

A New multi-year Official Languages Plan to Support Canada's English Linguistic Minority Communities
Quebec Community Groups Network
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Overview

This aim of this document is to outline the strategic priorities of the English-speaking Community of Quebec (ESCQ), and its high-level expectations from a new multi-year Official Languages Plan to support Canada's English linguistic minority communities. Sector and regional leaders have developed their own priorities and expectations, which the strategic priorities contained hereunder support.

Community Expectations from a New Multi-year Official Languages Plan to Support English Linguistic Minorities

A principle function of the QCGN is to provide the capacity for the community to identify its development priorities, and coordinate common action for their achievement. This process and the community's six strategic priorities are explained further in this paper. The QCGN is in constant contact with the community sector, institutions, and supporting stakeholders, collecting and collating needs and priorities. In addition to these ongoing activities, the QCGN hosted two community consultations in 2016 to gather input for ESCQ expectations from a new official language action plan. Here are the results of these consultations:

- **Change the way resources are channeled to our community.** Federal institutions are often challenged in taking positive measures to enhance our community. Solutions could include establishing a community-managed cross-sectoral development fund. Closer intergovernmental collaboration and transparency by placing separate resource envelopes targeted to the community within bilateral agreements has also proven very effective;
- **Index federal support resources, adhere to service standards, and require less onerous reporting.** Inflation is a fact of life for community sector organizations, but federal support is not indexed. For example, \$3.77 million is allocated to our community by Canadian Heritage's Cooperation with the Community Sector program; an amount set in 2008, which corrected for inflation in 2016 should be \$4.23 million. The community sector does not have access to cash reserves and lines of credit, so when application decision and fund delivery standards are not met, organizational survival is often at stake. Finally, our community supports the requirement to be accountable for public money, and requests that reporting regimes be rationally designed with the limited capacity of the non-profit sector in mind.

- **Finance national level representation for community sector organizations and provide resources to develop and maintain sector policy expertise where gaps exist** to ensure the ESCQ is able to participate as an equal at the national official languages table. This means resources to maintain policy expertise within sectors like youth, women, seniors, arts and culture, heritage, education, literacy, employment, economic development and entrepreneurship and access to justice;
- **Create thematic inter-institutional programs and resources that address specific community needs.** Communities do not function in silos, and are often frustrated when dealing with governments that operate within institutional boundaries. Although much effort is expended in ensuring inter-institutional cooperation and ‘horizontal coordination’, community organizations interfacing with the federal partner on complex priorities are often left frustrated and their needs unmet;
- **Invest in youth engagement and retention through a targeted fund.** Successive community development plans have underlined the importance of youth who will determine our community’s course and guarantee our collective vitality and development. A more coherent approach to this oft-repeated priority is needed and requires targeted funding.
- **Target outreach programs to cultural communities.** The inherent diversity of the English-speaking Community of Quebec, and the multiple identities of many of its members must be accounted for by the Government of Canada, which in partnership with the community sector must assist English-speaking cultural communities faced with the challenge of being minorities within linguistic minorities;
- **Specific federal programs to attract and retain newcomers to our community.** Newcomer integration is being conducted by the ESCQ’s community sector and civil society. These activities are being done largely within the rubric of other programs and activities, or through private resources. And not enough attention is being paid by the federal partner to the migration of English-speaking Canadians to Quebec as a method of ensuring community renewal. We propose that the new official language plan:
 - Require Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (IRC) to clearly outline the ‘art of the possible’ related to the attraction and integration of newcomers to English-speaking Quebec; and,
 - Contain a plan to make our community know in the rest of the country and promote migration to Quebec by English-speaking Canadians.
- **Rebuild community-based literacy.** Literacy in general must be approached in the widest possible way, and certainly beyond workplace skill development; and,
- **Enable federal research to support community vitality.** This means not only providing adequate funding, but also including the community as a real partner in research activities, while building internal community research capacity. The new official languages plan should ensure:

