



Employment and
Social Development Canada

Emploi et
Développement social Canada

Canada

What We Heard Report

Report on the Dialogue Day between Representatives of the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec and Employment and Social Development Canada

Employment and Social Development Canada

Dialogue held on October 17th, 2024

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Overview

2. What we heard (takeaways)

- a. By-and-For Approach
- b. Socio-Economic Marginalization
- c. Youth and Education
- d. Unemployment, Underemployment and Skills Mismatch
- e. Horizontal Approach to Problem Solving

3. Conclusion

Annex: List of participants from English-Speaking Communities of Quebec and from federal institutions

1. Introduction

Employment and Social Development Canada's (ESDC) Annual Dialogue Day with representatives of English-speaking communities of Quebec (ESCQ) took place on October 17th, 2024, in Montreal. This was the first time since 2019 that ESDC hosted this in-person Dialogue Days with OLMCs.

In the evening, a networking event brought together participants from both official language minority communities (OLMCs) from across Canada and federal partners represented at the dialogues, including the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat; Canadian Heritage; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada; and Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions.

Overview

The day began with a presentation, led by colleagues from Canadian Heritage, with the participation of the previously mentioned federal partners, on the newly formed Interdepartmental Working Group on Workforce and Economic Development in OLMCs, which is co-chaired by ESDC and PCH. The session served to present the objectives and work being done by the working group as well as to engage in discussion with the ESCQ representatives on the priorities of the working group, that are still being determined. ESCQ's participants indicated that they were supportive of the three themes identified for their communities (Employment from a horizontal perspective, Entrepreneurship from a horizontal perspective and integrated supports and community vitality) and would want to be involved and informed of the development of the working group as it unfolds.

Aside from the Interdepartmental session, organizations presented on the challenges of their communities as well as the work being done specifically with regards to employment and employability. Organizations representing various regions of Quebec presented their local reality.

More specifically, the following issues were discussed:

- Employment needs in the English-speaking Communities of Quebec
 - The importance of building a modern and inclusive workforce for English speakers in Quebec;
 - The state of adult literacy within OLMC; and
 - The employment situation of English-speakers in Quebec.
- Early learning and Childcare
 - An assessment of the well-being of English-speaking children in the province of Quebec.
- Rural or Remote Regions Concerns and Youth Employment
 - Initiatives aimed at supporting youth in remote areas, and

- Employment perspectives for young people in region (ex. Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine).

2. What We Heard: Takeaways

The opinions expressed in this discussion do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Canada. They represent the perspectives of the stakeholders involved.

a. By-and-For Approach

The stakeholders have requested that the Government of Canada make a better use of the by-and-for model of service delivery for the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec (ESCQ). Their unique needs are best addressed using such a tailored approach. Given that the figures show that the ESCQ have lower incomes, higher unemployment rates, and a higher proportion in temporary employment than the Francophones majority in Quebec, this should be taken into account by federal institutions through their funding initiatives.

b. Socio-Economic Marginalization

Getting people in jobs helps but does not solve the underlying issues of the ESCQ socio-economic marginalization according to stakeholders from the ESCQ. The widely spread perception that Anglophones are the advantaged group when compared to Francophones in the province of Quebec is wrong. There is a need to make sure that people understand that the reality is actually the opposite. Even though ESCQ organizations are meeting their numbers and objectives, they are still not the priority for governmental funding. They need allies to better serve vulnerable populations.

When analyzing ESCQ labour market challenges, there are deep roots to the economic marginalization of ESCQ that need to be taken into account, and this has been going on for generations. This social exclusion has had a significant impact on the workforce participation of the ESCQ. There is therefore a real need to get underneath the surface, so that government representatives have a profound understanding of the social, political, and economic causes of the hardship the ESCQ are facing today.

c. Youth and Education

The vitality of the family is essential for employment success of the ESCQ. The absence of English daycares and schools in many regions of the province creates a lot of stress for families. Due to this vulnerability acquired in their early learning journey, many ESCQ youth are jumping from high school to the labour market. To reduce this financial precarity, the federal government should invest to ensure that English-speaking kids have access to kindergarten in

English everywhere in Quebec. Given the FPT considerations on the early learning and childcare (ELCC), a proposed solution could be community-based support for families to bridge barriers to access existing child care services provided by the Quebec Government. A rural exodus has also been noticed by the ESCQ. Due to the high unemployment rates in their home regions, English-speaking youth are leaving their area of origin for Montreal. These high-potential youth must be retained to keep Quebec regions alive. A solution would be to ensure that English colleges and universities have satellite campuses in rural and remote regions of Quebec.

d. Unemployment, Underemployment and Skills Mismatch

Having people get a job is fine but if they are underemployed, this is an issue. To overcome this barrier, one solution could be to look at entrepreneurship and other supports to train the workforce for the jobs of the future. These other supports could be French-language training for workers to ensure their level of bilingualism is high enough to be able to work in the language of the majority, and supports for education throughout life, especially with post-secondary and technical training in English. ESCQ stakeholders want to make sure that the discussions not only cover developing the workforce. Indeed, there are existing workers doing jobs that might not be there in the next five years. The ESCQ senior community is actually less prepared than even to leave the workforce.

There is a need to invest in educational resources and partnerships, encourage social enterprise and innovation, and develop targeted employment initiatives. These initiatives should leverage labor market data to identify future needs and align training and job placement to those needs in order to contribute to economic development. All of these initiatives entail enhanced French-language learning programs so that the ESCQ could be fully efficient in their region.

e. Horizontal Approach to Problem Solving

Wraparound supports are essential. Economic vitality is not possible without a healthy community. OLMC stakeholders state that since accessing to federal funding via the province of Quebec is not doable for the ESCQ, the federal government should develop an integrative approach of its own while having the courage to jump in Quebec's agenda. Employment is one if not the key priority that has the potential to bring everyone together.

