

Quebec Community Groups Network Urges English-speaking Quebecers to Vote for Best Local Candidate

MONTREAL, September 17, 2021 – As Canadians head to the polls Monday, English-speaking Quebecers are confronted with an unprecedented set of proposed violations of our fundamental rights and freedoms. Unfortunately, few candidates and none of the main political parties have pledged to defend our community from these recent attacks – or to safeguard Canada’s linguistic duality.

Introduced by the Quebec government before the election call, *Bill 96, An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec*, plans to severely constrict our ability and our rights to receive services in English. Through a variety of measures, this legislation would discourage public servants and institutions from providing us with services in our own language.

Like with Bill 21, An Act respecting the laicity of the State, the Government of Quebec is preemptively invoking the notwithstanding clause in the Canadian Constitution to preclude any legal challenge to Bill 96, under either the Canadian or Quebec charters of rights and freedoms. Meanwhile, our educational leaders continue a court battle over *Bill 40, An Act to amend mainly the Education Act with regard to school organization and governance*. That legislation attempts to strip English-speaking Quebecers of our minority language education rights guaranteed under Section 23 of the federal Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

“The Government of Canada has a duty to protect the rights of all Canadians and maintain the integrity of our Constitution – but none of the parties and few of the candidate are speaking out or stepping up to prevent Quebec from trampling our rights,” says QCGN President Marlene Jennings.

As is our tradition, the Quebec Community Groups Network wrote [a letter](#) to each of the main federal parties asking them to reply to these concerns and to help counter other threats our community, to act to help arrest the rapid erosion of the linguistic duality that has long served as one of the foundation stones of our nation. Our goal is to advise and educate our political leadership and our community about the specific issues of importance to English-speaking Quebecers and the vitality of our communities. This time, we received only a single reply – from the Bloc Québécois. In its reply, the Bloc endorses the use of the notwithstanding clause to defend the rights of Quebec’s majority while condemning the use of the Court Challenges Program to defend the rights of Quebec’s minorities.

Despite prompting, neither the Liberal Party of Canada nor the Conservative Party of Canada provided responses to address our core concerns. Nor did the New Democratic Party which has, for years, supported extending the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101) to federally regulated businesses. The leader of the Green Party stated she opposes Bill 21 and Bill 96 – but has been contradicted by her party’s Quebec wing, which inserted other ideas regarding this sensitive issue in its provincial platform.

“None of the parties are showing the courage – or necessary vision – to defend our rights. Nor are there signs of any fortitude or leadership to stand on guard for our Canada. So we have no alternative but to urge all members of our community and all Quebecers to vote for the candidate in your own riding who you believe will best represent you,” Jennings says.

“All citizens have the right – indeed the civic duty – to vote. Who will lead the country depends on the results of individual races for the 338 House of Commons seats. Your vote helps determine which party will form the next government. But who represents you and stands up for your interests – whether in government or on the opposition benches – is up to you!”

The Quebec Community Groups Network (www.qcgn.ca) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 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.

For further information:

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