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President's Message

RENEWED DETERMINATION IN BATTLE FOR RIGHTS AND RESPECT

By Eva Ludvig
QCGN President



After decades of relative linguistic peace, English-speaking Quebec has reached a momentous crossroad. Not since the introduction of Bill 101 in 1977 have English-speaking Quebecers been required to so vigorously defend our contributions to Quebec society, the institutions we have built and indeed our very place in this province. That was among my messages in a [commentary](#) published in The Montreal Gazette on June 15.

For more than a year now, the English-speaking community of Quebec has been galvanized as it had not been for a very long time. This peaked publicly May 14, 2022, when hundreds upon hundreds filled the streets of downtown Montreal in vigorous protest against Bill 96, the unnecessarily harsh rewrite of Quebec's Charter of the French Language previously known as Bill 101. It was one of those moments that will remain with me and with many others for a long time. It was the first time that the QCGN had initiated such a rally and I must admit we were nervous. Would people come? And they did—in numbers way beyond our hopes and expectations. And it demonstrated that, as a community, we would not take the restrictions of our rights and our access to services lying down.

Federal act adds to community's woes

The community was similarly stirred in the fight against Ottawa's Bill C-13, an overhaul of Canada's Official Languages Act (OLA) that now encompasses Bill 96. Designed to modernize the Official Languages Act and establish language-of-work rules for federally regulated private businesses in Quebec, Bill C-13 inserts three references to Quebec's Charter of the French Language in the Act. The QCGN's legal assessment is that references to Quebec's French Language Charter within the quasi-constitutional OLA poses a danger to the rights of English-speaking Quebecers. In [our brief](#), we recall that the Charter of the French Language – as amended by Bill 96 – now operates notwithstanding the protections of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and subordinates the protection of rights contained in Quebec's Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

The QCGN appeared before the [Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages](#) (OLLO) on June 5. We submitted that withdrawing the references to the Charter of the French Language from C-13 would in no way diminish or abrogate the rights of, or support to, French-speaking minority communities. "There is, however, danger in retaining those references – danger to the English-speaking community of Quebec and danger in setting up an official-language regime that creates a precedent for other provinces to impose restrictions on their own linguistic minorities as Quebec has done," former Senator Joan Fraser, a member of our board, told the committee. "The bill also gives license to governments and the courts to interpret language rights asymmetrically – that is, more narrowly – for the minority-language community in Quebec, which is a potentially worrying precedent for other minority language communities."



I told the Committee that the QCGN believes there are positive aspects to the version of C-13 that had passed at third reading in the House of Commons and eventually received Royal Assent. The bill goes some way toward improving Part VII of the Act, and now makes mention of the Court Challenges Program – a federal program critical to the defence and advancement of equality and language rights. It also seeks to increase the powers of the Commissioner of Official Languages which will better assist in enforcing the Act. I concluded by telling Senators that the Official Languages Act is a lifeline for the English-speaking community of Quebec – now more than ever. And I warned them that if C-13 was approved as it stood, that lifeline will be seriously frayed.

Despite our best efforts—and those of our ally MP **Anthony Housefather** – the lone MP to vote against Bill C-13 in the House of Commons – and Senators **Judith Seidman** and **Tony Loffreda** — political forces and partisan imperatives have won the day. With five nays and five abstentions, a total of 10 senators did not support the bill. Nevertheless, we feel that our community's historic rights and needs have been largely ignored. It is not surprising that we feel alone wondering whatever happened to our traditional allies and supporters.

There is no denying the widespread disquiet of the francophone community over demographic numbers that can paint a less than rosy picture especially when fully exploited by some media and politicians, just as there is no denying that we are dealing with a government in Quebec City that is not interested in talking with us, let alone listening to us or understanding our concerns. It demonstrates an unacceptable lack of respect toward our community.

Renewal of the QCGN

The galvanization of the community demonstrated to us at the QCGN the value of a renewal process which we had begun, and which would eventually help expand our membership to include individual members as well as adding advocacy to community development as part of our mission. And it laid down markers for what we need to do next.

In the past year, the QCGN maintained its commitment to adapt to the needs of our community. Our Board of Directors has guided the work with our members to help bring this renewed vision to life, develop a governance model that ensures a greater voice for more English-speaking Quebecers, enshrines our community's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and secures representation from all corners of Quebec all the while respecting the importance of the French language. Working together we are building a bigger tent organization that will allow the QCGN and its members to more forcefully advocate for the needs and priorities of English-speaking Quebecers while nourishing the vitality of our diverse communities.

