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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

QCGN MEETS WITH LANGUAGE MINISTER SIMON JOLIN-BARRETTE

By **Marlene Jennings**
QCGN President



Along with members of our Executive Committee **Kevin Shaar, Eva Ludvig, Matt Aronson**, and our Director General **Sylvia Martin-Laforge**, I met with **Simon Jolin-Barrette**, Quebec's minister Responsible for the French Language earlier this month.

Minister Jolin-Barrette told our delegation that the government's objective is not to take away rights from English-speaking Quebecers or divide the two language groups. He said his aim is to promote French while respecting the rights of our community. And he stressed that his proposals will not be detrimental to the institutions of our community. The objective, he explained, is to fight the decline of the

French language. Jolin-Barrette would not provide details of his plan, nor the timing of its release. QCGN was pleased to establish a dialogue with the provincial government ahead of coming proposals to reinforce the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101). We stressed that – despite the good intentions of past governments enforcing and reinforcing Bill 101 – English-speaking Quebecers have often been collateral damage. And even if the objective is not to hurt the English-speaking community – that will most likely be one of the side effects of certain measures, we emphasized and told him the QCGN will be vigilant!

Jolin-Barrette also spent a considerable amount of time discussing jobs in the civil service, and jobs for youths. We flatly rejected excuses such as English-speaking Quebecers do not want to move to Quebec City and told Jolin-Barrette that as the province's largest employer, the provincial government must show leadership.

When he asked for our opinion on federally regulated businesses, we told Jolin-Barrette that it was necessary to extend same rights to English- and French-speaking workers. Finally, we told Jolin-Barrette that unchallenged myths propagated by some media did not make Quebec a welcoming place for many anglophones. Listen to my [conversation](#) with **Elias Makos** on CJAD and my [interview](#) with CTV Montreal's **Maya Johnson**.



QCGN Opposes Use of Notwithstanding Clause to Limit Our Rights

Last week the QCGN was alarmed at comments by Premier **François Legault** that his government would almost certainly use the notwithstanding clause to shield new reforms to Bill 101 from any legal challenge. The clause allows provincial governments to override the basic freedoms guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The QCGN is and has always been opposed to the use of the notwithstanding clause to override the rights of Quebecers. English-speaking Quebecers were already concerned about what the government will propose to enforce and reinforce Bill 101. The fact that Premier Legault is already considering the use of the notwithstanding clause is certainly cause for concern. We stated in a [press release](#) that Quebec governments past and present have shown an unfortunate tendency to trample on the rights of English-speaking Quebecers in their rush to protect the French language. And, we note, the notwithstanding clause is a blunt instrument that should not be used to ride roughshod over our rights and freedoms. Also see coverage by [The Montreal Gazette](#), [CTV Montreal](#), [CBC Montreal](#), [Le Journal de Montréal](#), and [La Presse](#) as well as analysis by Radio Canada political columnist [Michel C. Auger](#) and this opinion piece by human rights lawyer [Julius Grey](#). To understand what exactly the notwithstanding clause is and why it matters, read the last [Policy Matters](#) blog post by QCGN's policy team.

Liberal Plan to Protect and Promote the French Language

As we await news on what the Coalition Avenir Québec government has in store to reinforce Bill 101, the opposition Liberals presented their plan last week. Liberal Leader **Dominique Anglade** and language critic **Hélène David** presented the party's [five fundamental principles](#) and [27 recommendations](#) (French only) to protect and promote the French language in Quebec.

We are pleased to see that the Liberal Party sees Quebec's English-speaking community as a partner in the protection and promotion of the French language. We are also pleased that they appear to be taking a positive, non-partisan approach which is what is needed to make this truly inclusive.

The Liberal's proposals are mainly about support for francisation and French-language training. We applaud this since it will have a positive impact on English-speaking Quebecers who want to improve their French-language skills.

However, there are proposals to amend the Charter of the French Language that concern us, most notably applying the Charter of the French Language to federally regulated businesses. We also need to better understand proposals to apply the Charter to businesses between 25-49 employees, as well as the impact of applying a freeze/cap on enrollment in CEGEPs.

Meanwhile the QCGN welcomed the creation of an independent French-language Commissioner appointed by the National Assembly and applaud the evidence-based approach to the Commissioner's mandate to use studies and analyzes to report on the state of the French language and public language policies, notably those of ministries and agencies. We also agree with the establishment of an Office for the Protection and Promotion of the French Language to replace the *Office Québécois de la langue française* (OQLF). A balance between protection and promotion of the French language is sorely needed.

Having said all this, our governments always state that they do not want to negatively impact the English-speaking community. However, our experience is that English-speaking Quebecers are often collateral damage because government officials are not good at understanding and evaluating possible impacts on our community. That is why our community should and indeed must be consulted upstream from any policy making. The QCGN was not consulted in advance of the Liberal party's recommendations and we have not had time to do a deep analysis of their plan. We must consult with our community to gather reactions and opinions. Our job starts now!

