

QCGN Calls on Federal Parties and Candidates to Support the Language Rights of English-speaking Quebecers

MONTREAL, August 16, 2021 – With Canadians scheduled to go to the polls September 20, the Quebec Community Groups Network calls on all federal parties and candidates to commit to support the language rights of English-speaking Quebecers.

“We are opposed to the Government of Quebec’s pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause to suspend the fundamental freedoms, legal, and equality rights of its citizens under *Bill 96, An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec*,” commented QCGN President Marlene Jennings. “The Government of Quebec is proposing to create what we are calling a Charter-free zone that would make the National Assembly – not the courts – the arbiter of the balance between collective and individual rights and freedoms.”

“We believe it is the Government of Canada’s obligation to support the Constitutional rights of all Canadians,” she added: “We expect the federal government to fulfill its solemn duty to protect and defend our rights.”

English-speaking Quebecers are also worried about the path proposed under Bill C-32, which would amend the Official Languages Act. The federal bill died on the Order Paper when the election was called.

“The QCGN is concerned that federal parties appear to be abandoning the equality of Canada’s two official languages, in favour of an approach focused solely on the protection and promotion of French,” said Jennings: “Federal elected officials seem to have forgotten that the protection of English and French minorities is a supporting wall of Confederation. We are disturbed by proposed measures that would likely disadvantage English-speaking Quebec when it comes to federal support for Official Language Minority Communities.”

“English-speaking Quebecers are also wary of proposals to extend language rights only to Francophones dealing with federally regulated businesses in Quebec,” she said. “It is essential that federal parties and candidates support the right of English-speaking consumers and workers to communicate with these businesses in the official language of their choice.”

The QCGN is calling on all federal parties and candidates to:

- Unequivocally support Canada’s linguistic duality as a pillar of the country from sea to sea to sea;

- Recognize that Official Language Minority Communities, including Quebec’s English-speaking community, continue to be vulnerable, and pledge that both communities will be treated equally under the law and will receive federal support no matter where they are located in Canada;
- Commit to the equality of language rights and obligations in all areas of federal jurisdiction across Canada;
- Actively support the Constitutional rights of all Canadians, no matter where they reside in Canada; and
- Pledge to ensure that English-speaking Quebecers are equitably represented in federal institutions in Quebec outside the National Capital Region.

Over the coming days and weeks, the QCGN will consult members and stakeholders across our many regions and sectors and poll them about their concerns. Once we have gathered and distilled their input, we will write to all of the federal parties to seek their commitment to support the concerns of Quebec’s English-speaking community and pledge for positive change. We will also urge members of our community to question candidates about these matters on the campaign trail.

The Quebec Community Groups Network 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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