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Network News

The news that matters to
English-speaking Quebecers



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

SENATE MUST EXAMINE CONSTITUTIONAL EFFECTS OF BILL C-13

By Eva Ludvig, QCGN President



On Monday, the House of Commons adopted Bill C-13, the federal government's overhaul of the Official Languages Act. The bill now moves on to the Senate, where we hope the Upper Chamber will closely scrutinize the inclusion of Quebec's Charter of the French Language within the Act.

The bill, which is contentious for English-speaking Quebec, sailed through the House. A handful of Liberal MPs, representing mainly Montreal-area ridings with significant numbers of English constituents, objected to portions of the bill. They argued that amendments proposed by Conservative and Bloc MPs during study of the bill by the Standing Committee on Official Languages would harm the language rights of English-speaking Quebecers. In the end, there was a single holdout: Mount Royal MP **Anthony Housefather**. Anthony also voted No last week when the bill passed the report stage. At that time, new amendments troubling for the English-speaking community of Quebec were adopted. On behalf of the Quebec Community Groups Network

and the community, I sincerely thank Anthony for putting principles before politics and standing up for our community. It should be noted that Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine MP **Sherry Romanado** abstained on both votes.

As it moved through the House, C-13 was significantly amended. From the perspective of English-speaking Quebec, it has been made decidedly worse than the already problematic bill proposed in March 2022. Our primary concern at this point is the incorporation of Quebec's Charter of the French Language (Bill 101) in three places in the bill, most notably in the purpose clause. The QCGN suggests there is an urgent need for the Senate's Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee to examine the constitutional ramifications of C-13 because of these incorporations and the fact that the Quebec Charter of the French Language, as amended by Quebec's Bill 96 last year, now includes the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause. This enables the Quebec government to override constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedoms without fear of court challenges.

Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** has spoken out against the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause. If Bill C-13 is to live up to that principle, the references to Quebec's language charter should be removed

before the bill is given Royal Assent. These references do nothing to promote the rights and freedoms of French-speaking Canadians. Further, they provide a legal precedent for other provincial and territorial governments to treat their linguistic minorities in a similar fashion.

Federal Action Plan

On April 26, I was on hand with a small delegation of English-speaking Quebecers for the launch of the Government of Canada's [**Action Plan for Official Languages 2023–2028: Protection – Promotion – Collaboration**](#). This ambitious, five-year Action Plan provides \$1.4 billion in new spending on programs and initiatives that aim to bolster the vitality of Canada's two Official Language Minority Communities and to address the unique challenges faced by Francophone communities outside Quebec and Anglophone communities in Quebec.

The QCGN and community stakeholders have worked hard over the years to ensure the needs of more than 1 million English-speaking Quebecers are equitably addressed by the 2023-28 Action Plan. We are pleased that the special needs of English-speaking Quebec have been recognized and we are relieved that serious efforts have gone into recognizing the challenges specific to our community. Major new investments are available for our education, access-to-justice, and health and social services sectors. We are particularly pleased that the government heard us on the necessity for more help in addressing unemployment within English-speaking Quebec, and also on the need for programs to assist the critical work done by our arts, culture, and heritage organizations.

The QCGN welcomes the new Action Plan and we were heartened that Prime Minister Trudeau made special mention of the federal government's continuing leadership role in protecting Quebec's English-speaking communities. However, we remain apprehensive given that the areas of greatest concern to English-speaking Quebecers – health and social services, education, and access to justice in English – all lie within Quebec jurisdiction. While the Government of Canada is offering significant investments in educational and community infrastructure, much of this money flows through the province. Thus, Quebec will have to agree how the funding is used to support our English-speaking community. We will need the support of the provincial government to ensure these monies hit their targets.

Quebec has made progress over the last several years in taking the needs of its English minority seriously. This must be balanced against the genuine concerns we have over the enjoyment of our fundamental rights and freedoms in the face of legislation like Bills 21 and 96. It is clear, however, that significant opportunities exist to work with the federal and provincial governments to address priority areas. The Action Plan presents a promising mechanism to bring federal dollars into the province for the benefit of all Quebecers.