Moving forward, as a community we will need to continue to tackle major challenges that lie ahead: Bill 23 on education, Bill 15 on health and social services and whatever the ruling is on Bill 40 not to mention the continued implementation of Bill 96 and the impacts of C-13. We need to continue our fight for the respect of our rights and needs. Continue to gather more supporters and allies. I believe that the renewal we have undergone as an organization better prepares us to do all this. This will require a strong team effort. And with the help of our new Board of Directors and the support of all of our members, key partners and stakeholders – not to mention our staff of professional – we will work diligently to shape a new approach and develop the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed.

QCGN's 28th Annual Meeting discusses vitality of English-speaking Quebec



I would like to thank our members, stakeholders and guests who ensured the success of the QCGN's 28th Annual Meeting and Convention of the Members on June 9–10. During our event, more than 150 members and stakeholders expressed their commitment to this province; the future of the French language; and the vitality of our Community of Communities. It was our first in-person meeting since the pandemic and the very first with the participation of new individual members who added a new voice to discussions during our event titled ***#OuiOurQuebec – Our Community, Our Province, Our Quebec!***

I would like to thank our impressive lineup of guest speakers who ensured our event was both entertaining and informative. These included our keynote speaker **Anthony Housefather**, who discussed the difficult battle to protect the rights of our minority community, and ACS President **Jack Jedwab**, who launched the event with a presentation on the identity of English-speaking Quebecers in a presentation entitled ***Quebec Anglophones: Who Are We?*** On Saturday, commentators **Toula Drimonis** and **Guy Rodgers** debated the theme **Minorities in Quebec Do we belong?** in a panel moderated by **Nantali Indongo**, host of CBC Montreal's provincial arts and culture program, *The Bridge*. Our second panel, **English-speaking Quebec and Shifting Constitutional Sands**, featured constitutional legal experts **Julius Grey**, **Marion Sandilands** and former Senator **Joan Fraser**. They commented on how Bill C-13, the overhaul of the Official Languages Act, and Bill 96, which fortified Quebec's Charter of the French language as well as other provincial bills like Bill 21 and Bill 40, have negatively impacted our communities and weakened the rights of English-speaking Quebecers.



A highlight of our two-day event was our first Benefit Cocktail with the [Fondation Notre Home Foundation](#) – more of a friend-raiser than a fundraiser – where dozens of QCGNers and influential friends gathered to discuss the future vitality of our community. There we had a chance to exchange with community leaders and discuss the relaunch of the QCGN Community Leadership awards in the presence of some past winners including **Clifford Lincoln**, **Joan Fraser** and **Jack Jedwab**. Details on call for nominations coming soon.

Meet QCGN's new Board of Directors



During the Annual General Meeting on Saturday, June 10, some old and some new faces were elected and re-elected to join me on QCGN's Board of Directors. New to the 2023–2024 board are **Chad Bean**, **Grant Myers** (Treasurer), and **Peter Starr**, as well three youth who were elected to three new board positions representing the new category of individual members. They are **Chelsea Craig**, **Jordan Black**, and **Maria Kyres**. Making a comeback following their acclamation are **Alix Adrien**, **Matt Aronson**, **Eleni Bakopanos** (Secretary), **Joan Fraser**, **Marlene Jennings**, **Katherine Korakakis** (Vice-President), and **Eric Maldoff**.

Pictured above in the front row are executive committee members Katherine Korakakis; Eva Ludvig, and Eleni Bakopanos. Back row: Alix Adrien, Chelsea Craig, Eric Maldoff, Joan Fraser, Maria Kyres, and Peter Starr.

2022–2023 Annual Report: English-speaking Quebecers Stand Together



As discussed during our Annual General Meeting, the year 2022–2023 was eventful for our organization, our Network, and our community as we were forced to stand up for our rights in face of destructive provincial and federal legislation. I am pleased to share the QCGN's 2022–23 Annual Report entitled [English-Speaking](#)

[*Quebecers Stand Together.*](#) I invite you to click on the title and read about our momentous year and learn more about the numerous advocacy activities and exciting projects led by the QCGN.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES AND THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

By Riley Dalys-Fine
QCGN Director of Community Engagement and Strategic Alliances

This summer marks one year since the Community Vitality Roundtables validated their five-year Community Development Plan. *Working Together for a More Vital Community: The 2022–2027 Community Development Plan for English-speaking Quebec* reaffirms a common understanding of what makes our community vital and how working together makes it possible to achieve what we cannot accomplish on our own.