- Federally funded research that is able to enhance and support Canada’s official languages should include linguistic dimensions (i.e. oversampling). For example, CMHS housing data, and the labour force survey are excellent sources of data, but of little use because they do not regularly contain a language dimension.
 - Statistics Canada must receive discreet funding to fully support its official languages data collection and analysis.
 - All federal institutions should have access to a strategic research to support Part VII related research developed in consultation with the community;
- **Create a Part VII implementation fund to ensure federal institutions not specifically mentioned (and funded) in the new plan have access to resources to fulfill their Part VII commitments.**
Current strategies are built upon priorities, which are in turn usually assigned to specific institutions, who are appropriately resourced. Unfortunately, this leaves institutions not mentioned in official languages’ strategies without resources to fulfill Part VII commitments;
 - **Centralize authority to monitor the implementation of the official languages strategy.**
Responsibility for coordinating Canada’s official languages’ strategy must be accompanied by a centralized authority to ensure compliance from federal institutions. This is not a trait of the current approach with relies too heavily on encouraging and promoting coordination;

Background

Canada’s English linguistic minority population in 2011 numbered 1 058 250.¹ These official language minority communities (OLMCs) are all located within the province of Quebec, and are therefore referred to collectively as the English-speaking Community of Quebec. Individual members of this community are referred to as English-speaking Quebecers.²

The population of our community has been in steady decline since 1951, but has stabilized since 1991 at just over 13 per cent of Quebec’s total population. In absolute terms both English mother tongue and English FOLS figures have been slowly on the rise since a low-point in 2001.³ These positive numbers however hide the slow decay and decline of disappearance of individual communities like Trois-Rivières, and, “Quebec’s vanishing rural anglos (sic).”⁴

¹ The definition for English linguistic minority populations is contained in s.3 of the Official Languages (Communications with and Services to the Public) Regulations. Unless otherwise stated, population figures used in this document are sourced from Stats Can (2011 Census or National Household Survey (NHS)), and reflect First Official Language Spoken (FOLS). For a definition of FOLS, see <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/concepts/definitions/language05>

² The colloquial term ‘Anglophone’ is not used, and is not defined in federal law or regulations, since it fails to capture non English mother tongue members of English-speaking Quebec.

³ English mother-tongue reached its lowest point in absolute terms in 2001 (591 365), and as a percentage of Quebec’s total population in 2006 (8.2). It rebounded in the 2011 Census however, and now sits at 654 705 people, or 8.4% of Quebec’s total population.

⁴ Scott, Marion. *Quebec’s vanishing rural anglos*, Ottawa Citizen, 17 Feb 2011.

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/life/Quebec+vanishing+rural+anglos/4348870/story.html> accessed 8 Jun 16

English-speaking communities face challenges common to non-dominant minorities the world over, including: how to get positive attention from government and support that ensures substantive equity with the majority; and, how to integrate into the social, economic, cultural and political mainstream while maintaining a distinct identity. We are also a linguistic minority that happens to speak a dominant world language, and so unlike other Canadian linguistic minorities, language preservation is not an issue. But we exist in the only Canadian jurisdiction with a legislative and regulatory framework that actively suppresses our language in the public space, and controls access to vital community institutions like schools. And the ESCQ rests uncomfortably at the crossroads of the Canada – Quebec relationship within an official languages architecture that relies on federal, provincial, and territorial cooperation.

Finally, the ESCQ suffers from extrinsic myth, “...the outdated conception of the community as a homogenous and privileged elite”, which is fact, “...made up of a diverse set of “pockets” that, to varying degrees, find it challenging to maintain a level of vitality.”⁵

It takes courage and patience for policy leaders to study, understand, and devise ways to support the ESCQ. Nonetheless, Canada’s vision and national core value of linguistic duality from coast to coast to coast depends on the presence of vital official language minority communities in each province and territory. This means embracing the principle of equality, “...respect for the idea of minority status, both in the country as a whole and in each of its regions,” by all levels of government.⁶

The Priorities of the English-speaking Community of Quebec

Community Overview

The English-speaking Community of Quebec is a complex ‘community of communities’, characterized by its diversity, and variation of individual community needs. For example, 34 per cent of the ESCQ are immigrants who have arrived since 1971, and 38 per cent of community members are not English mother tongue. And while most outside observers might think of Montreal when considering the ESCQ, nearly 20 per cent of the community’s population live outside of the Montreal region and its institutional base. If considered independently, the 210,000 English-speaking Quebecers living in Quebec’s ‘regions’ are third in size only to Ontario and New Brunswick’s official language minority communities (OLMC). And 130,000 of these regional English-speaking Quebecers live outside of the Quebec City, Sherbrooke, and Gatineau Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA), in rural or small communities.