The positive news in the Action Plan is also tempered by our community's continued concern around Bill C-13 and its potential effect on the interpretation of language rights for English-speaking Quebec.

The QCGN is prepared to work with the community and all levels of government to make the most of the opportunities presented in this new Action Plan. As the Government of Canada's interlocutor with the English-speaking community, the QCGN will play a critical role in working with our partners in the community sector as well as in government to ensure that these opportunities are fully accessible to the many members of our Community of Communities. Over the coming months, the QCGN will continue to work with the Community Vitality Roundtables to mobilize our member and partner organizations to take part in consultations and information-sharing events.

Backlash in Quebec

While the QCGN was encouraged by the measures proposed in the Action Plan, we were disheartened by Minister of the French Language **Jean-François Roberge's** reaction and his plan to demand that the money allocated to Quebec's Anglophone and Allophone communities be used for francization. Roberge observed to the National Assembly press corps that while Prime Minister Trudeau says it's French that is in danger in Canada, a lot of money is destined for Anglophone communities in Quebec. Minister Roberge also commented that it would "unacceptable" if minority groups in Quebec were to use that money to pay for court challenges against Quebec's language laws.

We are deeply disappointed that Minister Roberge and other political leaders are opposed to our federal government supporting the vitality of this province's English-speaking community. As noted by MP Housefather on Twitter: "It is not up to any provincial government to tell minority language communities what monies devoted to them under a Federal Action Plan are used for."

Many provisions of Bill 96 take effect June 1

As we approach the first-year anniversary of [**Bill 96 An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec**](#), passed in the National Assembly of Quebec June 1, 2022, certain of its

provisions will come into force June 1, 2023. Effective that day:

- The Government of Quebec must communicate with the public, orally and in writing, exclusively in French, except for individuals entitled to English-language instruction, now classified as "historic Anglophones".
- Any contract with the Government of Quebec must be drawn up exclusively in French.
- Newcomers to Quebec will be able to receive government services in a language other than French for only six months following their arrival.
- Employee group insurance and annuity contracts drafted in English only must be translated into French unless they expire within the next year.
- CEGEPs and universities must complete a first review of their language policies this June, to be repeated every 10 years.

In early May, Minister Roberge told [The Montreal Gazette](#) that proof of eligibility will not be required from those seeking services in English effective June 1. Just saying you are an Anglophone with existing language rights will get you government services in English, he said.

The minister appears to realize the law is problematic and impracticable to apply. However, this good-faith approach places the onus on citizens and government employees. This could lead to confusion and potential conflict. Minister Roberge emphasizes that the new law must be applied and that the state and government organizations must be exemplary. That is a bit of a mixed message! The QCGN maintains that effective communication and training will prove necessary to ensure this policy of good faith and flexibility trickles down to government employees and that front-line service providers don't unduly restrict access to English-language services. Pushing solutions down to the level of citizens and government employees risks creating unnecessary stress and confusion. In reality, it is the law that must be amended.

On a positive note, Minister Roberge is showing signs of openness to issues raised by many Quebecers. The use of identity cards would have stigmatized English-speaking Quebecers and immigrants and would not have been conducive to social cohesion.

The practical implications of the latest Bill 96 provisions cannot yet be fully evaluated. However, the QCGN continues to closely monitor the situation to best inform the English-speaking community of any developments, whether these be impacts of these new regulations, or any legal challenges and/or litigation.

QCGN concerned about Quebec bills on education and health

The QCGN is concerned about new provincial bills that would significantly alter the way that the education and health care networks operate. The bills would centralize more powers in Quebec City and further restrict our community's ability to influence the future of our school boards and health care institutions as well as the delivery of educational and health care services.

On May 2, the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government tabled its latest school governance reform: [Bill 23, The Education Act and Enacting the National Institute of Excellence in Education Act](#). This proposed legislation would have clear implications on the constitutional rights of our community to control and manage our primary and secondary schools. It would empower the government to appoint the directors general of school boards and authorize the Minister of Education to reverse decisions of school boards that are deemed "not consistent with targets, objectives, policy directions and directives the Minister has established."

