

For immediate release

QCGN Demands Apology From Prime Minister Trudeau

Montreal – January 18, 2016 – The Quebec Community Groups Network is shocked and appalled that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau steadfastly refused to speak English during a stop in Quebec's Eastern Townships yesterday and is demanding an immediate apology and a meeting.

During a town hall meeting in Sherbrooke, Que., Trudeau did not utter a single word of English, even when questions were addressed to him in the language of Shakespeare. Responding to one woman who asked what the federal government intended to do to address the lack of mental health services for English-speaking Townshippers, he replied in French: "Thank you for your use of both official language, but we're in a French province so I will answer in French."

"The QCGN cannot imagine the Prime Minister or any other bilingual politician replying in English to a French question posed in New Brunswick, Manitoba, or any other province where the main language is English," commented QCGN President James Shea. "Even staunch defenders of the French language like René Lévesque would never have made such a misstep."

"We are shocked, disappointed and utterly dismayed that the Prime Minister could be so tone deaf," added QCGN Vice-President Geoffrey Chambers, calling upon Trudeau to meet with the QCGN to clarify his position on bilingualism.

"Does this signal a change in policy or attitude towards Quebec's English-speaking minority?" asked Shea, noting that the federal government just wrapped up a cross-country consultation on official languages and is in the process of drafting its strategy on how to support official language minority communities across the country.

"This is a repudiation of almost a half century of work in official languages and we need reassurances that this does not signal something deeper and more threatening to our community," said Chambers. "He is touring Canada to listen to people and we have something to say."

The Quebec Community Groups Network is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 51 English-language community organizations across Quebec. A centre of evidence-based expertise and collective action, QCGN identifies, explores and addresses strategic issues affecting the development and vitality of the English-speaking community of Quebec. It also encourages 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@qcgnc.ca

Telephone: 514-868-9044, ext. 223 | Mobile: 514-912-6555