The Community Vitality Roundtables, which represent dozens of stakeholder organizations, are responsible for overseeing the Community Development Plan, a process truly "by and for" the English-speaking community. The four Roundtables: Data, Funding, Organizational and Network Health, and Representation, oversee a diverse set of strategies and actions to build the capacity of the community to take control of its development and address the challenges to its vitality.

Action Plan

This year was pivotal to the work of the Community Vitality Roundtables given the opportunities presented by the renewal of Canada's Official Languages Strategy. The *2023–2028 Action Plan for Official Languages: Protection–Promotion–Collaboration* was released on April 26. The new Action Plan represents an increase of \$1.4 billion over five years, including a total of \$62.5 million in new funding for community sector organizations.

On June 9, the QCGN was happy to welcome federal officials from different departments involved in the Action Plan to address our community directly about opportunities under the new Action Plan. We hosted a panel discussion on some of the new initiatives between **Jean-François Roussy**, Senior Director of the Official Languages Directorate at Canadian Heritage, **Karina Desmarais Yelle**, Deputy Director and Senior Counsel at the Official Languages Directorate of Justice Canada and **John Buck**, President and CEO of Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC) and co-chair of the Data Roundtable. This was followed by a speed-dating activity, during which stakeholders were able to exchange directly with federal funders and learn about new programs and projects. The activity was part of our Annual Convention, and made possible through the financial support of **Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada (ISED)**.



As with previous planning cycles, the department of Canadian Heritage looks to the QCGN as its interlocutor with Quebec's English-speaking community to advise it of the community's priorities. The QCGN will work with the chairs of the Roundtables to ensure that the needs of Quebec's English-speaking organizations are met with the commitments made by the Government of Canada to increase funding. Moreover, the work begun by the Roundtables on the Community Development Plan sent a clear message to the Government that it must invest in our collective capacity to build a more vital community.

2024–2025 Community Development Priorities on QCGN website

Every year, the QCGN works with its members, partners, and stakeholders to provide an updated list of community development priorities to government funders. Our main funding partner in this process is Canadian



Heritage, which lists the priorities in its annual call for proposals under the Official Languages Support Program. The list, however, is circulated to all federal departments who work with our community as well as to other levels of government.

The list is typically achieved through a survey distributed to community partners. To focus on mobilizing stakeholders for critical discussions taking place this summer around the new Action Plan, the Community Vitality Roundtables decided to forego the annual survey and renew the 2023–2024 Community Development Priorities for 2024–2025. The list can be reviewed on our [website](#).

COMMUNITY INNOVATION FUND PROJECTS BENEFIT 1,500 YOUTH AND SENIORS ACROSS ENGLISH-SPEAKING QUEBEC

The QCGN is delighted to share the remarkable success stories of our Community Innovation Fund which injected more than \$1 million into our community over the past three years. During our Annual Meeting on June 9, we launched [a video trailer](#) promoting our projects and a [booklet](#) that celebrate the accomplishments of our amazing QCGN's CIF 2.0 partners.

In 2016, the QCGN launched the **Community Innovation Fund** (CIF) with financing from **Employment and Social Development Canada**. We are now celebrating the completion of CIF 2.0, the second cycle of this initiative that helps organizations in our community put social innovation into action to address the pressing needs among the most vulnerable members of English-speaking communities across Quebec.

Our projects proved once again that with modest financial assistance and support, organizations can launch short-term social initiatives that can develop into sustainable projects. Over the past three years, funding from the Community Innovation Fund helped tackle critical needs and gaps in services – for the direct benefit of vulnerable youth and seniors in various sector and regions of our province. These members of our community faced significant challenges in accessing employment and services. With language barriers added to an already daunting mix, it was essential to find innovative solutions. Each of these 10 projects has, in its own way, directly benefitted many individual vulnerable members of our communities. At the same time, these projects tackled critical needs and gaps in services across Quebec's sectors and regions.

