



**Presentation to the  
Standing Committee on Official Languages  
on  
Immigration as a Development Tool in  
Official Language Minority Communities**

*Notes for an address by  
Robert Donnelly, QCGN President and  
Michelle Dupuis, Director of Community Support and  
Network Development*

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*Check against delivery*

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Quebec Community Groups Network is pleased to have this opportunity to address the Standing Committee on Official Languages regarding the issue of Immigration as a Development Tool in Official Language Minority Communities.

It is clear that Quebec needs immigrants. The continued vitality of our province, and – within that – of the English-speaking community, greatly depends on immigration. However, under the assumption that English-speaking Quebec has already largely benefitted from immigration, little attention has been paid to the needs of the English-speaking official language minority community in Quebec. Yet renewal is of critical importance to the development and vitality of our community. The goal of the QCGN is to encourage politicians and policy makers to consider this fundamental issue.

Cultural diversity is also a fact in Quebec society, and this trend will only increase. During the Bouchard-Taylor Commission on “Reasonable Accommodations”, the QCGN stated that the debate on the cohabitation of different communities was essential and that it should focus on the equilibrium between the rights of the majority and the rights of the minority. We believe it is vital that we understand who makes up our minority communities, and that we understand their needs and values. The QCGN also highlighted the ways in which immigration positively affects society and reminded the commission that English-speaking community is recognized by many as being progressive in the way it has dealt with the changing face of English-speaking Quebec.

In 2006, Quebec immigrants for whom English was the only official (Canadian) language they knew upon arrival represented nearly 20 per cent of total provincial immigration. This was up from just under 16 per cent in 2002. Considering the important percentage of immigrants who speak English, we see that it is inevitable that English-language institutions will be involved in the process of integrating newcomers and managing diversity.

We are happy to note that a significant portion of Quebec's intelligentsia does not support the alarmist view of sovereigntists like Pierre Curzi who recently argued that too many new immigrants were integrating the English-speaking community. André Pratte, the Chief Editorial writer at La Presse, has remarked that while French is threatened by English, the threat would remain even if all English speakers left the province. In other words, Pratte recognizes that the threat is not coming from Quebec's English-speaking community, but rather from the dominance of English in a global world.

Ideally, the QCGN believes that Quebec's English-speaking community could be seen as a bridge for English-speaking newcomers, to help them learn French and integrate Quebec society. It is important to note that language and community are distinct issues. Indeed, English-speaking Quebecers are an excellent role model for new immigrants because, despite facing similar challenges, they have successfully learned to speak French and have respectfully integrated into Quebec society.

Historically, the arrival of new immigrants has played a fundamental role in shaping English-speaking Quebec, particularly in the Greater Montreal area where the diversity of the population is a defining characteristic of our community. As mentioned in the QCGN's presentation to this Committee on February 17, 2003, immigrants have always played an important role in the vitality of English-speaking Quebec. We value the diversity arising from immigration and generally view newcomers as making significant contributions to our community and in turn to Quebec society.

In a brief to the National Assembly committee on Immigration in 2007, the QCGN argued that immigrants whose first official language spoken is English can identify with the English-speaking community while successfully integrating into Quebec society. As Dr. Jack Jedwab explained in his presentation to you last week, the choice of definition – whether it be Mother Tongue or First Official Language Spoken – leads to significantly different numbers. The first are immigrants who readily identify with the English-speaking communities of Quebec. The latter is a group that may have more affinity to the English-speaking community because they are more comfortable in English than French.

Identity and identification are at the intersection of official languages policy and immigration policy in Quebec. And, in turn, these issues impact the more substantial challenges of renewal and retention that our community must address.

In his latest Annual Report, the Commissioner of Official Languages Mr. Graham Fraser dared to tackle the issue of renewal of our community head on. Mr. Fraser acknowledges the community has many years of experience in integrating newcomers and managing cultural diversity and he suggests "...it would be important for English-speaking community organizations to obtain the resources they need to continue working on integrating newcomers and helping them realize their full potential in Quebec."

For a multitude of reasons the Federal Government has had difficulty in fulfilling its responsibilities toward English-speaking minority community under Part VII of the Official Languages Act. First of all, responsibility in the area of Immigration has been devolved to the Provincial Government. Secondly, the creation of a steering committee by Citizenship and Immigration Canada for Francophone Minority Communities did not have an equivalent for the other official language minority. The strategic framework and summary of initiatives did not consider or contribute to the vitality of our community. Finally, the final report tabled in 2003 entitled "Immigration as a tool for the development of official language minority communities" was unable to address the needs of English-speaking immigrants to Quebec. We are here today to offer some innovative ideas and hopefully start a dialogue around this issue.

Too often immigrants to Quebec who speak English fall between the cracks and the federal government has an opportunity to offer them services and help them to integrate into Quebec and Canadian society through the English-speaking community. This can be done in a win-win fashion, particularly in the regions of

Quebec. The Provincial Government has a strong desire to “regionalize” new immigrants. There are English-speaking communities in several regions of Quebec and if English-speaking immigrants were able to count on those communities for guidance and services to be able to integrate, this might motivate them to move to the regions. Without this support system, new immigrants are more likely to remain in Montreal where they will find support from their own communities. This is one area where the Federal Government can play a role in supporting the vitality and development of English-speaking communities by helping those organizations that are working in the regions to offer services such as French-as-a-second-language training and help in seeking jobs.

Secondary migration is something both the province and the English-speaking community would like to avoid. An interesting, although relatively outdated poll produced by CROP and the Missisquoi Institute in 2000 shows the reasons that immigrants who speak English tend to leave the province. The poll revealed that they are more inclined to leave for educational and economic opportunities. They also cited discrimination and problems associated with integration as influencing the decision to leave the province.

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Educational opportunities | 13% |
| Economic opportunities    | 31% |
| Politics                  | 15  |
| Feeling of discrimination | 1%  |
| Family reasons            | 11% |
| Retirement                | 4%  |
| Other                     | 10% |

*(This graph was presented in 2003 when the QCGN last spoke about the issue of immigrants, but it is still quite telling. )*

As the QCGN suggested in 2003, English-speaking institutions can provide a sense of community to immigrants while facilitating the transition to Quebec society and its linguistic reality. Successful integration is closely linked to the institutional vitality of communities and Quebec's English-speaking population is no exception.

Mr. Chairman, as you and your fellow committee members sit down to write up your report and recommendations on Immigration as a Development Tool in Official Language Minority Communities, we hope you will address the need for renewal of our community. We also hope that politicians and policy-makers will invest some time and innovative thinking that will inform longer term investments in Quebec ahead of the next Roadmap. What we would like to see is more research, particularly action-based research such as pilot projects that would lead to meaningful investments for the development of Quebec's English-speaking minority community in the next action plan. In the meantime, we suggest more multi-sectoral and interdepartmental efforts be put into an assessment of the needs of the English-speaking minority in terms of immigration, immigrant retention and community renewal.