

Network News December 2017

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BONJOUR-HI TO 2018

**By Jim Shea
QCGN President**

Bonjour-Hi,

It has been busy month leading into the Christmas holiday break, one where outstanding items on QCGN's wish list – the creation of both a Minister and a Secretariat Responsible for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers – were granted before our community was caught in the crossfire of a mischievous elf.



With apologies to Clement Clarke Moore

*'Twas the month before Christmas, when all through the province
Two Solitudes were stirring, especially in the legislature;
Our community needs were communicated with care;
In hopes that our government soon would be there;*

*Our community was nestled all snug in success,
While visions of a secretariat danced in our heads;
And Kathleen in her 'kerchief, and Philippe in his cap,
Were hoping to settle for a short winter's nap,*

*When from the PQ bench arose such a clatter,
Anglos sprang from their nests to see what was the matter.
Away to the media, Lisée flew like a flash,
We tore open our newspapers, we all were aghast.*

*When, what to our wondering eyes should appear,
But a holiday break, and no motions till next year*

*Now, Philippe! now, Kathleen! now, Geoffrey and David!
On, Jean-François! on François! on, Gabriel and Manon!
Off to your ridings! Take a break from the squall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"*

Needless to say, the Bonjour-Hi motion that was passed unanimously in the National Assembly created considerable negative fallout. It was near impossible for our community not to take the motion as an affront. A lot of ink has flowed in the provincial, national and international press. The fallout has made Pastagate look like a picnic. Some of the diatribes were directed at the government – but unfortunately much of the negativity was directed back at our community which was an innocent bystander as the Parti Québécois attempted to use language as a wedge issue - again! The QCGN office even received calls from cranky Francophones complaining that we are the best-treated minority in the world and that if we are not happy living in a French province, there are nine other provinces to which we could move. In the wake of the motion, the QCGN wrote to **Premier Couillard**, to our 3 Amigos (**Kathleen Weil**, **Geoffrey Kelley** and **David Birnbaum**), to **Parti Québécois leader Jean-François Lisée**, and to the leaders of the **Coalition Avenir Québec** and **Québec Solidaire**. We expressed our tremendous disappointment. We told the Premier that his government had allowed itself to be outmaneuvered by a cynical wedge tactic. Lisée subsequently admitted to the media that the motion he proposed was a trap for Couillard. We found it hard to believe that the Liberals, who have shown more openness toward our community recently, were so easily duped. Since the motion required unanimous consent, the divisive and hurtful debate was completely unnecessary – even if the Liberals managed to ensure the word “irritant”, first used by **French Language Minister Marie Montpetit**, was removed from the watered-down version that passed unanimously. We told all of the party leaders that with one voice, the National Assembly had conveyed a strong and clear message that the simple speaking of English here is unwelcome. We said that such gestures of scorn are damaging to social peace and that our MNAs modelled divisive behaviour. We concluded that our government representatives can and must do better.

Bonjour Welcome

While the greeting Bonjour-Hi! was causing an unduly disproportionate disturbance in Quebec, many of our neighbours to the west would like to see it used more widely in Ontario. In reply to the hubbub in the Twittersphere, **Peter Hominuk**, Executive Director at **Assemblée de la Francophonie de l'Ontario**, tweeted that Franco-Ontarians are rather open to the #bonjourhi that provoked such controversy in Quebec. The French-language website **#ONfr**, which disseminates political news from Ontario and French Canada, interviewed several Franco-Ontarian leaders on this issue, some noting that it is one of the cornerstones of the concept of “active offer”. (Run by the educational television channel **Télévision française de l'Ontario**, a provincial Crown corporation, TFO is one of the few French-language broadcasters in Canada headquartered outside Quebec.) According to the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (OCOL), an **active offer** of service is an open invitation to the public to use one of Canada’s two official languages—English or French—when communicating with or receiving a service from the federal government. The active offer includes a bilingual greeting, such as “Hello! Bonjour!”, and visual cues, such as signs, that support this invitation. OCOL notes that bilingual greetings respect the language rights of the public to be served in the official language of their choice in designated bilingual offices and allows federal employees to promote Canada’s fundamental values of linguistic duality, diversity, inclusion and respect. AFO, our sister organization in Ontario, runs an ongoing campaign that encourages Ontario residents to make an active offer of service but using the greeting: Bonjour_Welcome. For more information about @Bonjour_Welcome, visit the **website** or the **Facebook page**.



