

Brief to the

**S cretariat   la jeunesse on the  
Politique Qu b coise de la jeunesse,  
Axe IV: Active and participatory citizenship**

Presented by the  
**Quebec Community Groups Network**

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This year the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) is celebrating 20 years of leadership as a strong voice of the English-speaking Community of Quebec. The QCGN is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 49 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 English-speaking Quebec and encourages dialogue and collaboration among its member organizations, individuals, community groups, institutions and leaders.

While the QCGN agrees with the three proposed orientations for the government's future Policy on Youth on page 18 of the *Document de consultation* produced by the *S cretariat   la jeunesse* on the *Politique Qu b coise de la jeunesse*, we would like to underline that systemic problems lie in its implementation. As will be demonstrated throughout this brief, for these orientations to have an effect on Quebec's English-speaking youth, a targeted approach reflecting their specific needs as a minority is crucial.

English-speaking Quebec is a diverse, confident, recognized and respected linguistic minority that actively participates in and contributes to the social, economic, cultural and political life of Quebec and Canadian society. In order for this to be sustained, all levels of government need to be committed to legislative policy and financial investment approaches which support the vitality and strategic development of the 1,058,250 Quebecers who make up Quebec's English-speaking community.

While the QCGN's activities encompass a variety of policy development, research and advocacy in different sectors, youth is of particular importance to the organization, key stakeholders, and the wider community. These are the leaders of tomorrow who will determine our community's course and guarantee our collective vitality and development for the continuing benefit of all Quebecers. In fact, in successive multi-year Community Development Plans crafted by our leaders over more than a decade the issue of youth has always been a foremost priority.

While the QCGN, as an umbrella organization, can speak generally to the multi-levelled challenges of Quebec's English-speaking youth – and we will do so to a certain degree throughout this brief – we have chosen to focus on the fourth area of intervention. Nonetheless, we have actively encouraged our members in regions across Quebec, specific sectors, as well as key stakeholders to present their own briefs and make recommendations on either single or multiple areas of concern.

To give you some sense of our expertise in this area here are the key youth-related projects the QCGN has undertaken:

- **Young Quebecers Leading the Way:** Led by the QCGN in partnership with the Association for Canadian Studies and the Institut du Nouveau Monde, Young Quebecers Leading the Way is a three-year bilingual project that is engaging hundreds of young Quebecers in the celebration of the sesquicentennial of Canadian Confederation. Funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage's Youth Take Charge program, the project is overseeing three annual youth forums, and preparatory workshops in six different regions of Quebec, where participants aged 15 to 25 will offer their views on the significance of youth engagement in shaping the future of Canada.
- **Young Quebecers Leading the Way Award:** This award was established this year by the QCGN, the Notre Home Foundation and CBC Montreal. Awarded for the first time in October 2015, the

prize recognizes and celebrates leadership, innovative thinking and the outstanding achievements of young English-speaking Quebecers who are engaged in innovative initiatives that create change in our communities.

- ***Vote it Up:*** Created in 2012, and activated for all municipal, provincial and federal elections since, Vote it Up is an initiative of the QCGN to encourage young English-speaking Quebecers to participate in the electoral process. With support from Quebec's Chief Electoral Officer (DGEQ) for the first three campaigns, Vote it Up targeted youth aged 18 to 35 and encouraged them to take advantage of their democratic right and vote. While QCGN did not obtain funding to run a campaign for the 2015 federal elections, it recognized the importance of youth engagement in the electoral process so the campaign was re-activated.
- ***Notre Home:*** In 2012 the QCGN commissioned Montreal singer-songwriter David Hodges to pen a song about English-speaking Quebec, conveying themes of engagement, leadership, as well as cultural and linguistic identity. Following the success of the Notre Home anthem, which included the production of a music video, the QCGN brought David Hodges and his unifying message of inclusiveness and openness to young Quebecers across the province. With funding from the Government of Quebec, the Notre Home Tour visited more than 50 schools in two dozen municipalities, from Gatineau to the Magdalen Islands and from Rouyn Noranda to Thetford Mines. Sparking discussions about bullying, isolation and a sense of belonging, David Hodges met with more than 10,000 elementary and high school students.
- A seminal project for past and ongoing work in the area of youth, and for recommendations provided in this brief is ***Creating Spaces for Young Quebecers: Strategic Orientations for English-speaking Youth in Quebec***, a publication produced by the QCGN in 2009 with funding support of the Department of Canadian Heritage, which will be discussed in detail later on in this brief.