Coaching and mentorship programs promoting mental health are also very important. As for the regions, ESCQ need more virtual supports to reach to the youth in their regions. This holistic view should continue in order to reduce the incidence of social issues like the housing crisis and intimate partner violence. That being said, the Government of Canada cannot close the socioeconomic gap alone. Collaboration and partnerships are key. These partnerships could be leveraged with further collaboration between different levels of government and the English-speaking communities.

3. Conclusion

The Dialogue Day with the ESCQ highlighted that there is still considerable work to be done and suggests that ongoing conversation is important. It would be beneficial for ESDC and federal institutions to consider maintaining open communication channels, as regular community consultation by the federal government could play a role in addressing the barriers faced by the ESCQ.

A one-size fits all solution may not be beneficial, and the interdepartmental federal approach proposed was welcome by community stakeholders. The ESCQ appreciated being engaged and they want to continue to be part of the development of solutions by the federal government for their communities.

Beyond investments in individual programs and by individual federal departments, communities have expressed the need to establish specific targets to demonstrate to what extent the economic vitality of the ESCQ is improving.

Appendix

List of participants from the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec

Organization	Name of participant and Responsibility
Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN)	Riley Dalys-Fine - Director of Community Engagement and Strategic Alliances
Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN)	Sylvia Martin-Laforge - Director General
Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN)	Davide Ventrone - Program and Policy Researcher
Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC)	John Buck - President and Chief Executive
Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC)	Grant Myers – Provincial Development Officer
Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC)	Anna Vanha – Vice-President of Operations
Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC)	Michel Thérourx - Senior Advisor to the President and CEO
Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC)	Leslie (Laszlo) Acs - Chair of the Board of Directors
Youth Employment Services Montreal	Marina Boulos-Winton – Acting Executive Director
Youth Employment Services Montreal	Mario Clarke - Programs Director
Seniors Action Quebec (SAQ)	Fred Jansen - President
Seniors Action Quebec (SAQ)	Katia Toimill-Bramhall – Executive Director
Literacy Quebec (LQ), Community-Empowered Literacy Initiative (CELI)	Wendy Seys - President
Regional Association of West Quebecers	Chad Bean, Vice-President
Coasters Association	James Buckle – Director of Finance and Operations
Regional Development Network	Cathy Brown - Executive Director
Vision Gaspé-Percé Now (VGPN)	Connie Jacques – Board of Directors
Voice Of English-Speaking Québec (VEQ)	Brigitte Wellens – Executive Director
Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN)	Jennifer Johnson – Executive Director

Neighbours Regional Association of Rouyn-Noranda	Sharleen Sullivan - Executive Director
Monteregie East Partnership For The English-speaking Community (MEPEC)	Kareen Massé - Youth and Family Coordinator
Youth 4 Youth (Y4Y)	Adrienne Winrow - Executive Director
Centre for Access to Services in English (CASE)	Audrey Ottier - Executive Director
Black Community Resource Centre	Raeanne Francis - Managing Director
English Language Arts Network	Miranda Castravelli - Executive Director
English Language Arts Network	Nick Maturo - Director of Programming
Concordia / Quebec English-speaking Communities Research Network pour l'éducation post-secondaire au Québec	Patrick Donovan – Research Associate and Advisor
Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT)	Nick Salter – Executive Director
Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT)	Morgan Gagnon – Interim Director of Policy & Research
Megantic English-speaking Community Development Corporation (MCDC)	Brian Gignac – Executive Director
Monteregie West Community Network (MWCN)	Joanne Basilières, Employability and Mental Health Coordinator
North Shore Community Association (NSCA) Baie-Comeau	Jody Lessard – Executive Director
Townshipper's Association	Denis Kotsoros - Executive Director
Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA)	Allen Richards – Executive Director
Assistance and Referral Centre	Karine Parent, Social Development and Employment Coordinator
Assistance and Referral Centre	Christian Lapointe – Executive Director

List of participants from federal institutions

Employment and Social Development Canada	Responsibility
Michel Laviolette	Assistant Deputy Minister, Quebec Region
Firmin Andzama	Director – OL Part VII Centre of Expertise and
Marie Lebel-Racine	Manager – OL Part VII Centre of Expertise
Claire Forget	Senior Policy Analyst – OL Part VII Centre of Expertise
Tania Claes	Senior Policy Analyst – OL Part VII Centre of Expertise
Samantha Rowe	Policy Analyst – OL Part VII Centre of Expertise
Julie L'Allier	Manager - Enabling Fund
Paul London	Manager - Enabling Fund
Stéphanie Vallon	Director - Federal Secretariat on Early Learning and Child Care
Lise Comeau	Manager - Federal Secretariat on Early Learning and Child Care
Mihail Markov	Oversight Manager - Early Learning and Child Care, Service Canada
Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat	
Daniel Cadieux	Manager – Oversight and Compliance - Official Languages Centre of Excellence
Karim Adam	Director, Oversight and Compliance - Official Languages Centre of Excellence
Canadian Heritage	
Josée Grimard-Dubuc	Director General - Quebec Region
Jalila Bendarhou	Executive Director – Official Languages Branch
Patrick Cyr	Manager
Alice Gaudreau	Policy Analyst
Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions	
Jenna Chaussegros de Léry	Junior Policy Analyst
Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada	

Linda Garand	Manager – Portfolio and Intergovernmental Engagement Secretariat
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