"Certain provisions of Bill 23 are manifestly unconstitutional," according to the [Quebec English School Boards Association](#) (QESBA), which has said it will challenge the legislation if it remains unchanged. "We will spend the next weeks trying to convince MNAs to modify Bill 23 in order to fully respect our constitutional rights. However, if the bill remains in its present form the QESBA will have no other option than to quickly initiate a legal challenge of the legislation," declared QESBA President **Dan Lamoureux**.

On March 29, Health Minister **Christian Dubé** introduced [Bill 15, An Act to make the health and social services system more effective](#). This calls for a major overhaul of Quebec's beleaguered health and social services network. This massive piece of legislation, almost 300 pages long, includes more than 1,000 articles. It would create a new provincial agency, Santé Québec that would oversee all activities related to the public health-care system. This government agency would also become the sole employer of the province's health-care employees and would replace regional health agencies — known by their French acronyms CISSS and CIUSSS. The bill would turn those regional health agencies into councils that answer Santé Québec.

According to Minister Dubé, a more organized structure at the top will lead to reduced wait times in emergency rooms, put a dent in the backlog for surgeries, and improve the overall patient experience. But health care professionals and community advocates are concerned about further centralization of powers in Quebec City. The QCGN and other representatives of Quebec's English-speaking community are

alarmed about the proposed legislation's impact on the delivery of health and social services in English, as well as the fate of access programs and advisory committees which would be significantly overhauled. English-speaking Quebecers are worried about our place in the institutions that we built and supported over many generations.

The QCGN will be taking deep dives into both these two pieces of legislation to fully understand their implications for English-speaking Quebecers. We have written to Education Minister Bernard Drainville seeking to be included in the government's consultation on Bill 23 to present the point of view of our members and the English-speaking community.

QCGN reconnects with Francophones in Ontario

The QCGN recently reconnected with our sister organization representing Francophones in neighbouring Ontario. QCGN Director General **Sylvia Martin-Laforge** and I participated in a Zoom call with the **Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario** (AFO) President **Fabien Hébert**, Director General **Peter Hominuk**, and Policy and Government Relations Director **Bryan Michaud**. We spoke of renewed cooperation between our two organizations on a series of issues, including: Action Plan investments;



intergovernmental opportunities; and policy preoccupations in certain sectors including health care and access to minority language services from our respective provincial governments. We look forward to working with them and other francophone minority community groups in the coming months.

BENEFIT COCKTAIL FOR ENGLISH-SPEAKING QUEBEC



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In cooperation with

QCGN | Quebec
Community
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Network
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BENEFIT COCKTAIL
& launch of
**QCGN COMMUNITY
LEADERSHIP AWARDS**

Friday June 9 - 5 à 7
Le Nouvel Hotel
1740 Boulevard René-Lévesque West
Tickets \$60

Proceeds will fund initiatives that support minority language and human rights in Quebec.

Inclusion Diversity Civic Engagement Respect

The 28th Annual Meeting and Convention of QCGN Members begins **Friday, June 9**, with a benefit cocktail organized by the QCGN in cooperation with the **Fondation Notre Home Foundation**. During the 5 à 7, we will launch the call for nominations for the **2023 QCGN Community Leadership Awards**. We are pleased to relaunch our awards after a three-year hiatus caused by the pandemic. The cocktail will be preceded by the presentation of poll results which will provide insights into the vitality of our community and our institutions by **Jack Jedwab**, President of the Association for Canadian Studies. Tickets are \$60 and all

proceeds will go to fund initiatives that support human and minority language rights in Quebec. Click [here](#) to purchase tickets. Full details about the 24th Annual Meeting and Convention of the QGN on our convention webpage [here](#).

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ONLINE STREAMING ACT (BILL C-11)

With the adoption of the Online Streaming Act (Bill C-11), the [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission](#) (CRTC) is launching a process to modernize the broadcasting system and to ensure that online streaming services make meaningful contributions to Canadian and Indigenous content.

The CRTC is proposing a new contribution framework for traditional broadcasters and online streaming services that acknowledges the possibility of flexible contribution requirements for different business models. The Commission is also consulting on whether initial contributions should be made by online streaming services.