Numerous members of the QCGN Board of Directors, senior staff and Network representatives were on hand November 24 for the realization of a long term strategic goal – the creation of a new structure in government to respond to the concerns of Quebec’s English-speaking community. The launch of Quebec’s first-ever provincial government office designated to look after the interests of our community took place at the historic **Morrin Center**, an institution of Quebec’s English-speaking community located in Old Quebec just few short blocks from the National Assembly. The new Secretariat Responsible for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers has been granted a start-up budget of just over \$1 million. The QCGN had proposed to the Premier’s office a Secretariat which would eventually be staffed by more than two dozen people—mostly English-speaking Quebecers who are knowledgeable about our community. While the framework for the Secretariat was much more modest than QCGN might have liked, as the community’s main interlocutor with government entities we fully expect that it will ramp up over the coming months and become a genuine asset that will provide serious and sorely needed policy input from our community into provincial government policies and programs. We look forward to working with our new Minister Responsible for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers, **Kathleen Weil**, and her new Assistant Secretary, **William Floch**, to build a robust and enduring Secretariat that will ensure the interests of our Community of Communities are better understood and acted upon by our provincial government partners. Read the government’s **communiqué**. Read our **press release**.

Floch to Lead New Secretariat



The QCGN welcomed the nomination of **William Floch**, who will lead Quebec’s new Secretariat for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers. As Assistant Secretary, Floch will act as a liaison between the Secretariat and other government ministries. Floch has spent two decades working for the federal government in the department of Canadian Heritage, most recently as the manager for Research and Policy Development. A graduate

of McGill University and Bishops University, Bill also managed the Official Languages Program for the Quebec region, and is a former executive director of the Townshippers' Association. Bill is very knowledgeable about our community and its challenges. He is also enthusiastic to get to work. “I’m very optimistic. There are really positive signs of openings and of support for this concept. I think there’s already a lot of very important work being done in some key sectors (such as) health and education,” Bill told reporters at the news conference announcing his appointment on Nov. 24. “It will be a matter of figuring out across the sectors and ministries where we can help the most and align with community needs and priorities. There are a lot of other people already working within the government structure for the English-speaking community and it’s a matter of connecting with them.” Bill finished his first week on the job speaking at a November conference in Gatineau on his new role bridging the community and the provincial government. “If you are going to be a bridge, sometimes you have to let people walk over you,” he joked, as he participated in a panel that examined the advocacy efforts that led to the creation of the Secretariat and the

QCGN-sponsored panel also featured Canada's former Commissioner of Official Languages **Graham Fraser** and Ontario's Commissioner of French Language Services, **François Boileau**. With vast experience in representing the interests of Canada's official language minority communities, the two agreed this was a significant and happy advance for both Quebec's English-speaking community and official language communities across Canada. Speaking from experience, Boileau advised Floch to be patient but relentless, and to be pragmatic, not dogmatic. Floch said that in his first week on the job, he had already received overtures from three offices within the government of Quebec seeking help or advice from the Secretariat. He noted there is a broad set of community and government needs and Job One will be to set priorities. And he reassured listeners that the Secretariat's objectives are non-partisan: "We want to ensure this survives whatever party is in government. That will be the test of success."

QCGN Meets with MNAs



A few days earlier before the launch of the Secretariat, QCGN was in Quebec City for our annual meeting with Members of the National Assembly. The event was a great success, due to the significant presence of QCGN members from all across the province. Some 50 representatives from the Outaouais to the Magdalen Islands, and from the Eastern Townships to the Abitibi, were on hand, along with most of QCGN's Board of Directors, to discuss the challenges and priorities of our community with our representatives in the National Assembly. We were delighted that **Premier Phillippe Couillard** dropped in. Last year before our annual meet with MNAs, the Premier held a historic sit-down meeting in his office with QCGN representatives. The positive fallout from that momentous meeting were clear as Couillard spoke briefly about his commitments to our community. Several ministers were in attendance. They included **Kathleen Weil** (our new Minister Responsible for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers); **Gaetan Barrette** (Health); **Geoffrey Kelley** (Native Affairs); **André Fortin** (Transport); **Pierre Arcand** (Treasury Board), as well as **Stéphane Bilette** (Small Business) and **Luc Blanchette** (Forestry and Mines). Plenty of other elected officials were also on hand, including my Gatineau area MNAs **Maryse Gaudreault** (Hull) and **Marc Carrière** (Chapleau). Quebec's regions were well represented by both QCGN's member and MNAs including **Martin Ouellet** from the North Shore; **Pierre**

significant English-speaking populations, but some have few anglophone constituents and the MNAs who attended from those constituencies were simply interested in the concerns of our community. Among Montreal-area MNAs, **David Birnbaum** (D'Arcy McGee) participated, with colleagues including **Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois** (Gouin); **Rita de Santis** (Bourassa-Sauvé); **Saul Polo** (Laval des Rapides); **Richard Merlini** (La Prairie); **Jean Habel** (Sainte-Rose) and **François Ouimet** (Marquette). Also on hand to discuss community priorities and concerns were **Jim Carter** from the **Community Health and Social Service Network**; **Jack Jedwab** of the **Association for Canadian Studies**; **John Buck** from the **Community Economic and Employability Corporation** (CEDEC); and **Richard Walling** from **Jeffery Hale Community Partners**. These were among a handful of community and sector leaders who participated in a first sit-down meeting with QCGN and Minister Weil Nov. 6, to discuss her new role and the Secretariat. As well as everyday concerns about government services in their regions and sectors, much of the evening's conversations revolved around the creation of the Secretariat for which the QCGN and community leaders hold high hopes. Our **op-ed** on the subject, signed by QCGN Vice President **Geoffrey Chambers** and I, was published that morning in **The Montreal Gazette**.

