

[Network News](#)[View this email in browser](#)

Working  
Together

Travaillons  
Ensemble

## WE HEAR PREMIER LEGAULT'S HOSTILE AND INHOSPITABLE MESSAGE LOUD AND CLEAR

By Marlene Jennings  
QCGN President



The last year, and particularly the last few months, have been tough for our community as the Coalition Avenir Québec seems intent on doing its utmost to methodically weaken the rights and institutions of English-speaking Quebecers.

Over and above Premier **François Legault's** limiting notion of an historic English-speaking community, we learned this past weekend that the Minister of Higher Education is putting the brakes on a badly needed expansion of overcrowded Dawson College and asking the college to downsize its plans. (Read our [press release](#) and coverage by [Journal de Montréal](#) and [CTV Montreal](#).) This at a time when the government is planning to impose quotas on enrolment in English-language CEGEPs. (Read commentary in [Le Devoir](#).)

Without consulting our community, last week the CAQ cabinet named a new assistant deputy minister responsible for the English-language educational network as well as intercultural and Indigenous relations – the most senior bureaucrat charged with services to English-speaking Quebecers. The chosen candidate, a career civil servant, has no discernable knowledge of or experience the English-language education network. (Read QESBA [press release](#) and coverage in [Montreal Gazette](#).)

This are the last two salvos in a long line of blows to our community. Less than two months ago, the CAQ gutted the *Provincial Committee for the Provision of Health Services and Social Services in the English Language* that is responsible for advising the government on the delivery of services to English-speaking Quebecers. It is now seeking to replace members with government appointees who are less challenging. (Read QCGN [press release](#).) The government has taken this problematic pivot at a time when regional Access Programs reviewed by the disbanded committee are sitting on the minister's desk awaiting approval by the minister and then cabinet before they can take effect. This program lays out what services English-speaking Quebecers have a right to access in any given region.

And all of this is happening as the government prepares to pass Bill 96 – legislation that proposes to enforce and reinforce the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101). The preemptive use of the notwithstanding clause in this controversial bill would constitute the most sweeping override of human rights and freedoms in Quebec and Canadian history, trampling on the rights of all Quebecers.

including judges, teachers, and police officers. That led to the removal of an elementary school teacher in western Quebec from her teaching position in December because her hijab contravenes the law. Since the incident, polls indicate that support for the bill has dropped from about two thirds of Quebecers to a little more than half and has spurred municipalities from across Canada to pledge support for a legal battle against the law.

It is worth noting that the Premier retained responsibility as Minister Responsible for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers. Meanwhile his minion **Christopher Skeete**, Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier for Relations with English-Speaking Quebecers, is doing little or nothing to represent our community in government. Representing the government to the community and not the community to government, he has been an apologist not to say a cheerleader for all these fundamental changes that are extremely detrimental to Quebec's English-speaking communities and the institutions that support us.

This is all sending a hurtful and exclusionary message to members of Quebec's English-speaking minorities and other minority communities to either assimilate or go away. Premier Legault is making it more and more clear that all minorities in Quebec must adopt the French language and Quebecois identity or they are not welcome here.

We hear Premier Legault's hostile and inhospitable message loud and clear: assimilate or be gone. We do not believe this is the kind of society the vast majority of Quebecers have built and want to live in.

## Update on Bill 96

Tomorrow the National Assembly's **Committee on Culture and Education** returns to its clause-by-clause study of **Bill 96, An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec**. The QCGN continues to monitor the hearings to understand and react to changes to the proposed legislation as it is modified. You can find the amendments to Bill 96 and details of future proceedings on the committee's **webpage** on the National Assembly website.

Meanwhile our community's campaign to react to Premier **François Legault's** notion of an "historic English-speaking community" has gained traction and we hope to have more support before the National Assembly reconvenes. Our **open letter** to Premier François Legault, which has now been signed by more than 4300 Quebecers, and the **companion resolution**, has been endorsed by more than 50 groups. These messages to the Premier and our elected officials state that English-speaking Quebecers are full and contributing members of Quebec society and that any attempt by the Government of Quebec to define the English-speaking Quebecers as an 'historic' community or limit their right to receive government communications and services in English is profoundly objectionable. Consult the list of supporters on the **QCGN website** and read our **press release**.

I strongly encourage you and your organizations to get behind this campaign. If your group would like to sign the resolution, please contact me at [sylvia.martin-laforge@qcgnc.ca](mailto:sylvia.martin-laforge@qcgnc.ca).

