

For immediate release

Future of English-speaking Quebecers is core element for Modernization of Official Languages Act

Ottawa –May 28, 2018 – The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) spoke up today as part of the Modernization of the Official Languages Act.

“The Act is a lifeline for English-speaking Quebec,” QCGN President Jim Shea told a hearing of the Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages. “The Act is the only language rights legislation that protects the interests of English-speaking Quebecers as a community. It sets out quasi-constitutional rights for English-speaking Quebecers, including the right to access federal services in English, the representation of English-speakers in the federal public service, and those workers’ right to work in English.

“Further, it provides the framework for much-needed financial support for the community’s institutions and networks.”

However, QCGN Vice-President Geoffrey Chambers added, “as an official language minority, the English-speaking community faces similar challenges to those faced by the French-speaking minority communities.” In 2011, Chambers recalled, the Standing Committee recognized the English-speaking community of Quebec as part of a “unique social, political, economic and cultural context” deserving of recognition. “This unique context must be taken into account in any discussion on the modernization of the Act,” Chambers said.

English-speaking Quebecers face a degree of economic exclusion not faced by French-speakers outside Quebec, he said. English-speakers have a lower median income and a higher unemployment rate than their French-speaking counterparts in Quebec. Aside from New Brunswick, Quebec is the sole province where the linguistic minority has a lower median income than the majority.

QCGN Board Member Eva Ludvig told the committee that specific measures are required to build capacity within the English-speaking community in Quebec to speak and act with a full and influential voice at the national level. Members of the English-speaking community within Quebec currently constitute more than half the minority-language population across Canada.

However, she said, English-speaking Quebec “is not currently resourced to equally participate in national level official languages’ discussions.” Ludvig’s background includes two decades as the Quebec Representative of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

The Quebec Community Groups Network is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 56 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.

[Click here](#) to read the Executive summary submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages: Study on Canadians’ Views about Modernizing the *Official Languages Act*

[Click here](#) to read the complete brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages Study on Canadians’ Views about Modernizing the *Official Languages Act*

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