Raymond Th  berge to Take the Helm at Official Languages



An old acquaintance was also granted a wish in the lead-up to the holiday season. A few days ago, **Raymond Th  berge** officially became Canada's seventh Commission of Official Languages. I worked closely with Raymond when he was the Executive Director of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. He is a dedicated advocate for Canada's official language minority communities, and I look forward to working with him again. I got a chance to personally extend my congratulations to Raymond when I was on hand Dec. 5 for the start of his confirmation hearing before the **House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages**, which unfortunately was interrupted by technical problems with the recording equipment. My Board colleague **Eva Ludvig** was on hand when the **Committee reconvened** a few days later. He assured her that a visit to Quebec was a first order of business. The QCGN looks forward to his becoming better acquainted with Quebec's English-speaking minority community. We are eager to share with him the priorities and challenges of English-speaking Quebec. Read our **press release**.

New Senate Committee Members Committed to Visiting Quebec

I recently had the pleasure of speaking with the Honourable **Ren   Cormier**, the new Chair of the **Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages**. Senator Cormier, who hails from New Brunswick, reached out to QCGN to introduce himself. He assured us of his

confirmed the Committee will be continuing its study on the modernization of the Official Languages Act. This will include a visit to Quebec in April 2018. On the Committee are **Rose-May Poirier** (New Brunswick), who is the deputy chair; former chair **Claudette Tardif** (Alberta); **Raymonde Gagné** (Manitoba); **Paul E. McIntyre** and **Percy Mockler** (New Brunswick); **Lucie Moncion** (Ontario); as well as **Ghislain Maltais** and **Marie-Françoise Mégie** from Quebec. The Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages has the mandate to study all matters relating to official languages generally and matters relating to the application of the Official Languages Act (OLA) and the regulations and directives made under it. The Committee investigates the respect of Canadians' language rights and the principle of equality of the two official languages. It examines questions pertaining to the OLA and pays particular attention to the federal government's role and its commitment to advancing English and French in Canadian society and to enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities. On behalf of the QCGN, I re-affirmed our commitment to assisting the Senate Committee in their work, and added that QCGN looks forward to meeting Senator Cormier in person.



QCGN STAFF HOLIDAY BREAKFAST A SUCCESS



Fifty members and stakeholders of the QCGN were on hand for our Annual Holiday Breakfast and Open House. Among our guests were **Kathleen Weil**, the new Minister Responsible for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers, the Assistant Secretary of the Secretariat **William Floch** and frequent guest D'Arcy McGee MNA **David Birnbaum**. Also on hand were Pierrefonds-Roxboro Borough Mayor **Dimitrios Jim Beis**, **Bonnie Soutar** from the NDG Food Depot as well as several members of the QCGN Board of Directors and the staff and boards of our member groups. Our staff-led holiday tradition, which is coupled with a fundraising activity to support one of our member or stakeholder organizations, collected some \$400 as well as two boxes full of non-perishable items to support the activities of the **NDG Food Depot**, which works collaboratively with other community partners to address issues of food security in NDG and the surrounding areas. If you missed the event but want to show your support for the NDG Food Depot, you can donate online by clicking on the button below or drop off a donation of cash or food at 6450 Somerled Ave. in Montreal. To consult the wish list of most needed items, click [here](#).

[Donate to NDG Food Depot](#)

COMMUNITY MEDIA ALIVE AND THRIVING DESPITE CLOSURES

The **Quebec Community Newspapers Association** (QCNA) and **L'Association de la Presse Francophone** (APF) recently denounced a deal between Canadian print giants Torstar Corp. and Postmedia Network Inc. to swap newspapers and shut them down, effectively eliminating local newspapers and monopolizing withering advertising markets while cornering readers.

According to a **Postmedia press release**, the transaction involves 41 community and daily newspapers, eliminating in its wake an estimated 291 jobs. See coverage by **CBC**, **The Globe and Mail**, and **The Financial Post**. No Quebec papers were affected by the swap of community and daily newspapers. Postmedia operates The Montreal Gazette.