The CRTC beginning with a series of consultations focusing on what contributions online services will need to make to support the Canadian broadcasting system. (Full details [here](#).)

Interested parties can follow the [consultation](#) and participate by filling out the [online form](#); writing to the Secretary General, CRTC, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N2; or sending a fax to 819-994-0218. You have until **June 27** to participate. All comments received will form part of the public record and will inform the CRTC's decision.

ELENI BAKOPANOS RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD FROM MCGILL

Each year the McGill Alumni Association (MAA) recognizes alumni, friends, students, faculty, and staff who stand out for their impressive contributions and achievements in service to McGill, the MAA and in their respective communities. Among this year's recipients was QCGN Board member **Eleni Bakopanos**.

Eleni is an accomplished McGill graduate who has shown outstanding dedication both to her alma mater, as a longtime member of the McGill Women's Alumnae Association (MWAA), and to her community, as a Liberal Member of Parliament between 1993 and 2006. She is a past senior director of Government Relations at McGill.

During her more than 40-year involvement with the McGill Women's Alumnae Association, Eleni helped the association promote the leadership potential of McGill's female graduates. She organized and chaired countless events where accomplished female leaders have shared their experience with McGill alumnae and offered her wisdom and encouragement to fellow alumnae through the MWAA's McGill Women's Mentorship Program.

Last but certainly not least, Eleni was a generous donor to and fundraiser for the MWAA's 130th Anniversary Scholarship, which came to its successful fruition in 2022.

A passionate advocate for women's equality, empowerment and social justice, Eleni has volunteered with various Quebec women's organizations, including the Montreal Council of Women, Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie and the Business and Professional Women's Club. She currently serves on the boards of directors for Equal Voice (Past Chair) and the Quebec Community Groups Network, and as VP of the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians.



CLIFFORD LINCOLN'S LIFE OF SERVICE – A BATTLE FOR RIGHTS AND THE COMMON GOOD

By Anna Farrow

QCGN Board of Directors

This Network News article is a condensed version of the one that appeared in the March edition of The Catholic Register. Retired from the English-Speaking Catholic Council, Anna now writes for The Catholic Register. Read the full feature at this [link](#).



Photo courtesy of Peter Stockland

"It is drastic," Lincoln said. "I believe in the evolution of rights provided it is towards the common good and the reinforcement of rights, but it has been the other way."

Since stepping away from federal politics in 2004, he has held the role of tête grise, elder statesman, amongst anglophone Quebecers. His status is hard earned. Having served as a member of the National Assembly for eight years, and another nine years as MP for the Montreal riding of Lachine-Lac-Saint-Louis, he clearly still relishes the cut and thrust of political life.

Lincoln entered the political fray in 1981 when the Quebec Liberal Party was official opposition to the majority Parti Québécois. When then Liberal leader Claude Ryan asked his ministers what positions they would like to take up, Lincoln asked to be the environment critic. He soon discovered that being a critic is both a "wonderful political school" and "a very frustrating business."

"You've got executive power, you've got funds, a big staff" and, in the case of the environment, "you've got a cause that the public loves."

On the other hand, "You are in a cabinet where nobody cares (about your role). The economy rules. Everybody is against you. You are a lone wolf and the only thing that saves you is to be tenacious. You must have a thick skin and fight it out."

Lincoln's career has been anything but a series of defensive skirmishes to protect personal fortunes. He betrays a disdain for politicians who seek "glory or titles" and is reluctant to speak of personal accomplishments. Throughout his career, his single-minded focus has been the "common good."

His speech and writings are shot through iterations of the phrase, "common sense of belonging," and "common cause and ideas." In his 2012 memoir, *Toward New Horizons*, Lincoln wrote, "in politics, one's motivation should not stray beyond the core notion of the common good." The "fight" he speaks of is the fight for a Canada, "of equity and fairness where the interdependence of people and societal values form the core of good governance."