See coverage by [The Montreal Gazette](#), [Global Montreal](#), [CTV Montreal](#), [Radio Canada](#), [Le Devoir](#), and [Le Journal de Montréal](#).

Bill 21 Violates Rights of English-speaking Community

It is with mixed feelings that the QCGN greeted Quebec Superior Court's decision which largely upheld the province's controversial secularism law which bans teachers and some other public servants from wearing religious symbols such as Muslim hijabs and Jewish kippahs. However Superior Court Justice **Marc-André Blanchard** ruled that [Bill 21, An Act Respecting the laicity of the State](#) cannot apply to our English school boards and members of the National Assembly.

Like many in our community, the QCGN is disappointed that Justice Blanchard did not find that Quebec's laicity legislation contravenes gender provisions contained in Section 28 of the federal Charter of Rights and Freedoms that guarantee "equally to male and female persons." You may recall

moves forward.

We agree with Premier **François Legault's** statement this week that "We need one Quebec, with one set of common values." But we vigorously disagree on what those common values should be. Blanchard's detailed 248-page ruling found that Bill 21 violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms which contains common values that we should all uphold. The judge declared that Quebec may violate these rights by using the notwithstanding clause. This is a shame!

The QCGN is also disappointed that Quebec Justice Minister **Simon Jolin-Barrette**, the architect of the secularism law, hastily announced that the province will appeal the ruling since it contains a major win for our school boards. Justice Blanchard declares that Quebec's secularism law violates Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms regarding minority education rights invalidating the legislation as it pertains to English school boards and their personnel. Section 23 rights cannot be overridden by the notwithstanding clause.

This is a landmark ruling for Quebec's English-speaking community that have an impact for all official language minority school boards across Canada. What was a bad day for minorities, especially Muslim women, was a good day for minority education rights!

Justice Blanchard, who heard testimony from experts who declared that having teachers from diverse backgrounds is important for minority students, affirmed that the choice as to the hiring of teaching staff rightfully belongs to English school boards which have the right to "recognize their linguistic and cultural specificity." Since our boards – and indeed our community – value and celebrate religious and ethnic diversity, our school boards have the right to hire staff that reflect our intrinsic values.

Pending an appeal by the Government of Quebec, the decision applies to all English school boards in Quebec and will have an impact for all official language minority boards across Canada. It reflects the position taken by the **English Montreal School Board (EMSB)** and the **Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA)**, both of which applauded that part of the ruling. Read their press releases [here](#) and [here](#).

Read the [court ruling](#), [QCGN's statement](#) and the editorial by [The Montreal Gazette](#). Also see coverage by The Montreal Gazette [here](#) and [here](#), [CBC Montreal](#), [CTV Montreal](#), [Radio Canada](#), [La Presse](#), [Le Journal de Montréal](#), [Le Devoir](#) as well as stories in the international press including the [New York Times](#), [The Washington Post](#) and London's [The Guardian](#).

Canada's Official Language Minorities Should Have Same Rights

On March 30, QCGN Vice-President **Kevin Shaar** and I presented to the **Expert Panel on Language of Work and Service in Federally Regulated Private Businesses**. That panel was tasked by Official Languages Minister **Mélanie Joly** with developing options and recommendations to protect French as a language of service and work in federally regulated businesses in Quebec and in other Canadian regions with a strong francophone presence.

We were reacting to recommendations in **English and French: Towards a Substantive Equality of Official Languages in Canada**. In that reform paper presented by Minister Joly, the Government of Canada makes legislative proposals to increase the use of French in federally regulated private enterprises. We maintained that Canada's commitment to the protection, promotion, and vitality of the French language in Quebec need not — and indeed must not — diminish opportunities for English-speaking Quebecers. In this context, we strongly believe that language rights in federally regulated businesses must apply to both Anglophones and Francophones.

The QCGN made the following two recommendations to the panel: 1) Any language rights in federally regulated businesses must apply to both English-speakers and French-speakers; and 2) Any creation of language rights for such businesses must be achieved with a legislative instrument other than the Official Languages Act.

Read QCGN's [brief](#) to the panel. Also read [QCGN's op-ed](#) in [The Montreal Gazette](#).

Ongoing Language Rights Campaign

QCGN continues to meet with community groups to discuss our ongoing advocacy campaign to protect the language rights of English-speaking Quebecers. We welcome opportunities to exchange with the leadership of community groups and update members and community stakeholders on federal and provincial proposals to changes language legislation and policy. Unprecedented changes to both federal and provincial language legislation is occurring on the backdrop of QCGN's renewal initiative where the organization is reviewing its governance and structures to ensure stronger advocacy for our community. We would be pleased to meet with your members and Boards of Directors to answer their questions and gather feedback. Please contact our Director General **Sylvia Martin-Laforge**

Funding for English Community, French Language in Quebec Budget

The provincial budget released on March 25 included resources to support English-speaking Quebecers and a significant boost in funding for French-language protection agencies including the *Office Québécois de la langue française*.

