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QCGN Praises Commissioner Fraser for a Decade of Support to Quebec's English-speaking Community

Montreal – May 19, 2016 – Governments should do more to protect the language rights of Canadians argued Graham Fraser, Canada's Commissioner of Official Languages who delivered his tenth and final annual report on Thursday.

"Governments, including the government of Quebec, must find better ways to protect and support their linguistic minority communities," agreed QCGN President Dan Lamoureux, noting that getting recognition for the needs and priorities of Quebec's English-speaking minority is a challenge at all levels.

In one of his earlier annual reports, in 2008, Commissioner Fraser recognized that Quebec's English-speaking community was one of the two official language minorities in Canada. Meanwhile, successive Ministers of Canadian Heritage and other federal politicians and departments have not always found a way to meet that challenge.

QCGN's Director General Sylvia Martin-Laforge remarked that the current federal government's initial consultation on its official language strategy puts an emphasis on the preserving and promoting the French fact in Canada, including strengthening French in Quebec. "This recurring lop-sided approach to official language communities fails to give equitable consideration to that other linguistic minority – English-speaking Quebec," she said, noting that QCGN was in consultation with Canadian Heritage as the Commissioner released his report Thursday morning.

In a complementary report entitled *Protecting Language Rights: Overview of the Commissioner's Intervention in the Courts*, Fraser congratulates individuals and organizations who have gone to court to compel governments and institutions to meet their obligations and advance the language rights of all Canadians. He notes that parents, including Hong Ha Nguyen here in Quebec, have earned the respect of Canadians by "ensuring that Canada lives up to its reputation as a country that respects its official languages and its linguistic minorities."

“Above all, these individuals and organizations, like all Canadians and all community organizations throughout the country, deserve to have the Government of Canada, federal institutions and provincial and territorial governments fully respect their language obligations,” he concludes. “No one should have to resort to legal action to assert their rights.”

Martin-Laforge, who started at the QCGN as the Commissioner began his mandate, praised Fraser for his steadfast support of Quebec’s English-speaking community. “Commissioner Fraser used his deep-rooted knowledge of Quebec to educate others and to further the understanding of our community of communities and help us dispel many myths about English-speaking Quebec,” she said. “Like the individuals and organizations that he lauds in his report, Commissioner Fraser deserves admiration and gratitude for a decade of solid leadership in supporting official language communities, including our own.”

QCGN was also pleased that Commissioner Fraser extended his final *Award of Excellence – Promotion of Linguistic Duality* to Canadian Parents for French (CPF), a longtime member of our Network. The award, instituted by Fraser eight years ago, was given to CPF for its exceptional work in the area of research and promotion; for providing opportunities for young Canadians to learn French in schools and communities, and supporting their sometimes unilingual parents; and for respecting French as an integral part of Canada.

The Quebec Community Groups Network (www.qcgn.ca) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 48 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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