"Although this is not good news, and it's never easy to see print media close up shop while good people lose their jobs, it's important to remember what community newspapers stand for. Community media is vibrant, more important than ever, and will continue to act as models for the future of real journalism," says **QCNA President Steve Bonspiel**. "We tell our community's stories, highlight the accomplishments of our neighbours, and stand up for the truth through solid reporting and research. That will never change, but more and more we need the support of our communities and government to ensure our survival."

The announcement comes two short months after Canadian Heritage Minister Mélanie Joly, focusing on Canada's cultural strategies, declared that the government's approach to Canada's newspaper industry is not to "bail out industry models that are no longer viable." The Liberal government, she added, will instead support "innovation, experimentation and transition to digital."

This was a surprise to many, considering that Joly had conducted a year-long consultation on how to overhaul Canada's cultural policies and strategies, particularly in the context of community newspapers.

"It is deplorable to see so many English-speaking majority communities lose their newspapers. The layoff of 291 employees will have serious repercussions on the information sector and the community vitality of the targeted regions," said **APF President Francis Sonier**. "This situation should be a wake-up call for our governments, especially as a very strong reminder that minority community media are even more vulnerable and just as important, if not essential, to enable all Canadians from official language communities to fully live in their language."

The Quebec Community Newspapers Association provides advocacy, government representation, marketing and promotion for 31 Quebec's English-written community newspapers. Among other activities, it highlights newspaper challenges in official language markets and provides possible solutions and establishes partnerships that will benefit members and the association.

MADE IN ESTRIE ARTISTS NETWORKING EVENT A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

Submitted by Townshippers' Association

On Nov. 14, the **English-Language Arts Network** (ELAN) and **Townshippers' Association** partnered with the **Conseil de la Culture de l'Estrie** and the organizer of **Shazamfest** to host Made in Estrie, a networking evening aimed to bring French- and English-speaking artists together. The evening proved a resounding success!

Organizers and partners included, just shy of 50 people attended the 5 à 7 style event and 14 participated in a special edition "minute market".

What made this minute market special, you ask? Participating artists (writers, painters and musicians from the Estrie region) were paired with someone from the other language community and given a short amount of time to introduce themselves and talk about their craft. Each pair then presented the other's work to the group, using their second language.

came together and shared their art, their current projects, and some laughs.

The event was held at **Irisium** in Sherbrooke's downtown core, a recently opened creative space for musicians and visual artists. Its mission is to foster the development of musicians and artists by providing the facilities, services and support that will help them reach their full potential. This location was very much a natural fit for this networking activity.

Comments from participants have been encouraging. Moving forward, Townshippers' is looking forward to doing more in partnership with the Conseil de la Culture de l'Estrie. Many thanks to Guy Rodgers and the English-Language Arts Network for helping to get the ball rolling, by lending us their expertise and suggesting such a winning formula.

SIX COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE TOWNSHIPS HOST FESTIVE OPEN HOUSE

Townshippers of all ages are invited to celebrate the holidays with our community organizations in the **Marguerite Knapp Building** at the annual **Open House** Wednesday, Dec. 20, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Meet and mingle with the team behind Townshippers' Association, a non-profit organization serving the region's English-speaking community and learn about their many community programs, activities, and projects. Enjoy refreshments while getting to know five other community organizations that share the building including the **Lennoxville and District Women's Centre**, **Mental Health Estrie**, **Townshippers' Foundation**, **The Townships Sun**, and the **Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network** (QAHN).

Earn some extra "nice" points before the holidays by bringing new hats, underwear, gloves, socks, and scarves, and other warm articles of clothing, to donate toward **Mental Health Estrie's HUGS campaign**. Cash gifts of \$10 and more will be used to purchase warm essentials, and their donors will be issued a tax receipt.

QAHN will have copies of the latest issue of **Quebec Heritage News**, and, in honour of the festive season and the open house, will offer all new members a special holiday membership rate.

Visitors can also take advantage of some last-minute holiday shopping from Townshippers' Association's boutique and give someone a taste of the Townships with books, music, cards, and artwork from the **Townships Expression** collection.

Everyone is welcome to this free event at the Marguerite Knapp building, 257 rue Queen, Sherbrooke (Lennoxville), from 5 to 7 on Wednesday, December 20, 2017. If you're new to the area, this is a great chance to meet new people and see what these community organizations can do for you. Parking is available behind the building, accessible via Charlotte St.

For more information visit www.Townshippers.org or call 819-566-5717 (toll-free 877-566-5717).

VEQ HOLIDAY HAPPY HOUR RAISES FUNDS FOR HAMPERS

Submitted by Voice of English-speaking Quebec

Holiday Happy Hour at the Morrin Centre in Quebec City. More than 140 community members came together in the spirit of the holiday season and in support of the **Community Christmas Hamper Campaign**. The event was enjoyed by all and was successful in collecting funds and non-perishables for less fortunate members of our community. This year, the campaign will deliver holiday goodness to more than 200 families. Check out www.qchampers.ca for more details on this initiative.



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