These community characteristic pose a number of challenges, like organization and capacity. English-speaking Quebec, which has only in the past few decades considered itself a linguistic minority, and has not developed capacity in a number of key areas, like youth, women, and post-secondary institutions. Moreover, English-speaking Montreal has not developed the infrastructure to work collectively, largely due to the prevalence of multiple identifies prevalent amongst this community. When asked the question, “Of which cultural community do you belong?” 30 per cent of Laval English-speakers replied ‘Greek’, and

⁵ Palmer, Lise and Tomlinson, Patrick. *The Implementation of Part VII Community and Social Stakeholders’ Perspectives: The English-speaking Communities of Quebec*. Report submitted to the Official of the Commissioner of Official Languages, October 2009. p.1

⁶ Book 1, General Introduction: The Official Languages, Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 1967. s.86.

22 per cent answered Italian.⁷ There is a long a complex history behind these multiple identities within English-speaking Quebec, which was traditionally the welcoming community to non-Catholic and non-French-speaking newcomers to the province. In any event, unless threatened, English-speaking Montrealers tend to act collectively within their own cultural communities

A number of myths surround our community; the idea of the wealthy, privileged minority is difficult to shake, despite the data.⁸ For example, the median income of English-speaking Quebecers is 11 per cent lower than the majority, and there is a four per cent higher prevalence of low income for community members based on the after-tax low-income measure (LIM-AT). Another challenge is a tendency of stakeholders not to take into account the variations of individual English-speaking communities. Sticking with LIM-AT data, the low income prevalence for English-speakers is 36 per cent in Joliette, compared to 18 per cent for the majority, in Cowansville 30 per cent versus 16 per cent and Montreal 20 per cent versus 16.4 per cent.

2012 – 2017 Community Priorities and Enabling Strategies

The ESCQ's priorities reflect a community attempting to ensure the survival of its unique identity and culture. English-speaking Quebecers are as distinct from Canada's English and Quebec's French majority as Acadians are from Québécois. And they are doing so in the only province or territory in Canada with a legislative and regulatory framework to suppress the use of its minority language in the public sphere. To realize the Canadian ideal of linguistic duality from sea to sea to sea, the Government of Canada must make a special effort to support English-speaking Quebecers, since, in the words of the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*:

“...language is much more than a simple means of communication, and culture is much more than the persistence of a few psychological traits of expressions of folklore. We feel it is unacceptable to consider the French language in Canada, or the English languages in Quebec, as a mere personal or family trait, encountered in church, in some associations, or at best in elementary school, but not elsewhere.

The life of the two cultures implies in principle the life of the two languages....at the practical level, an attempt to make every possible provision for cultural equality is primarily an attempt to make every possible provision for linguistic equality.”⁹

On the weekend of March 23-25, 2012, more than 180 members of the English-speaking Community of Quebec took part in a Community Priority Setting Conference. The conference was the culmination of the first phase the Strategic Priorities Forum that included 19 regional and sectoral consultations, five focus groups and an online survey of more than 500 English-speaking Quebecers, all of which sought the community's input on the priorities for a vital and sustainable English-speaking community. The following six priorities and implementing strategies were agreed to:

⁷ CHSSN *Community Vitality Survey*, April 2010. Slide 20.

⁸ See for example *The Vitality of Quebec's English-speaking Communities: From Myth to Reality*, a report of the Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages, October 2011.

⁹ Book 1, General Introduction: The Official Languages, *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, 1967. s.60-61

ACCESS TO SERVICES IN ENGLISH - Increased access to services and government information in English in all aspects of daily living is a pressing issue. The ability of individuals in our community to make informed decisions depends on our capacity to understand options and implications in English.

Strategy - Increasing access to services and government information in English in all spheres of daily living is a pressing issue for our community. The ability of English-speaking Quebecers to make decisions depends on our ability to understand options and implications in English. This need is strongest in the health and social service sector as well as in the support of marginalized English-speakers including low-income citizens, seniors, as well as individuals with disabilities.

