to update the Official Languages Act.

In its report released this afternoon, the committee states: “the Official Languages Act must recognize that the security and vitality of the French language requires special attention; take measures to promote the substantive equality of use and status of English and French; continue to protect the rights of English and French linguistic minority communities across Canada; and support the development and enhance the vitality of official language minority communities.”

Eva Ludvig, president of the QCGN, noted that many witnesses shared the QCGN’s deep concerns about the inclusion of Quebec’s *Charter of the French Language* (Bill 101) within the *Official Languages Act*. She said this plan is wrong-headed for two reasons.

“First, the purposes of the two Acts are at odds, and combining them in the Official Languages Act would adversely affect the judicial interpretation of language rights for English-speaking Quebecers,” she said.

“Second, the *Charter of the French Language*, as amended by Bill 96, is now shielded by the notwithstanding clause. Including mention of the *Charter of the French Language* within the Official Languages Act and incorporating it by reference into the *Use of French in Federally Regulated Businesses Act* explicitly support the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause by the government of Quebec.

“Either the government of Canada stands behind the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Canadians or it does not,” said former Senator Joan Fraser, a member of QCGN’s Board of Directors.

“This is why the QCGN insists that all references to the *Charter of the French Language* be removed from C-13,” Ludvig added.

“With respect to the proposed *Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act*, the QCGN renews its objection to the government of Canada creating new language rights for French only for employees and customers of these businesses, for example banks, airlines, and telecommunication companies.

“Canada has two official languages – French and English – and Parliament has a constitutional duty to ensure equal rights between the two,” Ludvig insisted.

The Senate Committee's report makes it clear that C-13 is legislation with constitutional implications. This is why the QCGN calls on the Senate to refer the bill to both the Legal and Constitutional Affairs and Official Languages Committees when it is sent to the Upper House following third reading.

"The QCGN remains committed to working with Parliamentarians to safeguard the language rights of both English and French Canadians," added Ludvig. "As an organization and as a community, we are deeply committed to the protection and promotion of French. We are convinced that this is not a zero-sum game."

"The QCGN thanks the Honourable Members of the Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages for their continued diligence and commitment to modernize the Official Languages Act. And it calls on the Upper Chamber to give C-13 thorough consideration," said Ludvig. "This rewrite of the Official Languages Act is historic and must be undertaken with the greatest of care and diligence."

Last week the QCGN published an [open letter](#) calling on the federal government to remove all references to Quebec's Charter of the French Language in Bill C-13. To learn more about our position, read the [QCGN's brief](#) to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages.

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.

**For further information:**

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