Our CIF 2.0 partners were: **The Depot Community Food Centre; Weredale Summer Camp; the Côte-des-Neiges Black Community Association; Gay and Grey Montreal; Suspicious Fish; the Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA); Project 10; Press Start; DESTA Black Youth Network; and the Museum of Jewish Montreal.**

"Our projects did exactly that while truly improving the vitality of our English-speaking minority communities," commented QCGN Director General **Sylvia Martin-Laforge**. "Through innovations projects and programming, our partners helped some 1500 participants find jobs, fight isolation, or learn new skills. They provided support and confidence building through employability programs, internships, and job training. Some participants developed





the digital dexterity required to work with computers and the internet, other enhanced literacy levels and French-language skills of their clientele."

"The QCGN has been pleased to serve as both an intermediary and as a champion for our partner organizations, said Martin-Laforge. "We want to sincerely thank and congratulate each of our community partners for their leadership, imagination, and perseverance as they developed and delivered these innovative approaches and solutions."

"We also sincerely thank the **Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program** for this significant investment in our

community. We were pleased to learn that Canada's next Official Languages Action Plan, which was launched on April 26, commits to renewing funding for this program," added Martin-Laforge. "The QCGN advocated vigorously for more such investments in our community's future and vitality, and we are working closely with our community to ensure that vulnerable English-speaking Quebecers continue to have access to the opportunities provided by the Community Innovation Fund."

View our video trailer [here](#). Watch all the videos and read our booklet on the [Community Innovation Fund page](#) of the QCGN website.

ENGAGING ENGLISH-SPEAKING YOUTH IN POLICY DIALOGUE



This summer, Junior Policy Analyst **Arielle Warten** is leading a major research project that will help the Quebec Community Groups Network better understand how it can support the policy goals and aspirations of English-speaking youth.

Engaging Youth in the Policy Discussion will explore the priorities of English-speaking youth through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and data collection through surveys. From a strategic and regional perspective, the project aims to broaden the existing network of engaged youth in public policy by providing spaces where ideas can be shared, and common goals identified and achieved.

There are many community stakeholders and civil society organizations, clubs and informal networks supporting English-speaking youth, and the QCGN works with many of these organizations. With its connections, resources and understanding of policy and advocacy, one of QCGN's goals is to learn more about existing and emerging organizations, projects, and

individuals. We also aim to work with an increased number of them to ensure we are doing our best to assist youth and organizations, supporting them through their journeys in policy discussions, advocacy, and civic engagement.

"Our project aims to invest in youth by not only understanding their priorities, but also by assisting them through QCGN resources and tools, as well as our knowledge of community engagement and advocacy," said QCGN Director General **Sylvia Martin-Laforge**. "This project will involve more youth within our organization, leading perhaps to a youth advisory committee led by young, energetic board members. It will also provide the

QCGN with a roadmap towards effectively engaging with and supporting English-speaking youth in policy discussions."

Last year, Arielle worked to mobilize English-speaking youth to speak out against Bill 96 and share their voices in the parliamentary study of *C-13, An Act for the Substantive Equality of Canada's Official Languages*. Arielle brought a youth perspective study, appearing before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Our survey, interviews and focus groups will target English-speaking youth (15–29) who identify as members of our minority language community and who would like to share their insights on youth engagement! If you are interested in participating in an interview or youth-led focus groups, please contact Arielle.warten@qcgnc.ca.

If you are under 30, please click on this [link](#) and answer our survey.

THE QFHSA'S 79TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: THE TIME IS NOW!

Submitted by Carl Meindl

Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations

On the evening of June 1, the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations held its 79th Annual General Meeting. Although it was a bit disappointing to hold a virtual annual general meeting yet again, it must be acknowledged that it is an excellent way to get the most participation. This year we had 26 member associations represented at the event, which is a number not seen in many years. Delegates from Western Quebec, Central Quebec, and the Eastern Shores joined our delegates from the Greater Montreal Area.

The fiscal year 2022 saw our membership fees slowly increasing as Home and Schools became more active, attracting their membership back to their activities. Federal and provincial funding was available as well, so the year ended with a \$16,916 deficit, which was less than what had been feared.

Members of the Resolutions Committee presented eight resolutions for consideration:

Resolution 2023-01: [Revoke Bill C-13](#) presented by *Rosemary Murphy*

Resolution 2023-02: [Regulate Use of the Notwithstanding Clause](#) presented by *Brian Rock*

Resolution 2023-03: [Better Develop the New Culture and Citizenship in Québec Program](#) presented by *Natasha Drysdale*

Resolution 2023-04: [Maintain Sexuality Education as a Separate Program](#) presented by *Bobbi Brown*

Resolution 2023-05: [Address the Impact of COVID on Student Learning](#) presented by *Samantha Patel*

Resolution 2023-06: [Support School Employees](#) presented by *Marlyn Brownrigg*

Resolution 2023-07: [Ensure the Availability of Bilingual Services by Student Ombudsmen](#) presented by *Cindy Lockhart*

Resolution 2023-08: [Accommodate Immigrant and Refugee Children](#) presented by *Sharad Bhargava*

Click on the links for the text of each resolution which can also be found on our website, qfhsa.org. Of all of the above resolutions, the resolution to maintain sexuality education as a separate program received the most attention. The discussion was lively, and it was clear many delegates had strong opinions on the topic.

