

QCGN calls for productive dialogue with English-speaking community

For Immediate Release

Quebec City, April 11, 2013 –English-speaking Quebecers are opposed to Bill 14 and believe it should be scrapped. But that does not mean our community does not want to continue dialoging to bridge the gulf of misunderstanding that persists between the Government and its English-speaking minority. That was among the key messages the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) delivered to the Committee on Culture and Education that is studying Bill 14.

“More coercive measures will not promote or protect the French language,” said QCGN President Dan Lamoureux, noting that the government is once again failing to distinguish between English-speaking communities and the threat of English as a global language of commerce and mass culture. “English-speaking Quebecers are not a threat.”

Lamoureux noted that, if passed, Bill 14 would restrict the right of municipalities and their citizens to decide how their own taxpayers will be served. It would revoke the right for French-speaking military personnel who may be transferred to other provinces to send their kids to English schools. It would place a greater burden on all small businesses – French and English – that will have impacts ranging from some enterprises deciding not to expand to others deciding to go to another province where the cost and irritants of doing business are less onerous.

“But our deepest concern is the proposed change to the preamble of Quebec’s Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms contained in the bill,” said Lamoureux, noting that Bill 14 does not fix problems. It creates new ones.

“Bill 14 attempts to create a common identity by coercion,” commented lawyer Michael Bergman, who sits on the QCGN’s Justice Reference Committee, noting the proposed legislation runs counter to the unique historic characteristic of Quebec society as a large extended family, in which people have their difference, but in which everyone is included. “Bill 14 seeks to manipulate Quebec’s legal system, taking away Quebecers’ rights to be themselves. Bill 14 would define our identity for us, and sublimate our rights and freedoms in the process.”

“Public policy must be based on facts, not myths,” commented Sylvia Martin-Laforge, Director General of the QCGN, noting that no credible evidence has been presented to show that this Bill is necessary or urgent at this time. “The QCGN believes it is time for Quebec to stop and consider a linguistic future that includes its English-speaking minority. Surely we can find a way to have a rational and reasonable conversation regarding the strategic accommodation of linguistic minorities in Quebec.”

“The injustices of the past – real and or perceived– should not be writing the script for our future,” concluded Lamoureux. “It is time to begin real dialogue through a standing mechanism to bridge the gulf of misunderstanding that persists between the Government of Quebec and its English-speaking community. “

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.

For further information:

Rita Legault, Director of Communications and Public Relations

Rita.legault@qcgn.ca

Tel.: (514) 868-9044, ext. 223, Cell: (514) 912-6555