

For immediate release

Huge Victory for Minority Language Rights in Quebec's Superior Court

Montreal, August 10, 2020 – The Quebec Community Groups Network applauded a Quebec Superior Court decision to suspend the application of Quebec government reforms to the governance of English school boards while the courts review the constitutionality of *Bill 40: An Act to amend mainly the Education Act with regard to school organization and governance*.

The Quebec English School Board Association (QESBA) and a slew of other applicants are challenging the government's new governance model maintaining that it does not respect Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to manage and control our minority language educational institutions. They petitioned the courts to suspend the application of Bill 40 to English school boards until hearings on the merits of the case which could take many months.

"This is excellent news for Quebec's English-speaking community and for official language minority communities across Canada," commented QCGN President Geoffrey Chambers. "The ruling means that unwelcome changes to the management of our schools are now on hold while the courts review the constitutionality of Bill 40 – a case that will help clarify the rights of official language minority communities across Canada.

"We have been quite clear on our position regarding Bill 40," Chambers said, noting the legislation is strongly opposed by English-speaking parents, teachers and community leaders. "We all believe that the law violates minority language education rights contained in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and we fully support the legal fight against this unconstitutional Act."

In his 39-page ruling released today, Superior Court Justice Sylvain Lussier made it clear that the Government of Quebec's failure to properly consult with English-speaking Quebec on Bill 40 raised serious questions about the constitutionality of the government's reforms.

"It's not just about the substance of our Section 23 rights. The government is constitutionally obligated to consult with our community on the way our schools are managed and controlled," said Chambers. "We look forward to further arguments that will demonstrate this legislation infringes on our right to manage and control our school system."

Chamber said it was simply unrealistic to hold elections for service centres in less than three months – particularly during the current public health emergency.

“We are pleased that school boards will continue to be responsible for managing our school system and we urge the Quebec government to do as previous governments have done and extend the mandates of existing commissioner,” said Chambers. “This is the best scenario, particularly during the pandemic when the focus of our administrators is on preparing for the new school year.”

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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