While the QCGN welcomes investments in our community and our vitality, we continue to be wary of this government which is promising to reinforce the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101). And with increased spending for the French-language protection we are waiting for the other shoe to drop. Meanwhile we were pleased that Quebec's budget will strengthen the capacity of community organizations to serve Quebec's English-speaking minority community by, notably, maintaining and enhancing the network of wellness centres and implementing an employability strategy. The budget also provides funding for the Secretariat for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers to compile statistics that will provide a better understanding of the situation faced by English-speaking Quebecers; undertake a feasibility analysis regarding the production of a comprehensive evidence-based document on English-speaking Quebec; and inventory policies, programs, laws, and regulations that impact English-speaking Quebecers.

These investments will give our community the evidence base it needs to advocate across government ministries for the policies and programs needed to support our linguistic minority community. The QCGN expects to be part of government consultations to ensure nothing about us is decided without us.

Read QCGN's [press release](#) and coverage by [CTV Montreal](#). Also listen to my [CJAD interview](#) with Liberal MNA [Greg Kelley](#), Official Opposition critic for relations with English-speaking Quebecers, on Montreal Now with [Aaron Rand](#) and [Natasha Hall](#).

The Power of Volunteers Working Together to Make a Difference



The Value of One, The Power of Many, is the theme for National Volunteer Week that taking place this week from April 18-24. During this national celebration of volunteers, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many individuals in our Network and community who devote countless hours and make a real difference for English-speaking Quebecers.

Canada's volunteers work tirelessly for their communities, asking for nothing in return. They contribute billions of dollars to the Canadian economy every month, at last count over \$55 billion per year, according to Volunteer Canada, which is shining the spotlight on those volunteering to support essential services during this public health crisis and saluting those who help by staying home to protect themselves and

their communities.

This past year has been exceptionally difficult due to the COVID-19 public health crisis. Getting through these trying times would not have been possible without the thousands of caring and volunteers who have supported our elderly, volunteered for food banks and other social assistance organizations, delivered meals to shut ins, manned the phones to call those in need of a listening ear. So many acts of kindness and compassion that have made an abyssal year manageable.

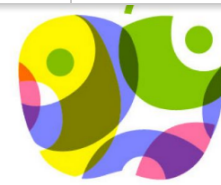
I would also like to pay tribute to the many invaluable volunteers at the QCGN including the members of our Board of Directors and the individuals who sit on our committees. You have dedicated many hours in contributing to the success of the QCGN and making our community more vital. We recognize the value of each and every individual and the power of many volunteers working together to make a difference.

BILL 40 BATTLE IS MOST IMPORTANT LEGAL CASE FOR OUR COMMUNITY IN DECADES

Submitted by APPELE-Québec

and balances that ensure the interests of English communities across Quebec are protected, a Superior Court judge was told as Quebec's controversial

APPELE
QUÉBEC



education reform legislation, Bill 40, was back in Quebec Superior Court last week.

"Our schools are sort of the hub of the community, the heart of the community," testified **Stephen Burke**, chair of the Central Quebec School Board that covers some 515,000 square kilometers and represents 5,000 students from the Saguenay to Thetford Mines. "Our schools ensure the pursuance of the English communities in all of those regions. So, I see myself not only as the chair of our meetings, not only as a representative of the council of commissioners, but also as a defender of the English communities that are in predominantly French areas."

All nine English school boards along with the **Quebec English School Boards Association** launched a legal challenge to quash Bill 40 which abolishes democratically elected school boards and transforms them into government-controlled service centres.

"This important Constitutional case has national implications, and Quebec's English school boards and our community partners are determined to see our Charter rights fully respected," said QESBA President **Dan Lamoureux**. "Quebec is the only province in Canada that has not exempted its minority language community from sweeping changes to the public education system. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms prescribed section 23 in matters of minority education for a specific reason. Minority communities survive on a healthy and stable education system managed and controlled by them."

This school boards' legal action argues that **Bill 40, An Act to amend mainly the Education Act with regard to school organization and governance**, contravenes our linguistic minority community's right to manage and control our school system – a foundational right under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"This is the most important legal case for our community in decades. It goes to the heart of our community's needs and rights," commented Joan Fraser, vice-chair of the Alliance for the Promotion of Public English-language Education in Québec – APPELE-Québec – which is watching the case with great interest.

The legal upheaval of our education system has been blocked since September when Quebec's Court of Appeal maintained a Superior Court stay that suspended the application of Bill 40 for English boards until the merits of the case can be argued. That is what is before the court now: the merits of the case.

The result of the courts doubling down on Bill 40, was the government's plan to abolish English Quebec's school boards remains on the backburner until there is a final ruling on whether or not that legislation respects the Constitution.

APPELE-Québec is a broadly based, Quebec-wide coalition representing parents, educators and the community. It was formed to promote the continued existence of English school boards, to ensure they are governed by commissioners who are democratically elected by the English-speaking community at large.

The Chair of the APPELE-Québec Alliance is former MNA and Minister **Geoff Kelley**. The vice-chairs are former Senator and journalist **Joan Fraser** and constitutional lawyer **Kevin Shaar** – both members of the QCGN's Board of Directors. QESBA and the QCGN sit on the steering committee along with the **English Parents' Committee Association** (EPCA), and the **Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations** (QFHSA).

