

QCGN Appearance before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages

**Opening Remarks
Ottawa, November 1, 2016**

The purpose of our brief time with you this morning is to provide Canada's English-speaking linguistic minority communities, the English-speaking Community of Quebec, a voice in what has apparently become a study on the federal government's current and future official languages' strategy. We are lucky to be accompanied by the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC), our leading economic development partner, and the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA), our community's public education voice. It is worth noting for the record that we were not proactively invited to appear before you today; we requested this time. And so I will not waste it.

On July 5, members of the committee were provided with the strategic priorities of the English-speaking Community of Quebec, and its high-level expectations from a new multi-year Official Languages Plan to support Canada's English linguistic minority communities. A detailed policy paper accompanied the priorities sent to you in July, and has also been provided to the Committee's analyst. These priorities and expectations were developed in consultation with the community sector, institutions, and supporting stakeholders.

We are asking for:

1. Changes in the way resources are channeled to our community, recognizing the challenges our community faces working within a framework that requires federal-provincial cooperation;
2. Indexed federal support resources, adherence to service standards, and less onerous reporting requirements to ease the burden on the community sector. We are pleased to note the advances being made on two of these points by Canadian Heritage.
3. Financing national level representation for community sector organizations and providing resources to develop and maintain sector policy expertise where gaps exist. English-

speaking Quebec is trying to engage in the national discussion with both hands tied behind its back.

4. Creating 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. We are pleased to hear Minister Joly indicate this will be an organizing principle in the new action plan.
5. Investment in youth engagement and retention and help us build youth sector capacity through a targeted fund.
6. Targeted 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;
7. Specific federal programs to attract and retain newcomers to our community. We need and want Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to fulfill its responsibilities to our community, and we believe they want to do more. Recent discussions with this department have been positive, and we hope to move concretely forward with them soon;
8. Community-based literacy to be invested in again. Literacy in general must be approached in the widest possible way, and certainly beyond workplace skill development; and,

9. Enabled 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.

10. 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.

11. Centralized authority to monitor the implementation of the official languages strategy.

Let me conclude by noting that our community 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 leadership to address this inequity begins with Parliamentarians like yourselves having the reflex to consult with both of Canada's official language minority communities, English and French. You must make the effort to get to know us, and the unique challenges we face. Do not rely on what you think you know, on the myths that surround English-speaking Quebecers. The QCGN is at your service to help you do this.

Thank you, we look forward to answering your questions.