

For immediate release

CAQ Misses the Mark with Scheme to Abolish School Boards

Montreal – January 19, 2018 – The Quebec Community Groups Network is shocked that the Coalition Avenir Québec is resurrecting a much-maligned plan to abolish school boards. We are disappointed that the CAQ would display such little knowledge or understanding of Quebec’s English-speaking community and the vast importance we place on the control and management of our minority language schools.

“Our schools are cornerstone institutions of our community, not simply institutions that provide services in English,” commented QCGN President James Shea. “Yes, the purpose of schools is to provide the best possible educational experience for our students. But our English schools have the added responsibility of preserving and promoting the unique culture of our linguistic minority community.”

“The Government of Quebec cannot unilaterally decide how our community exercises management and control of our school system,” he added. Our community made its position abundantly clear, he noted, when we fought the current government’s Bill 86: An Act to modify the organization and governance of school boards to give schools a greater say in decision-making and ensure parents’ presence within each school board’s decision-making body.

In December 2016, dozens of community representatives came together at a press conference to denounce Bill 86, which sought to abolish school board elections and unilaterally increase the executive authority of the education minister. Backed by dozens of parents, elected school board officials and other community representatives, officials of the Quebec Community Groups Network, the English Parents’ Committee Association (EPCA), the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA), and the Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations (QFHSA) spoke out to enforce the constitutionally protected rights of our minority language community, to prevent these rights from being eroded or eliminated by government reforms.

In our brief to the National Assembly’s Committee on Culture and Education studying Bill 86, the QCGN argued the proposed legislation trampled on minority rights and should be scrapped. We emphasized that the provincial English public school system is a key community institution and

that the bill violates the bedrock constitutional rights of Quebec's English-speaking community to control and manage our own schools.

"Faced with the CAQ's proposition to abolish school boards, we firmly reiterate this position," said Shea, adding that "We are confident that any government that threatens the minority language educational rights of Quebecers will face an aggressive legal challenge."

The Quebec Community Groups Network is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 53 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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