

QCGN Statement on National Assembly Hearings on Bill 96

QCGN Calls for Broader Participation in Bill 96 Hearings

MONTREAL, June 30, 2021 – The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) is deeply disappointed that the Government of Quebec is severely limiting participation in public hearings on Bill 96 and that it did not issue a wider invitation to Quebecers. Instead, government officials pre-selected participants with a strong bias in favour of the legislation.

The Committee on Culture and Education announced yesterday that it is holding public consultations on Bill 96. It plans to hear from 50 groups and individuals between September 28 and October 7. There are only three groups representing Quebec's English-speaking community, including the QCGN.

Bill 96: An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec is a wide-ranging and complex piece of legislation. It represents a significant overhaul of Quebec's legal system. It proposes to amend the Charter of the French Language, 24 provincial statutes, one regulation, as well as the Canadian Constitution. Bill 96 also calls for the most sweeping use of human rights overrides in Quebec and Canadian history, ousting the application of both the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. It effectively creates a Charter-free zone with respect to a wide range of interactions between individuals and the state.

This Bill proposes to radically redefine the social contract between Quebecers. It is of concern to all Quebecers and deserves to be fully debated and discussed. It is critical that the diverse voices of Quebec are heard and taken into account. More representatives should be invited to comment on the bill and its impacts on Quebecers. Restricting the participation of Quebec's English-speaking community to three groups, for example, is deplorable. Members of the National Assembly need to hear from our legal community, leaders of our health and social services organizations, our school boards, and our business leaders, to name a few.

The QCGN urges the government to reconsider and invite a broad cross-section of Quebecers to participate in public hearings on Bill 96. Quebecers need to take the time to build a consensus on the type of society we wish to live in.

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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