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Network News

The news that matters to
English-speaking Quebecers



Happy Holidays! Joyeuses fêtes!

Wishing you
all the joys of the season and
happiness throughout the coming year
Meilleurs vœux de joie en ce temps des fêtes
et du bonheur pour la nouvelle année



Please note that the QCGN offices will be closed for the holiday from December 22 to January 2 inclusively.

President's Message

QCGN WILL REMAIN RELENTLESS AS WE MOVE INTO THE NEW YEAR

By Eva Ludvig
QCGN President

In spite of the difficult year end for our community as we continue to reel from the continued assault on our rights and institutions by the Coalition Avenir Québec Government, QCGN will remain relentless as we move into the new year to ensure our voices are heard loud and clear in defending our rights and the well-being of the historic institutions built by our community.



Let me mention some of the most significant recent developments in Quebec City and Ottawa that affect us and our institutions. Out of necessity, the political climates in Quebec and Ottawa remain our community's preoccupations. We wish it weren't so, but if the community were to abandon its advocacy efforts at both levels, it would do itself a disservice. Many pieces of legislation in the National Assembly and the House of Commons affect our lives as Quebecers who belong to the English-speaking community, including the delayed effects of Bill 96, which have yet to be fully felt.

Tuition policy an attack on our community

Several weeks ago, the government announced a new tuition policy that would pretty well double tuition fees for undergraduate students from other provinces. While the measure would apply to all universities, English institutions like McGill, Concordia and Bishop's would be far and away the most negatively affected. Under the proposed policy, undergrad tuition would have skyrocketed from about \$9,000 a year (already higher than the Canadian average) to about \$17,000. The government plans to redirect most of those new monies toward francophone universities, which it claims are underfunded vis à vis their English counterparts. There were also nasty remarks from the Premier and some ministers about hearing too much English on the streets of Montreal because of the presence of so many English-speaking university students. The government's motives and messaging were murky. Even before the final word on the policy last week was given, the damage was already being felt.

On December 14, the Legault government made its final position known. Undergraduate tuition from Canadian students from other provinces would rise to \$12,000, leaving it in many cases double what major universities elsewhere in Canada charge. But there was a serious kicker. While the universities had tried to get the government to back off the tuition increase by promising to francisize 40 per cent of their undergraduates from other provinces to an intermediate level, the government is now demanding they francisize 80 per cent of their undergrads, including international students, in addition to slapping them with the higher tuition fee.

Predictably, the [universities reacted with genuine outrage](#), pointing out the impossibility of achieving that goal for academic as well as logistical reasons. They point to already plummeting numbers of applicants from out of province and have implemented hiring freezes and budget cuts, while credit-rating agencies are muttering about downgrades. I said in our [press release](#) that if one were to devise a plan to starve the English universities out of existence, it would look like this. The aftershocks from this fresh earthquake are still being felt, but it is clear – from the fact that Bishop's gets a substantial exemption from the tuition hike and from the fact that the new policy was addressed only to McGill, Concordia and Bishop's – that this is about language, not money, as Minister **Pascale Déry** has sought to claim at times. Read this excellent [editorial](#) in The Montreal Gazette.

We called it an attack on our community, and so did McGill. There will be substantially more to say in the new year, so please stay tuned on this one.

Controversial bills passed in dying days of fall session

Both Bill 15, which will bring about a massive centralization of the health-care system, and Bill 23, further centralizing government control over education were passed at the end of the fall session of the National Assembly and represent challenges for our community going ahead.

It was with a sense of resignation that our community witnessed the inevitable passage of Bill 15 in the wee hours of Dec. 9, after the Legault government invoked closure and forced the massive bill through the National Assembly, even though dozens and dozens of its provisions had yet to be dealt with in committee. The bill, which will create an enormous central bureaucracy in charge of health care and social services called Santé Québec, establishes an historic first in giving the government-controlled agency the right to revoke minority-language access to health and social services. This has never

happened. This same government made a solemn promise during debate on Bill 96 last year to not touch the English-speaking community's access to health and social services in their own language.