## Celebrating Black History Month

I am thrilled that I was selected as one of **2022's CBC's Black Changemakers** joining an impressive group of individuals whose efforts to make a change are bringing about a meaningful impact and inspiring others across the province. I want to congratulate my fellow honourees who were selected from among more than 200 nominations. The 28 Changemakers were revealed during a virtual online celebration hosted by CBC Daybreak's **Sean Henry**. Other honourees include:



Guedwig Bernier, Herby Whyne, Jade Parkinson-Gayle, Jamil Springer, Jamilah Jean, Joanna Kanga, Keithy Antoine, Kimble Sherwood, Laurent Lafontant, Leo Scantlebury, Loreena Gabriel, Mubeenah Mughal, Renzel Dashington, Stephen Hennessy, Steve Cheldy Assoé, Tarah Paul, Temilade Akin-Aina and Mélanie Valcin. Profiles of the winners will be online on **CBC Montreal** starting Feb. 1. Stories and interviews will also be featured throughout Black History Month on CBC Radio and TV.

Meanwhile, tomorrow **February 1 at 7 p.m.** and again on **February 10 at 7 p.m.**, I will be moderating a workshop that celebrates Black contributions to the history of Quebec being presented by the **Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations** in collaboration with the **Community Learning Centre Initiative** (CLC) of **LEARN Quebec** and the Committee for the Enhancement of the Curriculum of the History of Quebec.

Guest **Dr. Dorothy Williams**, PhD, of Concordia University, and **Linton Garner**, co-creators of **blacbiblio.com**, will offer presentations on **The ABC's of Canadian Black History Kit** which brings to life the personalities and events omitted from the pages of textbooks because their role in Canadian history was considered historically insignificant. Each letter of the alphabet features a person, place, or event with their historical relevance. The presentation will be followed by a question-and-answer session. To register, and for more information, visit [www.learnquebec.ca/qfhsa-bhm](http://www.learnquebec.ca/qfhsa-bhm).

## GASCON CASE: PARTIAL VICTORY FOR FRANCOPHONES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

The federal government failed in its linguistic obligations by signing an agreement without taking into account the negative impact it was likely to have on the French-speaking linguistic minority. This is what the Federal Court of Appeal concludes in a judgment rendered last Friday which partially reverses the decision of Judge Gascon in 2018.

The Quebec Community Groups Network, which was an intervenor in the case, is proud to have supported the Francophone community of BC. "But this is not a complete answer to the problems in Part VII of the Official Languages Act which needs to be amended so that we don't just end up back in court," said QCGN President Marlene Jennings. "Greater accountability measures, clearer requirements regarding linguistic clauses, clearer definition of positive measures, and explicit consultation requirements are all still needed."

"We are also quite aware that the Appeal Court's decision was based on the current Official Languages Act and we remain quite concerned about the applicability of this decision in Quebec-Canada bilateral agreements under an asymmetrical Act proposed by Bill C-32," she added. "There are a lot of balls in the air right now regarding language rights for English-speaking Quebecers, so the QCGN will take its time studying the judgment."

In 2008, the government signed an agreement to transfer responsibility for providing employment assistance services and programs to the provinces. The **Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique** (FFCB) contested the transfer, arguing that this had the effect of considerably reducing access to employment services in French. The FFCB argued that the transfer contravened the linguistic obligations, but Judge Denis Gascon rejected their claim.

On Friday, the Federal Court of Appeal partially overturned the Judge Gascon's decision concluding that the federal government should not have signed this agreement knowing the negative impact it was likely to have on Francophones in British Columbia.

The Commissioner of Official Languages, Raymond Thériège, a co-complainant in the case, said this decision gives "momentum and strength" to the Official Languages Act.

"I am pleased that today the Federal Court of Appeal has granted my appeal, but more importantly that the judges have restored the rule of law by finally giving full force to Part VII of the Official Languages Act," Thériège said in a **press release**. "With this decision, the Federal Court of Appeal has given to Part VII a scope that reflects the legislators' intent to enhance the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada and support their development."

Consult the Court of Appeals **decision**. Also read this **backgrounder** by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, reactions by the **Fédération des francophones de la**

## CONSULTATION ON RENEWAL OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES HEALTH PROGRAM

Health Canada is conducting a **public consultation** to learn about personal experiences of English-speaking Quebecers in accessing health services in the official language of their choice and to know respondents' interests for the 2023-2028 phase of the **Official Languages Health Program** (OLHP).

The OLHP, launched in 2003, aims to improve access to health services for official language minority communities, which includes English-speaking Quebec. The program involves the training and retention of health professionals; health networking; and health services access projects.

The information collected by Health Canada will be analyzed and will be the subject of a consultation report, which will be shared online. The report will be part of a set of documents that will be used (in addition to a consultation report with stakeholders, the evaluation report of the Action Plan for Official Languages, a public opinion research report, various research documents, etc.) to guide Health Canada's reflections on the future of the program and on the program's priorities during the 2023-2028 phase.