But it was not just in matters of conscience that Lincoln voted against his party. It was, after all, his decision to oppose Bill-178, legislation that employed the notwithstanding clause in the Quebec signage debate, that led to his resignation from cabinet and the end of his career in provincial politics. Lincoln recalled many instances when a vote against the party meant that he was, uncomfortably, "all by himself." For someone who prizes dialogue and consensus-building, as well as one who understood the dynamics of party politics, those solitary stands were always difficult.

Lincoln joined the Liberal Party soon after emigrating to Canada from his native Mauritius in 1958, but he says he is "not a party guy in a rigid sense...Being a small-l liberal is far more important than being a big-L Liberal."

When asked what that entails, Lincoln responds: "Being a small-l liberal is basically the common good."

His understanding of that good includes the provision of space, both in caucus and the public square, for the free flow of ideas and beliefs. He is increasingly concerned that both government and media are now restricting that free flow.

Since leaving politics, Lincoln has not stopped working. He was a member of the Train de l'Ouest Coalition, a group that lobbied for the construction of a light-railway system for the West Island of Montreal.

His most long-standing commitment has been to the Algonquins of Barrière Lake. Introduced to the struggles of the community by Liberal colleagues David Nahwegahbow and Russell Diabo in 1993, Lincoln has since acted as the go-between between the Algonquins and the provincial and federal governments. The 30-year fight to negotiate a resource management plan for the protection of the land and culture of the Algonquins has been a frustrating one.

His role as "bridge within two solitudes, two cultures" is a volunteer position but is "like a full-time job." He laughs as he says: "My wife has got fed up because the phone is constantly ringing."

Long ago in 1988, Lincoln stood on the floor of the National Assembly and famously declared, "Rights are rights are rights." The chain of words has echoed back and forth across his career. They have become his trademark, his brand. But Lincoln now questions the solidity of those rights in Canada.

Thirty-five years ago, the Quebec government adopted Bill 178 after the Supreme Court ruled in *Ford v. Quebec* that mandating unilingual commercial signage was unconstitutional. It was the vote on the bill that was the occasion of Lincoln's speech, and it was his vote against the bill that necessitated his resignation from cabinet.

There was, Lincoln recalled, "a never-ending debate" that took place, "day after day in the press," as the wrangling over *Ford v. Quebec* made its way through three levels of judicial review. When Bill 178, a bill that used the notwithstanding clause as a short-term solution, was introduced, the hair-pulling and soul-searching intensified. Lincoln was one of three members of the Liberal cabinet to resign after their "nay" vote.

In contrast, when Bill 96, a 2.0 version of the Charter of the French Language that incorporated the notwithstanding pre-emptively to preclude judicial wrangling, was introduced in 2021, it was met with near universal praise in Quebec and tepid interest beyond.

"It is really astonishing to me how the great majority of people shrug their shoulders."

Lincoln is concerned that this indifference in the general public is a mirror to the attitude of the politicians. He fears that they are, "always appeasing the political side at the cost of the loss of rights."

In addition to being a Catholic who stood for his faith amid the clamour of public service, Lincoln stands as a model of a politician who was rigorously committed to the "common good".

CBC SEEKING NON-PROFITS FOR ANNUAL CHARITIES OF THE YEAR



CBC Quebec is now accepting applications from Quebec-based organizations wishing to work with CBC this fall. Charities will collaborate with CBC to highlight stories of people in our community who are making a difference.

Last year's charitable organization included the [Townshippers' Foundation](#) and **Montreal City Mission**. More about them [here](#). Throughout December, CBC Quebec collaborated with both organizations to showcase the work they do and share stories of people in our communities who

are making a difference. You can view the **Make the Season Kind** coverage [here](#).

To qualify, charities must be based in Quebec; actively serving Quebec's English-speaking community (in part or in whole); and be nonpartisan and not affiliated with a political party. They must also be a registered charity that complies with all required regulations and able to collect donations online. But topmost, the selected charities be prepared to put forward "real people" and stories — such as clients who will talk on camera/radio.

The deadline to apply is **Friday, June 30, 2023** at midnight. Details [here](#).

Thank you for reading our regular newsletter. For up-to-date news about the Quebec Community Groups Network you can visit our website at www.qcgn.ca or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram.



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