Public outcry makes it abundantly clear that Quebecers are upset at having their voices silenced in the management of their local health and social services institutions. The QCGN's stance on the bill was echoed by numerous community and patient advocates as well as doctors, nurses and other health-care workers who have also shown strong opposition to many aspects of this badly flawed bill. Opposition MNAs from the **Liberal Party of Quebec, Québec Solidaire**, and the **Parti Québécois** have spoken out against this bill, while six former premiers, representing both Liberals and the PQ, took the unprecedented step of writing a public letter urging the government to reverse course, calling the proposed legislation "dangerous". Some 6,400 Quebecers signed a QCGN petition, sponsored by Liberal MNA **Jennifer Maccarone**, demanding more consultation on the bill and amendments to guarantee the maintenance of community roles in governing local institutions like hospitals, as well as guaranteeing English-language access to health care. (Read our [press release](#) and click on the photo to view the tabling of the bill.)



Health and social services are vitally important to all Quebecers and deserve more than cavalier treatment by a government focused more on command and control than care and compassion. It is truly disturbing to note that from a policy and regulatory perspective our community is not systematically consulted on changes that will have significant impact on the ability of English-speaking Quebecers to receive critical services in their own language.

Following on the heels of the controversial Bill 40, which was to abolish school boards across the province, Bill 23, is for the moment mostly applicable to the French education sector, given that a court decision on 40 found that bill to violate English-speaking Quebec's Constitutional guarantees to manage and control its minority-language education system. That decision is now under appeal by the Quebec government, but the imposition of 23 has been held off pending the outcome of the government of Quebec's appeal of the Superior Court decision that declared sections of Bill 40 abolishing English school boards were invalid. The landmark decision by Justice Sylvain Lussier in August ruled that parts of the bill designed to turn English-language school boards into school service centres is unconstitutional and violates the rights of the province's English-speaking community. In the case, the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) argued the bill violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms giving the English community the right to manage its schools. This was a significant victory for Quebec's English-speaking community and official language minority communities across Canada.

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Congratulations to Russell, Welcome David

On behalf of the QCGN I would like to congratulate **Russell Copeman** on his appointment as the new Director General of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board. For the past five years, Russ served as executive director of the **Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA)** and as an assistant professor at the Max Bell School of Public Policy. He has also served as a senior administrator at Concordia, where he was associate vice-president for external relations, as well as an adjunct professor in the department of political science. He did several terms as MNA for Notre Dame de Grace and served as borough Mayor for Côte-des-Neiges/Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. His career exemplifies not only a concern for his community, but an unrivalled commitment to public service.

I would also like to welcome Russell's successor, **David Meloche**. Appointed in early December, David is a lifelong pedagogue who is recognized by the English education sector for his leadership, innovation and community involvement. He worked for more than three decades at the Lester B. Pearson School

Board and is currently on loan to the *Comité patronal de négociation pour les commissions scolaires anglophones* (CPNCA) as the QESBA representative at the teacher table. For more than decade, he served as Regional Director responsible for the eastern-most schools of the school board. He is also the co-founder of the first pediatric training school-based clinic in partnership with McGill University and Montreal Children's Hospital. Upon his appointment, David remarked that our school boards are essential institutions to the English-speaking community and that he is looking forward to working with the elected commissioners, the Director Generals of school boards and QESBA staff to ensure the vitality and continued excellence of public English education for students and the community.



The voice of English public education in Quebec, QESBA represents some 100,000 students in 340 elementary, high schools, and adult and vocational centres across the province.

Congratulations to Chez Doris



We congratulate [Chez Doris](#) for receiving the *AFP Québec – Association des professionnels en philanthropie Non-Profit Organization of Excellence Award*. The award was presented in mid-November by AFP Québec's Board President **Daniel H. Lanteigne** and accepted by Chez Doris President **Carole Croteau** and Director **Marina Boulos-Winton**. This recognition reflects the dedicated efforts of our exceptional employees, invaluable volunteers, highly skilled Board members, and generous donors who play a crucial role in our

progress. Together, they confront challenges head-on to meet the urgent needs of vulnerable and homeless women.

QCGN meets Minister, PQ and French Language Commissioner

It has been a busy fall with lots of advocacy activities to keep us busy. In early November I appeared before the [Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages](#) with our Director General, **Sylvia Martin-Laforge** for a study it is conducting on matters relating to [minority-language health services](#). The committee is looking at a broad range of issues including the inclusion of language clauses in federal health transfers; access to minority-language health services for vulnerable communities; the shortage of health professionals in public and private facilities serving official language minority communities and the language skills of health care personnel in these facilities; as well as the needs for research, evidence and solutions to foster access to health care in the language of one's choice. Read our [brief](#) and view the [hearing](#).

