

October 28, 2019

Dear QCGN Member,

We were saddened and deeply disappointed to learn last week of the decision of some members to withdraw from QCGN at a time when we should be focusing all our energy and resources on our significant policy differences with the Quebec government.

Before responding to allegations made by our former members, we wish to affirm that the QCGN has active networks, stakeholders, and partners across the province and the country and that we will continue to advocate for and represent the interests of all English-speaking Quebecers.

As a key advocacy voice for Quebec's official language minority community, our mandate is to speak in defense of the community when faced with policies and actions from government which are contrary to our community's interests.

We stand by our track record.

We have taken forceful and principled positions in defense of English-speaking community rights and in cases such as the securing of our institutional heritage and the design of health service guarantees under Bill 10. We have delivered.

By condemning Bill 21 (religious symbols) and helping to lead an engaged debate on Bill 40 (school board abolition), we are holding the Legault government and the Secretariat to account for its actions and practices in dealings with our community.

The response of the Secretariat to our opposition seems to be to reach out to community groups - third parties under its influence - encouraging them to destabilize the QCGN and advocacy functions in return for community development funding. The very fact of these groups are recipients of recent subsidies is indicative of damaging overreach on the part of the Government of Quebec and warrants rebuke.

Let us be clear: The QCGN is accountable to its members but its members in turn have an obligation to support and adopt policy positions in the broad interest of Quebec's English-speaking community.

We also wish to set the record straight on points raised in the various resignation resolutions received.

- The QCGN has never attempted to "centralize funding control". On the contrary this dispute has its roots in the insistence of these former members on a funding regime in which they would have had a prescriptive right to divide all additional Department of Canadian Heritage funding solely among themselves. The federal government insisted on working through a rigorous public

consultation process managed by the QCGN through the Priority Setting Steering Committee (PSSC) on a democratized evaluation of all of the community's needs and priorities prior to making funding allocations.

Far from taking control, the QCGN-run process devolved community priority planning to a wider group than our former members wanted.

- The assertion that the QCGN has exceeded its mandate attempts to deny the broad responsibility the QCGN has for policy and advocacy leadership for the official language minority community of Quebec. Even when narrow interests in our community may be under pressure from government to offer concessions or agree to compromises the QCGN often holds out for a principled rights-based solution.
- The QCGN has never blocked the participation of any of its member groups from Government consultations. From time to time Government departments consult the QCGN as to which groups may satisfy certain objective criteria set by that department for inclusion in some processes, and the QCGN in those circumstances identifies all qualifying entities. It may be easier for some constituencies to blame the selection process than to look inwardly for an explanation of why they may or may not have been selected by the department in question.
- The QCGN holds the Secretariat to exactly the same standard as should be applied to any government department. We have called out the Secretariat for its failure to employ universally accepted best practices in regard to public tender for contracts, transparent consultations with the community, and its requirement of quid pro quo political support from the beneficiaries of its largesse.
- The strategy of the Secretariat and the CAQ government is to undermine the legitimate leadership of the community in health, education and other fields. This attempt at destabilization is not limited to the QCGN. Furthermore, the Secretariat has sought to substitute itself as a voice and representative of community interests. The resigning groups' defense of the Secretariat in the context of these actions is particularly telling of their motives.

We have tried many times, and in many ways, to initiate constructive dialogue with both these groups and the government. But this was not the purpose of the campaign organized and run by agents and entities working in the interest of the Secretariat. There has been no good faith effort to ventilate or settle disputes, just as this unilateral resignation campaign is clearly not designed to enhance the solidarity of Quebec's English-speaking community at a time when our constitutional rights and values are under attack.

In summation, we deeply regret the departure of these groups, even though they represent a tiny proportion of Quebec's English-speaking population. While continuing to work with other groups in those regions and reaching out to individual English-speaking Quebecers, the QCGN will stand firm in its mission. We will not be bullied or silenced by surreptitious campaigns by the Government of Quebec to mute or silence the defense of our rights and needs and the inclusive Quebec we are committed to building.

The Executive Committee of the QCGN