New Board

After the resolutions were adopted, it was time to elect a new board of directors and the executive officers.

At the Annual General Meeting, we welcomed two newly elected members to the board of directors: **Ahmed Hassan** and **Brian Rock**. Ahmed is a member of the QFHSA's Resolutions Committee and is joining our board for

the first time. Brian has been a dedicated volunteer with the QFHSA since 2001. His most recent tenure on our board ended in June 2022.

At the meeting, **Elizabeth "Bobbi" Brown**, **Nick Giannakoulis**, **Samantha Patel**, **Ginette Sauv -Frankel**, and **Wanda Leah Trineer** were elected to serve additional two-year terms.

Rosemary Murphy continued as president. (Her term will end in 2024). Samantha Patel, relatively new to the board, was elected as a vice-president. The QFHSA congratulates Samantha on her willingness to step up to serve at the next level.

The meeting also marked the end of **Maxime C t **'s tenure on the QFHSA's board of directors. Board President Rosemary Murphy thanked him for the countless hours he has dedicated to the QFHSA in his six years on the board. An Eastern Quebecer, Max has been an important voice for his community.

With a new team in place and a stable financial situation, the QFHSA is ready to face the challenges of the new year. The time is now!

TIME FOR A PARTY... AT LONG LAST!



Submitted by **Karen Henchey**
QFHSA Communications Officer

Could we do it? Could we bring back a venerable tradition that was interrupted by the pandemic? We most certainly could!

On the evening of Friday, May 26, an enthusiastic crowd of over 100 gathered for the 2023 edition of the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations' Awards Banquet. The event, which was held at the Novotel in Ville St-Laurent, united Home and School volunteers from the Eastern Townships, Laval, the Island of Montreal, and points farther west including St. Lazare and Gatineau.

The QFHSA was pleased to welcome some very special guests to the event. **Noel Burke** and **Kate Le Maistre** - the 2022 Gordon Paterson award winners - to finally receive their awards in person. Last year's awards ceremony was a Zoom affair, of course.

It was great to welcome such a large contingent from the Lester B. Pearson School Board. Joining us were Commissioners **Frank di Bello** and **Allison Saunders**; Student Commissioner **Kayleigh Paré**; Parent Commissioners **Alaina Charszan** and **Marium Hasanie**; as well as Chair **Judith Kelley**. Also in attendance were a couple of alumni from the QFHSA board of directors, **Liette Chamberland** and **Renate Sutherland**. Renate is the current president of the Quebec Provincial Association of Retired School Educators. Other special guests included **Cameron Gray** of the Quebec Association of Geography Teachers and Global Educators and **Katherine Korakakis**, president of the English Parents' Committee Association.

The awards ceremony began with the presentation of this year's major awards. Attendees heard about the impressive accomplishments of our prize winners:

Leslie N. Buzzell Award: QFHSA President
Rosemary Murphy

Gordon Paterson Award: **Jennifer Baltuonis**, music teacher at St. Patrick's Elementary. Pictured here with St. Patrick's teacher, **Nissa Grant** vice-principal **Natalie Knott**, and **Mary Kate Jackson** of the St Patrick's Home and School Association.

Volunteer of the Year: **Nicole Fischer Gasser**,
Butler Elementary Home and School Association

Pat Lewis Environmental Award: **Macdonald High School's Bee Team**

Newsletter Award: **Cedarcrest Elementary Home and School Association** (Nadia Piluso, Editor)



And then it was time to cheer the efforts of the Golden Torch leaders and Unsung Heroes from our local Home and School Associations. (pictured above)

Several days after the event, the QFHSA got back in touch with our guests for their feedback. We learned that for most, a highlight of the evening was getting together in person with volunteers from their own Home and School and beyond. One attendee summed up the experience as follows: "Night out with amazing volunteers."

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 or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram.



Quebec Community Groups Network

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