

Commissioner's findings confirm concerns of English-speaking Quebec

For Immediate Release

Montreal, November 7, 2013 – The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) wholly concurs with the Commissioner of Official Languages' assessment of the situation of Quebec's English-speaking community and the challenges it faces as well as his suggestion that the provincial government appoint a minister responsible for English-speaking communities.

In his 2012-2013 Annual Report released earlier today, Commissioner Graham Fraser states that since its election, the Parti Québécois has increasingly voiced concerns about the threat to the French language in Quebec.

"We agree with Commissioner Fraser that the French language is vulnerable as well as his assertion that there is a fundamental difference between the dominant role the English language is playing on the international stage and English as the language spoken by Quebec's English speaking community," said QCGN Vice-President James Shea who was on hand for the release of the report.

"The Commissioner has it right when he suggests that elected officials and federal employees need to understand that while our language is not threatened, our communities are," said Shea. "This is paradigm that everyone has to wrap their minds around if we want to ensure a peaceful co-existence between English- and French-speaking Quebecers."

A case in point is how federal official language obligations follow the delivery of federal services in areas such as immigration where Ottawa has devolved powers to the provincial government, points out QCGN Director General Sylvia Martin-Laforge. "Consequently the federal government fails to support the renewal of English-speaking communities because it cannot support the integration of English-speaking newcomers into Quebec society." The increasing delivery of federal services by third parties due to subcontracting, partnerships, and privatization and – most importantly in Quebec – devolution, is a QCGN concern that is broached by the Commissioner in his report.

And, as the provincial government tables its *Charte des valeurs québécoises* this morning in Quebec City, the QCGN also agrees with the Commissioner's assertion that linguistic duality should be a fundamental value in Canada and that linguistic duality and cultural diversity are complementary not contradictory, added Shea.

Inspired in part by the Commissioner's suggestion, and also by such provisions that have been set up in many other provinces for their French language minority communities, the QCGN is calling upon the Government of Quebec establish a permanent consultation mechanism to seek advice from English-speaking Quebecers on public policy issues related to our community, said QCGN President Dan Lamoureux, noting that a Network consensus on the issue at the QCGN's Annual General Meeting in the spring has been reinforced by members and stakeholders since.

"As we prepared for a possible late fall election, this was one of the Network's main demands and it will remain at the top of our agenda as we meet political parties and provincial representatives in the coming months," said Lamoureux.

Martin-Laforge notes that the Commissioner, whose report covers his recently completed seven-year mandate, has an excellent understanding of our communities and has affirmed that English-speaking Quebec is one of two national official minority language communities in Canada. "Commissioner Fraser, whose deep understanding of Quebec comes from his own personal experience as a journalist covering this province, has been incredibly astute in his observations about our community and valiant in putting his views forward. In that context we are pleased that he has just begun a new three-year mandate as Canada's champion for linguistic duality."

To read the Commissioner's report, [click here](#).

The Quebec Community Groups Network (www.qcgn.ca) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 41 English-language community organizations across Quebec. Its mission is to identify, explore and address strategic issues affecting the development and vitality of English-speaking Quebec and to encourage dialogue and collaboration among its member organizations, individuals, community groups, institutions and leaders.

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