Also in November, Sylvia and our Secretary-Treasurer **Grant Myers** held a productive initial meeting with **Randy Boissonnault**, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages of Canada, in Ottawa.

Sylvia and I have also met with other politicians and government officials to better inform them of the issues our community faces. In October, we met with Parti Québécois MNA **Pascal Paradis** following his



win in the byelection in the Quebec City riding of Jean Talon. Paradis has taken on nine main files as the third opposition party's critic including relations with the anglophone community. Responsible for the Capitale-Nationale region, Paradis is also the critic for justice, public safety, labour, international relations and francophonie, as well as the fight against racism, LGBTQ+ communities, social solidarity and community action.

We also talked with Quebec's Commissioner of the French Language, **Benoît Dubreuil**, who we met at the **Quebec English-speaking Research Network (QUESCREN)** conference on Education and Vitality. We explained to Dubreuil that a guiding principle of the QCGN is that we support French as the official language of Quebec and that the QCGN upholds the protection and enhancement of the linguistic rights of all Canadians to thrive in our two official languages. We also noted that despite linguistic tensions, the QCGN as well as our

members and many of our stakeholders consider ourselves allies in protecting and promoting the French language. We do not see ourselves as a threat to French. We see ourselves as a partner to the French language. We support it, we learn it, and we speak it at work and at play and that, not unlike our French counterparts, we are a minority living within a majority. We said that the QCGN strongly believes that maintaining our linguistic identity does not threaten the French language and that the vitality of our minority language community contributes to — and does not detract from — the economic prosperity and cultural life of this province.

And this brings me to a glimmer of hope.

Hard work pays dividends

It is becoming clearer that the QCGN's hard work on many fronts is paying off. We have solidified our reputation as the go-to organization in media circles when comment from the English-speaking community is sought, and this is now extending to important voices in the francophone media paying attention, not just to us, but to our community as a whole. It is an important step for the QCGN in cementing our reputation – and therefore, our influence – as the leading voice of the English-speaking community of Quebec, a voice that is tough, but measured; balanced, non-partisan and positive whenever and wherever possible.

In the battle over Bill 15, we found our community sharing concerns about the health bill in solidarity with those of many francophone groups and individuals across Quebec. Read this thoughtful [column](#) by seasoned political reporter **Michel C. Auger**. This is an important moment, and something the English-speaking community must build upon in the coming months: to show, as we have known all along, that we do have common cause as Quebecers with our francophone friends and neighbours.

Expanding upon points of agreement instead of focusing on points of departure will go a long way toward strengthening the bonds between us and making the CAQ's divisive program and policies more difficult to impose. The large and influential number of francophone voices decrying the new university tuition policy shows us we have allies on this issue as well. It is an opportunity we should not squander.

And with that, I wish you all a very safe, happy and peaceful holiday season, full of joy and fellowship, and all the best in 2024.

QCGN MEMBERS CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS



*The QCGN's Holiday Breakfast and Open House was a huge success as dozens of members and friends participated in our holiday festivities. We were thrilled to see many of our new individual members take part along with a large number of longtime stakeholders. There was also a large contingent of MNAs including **Jennifer Maccarone**, who recently sponsored our Bill 15 petition to the National Assembly, along with her colleagues **Elisabeth Prass**, **Greg Kelley**, **Désirée McGraw**, and **Michelle Setlakwe**. Thanks in large part to our raffle with prizes donated by our generous Board and staff, we raised more than \$1,000 to benefit the **Fondation Notre Home Foundation**. The foundation is a registered charitable foundation that raises funds to support initiatives by groups and organizations that encourage, enhance, and empower the English-speaking community of Quebec. Currently the foundation is supporting the legal battle to save our locally controlled, democratically elected school boards. Details of the campaign on the **Quebec English School Board Association's** website [here](#). Donations are still being accepted. Click [here](#) to donate.*

QCGN AND STAKEHOLDERS DISMISS DISTORTED REPORT ON FUNDING BY MP MARIO BEAULIEU

The QCGN has had the chance to study Bloc Québécois MP **Mario Beaulieu's** report condemning how federal funding of the English-speaking community in Quebec contributes to the anglicization of the province and should be redirected to supporting French, the only threatened language, in his view.