Read QESBA's **news release** and coverage in **The Montreal Gazette**, **CTV Montreal** and **Global Montreal**. For a refresher on where the community stands on this case, read the commentaries last fall by **APPELE-Québec** and the **QCGN**.

QCGN WEBINARS EDUCATE ENGLISH-SPEAKING QUEBECERS ABOUT LANGUAGE RIGHTS



By Rita Legault
QCGN Director of Communications

In February, the federal government released its proposals to modernize Canada's approach to official languages with a reform paper entitled ***English and French: Towards a substantive equality of official languages in Canada***. In the coming weeks, the Quebec government plans to put forward its plan to reinforce the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101).

With both the federal and provincial governments reviewing and renewing language policy and legislation, there is a rising tide of linguistic tensions in Quebec. With a mandate of to promote and protect the language rights of English-speaking Quebecers, the Quebec Community Groups Network is determined to serve as a crucial and constructive voice throughout upcoming debates that may prove emotional and sometimes acrimonious. In this fraught environment, the Quebec Community Groups is hosting a series of webinars to inform our community about its language rights.

The first phase of the webinars aimed to lay a foundation for our understanding of language rights. The second phase will look at the experience of English-speaking Quebecers where we are going in the future.

The last in a trio of introductory webinars, ***English-speaking Quebecers and the Charter of the French Language***, was presented last Thursday by retired veteran political reporter and broadcaster **Bernard St-Laurent** (right) who was interviewed by former radio host **Royal Orr** (left). Introducing this dynamic duo was QCGN Board member and retired Senator, **Joan Fraser** (inset).

St-Laurent, who has covered the ups and downs of provincial and language politics ever since he landed his first reporting job at the National Assembly just before the Parti Québécois was elected in 1976, reported on pivotal moments in Quebec's history, including the passing of Bill 101 in 1977 as well as the 1980 and 1995 referendums on sovereignty. A former radio host and President of Alliance Quebec during the tumultuous 1980s, Orr was both a player and an observer of language skirmishes. A former Senator, journalist and editor, Fraser has been a close observer of the trials and tribulations of Quebec's English-speaking community, Joan was a senior editor of The Montreal Gazette when Bill 101 became law.

St Leonard Riots

With colourful anecdotes about the personalities behind the passage of the Quebec's Charter of the French Language, also known as Bill 101, St-Laurent recounts the history of Quebec language laws that led to the creation of Bill 101 which is at once much-loved and much hated. Through a conversation with Orr St-Laurent recalls the St Leonard Riots when parents reacted to the Union National's Bill 63, which sets out requirements for French-language instruction to anglophone and allophone children. And its Liberal successor Bill 22, Quebec's Official Language Act which made Quebec the sole official language of Quebec and required students to pass a test to get admitted to an English primary or secondary school.

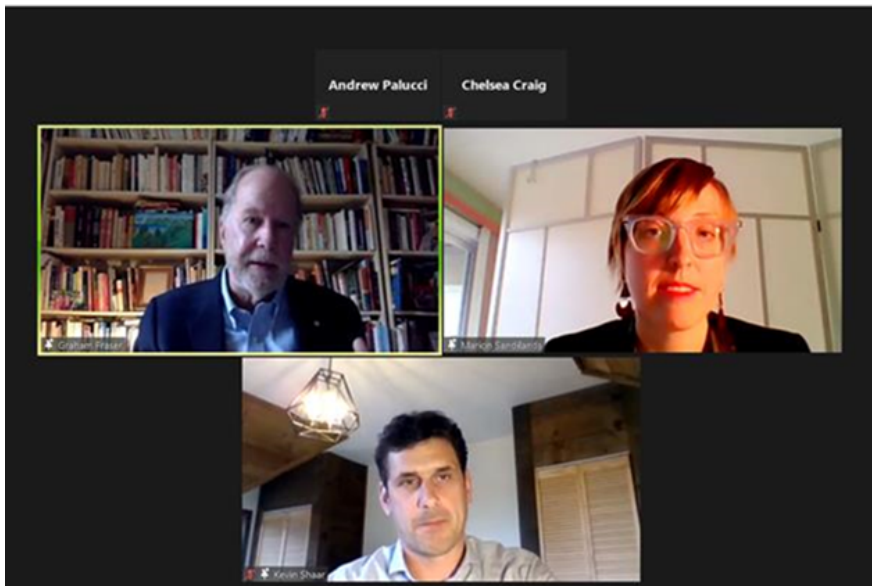
Anger over these and other actions by the Liberals and the Union National led to the election of the Parti Québécois in 1976. While PQ hardliners were fervently in favour of harsh measures in Bill 101, the proposed legislation did not meet with unanimous popular support, says St-Laurent. Even PQ Leader René Lévesque had reservations about the bill. But anxiety about the future of the French language in Quebec won the day and the Bill was passed into law.

View the [webinar](#) on the Charter of the French Language.