The QCGN is pleased that the conclusion of the *Document de consultation* produced by the *S cretariat   la jeunesse* on the *Politique Qu b coise de la jeunesse* states that the government is cognisant of the fact that the different elements of its youth policy will affect young French- and English-speaking Quebecers, aboriginals and immigrants differently. Based on this reality, it is pertinent that programs targeted to meet the individual needs of all of the aforementioned groups be funded in order to assure their ultimate success in remaining an integral part of Quebec society.

By focussing on *Axe IV: Une citoyennet  active et plurielle* we hope to illustrate what is needed for the Quebec's English-speaking youth to become active participants in shaping a prosperous future for the province – a Quebec where they can feel as at home as their Francophone peers.

There are nearly 1.5 million Quebecers between the ages of 15 and 29, some 221,665, or 15 per cent of whom are English-speaking. In 2013, researcher Joanne Pocock produced a report titled *Socio-Economic Profile of Language Groups in the Census Metropolitan Area of Montreal* for Youth Employment Services (YES) and the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) using data from the 2006 Canadian census. Based on the data in the report just under one fifth of English-speaking Quebecers (as defined in regulations for the Official Languages Act as First Official Language Spoken - FOLS) live outside of the Montreal CMA. The data also demonstrated that for both age groups 15-24 and 25-44, the proportion of

English-speakers living below low income cut-offs, commonly known as the poverty line, was much higher than that of the French-speaking population in the Montreal CMA (15-24: 29.5 per cent versus 22.7 per cent; 25-44 25.9 per cent versus 18.6 per cent).

As demonstrated in “Interprovincial Migration Shifts in Canada” produced for TD Economics in June of 2013, 1.1 per cent of English-speaking Quebecers migrated inter-provincially in 2011, compared to 0.2 per cent of the French population. Despite accounting for 13 per cent of the province’s population, English-speaking Quebecers made up 52.9 per cent of the interprovincial migrants in that year. And while migration is principally motivated by economic factors, in *Interprovincial Mobility and Earnings* produced for Statistics Canada Perspectives in 2008, André Bernard, Ross Finnie and Benoît St-Jean, found that English-speaking Quebecers “are up to 10 times more likely to move [out of province] than other Canadians.”

### **Detailed data essential**

Detailed data on Quebec’s English speaking youth is lacking, particularly in terms of migration – something the Quebec government should invest in should it wish to understand the vitality challenges of Quebec’s English-speaking communities. Understanding the emigration patterns of English-speaking youth leaving the province as compared to Francophones, as well as the migration of English-speaking youth from the regions to Montreal as compared to Francophones, will assist in illustrating the particular needs of Quebec’s English-speaking youth.

Beyond the “intervention priorities” determined by the Quebec government, additional priorities must be set to address the needs of English-speaking youth to guarantee their active and widespread participation within different facets of Quebec society. English-speaking Quebecers are effectively absent from Quebec’s civil service. Despite accounting for 13.5 per cent of the province’s total population, English-speaking Quebecers represent 1 per cent of Quebec’s public service according to Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor figures. There is a need to decrease both linguistic and socio-cultural barriers. The breaking down of barriers will encourage and enable the English-speaking youth of Quebec to increase their levels of participation in community life and community volunteerism which in turn can have a lasting impact on their level of connectedness to their communities and to Quebec society as a whole.