"The report itself is the usual, predictable stuff," commented **Sylvia Martin-Laforge**, Director General of the QCGN. Beaulieu, a former president of the Société St-Jean Baptiste de Montréal, has a long and colourful track record as a language hardliner, including repeated denials that the English-speaking community of Quebec is a legitimate official-language minority, she noted.

"It is quickly evident that his report is an exercise in the cherry-picking of convenient facts while ignoring others that don't support his thesis and is loaded with distortion and disingenuousness," said

Martin-Laforge. "While decrying support for the English-speaking minority-language community in Quebec, for example, he is silent on the enormous sums the federal government spends to support francophone minorities in the rest of Canada. He also seems unclear on the concept of legislative requirements under Section VII of the Official Languages Act that compel the federal government to promote the *vitality* of all Official Language Minority Communities – English and French."



"Beaulieu maliciously describes organizations that receive federal support as "pressure groups" and uses a 30-year time span to generate a big, shocking number of \$2 billion – again ignoring the total that would be far higher if one were to peek at the francophone side of the ledger," Martin-Laforge said.

That view is widely supported by a number of stakeholders including the **English-Language Arts Network** (ELAN), the **Quebec Writers' Federation** (QWF), the **Quebec Drama Federation** (QDF) and the **Association of English-language Publishers of Quebec** (AELAQ) who issued a **joint statement** last week refuting Beaulieu's report.

"The implication that these funds serve any purpose other than the stated goal of supporting a federally recognized Official Language Community is in bad faith and is insufficiently supported by the report's conclusions," writes ELAN in the joint statement. "ELAN and its sister organizations, QWF, QDF and AELAQ, are not-for-profit organizations that connect, support, and create opportunities for English-speaking artists and cultural workers from every region of Quebec. We share expertise and resources for career advancement, funding opportunities, employment opportunities, and calls for participation in the arts. We advocate for our members' interests and make common cause with the Francophone arts community."

"We affirm the legitimacy of federal support for the English-speaking community in Quebec, a recognized Official Language Minority Community (OLMC); this funding enables the important work carried out by its various community organizations," write the funded groups. "We also wish to stress its particular impact on the continued vitality of Quebec's English-language arts and culture community, which faces unique challenges compared to the province's Francophone sector."

The groups point to **an analysis** of the most recent census data, there are 13,800 English-speaking artists in Quebec, representing 32 percent of all artists in the province. Only Quebec and New Brunswick boast such a large proportion of minority-language artists within their arts sectors. Despite their significant representation in the field, the median employment income of English-speaking artists is 21 per cent lower than that of their Francophone colleagues in Quebec, and their median personal income from all sources is 17 per cent lower. Furthermore, the median personal income of English-speaking artists in Quebec (\$31,000) is essentially on par with that of Francophone artists in the rest of Canada (\$30,400).

"Far from a force for anglicization, the English-language arts community is deeply rooted within Quebec society and proudly contributes to the diversity and vitality of Quebec culture, whether at home, in the rest of Canada or on the international stage," the groups state. "Indeed, the international success of countless English-speaking artists creates new opportunities for artists from both linguistic communities and reinforces Quebec's reputation as a society where the arts are deeply valued."

The statement notes that federal support for organizations such as ELAN and its sister organizations supports this contribution by providing crucial services to the English-language arts and culture community, which is subject to significant levels of precarity, yet which nevertheless continues to produce high-quality work. It allows English-speaking Quebecers from a wide range of backgrounds to tell their own stories and contribute to the vitality of their communities, and indeed the diversity of Quebec society as a whole.

"ELAN, QWF, QDF and AELAQ have always supported the protection of the French language in Quebec and have sought to collaborate with the Francophone arts community in pursuing our many common

objectives for the sector whenever possible," the statement adds. "To that end, we support the continued collaboration and exchange between English-speaking and Francophone artists in artistic creations that help to build bridges between our linguistic communities. So too do we champion the work—and federal funding—of French-language organizations outside of Quebec to preserve the culture and vitality of their Official Language Minority Communities."

"We firmly believe that the legitimate use of federal OLMC funds to support the English-speaking community – a diverse community with its own unique needs and challenges – in no way undermines these values," the groups conclude. Rather, it helps English-speaking Quebecers contribute more fully to the richness and diversity of Quebec and Canada's cultural landscape.