Community featured former Commissioner of Official Languages, **Graham Fraser** (*left in photo*), who spoke to our community about the history of the Official Languages Act.

Canada's longest serving Commissioner of Official Languages, Fraser intervened in many judicial cases in order to defend the linguistic rights of Canadians. In 2007, he intervened in the case which opposed the abolition of the Court Challenges Program which led to the official languages minority component of the program to be restored under the Language Rights Support Program. Fraser also appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada as a co-appellant in the DesRochers (CALDECH) case, which resulted in the Court's broadening of the interpretation of Part IV of the Official Languages Act and recognizing the public's right to receive service of equal quality in both official languages. In 2008, he intervened in the Nguyen case, in which the Supreme Court's interpretation took into account the interests of official language communities with regard to the rights guaranteed by section 23 of the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism



During his webinar, Fraser touches on everything from the creation of the Act a half century ago to the changes enacted over the years. The move towards Official Language legislation began in the sixties with the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which was created in 1963 by Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson in reaction

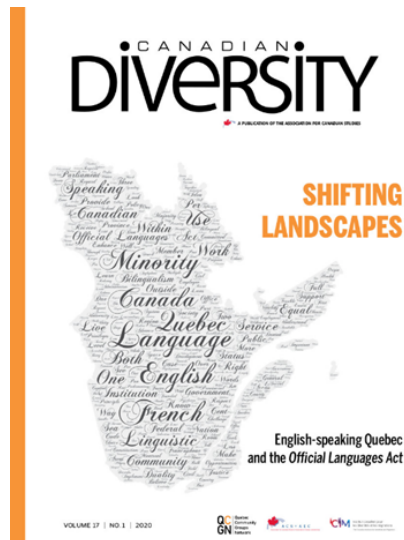
to rising linguistic tensions in Quebec and Canada. The first recommendation of commissioners André Laurendeau and Davidson Dunton was that English and French be declared the official languages of the Parliament of Canada, of the federal courts, of the federal government, and of the federal administration. Based on those recommendations, the government enacted the Official Languages Act in 1969 requiring that all federal institutions to provide services in English or French on request. The Act also creates the office of Commissioner of Official Languages and describes the procedure by which citizens may make complaints regarding the application of the Act. There was a major reform of the Act in 1988 when the law is substantially amended to take into account the new language-related obligations that the federal government had undertaken under Sections 16-23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The new law also introduced Part VII which commits the Government of Canada to enhancing the vitality of English and French linguistic minority communities and to promoting the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society. The Government of Canada is once again reviewing the Act and Fraser provides his insights on the government's proposed reform. View Fraser's [webinar](#). Also consult his PowerPoint presentation.

The first webinar, ***Language Rights and the English-speaking Community of Quebec***, was presented by Lawyer **Marion Sandilands** (*right in photo*) who practices civil litigation, constitutional and administrative law at Conway Baxter Wilson LLP, has appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada on matters of constitutional law and language rights. That included representing the QCGN when we intervened in the case of *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique v. British Columbia*. In that landmark case, the Supreme Court gave a generous and broad interpretation of Section 23 of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees minority language educational rights to French-speaking communities outside Quebec and to the English-speaking minority within Quebec. Read more about that case [here](#) and [here](#). Sandilands was also the lead author on QCGN's [English-speaking community of Quebec and the modernization of the](#)

with us since before Confederation, explains Sandilands. It goes back to the Quebec Act of 1774, which granted emancipation for Catholic, French-speaking settlers of the province and reinstated French civil law in combination with British criminal law. The Constitutional Act of 1791 then divides the territory into Upper Canada and Lower Canada. Anglophones, like the loyalists, resided in Upper Canada (present-day Ontario) and francophone Canadians lived in Lower Canada (present-day Quebec). Finally, the British North America Act of 1867 whereby three British colonies in North America—Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Canada—were united as “one Dominion under the name of Canada”. establishes English and French as the legislative and judicial languages of Canada. Sandilands then discusses the evolution of language legislation from the creation of the Official Languages Act in 1969, the Charter of the French Language in Quebec in 1977, and the Canadians Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 which enshrines language rights in Canada. She makes note of Section 23 of the Charter that set our minority education rights that guarantees the right to have one’s children educated in the minority language of a province – English in Quebec and French in the rest of Canada. These rights, which cannot be overridden by provincial legislatures, are the crux of the current court case on Bill 40 where English school boards are challenging Quebec government legislation that abolishes elected school boards and replaces them with government-controlled service centers.

View Sandilands’s [webinar](#).

Register [here](#) to receive information about future webinars. Meanwhile you can view all of our past webinars on the QCGN’s YouTube channel [here](#).



Also, keep informed by reading the **Policy Matters Blog** written by our policy team on our [Language Rights](#) page which provides background and information about the federal Official Languages Act and Quebec’s Charter of the French Language to help our community react in a strong, evidence-based manner to upcoming consultations on these legislative reviews that will have a deep impact on our community. It also contains QCGN policy positions, analysis, news, and information, as well as links to important resources. It will serve as a rallying point to inform members and stakeholders of the stakes and help them play their part in this critical debate.