In 2009, the QCGN produced *Creating Spaces for Young Quebecers: Strategic Orientations for English-speaking Youth in Quebec*, based on the input of 400 English-speaking youth in Quebec, aged 16 to 29. A follow-up report commissioned in order to understand the relevance of *Creating Spaces* today, compiled based on interviews with 17 key community leaders, indicated that *Creating Spaces* is still highly relevant today.

One of *Creating Spaces* many findings is that English-speaking youth often report worrying about shyness or being unwelcome at predominantly Francophone events and activities. This transcends language and at its core is dependent on English-speaking youth feeling as though they are equal members of Quebec society and feeling wanted among their peers in the Francophone majority.

In the same way, while interprovincial migration is often based on employment opportunities, a sense of belonging to Quebec society (which includes achieving greater participation in the activities undertaken within the society) will best ensure fewer English-speaking youth leave the province and that of those that do leave, a greater number return.

In *Intergroup perceptions and Push/pull factors for leaving Québec: Surveying Québec Anglophones and Québécois Francophones*, Richard Y. Bourhis & Rana Sioufi, of the Département de psychologie at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), conducted a questionnaire in 2013 in order to compare Quebec-born Anglophone and Quebec-born Francophone perceptions and factors accounting for willingness to move to the rest of Canada.

The results indicate that the English-speaking Quebecers surveyed identified strongly as Canadian, bilingual and English Quebecer but much less so as Québécois, while the Francophones identified strongly as Francophones and Québécois but much less so as Canadians and bilinguals.

English-speaking Quebecers saw their financial and professional prospects in Quebec as less promising than did the Francophones. English-speaking Quebecers were even somewhat more willing to move to the rest of Canada than to stay in Quebec. While employment was the top reason for moving, English-speaking Quebecers also listed factors that included avoiding linguistic tensions and being judged as an English-speaking Quebecer.

Both groups had feelings of being threatened by the presence of the other, though English-speaking Quebecers felt more personally victims of discrimination than did the Francophones. Additionally, discrimination against English-speaking Quebecers appeared to be more acknowledged by English-speaking Quebecers than Francophones.

An opinion survey, completed only by English-speaking respondents, found solidarity and strong support for defending the vitality of the English-speaking communities of Quebec and perceptions that the Francophone majority wants the vitality of these communities to decline.

While Bourhis and Sioufi's findings may be alarming, *Creating Spaces* provides fundamental examples of the root causes of these perceptions and driving factors for leaving the province, and of equal importance, a list of advantageous solutions. These solutions will not only improve the institutional vitality of the English-speaking communities of Quebec, but will also benefit Quebec society as a whole. They will increase the active participation of the province's largest minority group and diminish the threat perceived by some in the Francophone majority.

*Creating Spaces* found that English-speaking youth wish to foster better relations with Francophone youth. They acknowledge the charged political history of the province, and are ready to fully abandon the notion of 'two solitudes' to build new partnerships, collaborations and increased participation and avoid carrying negative patterns into the next generation.

In order to do this the government's youth policy needs to focus on solutions that will allow English-speaking youths to integrate rather than be assimilated. *Creating Spaces* found that youth perceived their English-communities as weak and in decline, in need of greater resources and of better links with the majority community. English-speaking youth wanted to be fluently bilingual – spoken and written – graduating from secondary school fully bilingual, but did not wish to lose their English-speaking identity or cultural heritage.

The youth found that a lack of total fluency, or biliteracy, creates barriers when trying to build a future in Quebec and, almost universally, that their English-language elementary and secondary schools did not adequately prepare graduates for a bilingual life in Quebec. The government needs to provide access, outside of the core curriculum, to increased French language training at all levels, to any and all English-

speaking youth that feel they require it in order to become bilingual and to have an increased ability to participate in Quebec society.

Additionally, the youth felt that the history taught in schools was lacking in material that could foster cultural affirmation and identity, including material on the history of English-language communities in the various regions of the province and the contributions of English-language community members to Quebec society as a whole. *Creating Spaces* deduced that funding was necessary for projects that give English-speaking youth access to arts, culture and heritage that reflects the experience of their community. For English youth to feel truly at home in Quebec they need to feel as though they have a place in Quebec society and that their linguistic community is valued.

