

STATEMENT REGARDING MEMBER RESIGNATIONS FROM QCGN

October 31, 2019

The reasons for the recent resignation of member organizations from the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) has nothing to do with funding by the Secrétariat aux Relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise (SRQEA), as claimed by QCGN president Geoffrey Chambers in numerous media interviews. It should be noted that the QCGN is itself a recipient of funding from the Secretariat, a fact that Mr. Chambers has neglected to mention in his assertions on this matter.

The resignations have taken place because all attempts to effect change within the QCGN regarding leadership, governance and mandate have been unsuccessful. The current QCGN leadership has chosen to lay the blame elsewhere rather than to look internally. The door has been repeatedly shut on efforts at negotiation and compromise (see attached backgrounder).

The QCGN is supposed to be a member-driven network but the level of tension within the organization has been rising steadily over the last few years to the point where today, nearly a third of voting members have now left. The organizations that have left QCGN strive to work in collaboration within our networks and with our partners, whether they be community organizations or government, to bring solutions to the table and promote a positive working relationship. Our experience over the past 16 months is that the QCGN leadership prefers to fight rather than collaborate in tackling the issues facing vulnerable English-speaking communities. Hostility towards our partners is not an effective way of enhancing the vitality of our communities.

Even though our organizations have left QCGN, we are firm believers in the need for a network-type organization, one that works on behalf of its members' interests, that acts as a rassembleur amongst diverse communities and can make effective representations on behalf of multiple constituencies. The groups that have left QCGN do not intend to leave a void as we must ensure that all English-speaking communities have an equitable opportunity to support their development and therefore remain a vital and contributing presence in Quebec.

Statement issued on behalf of:

Council for Anglophone Magdalen Islanders (CAMI)
Committee for Anglophone Community Action (CASA)
English Community Organization of Lanaudière (ECOL)
English Language Arts Network (ELAN)
Megantic English-speaking Community Development Corporation (MCDC)
Neighbours Association of Rouyn-Noranda
North Shore Community Association (NSCA)
Quebec Writers' Federation (QWF)
Vision Gaspé-Percé Now (VGPN)
Voice of English-speaking Québec (VEQ)
4 Korner's Family Resource Center

Media contact:

Brigitte Wellens, VEQ
(418) 683-2366 ext.223
brigitte.wellens@veq.ca

BACKGROUND

Funding

The Secretariat conducted a series of consultations in February 2018 as preparation for the Support Fund, in which over 70 English-speaking community organizations and institutions participated. QCGN was consulted during the initiative, participated in all the sessions including a session to validate findings at the end. Evaluations by community participants indicated high levels of satisfaction with the process and the outcomes.

The Secretariat Support Program, devised as a result of the consultations, provides funding to a wide variety of English-speaking organizations, both QCGN members and non-members. Funding has been provided to community groups large and small, including the QCGN itself, and to networks, universities and other institutions. The current round of funding was prepared, and allocated by the previous government so there is no linkage between the allocation of the funds and the current government.

Governance

In December 2018, a meeting was held between disaffected QCGN members and QCGN board members, the executive committee, Priority Setting Steering Committee, and staff, as a first attempt to resolve issues. Nothing was resolved or acted upon.

After an open telemeeting of QCGN members in May 2019, QCGN proposed a mediation process to oversee a dispute resolution process. No action was taken.

A dialogue session was held with members immediately following QCGN's AGM in June 2019. Even though many clear criticisms and questions were voiced about QCGN leadership, no action was taken.

In August 2019, the majority of QCGN's current board members called for a special meeting to vote on leadership reform. QCGN leadership prevented the vote by commissioning two legal opinions that called into question the validity of QCGN's own bylaws. As a result, the majority of QCGN's board members put their concerns with leadership and governance into writing and submitted a document to QCGN's governance committee with a request for it to recommend a solution or at least a process by September 15th. No action was taken.

In September 2019, the QCGN board voted down a request by member organizations for a special general meeting, with Mr. Chambers as chair of the meeting casting the deciding vote against the request. As a result, it was agreed by the board that the situation between QCGN and its members must be addressed by informing members of a process to review grievances and implement necessary changes. No action was taken.

In October 2019, 13 member organizations resigned as members of QCGN (as of October 31st).