Finally, learn more about the Official Languages Act and the critical role it has played in the survival of Canada as a cohesive national entity by consulting ***Shifting Landscapes: English-speaking Quebec and the Official Languages Act***. This is a special edition of Canadian Diversity produced

by the QCGN in cooperation with the Association for Canadian Studies (ACS) for the 50th anniversary of the Act. The magazine includes articles by Fraser, Sandilands, ACS President **Jack Jedwab**, former QCGN President **Geoffrey Chambers**, QCGN Director General **Sylvia Martin-Laforge**, Mount Royal MP **Anthony Housefather**, and other community voices.

WE ARE ALL QUEBECERS - JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

Submitted by **Chelsea Craig**

#OuiOurQuebec Campaign Coordinator

Avenue Strategic Communications

The Quebec Community Groups Network and community partners have launched the WE ARE ALL QUEBECERS campaign which celebrates our community and our sense of belonging to Quebec. All of us contribute to Quebec in a myriad of ways. Through social media, the campaign aims to engage our community in displaying their pride at being Quebecers. It also aims to raise awareness about our community and our concerns and break persistent myths about English-speaking Quebecers.

For the social media campaign, we are enlisting English-speaking Quebecers to display their community pride by posting photos and stories of themselves as well as their family, friends, and neighbours on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram using the tagline WE ARE ALL QUEBECERS, along with

with a short description we will publish them. Meanwhile, please visit our [@OuiOurQuebec website](#) to learn more about the campaign and interact with us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#) to remain informed about the campaign and upcoming events.

Photo Katherine Korakakis, president of English Parents' Committee Association (EPCA Quebec), and her family.



BILINGUAL VACCINATION INFORMATION; HOW TO RECEIVE RAMQ DOCUMENTS IN ENGLISH

By Michael Udy
Director of Access to Health and Social Services

The Quebec Community Groups Network was pleased to report about a month ago that English-speaking seniors had received bilingual information from the government on its COVID-19 vaccination campaign. But last week we received reports from other English-speaking Quebecers that they received the same package in French only.

The earlier correspondence arrived in envelopes addressed directly to recipients. They contained a bilingual information pamphlet and a letter, in both French and English, that was co-signed **Dr. Arruda**, Provincial Director of Public Health, and **Daniel Paré**, Manager of Quebec's COVID-19 vaccination campaign, encouraging recipients to register for an appointment to get vaccinated. These mailings appear to be targeted to members of the groups who are on the government's list of priority groups for vaccination. As such, the mailings are staggered in time. Last spring, the health ministry mailed English-language COVID Self-care Guides two months after French-only versions arrived at Quebec addresses. This occurred only after a public pressure campaign by the QCGN and other community advocates.

At the time, government officials determined they could use a list of addresses provided by Revenue Quebec of taxpayers who had registered to receive correspondence in English. Revenue Quebec did not supply the names of the individuals, which is why people received the English version of the Self-care Guide in envelopes addressed to 'L'Occupant'.

This year the Ministry is using a different list belonging to the *Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec* (RAMQ). On the list are the names and addresses of citizens covered by RAMQ who have asked to receive information in English. A disclaimer to this effect can be found at the bottom of the English version of the letter. After some enquiry, we were able to determine that people now receiving that letter and the pamphlet in French only have not made such a request.

The remedy for this is simple. Call RAMQ at **1 800 561-9749**. Wait until the end of the main menu to hear: "For information in English, press 9". In the next menu, which is in English, we suggest you select number 4 for the Quebec Health Booklet and other services. This selection leads to a real person, whereas as other choices may not. Ask the clerk to indicate in your file that you wish to receive all your correspondence in English.

Registering on the RAMQ list should ensure that future correspondence from the health insurance board will be in English. The list is also available should the government decide to employ it to send other information.

While the reception of this information in English signals progress, we do not know if this is a formally adopted practice that will apply to future situations.

LARGER NEED

By Michael Udy

Director of Access to Health and Social Services

Montreal's **Fulford Residence** is slated to close its doors by September. The private not-for-profit home in downtown Montreal for older English-speaking women is an historic initiative of the Montreal Anglican Archdiocese to support English-speaking women dating back to 1855.

In January, an outbreak of COVID-19 among residents and staff led to several deaths. Faced with recovering from this, a reduced number of residents, and reduced financial capacity, the Board of Directors announced the decision to close.

Over the past two months QCGN added its voice to the expressions of concern over the sudden shutdown and the fate of its remaining residents. QCGN President Marlene Jennings sent a letter to the Bishop of the Archdiocese of Montreal, President of the Fulford board. At the Bishop's invitation, QCGN representatives then met representatives of the board who shed light on Fulford's dilemma. Fulford's original project for senior women was the provision of a community living environment for autonomous residents. The women now actually living at Fulford are significantly less autonomous in a 150-year-old building difficult to adapt to their needs. Those needs require more material, professional and therefore financial resources.