COMMUNITY BUILDING - Developing relationships by fostering greater collaboration and networking among English-speaking organizations and the broader community, diversifying resources, and sharing and developing expertise will make our communities stronger.

Strategy - Strengthening relationships that foster greater collaboration and networking among English-speaking organizations, as well as developing partnerships with Francophones and the private sector are at the core of a vital English-speaking community. Sharing and developing expertise will build on the collective knowledge base of the community and diversifying funding sources will help ensure the long-term sustainability of organizations that support English speakers.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY - Greater access to employment and educational opportunities and higher levels of bilingualism will support the economic prosperity of English-speaking Quebecers thus improving the resilience of our communities.

Strategy - Achieving economic prosperity depends on greater access to employment and educational opportunities for youth and adults alike. Increasing levels of bilingualism across all generations will widen long-term opportunities for English-speaking Quebecers. Crucial elements to achieve prosperity include investments in skills training, entrepreneurship, the creative economy, literacy and lifelong learning.

IDENTITY AND RENEWAL - Nurturing a strong sense of belonging, expressing our identity, enhancing our visibility, and working towards a Quebec society that embraces diversity will ensure the renewal of our communities.

Strategy - Enhancing our visibility, sensitizing the Francophone majority to our reality, and working towards a Quebec that embraces ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity are essential steps towards building a more sustainable community. Arts, culture, heritage and media are vehicles for celebrating and forging our identity. Cultivating English-speaking Quebecers' strong sense of identity and belonging will attract newcomers to the community and enable them to envision a promising future in this province.

LEADERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION - Promoting leadership development at all levels, with an emphasis on youth engagement, and encouraging volunteerism will ensure we are an integral part of Quebec and Canadian society.

Strategy - Fostering strong stewardship within the community and its organizations and focusing on the renewal of leadership and volunteerism, with an emphasis on youth engagement, will nurture a more sustainable community. Ensuring political representation, recognition and support for our community as an integral part of Quebec society is dependent upon building stronger links with the Francophone majority as well as federal, provincial and municipal government officials and politicians.

STRONG INSTITUTIONS - Healthy institutions are the cornerstone of a dynamic community. Maintaining and supporting existing institutions and establishing new ones will strengthen our communities.

Strategy - Supporting strong institutions and strengthening the links between English-speaking Quebecers and those institutions will help insure our community's long-term sustainability. Institutions, for example elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools, linguistic school boards, hospitals, churches and community organizations are the cornerstone of a healthy and stable community.

The Community Development Priorities Process

The strategic priorities enunciated by the community in 2012 are kept 'evergreen' by the Priority Setting Steering Committee (PSSC), a committee of the QCGN Board. The purpose of the PSSC is to undertake a standing annual community consultation process to collect, analyze, prioritize and articulate the needs and the issues of the ESCQ and its constituents. The information obtained during this process is made available to the community sector and supporting stakeholders like federal departments and agencies.

Other community development priorities are identified and addressed within resources and capacity limitations through regular consultations between community actors and stakeholders.

Conclusion

The Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages, "...conveyed three important messages," in the preface of its October 2011 Report, *The vitality of Quebec's English-speaking Communities: From Myth to Reality*:

1. "Firstly, under the Official Languages Act, the federal government has a duty to support the development of both of the country's minorities, English-speaking and French-speaking.
2. Secondly, the government needs to recognize that since the realities and challenges experienced by the English-speaking and French-speaking minorities are sometimes similar but sometimes different, each minority must be treated in a way that takes its specific needs into account.
3. Thirdly, the government must ensure that federal institutions take positive measures to enhance the vitality of the English-speaking minority and support its development, while acting in accordance with provincial jurisdiction and powers."

These message maintain their relevance. The ESCQ is not participating as an equal partner in the official languages discussion at the national level, and it is not receiving the resources it requires to ensure its long-term viability. The Government of Canada can exercise leadership to address these problems. The culture of official languages must include the reflex to consult with and resource both of Canada's official language minority communities. Parliamentarians, Deputy Ministers, and Official Languages' Champions also demonstrate this reflex, get to know the ESCQ and its unique challenges, and not rely on myth and prejudice.

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