Furthermore, *Creating Spaces* recognized the need to overcome socio-cultural and linguistic barriers between English-speaking and French-speaking youth and work to increase collaboration and partnerships at the community level. It found that there is less interaction between the linguistic groups in more isolated regions and that, in certain regions, English and French school boards discouraged interaction to avoid conflict.

The government needs to work with community organizations as well as school boards and individual schools to create buddy systems between French and English institutions and pair an English and French school [and/or organization] to collaborate on community initiatives. The government's youth policy needs to include Quebec-wide projects and programs that are bilingual and youth-friendly, to foster exchange between English-speaking and Francophone youth; which can be done in ways that do not neglect the prominence of French in Quebec society.

In light of the dynamics mentioned above, the following are the QCGN's answers to the consultation questions surrounding civic engagement.

***Should the Youth Policy for the next 15 years focus on the priorities established by the government in this area of intervention?***

The QCGN believes that the priorities determined by the government in this axis are the ones in which the *Politique jeunesse* should focus on, so long as the solutions proposed and the programming funded to achieve these priorities is not done in a one-size-fits all format. There are cases where programming may already exist to achieve a certain priority referred to in the consultation, but if it is not tailored in a way that makes it accessible to and meets the needs of the English-speaking community it will not have an enduring impact on Quebec's English-speaking youth.

***Ultimately is volunteering or stipended volunteering likely to encourage young people to get involved in Quebec's communities and institutions?***

Volunteerism most definitely has a positive impact on encouraging youth to participate in the communities and institutions of Quebec society. Our community has a long history of volunteering as we have established our institutions. It is a tradition that is somewhat different from the majority community for a multitude of historical reasons that are well documented. We have understood that the earlier the desire to participate is fostered, the greater the chance it will become an ingrained part of one's adulthood. For this tradition to continue and grow, youth need to feel part of the society they are contributing to and feel a sense of community vitality. In the case of English-speaking youth the government must celebrate the efforts of our community in the past and find ways to make them feel

welcome in their society. In addition, the government must ensure that our community has the necessary resources to maintain its going concern. Likewise, volunteer boards of organizations must be encouraged to include youth among their ranks to ensure the opinions and ideas of society's future leaders are heard so that organizations can plan accordingly.

There is no doubt that the tendency to be active in one's community may prove to be a defining factor in future success and civic engagement.

***What are the best ways to encourage open and productive intergenerational dialogue, and what forums should be used to this end?***

Among *Creating Spaces* many recommendations was to encourage an intergenerational exchange of knowledge and skills to ensure cultural heritage, history, and the traditional arts are passed on to youth while equipping older generations with modern skill-sets (such as accessing the internet). This is equally important for civic engagement.

Many of the QCGN's member organizations, key partners and stakeholders, whether regional or sectoral, profess some element of intergenerational exchange in their youth mandates. One such member is the Quebec chapter of 4-H. These are community associations of boys and girls between the ages of nine and 25, working together with the guidance of voluntary adult leaders to unite youth and adults through self-development and community service programs.

A decade-long study commissioned by the 4-H National Council, outside of Washington D. C., titled: *The Positive Development of Youth: Comprehensive Findings from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development* found that 4-H'ers are about four times more likely to make contributions to their communities (Grades 7-12), two times more likely to be civically active (Grades 8-12), and two times more likely to make healthier choices (Grade 7) compared to their peers.

Funding for a multitude of intergenerational exchange projects across the province's different regions and in different sectors will help assure that the English-speaking community and Quebec as a whole stay strong and vibrant and that essential transfers of knowledge take place.

***How can we promote environmentally responsible behaviours within the context of volunteering and stipended volunteering or intergenerational activities?***

Environmentally responsible behavior is of crucial importance for the future of Quebec society and the world at large. It is the youth of today who will be responsible for fixing the environmental and climate change issues created by the previous and current generations of global decision makers and the average household.