Individuals are encouraged to complete this **online questionnaire**. Your comments are critical and will guide Health Canada's follow-on conversations with funding recipients, government officials, health care institutions and groups representing official language minority communities.

## NEW BILL PROPOSES NATIONAL AND REGIONAL STUDENT OMBUDSMEN

Although the QCGN is mainly focussed on Bill 96 and is awaiting federal language legislation, there are many other legislative initiatives important to English-speaking Quebec. One of them is *Bill 9, An Act respecting the National Student Ombudsman* which proposes to replace the existing complaint processing procedure for school service centres, establishing a National Student Ombudsman. The proposed legislation, which is also being examined by the National Assembly's Committee on Culture and Education, seeks to standardize the complaints procedure to ensure that students' rights are respected. QCGN recently partnered with the **Quebec English School Boards Association** (QESBA) and the **English Parents' Committee Association** (EPCA), in obtaining advice from our legal counsel **Marion Sandilands** on Bill 9 to examine the impact the proposed legislation would have on the education rights of English-speaking Quebecers. QESBA and EPCA appeared before the Committee's special consultation and public hearings on Bill 9 on January 18. Consult their briefs and the National Assembly site [here](#). You can also watch their presentations to the Committee [here](#).

## SEEKING ENGAGED INDIVIDUALS FOR PROVINCIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Just before Christmas the provincial government eviscerated the Provincial Access Committee aka *the Provincial Committee for the Provision of Health Services and Social Services in the English Language*, terminating the mandates of its members on December 30, 2021. It is now seeking to replace them.

Having set aside the previous process whereby the government had to select candidates proposed by the community through the Quebec Community Groups Network and the **Community Health and Social Services Network** (CHSSN), the provincial Ministry of Health and Social Services has published a **Call for Expression of Interest** for individuals interested in sitting on the committee.

While we are deeply disappointed that the government has set aside this process, the QCGN

own language. We are undertaking to raise awareness of the call for candidates, and we plan to support and encourage qualified individuals in coming forward.

(See our [press release](#) and coverage by [Global Quebec](#), The Sherbrooke Record [here](#) and [here](#) and the [Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph](#).)

Candidates must complete [this form](#) and submit it before **Saturday, February 5 at 5 p.m.**

Credentials, letters of recommendation, and other supporting documents may be attached. In the meantime, the minister is creating a selection committee composed of the secretary of the committee, a former member of the Provincial Advisory Committee or a current or former member of a Regional Access Committee, and an employee or board member of a provincial organization defending the interest of English speakers in the domain of health and social services. The committee will evaluate candidates with respect to their knowledge of health and social services; their understanding of cultural, historic, and linguistic issues of Quebec's English-speaking community; their understanding of the issues of the community with regard to the offer of health and social services; as well as the organization of the public network and its governance.

The committee will then submit a report to the minister with a list of candidates considered apt to be committee members. There must be at least two candidates for each seat to be filled. The minister will appoint members considering their place of residence as follows: Montreal (2); Laval (1); Montérégie (1); Estrie (1); Outaouais (1); all other 11 regions (5). At least one of the above must be a physician who has practiced in a public institution or be a professional or a middle manager who is or has been employed by a public institution. One member must be from an Indigenous community.

If you or someone you know is interested in applying and would like QCGN's support, please contact me at [sylvia.martin-laforge@qcgnc.ca](mailto:sylvia.martin-laforge@qcgnc.ca).

## YOUR VOICE MATTERS: TAKE OUR ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN ENGLISH SURVEY!

Got four minutes? The QCGN wants to hear your opinion. This month, we're asking our network to share their experiences – good and bad – of using Quebec government websites in English.

Why are we doing this? It depends how you look at it. First and foremost, the context of Covid-19 has made equitable access to online services more important than ever. Asking our network to share their recent experiences is a critical first step in better understanding our community's access to online services in English. A step we intend to build on with more in-depth research, including a population survey that is representative of Quebec's English-speaking community.

More broadly, initiatives like this one tie into a larger goal of creating a more nuanced picture of what English-speaking Quebec looks like. Over the next three years, QCGN will focus on defining, developing, and implementing a long-term information strategy and plan designed to achieve our objectives in the management and dissemination of knowledge, information, and data. By developing this information strategy, we hope to foster a greater understanding of the vitality issues and challenges of English-speaking Quebec. This will allow the community and its stakeholders as well as political partners to better understand the vitality challenges of English-speaking Quebecers, track the effectiveness of public investments, and identify gaps in community capacity.