Meanwhile deaths among the residents have reduced revenues to the point where the residence is losing \$60-\$70,000 each month. Such losses will eventually deplete the capital that subsidizes the home. It is understandable the Fulford board concluded they must find a responsible end to this slide. This situation reveals and emphasizes a larger need that continues to be unmet. The women living at Fulford cannot move to the St-Margaret's CHSLD because it has a waiting list. The people on that waiting list and the current residents at Fulford need access soon to an appropriate residence.

If the residents must be moved to a new care environment, it is imperative that it offer them the ability to live and communicate in English. It is disorienting and can be harmful for seniors who need placement to cope with a second language. Even if they know that language well, aging can weaken their grasp of it. At any age expressing one's personal needs, sometimes intimate, and understanding instructions in a second language can be less reliable and less reassuring for the person.

The QCGN is concerned about the fate of Fulford residents and the situation of the many English-speaking Quebecers on waiting lists for residential services. This is particularly concerning in the face of COVID-19 and the strain it has put on nursing homes, our elderly, and their families.

We are reaching out to seniors' stakeholders to discuss and advocate for a durable solution.

MOVING TOWARDS A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

By Riley Dalys-Fine

QCGN Manager of Community Outreach and Engagement

The QCGN is happy to share its summary report of the *Building a More Vital Community Together Forum* which took place March 16, 2021.

The forum represented the culmination of the second phase of its **Strategic Community Growth Plan** project which supports the creation of a community development plan for English-speaking Quebec. On March 16 we introduced stakeholders to the proposed community planning process to take place this spring.

The report on the forum, which can be accessed [here](#), provides an overview of how insight gained from our consultations will be used by the QCGN to develop the structure of a comprehensive Community Development Plan. Additionally, the report provides a timeline for how this plan will be developed, implemented, and monitored.

Moving from the consultation phase, the QCGN will continue discussions with members and stakeholders while shifting the focus to action planning.

"The last year and a half have been about forging consensus among English-speaking Quebecers concerning our key challenges," explains **Sylvia Martin-Laforge**, Director-General of the QCGN. "To that end community leaders have been meeting to share their perspectives and reinforce a common vision of community vitality."

challenges identified in consultations. They will address the following: What is the ideal model for framing and evaluating a community development plan for English-speaking Quebec? How do we govern the implementation of the plan in a way that represents stakeholders? How do the stated needs and challenges of our community translate into strategies for collective action?

"Our role thus far has been to facilitate a dialogue on the key barriers to realizing our community priorities across different sectors of activity," explains **Sabrina Taran**, QCGN's Director of Strategic Community Initiatives. "The challenge now will be to use this information to develop a five-year community plan that speaks to common needs."

On a policy level, these barriers include a lack of data, limited access to funding, under-representation of the community at a decision-making level and restrictive legislative frameworks, all of which impede the community's ability to realize its collective priorities, said Taran. While consultations reaffirmed consensus around these issues, work remains to be done to start seeing results.

To do this the QCGN will work with organizations and institutions to produce an outline for a community development plan to guide, monitor and evaluate collective action. The community development plan will also serve as a framework for the respective leadership roles to be played by the QCGN and other stakeholders in carrying out these actions.

The QCGN begins to address some of these questions with its mobilization strategy, which is included as an annex to the summary report. The strategy identifies next steps to engage the community throughout the planning and implementation of the community development plan.

Do not hesitate to reach out to Sylvia.Martin-Laforge@qcgnc.ca; Sabrina.Taran@qcgnc.ca, or me, [Riley Dalys-Fine](#).

COMMUNITY INNOVATION FUND PROJECTS IN FULL SWING

By **Bonnie Zehavi**

Community Innovation Fund Project Manager

The **Community Innovation Fund 2.0** is in full swing with 10 exciting projects helping Quebec's English-speaking communities put social innovation in action to address the needs of vulnerable English-speaking Quebecers. In a variety of ways, the projects address the needs of a diverse community of English-speaking youth and seniors through innovative and grassroots-led initiatives that seek to reduce isolation, promote inclusion, and improve the socioeconomic reality of our community's most vulnerable members. In this issue of the Network News, we highlight four exciting projects being offered by organizations new to working with the QCGN.



Project 10

As Montreal's only 2LGBTQ+ youth group offering support to youth in English, Project 10 (P10) has a 25-year history of providing impactful community programming, resources, and services. P10's *QTBIPOC (Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color) Youth Innovation and Collaboration Project* seeks to create a unique space for QTBIPOC youth to break isolation and build individual and collective capacity and increase the organization's internal diversity and its own capacity to serve a more diverse clientele.

Since receiving support from the CIF, P10 has been busy improving its communications strategy to ensure wider-reaching and culturally relevant promotion. It has successfully expanded its QTBIPOC Full Circle program, creating new programming specifically designed for QTBIPOC youth, including arts-based workshops offering safe space and providing opportunities for learning, self-expression, and social connection.

P10 also has been working closely with the Centre for Community Organizations (COCO) to apply an anti-racist, anti-oppressive lens to their organizational mandate, policies, and practices. Human

the needs of English-speaking QTBIPOC youth.