"What does concern us, however, is the way in which Quebec's minister for the French language, **Jean-François Roberge**, reacted to Beaulieu's sortie," remarked Martin-Laforge.

"There's something absurd about funding English in Quebec with such high amounts, when everyone knows that the language under threat in Quebec is French," Minister Roberge told the Quebecor news agency QMI.

"It's not hard to draw a straight line between Beaulieu's report and the Legault government's looming Plan d'Action for the French language, which was to have been presented last month, but is now to arrive sometime in the new year," said Martin-Laforge. "The CAQ government's penchant for punishing the English-speaking community as a way of showing its support for the French language is widely known, and we fully expect it will include a demand for greater Quebec control of resources directed to linguistic minorities."

The QCGN will pay close attention in the coming weeks and months to determine whether the federal government is at all swayed by MP Beaulieu's report and Minister Roberge's welcoming of it," said Martin-Laforge. "So far, it doesn't seem so, and the general yawn that greeted Beaulieu's opus supports the view that people don't take the material – or its source – seriously."

INTERPROVINCIAL MIGRATION BARELY CONTRIBUTED TO DECLINE IN QUEBEC'S ENGLISH-SPEAKING POPULATION

By Davide Ventrone
QCGN Program and Policy Analyst

Statistics Canada's Language Statistics Program released a new article on **Interprovincial and interregional migration of Canada's French- and English-speaking populations**. The analysis examines internal migration flows within Canada between two censuses as well as the cumulative effects of these migrations in the longer term. Data used in this Census in Brief comes from the five-year population censuses carried out from 1971 to 2021, with the exception of the National Household Survey of 2011.

Most interestingly, provincial migration to Quebec is the highest level it's been in more than 40 years, with the number of people moving to Quebec (84,000) being very close to those leaving (90,000). This trend reversal is mostly a result in the shifting migration patterns of English-speaking Quebecers.

Historically, English speaking Quebec has seen massive emigration to other provinces, although this lowered and stabilized in the 2000s. However, this has begun to reverse. From 2016–2021 in fact, it was mostly the number of English speakers *moving* to Quebec that increased and became nearly on par with those leaving. This means according to Statistics Canada that for the first time in at least 50 years, interprovincial migration flows barely contributed to a decline in Quebec's English-speaking popul

The migration changes in this recent census are likely due to migration during the COVID-19 pandemic and the housing crises. The move to remote work during the pandemic opened the option of migration for many English-speaking Canadians. With relatively cheaper housing in Quebec, it is argued many were attracted to the province for these reasons.

Although net migration is still negative, the change in trend is interesting, nonetheless. Will it continue? It's hard to say. With attacks on English minority rights from various provincial and federal pieces of legislation, the tensions between English and French communities in Quebec is the highest it's been in decades. Whether this will lead to a mass exodus as was seen in the last quarter of the 20th century is unknown. If the trend is solely due to COVID migration, net migration will likely return to be more asymmetrical. If not, we may see a new wave of anglophones who increasingly choose to settle in Quebec.

In the meantime, what does this mean for the Quebec's English-speaking community? First, it's important that we do not allow these numbers to create a narrative of "increasing anglicization" in Quebec. The numbers are still a net negative, and regardless, we must push back against attempts to associate the English community with the decline of French. Finally, this speaks to the increasingly diverse character of the official language minority community in Quebec. For example, the English community of Quebec is made up of a third who are **immigrations and face unique economic challenges**. With more coming from other provinces, the cultural, social and economic experiences among individuals of the community will continue to diversify. Thus, community organizations and the QCGN must continue to create an environment in which the vitality of the community can thrive. This means changing and adapting to meet the needs and challenges of being an English speaker in Quebec today. Focusing on demographic changes to the community is a key part of this.

The Census in Brief is accompanied by an [interactive data visualization](#) tool entitled *Interprovincial migration by language group in Canada from 1976 to 2021*. The tool allows you to select a province or territory, a language variable, the official languages, and the groups of migrants. Data are available in numbers or rates and for various reference periods. You will find these resources on the [Language Statistics portal](#). If you have any questions about these resources, please contact StatsCan at statcan.languagestats-statlinguistique.statcan@statcan.gc.ca.

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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