We invite you to complete our four-minute [survey](#) now and to share the link (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/justice-survey-1>) widely within your networks. Participation is anonymous and confidential. While each person may take the survey only once, the only prerequisites for participating are that you must live in Quebec and have a preference for accessing public services in English.

The survey will remain open until February 28. Results will be shared here in a future edition of Network News. We thank you for your time.



As opposition and concern grows over Bill 96, An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec, the Quebec Community Groups Network held another in its series of webinars to help English-speaking Quebecers understand their language rights. The latest in QCGN's series of public information events featured former senator and journalist, the Honourable **André Pratte**, and independent journalist, **Christopher Curtis**. In a discussion moderated by the Honourable **Joan Fraser**, also a former senator and journalist as well as a member of the QCGN's Board of Directors, our guests provide valuable insights into some of the legislation's more controversial elements. View the webinar by clicking on the video above or on QCGN's YouTube channel [here](#) where you can also find our [playlist](#) of past Language Rights webinars.

## The Fate of Canada: A Conversation with Graham Fraser



Last week, the former Commissioner of Official Languages **Graham Fraser** presented a webinar for the **McGill Institute for the Study of Canada** about his new book "*The Fate of Canada: F. R. Scott's Journal of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 1963-1971.*"

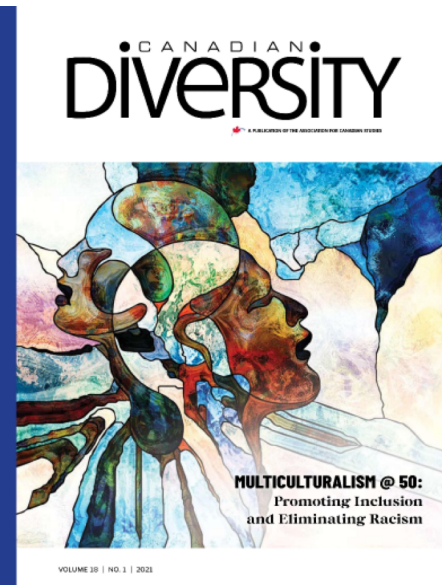
From 1963 until 1971, a group of distinguished Canadians wrestled with the language conflict that ran the risk of tearing the country apart. Among their ranks, F.R. Scott – a poet, intellectual, constitutional expert, human rights activist, and law professor – kept diaries that recounted the meetings of one of Canada's most significant royal commissions.

"The Fate of Canada" introduces readers to Scott's biography, puts his diary entries into the political context of the time, and identifies the people he met and the places he visited during the hearings of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. Scott's journal entries recording the earliest meetings convey optimism for a bilingual Canada. As the years pass, however, he becomes increasingly concerned that bilingualism is in danger, and Quebec's English community threatened. His remarks convey a sense of humour and

insight into the inner life of one of twentieth-century Canada's most significant intellectuals, and a royal commission that shaped the nation's language policy for decades to come. To purchase a copy of Graham's book, click [here](#). View the webinar [here](#) and consult the list of [upcoming events](#) including the 2022 Mallory Lecture "When Injustice is Fully Bilingual" by Montreal Gazette and Le Devoir columnist **Emilie Nicolas** that will take place on **Tuesday, February 15 at 4 p.m.** Nicolas, who is a consultant and public speaker on public policy, equity, human rights, international cooperation, race and gender issues, will explore the impact of the French-English duality on social movements that advocate for decolonization, antiracism and social justice in Canada. She will discuss how the competing nationalist discourses often leave "others" stuck between a rock and a hard place — and what strategies can be put forward to escape fully bilingual injustice.

## ACS Magazine Celebrates 50 Years of Multiculturalism

The [Association for Canadian Studies](#) has just released an issue of *Canadian Diversity* that examines the 50th anniversary of multiculturalism in Canada. Entitled *Multiculturalism @50 and the Promise of a Just Society*, this edition explores the roots, characteristics, and structural fault lines of Canadian multiculturalism and outlines the reframing required if the policy hopes to live up to its initial promise of delivering a just society. Guest edited by eminent philosopher **Will Kymlicka**, Canada Research Chair in Political Philosophy, contributors include Raymond Théberge, Jennifer Elrick, Cecil Foster, Miriam Taylor, John Berry, Jean-Philippe Warren, Ratna Ghosh, Daniel R. Meister, Varun Uberoi, Benjamin L. Berger, Shibao Guo, Lee Blanding, Jeffrey G. Reitz, and Jean Augustine. Click [here](#) to download a free copy.



*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](http://www.qcgn.ca) or follow us on Facebook and/or Twitter.*

---

*Copyright © 2022 Quebec Community Groups Network, All rights reserved.*

Want to change how you receive these emails?  
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)

