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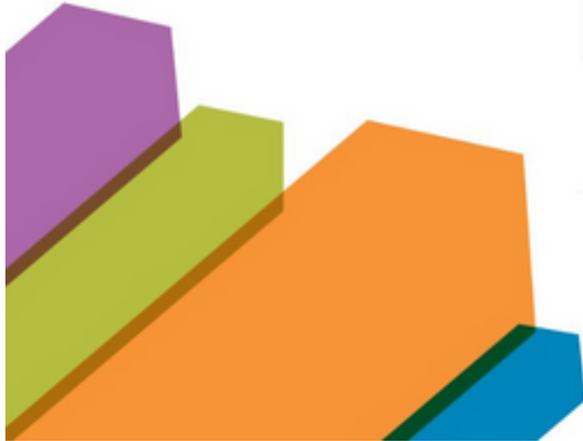


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Network News

The news that matters to
English-speaking Quebecers



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Vitally important to get out and vote in school board elections

From QCGN President Eva Ludvig



Given that it is already late October, many minds are focused mightily on an election. Yes, that election south of the border is important, but two days before that, on Sunday, November 3, there's another election, right here in Quebec: the election of school board trustees.

In many communities across Quebec, most positions on school boards have been acclaimed, or are even not being filled as of the September 29 deadline for filing nomination papers. But for the English Montreal School Board, Quebec's largest, full slates of candidates have been presented by the two people vying for the EMSB chairpersonship – incumbent **Joe Ortona**, and **Katherine Korakakis**, president of the English Parents' Committee Association of Quebec, and QCGN board member and vice-president. Both were recent guests along with me, on [CBC's Radio Noon with Shawn Apel](#).

There is a "use it or lose it" undercurrent to school board elections, given the Quebec government's desire, partially fulfilled with Bill 40, to do away with elected boards and replace them with centralized service centres. Court challenges to Bill 40 have so far resulted in a ruling that minority-language management of minority-language education is protected by the Canadian Constitution, but the government has appealed that ruling and the issue is not yet settled.

To the extent that higher voter turnout can demonstrate the value, indeed the necessity, of school boards, it is important for our community to get out on November 3 and vote. Unfortunately, as *The Gazette* [reported this](#)

[week](#), the revision process has been fraught with confusion and frustration, along with allegations that the system is deliberately complicated to lessen voter turnout. It now appears it is too late to have your name added to the voters' list if you're not already on it. You can, however, visit the [Elections Québec website](#) and follow the instructions. Given the time it is taking for responses, it would be best to file any queries immediately.

But if you are on the voters' list, please, please exercise your right to vote.

Schools are lynchpins of minority-language communities: OCOL

[In his most recent report](#), outgoing Commissioner of Official Languages **Raymond Th  berge** drew particular attention to the importance of schools for official-language-minority communities. "Minority language education is fundamental to the full development of OLMCs," he wrote. "Schools are undoubtedly the most important institution for their survival."

Th  berge's report also noted many of the challenges the English-speaking community of Quebec faces, including the lack of recognition by some in Quebec's political class that we are, in fact, an official-language minority at all.

As I said in our press release welcoming the OCOL report, "This ... underlines repeatedly what we and other English-speaking community groups have been saying for years: we are not the enemy of the French language in Quebec, despite the picture often painted by the CAQ government and certain elements of Francophone media. In fact, as the Commissioner's report emphasizes, the 1.25-million-member English-speaking community of Quebec and our institutions, including universities and CEGEPs, are part of the solution."



We also agree with the Commissioner when he says minority-language education is fundamental to the development of our official-language-minority community and that our schools are the most important institution for our communities' survival. It was reassuring to see M. Th  berge express some direct concerns about recent Quebec government policies in post-secondary education (higher tuition at English-speaking institutions for students from elsewhere in Canada; stiffer requirements for university undergraduates to master an intermediate level of French prior to graduation) that have been shown to cause harm to Concordia, Bishop's and McGill.

Bill 74, recently proposed legislation that will give the provincial government the power to restrict international student attendance at Quebec colleges and universities (in addition to federal moves to restrict the number of international student permits across the country), is vague about just how and where Quebec will act to curtail international students. English-speaking universities are on the alert for further moves that would disproportionately affect their enrolments and revenues.

CARE Conference heard similar messages



The QCGN was front and centre at the recent Community + Action + Resolve = Education (CARE) Conference, held in Montreal last month, which brought together about 200 community leaders from across Quebec to talk about strengthening the public English education system and supporting the broader English-speaking minority community.

Led by the **Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA)**, the two-day conference heard a variety of speakers underline the importance of working together to strengthen key institutions speaking minority community.

I had the honour of delivering a opening remarks to the conference, in which I was able to express some of the same thoughts as M. Théberge, **who also addressed the conference**.

"Leaders of our English education system have two complementary obligations," I said. "The first they share with education leaders from the majority community, to provide the best education possible for all students. The second is to leverage, protect and defend the unique language rights afforded to our linguistic-minority community. This they do not only for the benefit of their students, but as a responsibility to the minority community they serve."

The Conference underscored the need for continued collaboration among educators, government, and community stakeholders to address the complex challenges facing the English-language education system in Quebec. Key recommendations included improving teacher recruitment and retention, enhancing student engagement, and advocating for stronger government support.

It was an important moment, and I was glad QCGN played such a prominent role.

QCGN plays role in dialogue on employment challenges

The QCGN played a strong supporting role in helping **Employment and Social Development Canada** identify key themes of interest to our community at its annual dialogue session with the English-speaking communities of Quebec in Montreal on October 17.

By consulting our members and highlighting exciting initiatives coming from our community, we are able to contribute to several thematic presentations, the discussions on improving access to services, French-language training, and workforce integration for English-speaking Quebecers.

The event highlighted, among other things, regional disparities and the unique needs of rural areas, the demographic composition of the community, the challenges of early childcare and education, and the literacy-skills deficit that impedes employment. Conversations also addressed youth employment, adult literacy, and the need for stronger collaboration between government efforts and community priorities.



There will be further consultations as ESDC and other departments seek to make a more concerted effort to partner with the community sector to continuously improve federal programs to support Official Language Minority Community vitality.

Riley Dalys-Fine

Director of Community Engagement and Strategic Alliances

Bilingual municipalities are important community pillars

There was widespread disappointment when a Quebec Superior Court justice recently [denied a request from a group of bilingual municipalities](#) to suspend the application of parts of Bill 96 while they pursue a case against the language law, which they argue could cause them significant harm.

The merits of the over-all case have yet to be heard, and the case itself will continue. Bilingual institutions are important pillars of the English-speaking community of Quebec, and we are watching the case with interest and are firmly supportive of the municipalities' efforts, while we are also aware that injunctions to suspend parts of major legislation in the meantime are not always granted.

Sylvia Martin-Laforge

Director General, QCGN



Save the date

Back by popular demand, QCGN will be hosting a holiday party for members, partners and stakeholders once again this year. All the details will be forthcoming very soon, but for now, we invite to circle your calendar on this date:

Tuesday December 10, between 9:00 and noon.



We look forward to seeing you then to share in a celebratory toast for the season.

Thank you for reading our regular newsletter. For up-to-date news about the Quebec Community Groups Network you can visit our website at www.qcgn.ca or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram.



Quebec Community Groups Network

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