One of the key ways in which youth can develop environmentally responsible habits in the context of volunteerism and intergenerational activities is to take steps to ensure that they foster an appreciation for their natural environment.

Planting trees, cleaning up litter, collecting unharvested foods from agricultural fields, growing a community garden or collecting items to be recycled or composted are all volunteering activities that have a positive impact on all Quebecers. These environmentally responsible projects are also an excellent example of projects suitable for building bridges between English- and French speaking Quebecers.

### ***What are the best ways to encourage active and participatory citizenship among young people?***

The best ways in which to encourage broad range and active civic engagement is to make sure that the structures are in place to target all facets of Quebec's youth. Whether it be visual minorities, youth with learning disabilities or youth that are extremely artistic, if society does not produce policies that youth feel are relatable or accessible to them they will not have the propensity to become active in society. The perceptions of youth corroborate this reality.

In its 2011 publication titled *Results-Based Public Policy Strategies for Promoting Youth Civic Engagement*, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), with offices in Los Angeles, New York City and Washington D.C., provides various examples of strategies the Government of Quebec could pursue for the purpose of promoting youth civic engagement.

The publication discussed four strategies, each with various examples. We have highlighted some of the most suitable examples below:

1. Promote youth voting by:
  - a. Organizing voter registration drives that promote youth voting
  - b. Organizing candidate debates with youth
  
2. Establish opportunities for authentic youth voice in government by:
  - a. Establishing youth advisory councils that work with legislators
  - b. Establishing programs that provide grants for youth projects and allow youth to review applications for these projects
  
3. Promote diverse forms of youth service by:
  - a. Creating programs revolving around civic engagement and integrate them into the academic curriculum
  - b. Developing a province-wide youth community service campaign
  
4. Promote policies to support youth engagement by:
  - a. Investing in training opportunities on subjects such as policy process, government structure, community resources and community organizing
  - b. Creating a youth charter of rights with input from a youth-led process

The CSSP also notes that for such strategies to be successful the implementation process must be well thought out. This means identifying expectations based on the resources available, determining the barriers to success, ensuring that there is a large breadth of contribution from and communication between an array of stakeholders, and that the funders or sponsors of a project are continually assisting those implementing it. Of equal importance is monitoring the programs to make sure that the desired results are transpiring, making the results publicly available, and having the resources to take necessary actions to improve programs.

### **Conclusion**

The current consultation is the culmination of a process that began in 2013 as a white paper under the previous government. In general the principles and four axis of intervention in the policy discussion paper



resonate: however, while the discussion document states that a one-size fits all strategy cannot be effective for minority youth, we see no evidence that adapted strategies are or will be being considered for our community. To our knowledge no English-speaking leaders or organizations with youth programs were formally consulted throughout the exercise. It is therefore understandable that we remain skeptical about our youth's place even when the document states that measures will be put forward in the Action Plan, in order to take into account the realities of the English-speaking a community as well as other linguistic and ethno-cultural communities. The case for support – statistics and analysis – are simply absent.

We are appreciative that the QCGN was invited to the consultation on September 24, nonetheless, we consider a more extensive discussion with English-speaking community youth stakeholders is needed to ensure that policy and programming reflect the real challenges and needs of our youth. There is an overriding conviction in our community that we have been systemically overlooked in all deliberations and development of provincial youth policies and programming. This begins with the first Politique québécoise de la jeunesse in 2001, the subsequent Plan d'action jeunes 2002-2005, the Stratégie d'action jeunesse 2006-2009, and the most recent Stratégie d'action jeunesse 2009-2014. Given that this new strategy will guide action plans, program development and funding over the next 15 years, it is essential that a cross- ministerial plan for English-speaking youth, including specific programs and targeted funding, be developed in consultation with groups and individual who have a stake in our youth and the long term vitality of our communities.

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