

For immediate release

QCGN has New Interim President and Renewed Resolve to Battle Bill 96 and Other Legislation Detrimental to English-speaking Quebecers

Montreal – June 10, 2022 – Under new Interim President Eva Ludvig, the Quebec Community Groups Network today emerged from a policy forum with renewed resolve to fight Bill 96 and to advocate strongly to ensure new federal legislation updating the Official Languages Act does not abandon English-speaking Quebec by discarding the fundamental principle of linguistic duality from coast to coast to coast.

“There is a realignment under way that will reshape the Official Languages Act in ways that we feel will diminish our community’s long-standing relationship with the Government of Canada and leave us vulnerable,” said Ludvig. Bill C-13 proposes to create new language rights in one official language only. “The QCGN is fighting hard to make sure our minority community of 1.1 million people is also extended these new rights.”

Ludvig noted that Sonia LeBel, Quebec’s Minister Responsible for Canadian Relations and the Canadian Francophonie, has forwarded 14 proposed amendments to the House of Commons Committee on Official Languages detailing what Quebec wants to see in C-13. “These recommendations have not been shared publicly and are not available on the Committee’s website. However, it is clear that the Coalition Avenir Québec government’s war on the English-speaking community continues. There are no surprises here. Quebec wants exclusive jurisdiction over matters of language and culture, and it wants Ottawa to abandon its fundamental constitutional obligations towards Canada’s official languages and English-speaking Quebec.”

“Meanwhile the QCGN is closely following the implementation of Bill 96 and will be documenting the impact it is having on individual Quebecers,” said Ludvig. She pointed to QCGN’s newly launched Access to Justice in English website on which individuals are invited to share how they are being impacted by elements of Bill 96. The project’s web presence is designed to inform, consult, and interact on justice issues that have an impact on Quebec’s English-speaking community.

“We will also collaborate with those launching court challenges and we are developing strategies and tactics to ensure that Bill 96, and for that matter Bills 21 and 40, are not relegated to the sidelines during the upcoming provincial election campaign,” she said. Bill 21, the provincial legislation on secularism, outlaws the wearing of religious symbols by certain employees of the state including teachers. Bill 40, on school board governance, tramples on the community’s constitutional right to control and manage our schools.

Ludvig was speaking at a two-day QCGN policy forum – *English-speaking Quebec at a Crossroads* – during which more than 100 QCGN members and stakeholders discussed the future of Quebec’s English-speaking community.

“We were again reminded this morning that English-speaking Quebec is not the problem, nor are we a threat to French in Quebec or anywhere else. We are an asset to our society, to which we have been and continue to be a key contributor,” Ludvig told participants. “I look forward to carrying on today’s conversations and working together with all members of our English-speaking community and all Quebecers as we face our challenges together.”

QCGN’s policy forum kicked off Thursday evening with an emotional tribute to outgoing President Marlene Jennings who has passed the baton onto Ludvig. Citing multiple other commitments that she was no longer willing to put off, Jennings had long planned to step down as president at this spring’s Annual General Meeting. That meeting has now been postponed until the fall. Jennings remains a key member of the QCGN Board of Directors.

“Marlene has succeeded in bringing our community together and has proven been an effective and consistent voice on our behalf,” said Ludvig, who sincerely thanked Jennings for her contributions over many years: “Marlene has helped set the foundation for the QCGN’s continued success by advancing our renewal project. For all of this we are exceptionally grateful.”

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.

For further information:

Rita Legault, Director of Communications | rita.legault@qcgn.ca

Telephone: 438 270-0680

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