Camp Weredale

Another exciting CIF undertaking is the *Weredale Employability Training*, designed by Camp Weredale to increase employment opportunities for youth aged 18-25 who have aged out of residential and foster care.

Using camp facilities during the off season, the objective of the pilot project is to provide vulnerable youth and Care Jeunesse members a safe and positive experience to help them acquire employability and life skills as they transition to independent living. It also aims to create awareness about the difficulties of youth who have aged out of the system – a demographic often forgotten.

Initially designed to provide on-site housing for participants throughout the duration of the training, some of the Camp Weredale's key activities were disrupted because of COVID-19, as restrictive measures prevented staff and participants from using the camp space. However, the team has been busy conducting extensive research into the issue of youth aging out of care through phone surveys, focus groups, the study of academic journals, and by connecting with subject matter experts. These efforts have helped with a project redesign to meet the unique needs of the clientele while respecting current health measures in place.

The team's research findings also helped shape the structure and philosophy of the program, based on a three-prong approach: flexibility and agency for participants when conducting training; focus on teamwork and conflict resolution techniques; and friendship-building and creating a sense of community.

Fostering the Future of Fish

A Verdun-based literacy and arts organization providing English-language creative writing workshops to primarily low-income children, Suspicious Fish has been expanding its participant base and extending its target demographics with the launch of its CIF-funded *Fostering the Future of Fish*. With the goal of offering more diverse programming that bridges generational gaps and addresses multiple forms of isolation and marginalization, Suspicious Fish has been working to develop new programming for high school-aged youth, seniors, and young adult learners in the Southwest. Although school closures and restrictions on gatherings have created numerous challenges and required several redesigns, the group has managed to launch a pilot project at Beurling Academy in Verdun and, leveraging the support from CIF, recently acquired New Horizons funding for seniors in order to develop a one-year intergenerational, seniors-led project. The project will begin in the spring of 2021.

Museum of Jewish Montreal

Finally, despite losing their physical space at the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, the Museum of Jewish Montreal has been busy establishing new professional and creative opportunities for marginalized English-speaking Jewish youth and successfully strengthening both participant and audience connections to Jewish identity and community.

Through their microgrant program, *Professional Opportunities for Vulnerable English-Speaking Youth Through Fellowships and Microgrants*, the museum has been offering skill-building seminars and empowering young adults through microgrants. To date, the museum has supported nine youth participating in the program, and four "micrograntees" have completed and presented their projects through virtual events, while three more are scheduled to present in April and May.

Notably, the first four microgrant events brought in over 300 audience members, which is no small feat considering the museum's abrupt pivot to exclusively online exhibits. Each event has received incredibly positive feedback from audience members as well as the micrograntees themselves, the majority of whom indicated in follow up surveys that they felt an increased understanding and appreciation of Montreal's Jewish life and culture.

Organizations sharing the \$1.1 million funding include Camp Weredale, the Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA), the Côte-des-Neiges Black Community Association (CDNBCA), DESTA Black Youth Network, Gay and Grey Montreal, the Museum of Jewish Montreal, the Press Start Youth Coop, Project 10, Suspicious Fish, and The Depot. For details of each project visit the CIF page of the QCGN website and stay tuned for more updates in upcoming issues of the Network News.

Financed by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program – Children and Families Component and managed by the QCGN, the Community Innovation Fund was designed to

RED FEATHER FORUM EDITOR GLORIA MÉNARD RETIREES HER PLUME

By Rita Legault

QCGN Director of Communications



Facing insurmountable obstacles in part due to the COVID-19 public health crisis, the Red Feather Forum published its last edition a few weeks ago.

After 35 years of maintaining communications among Montreal's English-speaking health and social services community, time has taken its toll, explained founding editor **Gloria Ménard**, who has singlehandedly produced the newsletter for more than three decades.

"I am at the age where it's time to hang up my hat, I've essentially retired, given up other clients," said Ménard, who is winding down the operations of GM&A Communication.

"Since COVID it has been difficult calling around for stories," she adds. "The focus

has been getting through the pandemic. There are not a lot of new projects and activities to announce."

The Red Feather Forum was introduced in 1986 by the Foundation of United Red Feather Services – at one time the umbrella organization for more than 100 social service agencies in Greater Montreal. The original aim of the newsletter was to maintain communication links among the "Red Feather family", to maintain links among those employees and agencies, and to report to the English-speaking community on what was happening in its social services and institutions.

"When the government moved in and was taking over, people at the various agencies did not know what the others were doing," Gloria said, noting that at a forum it was decided to create a newsletter to keep everyone informed. Born of that meeting, the Red Feather Forum began publishing a quarterly newsy newsletter to keep people connected.

"It was very touching to see how many people wanted it," said Sheila Goldbloom, the last president of the Red Feather Foundation board. "It has a very special place in my heart."

People Working Together

"I was amazed at how good it was and how many people read it," she said, noting the newsletter was particularly satisfying for the staff whose efforts were recognized. "It was so exciting to be part of change and people working together."

Since dissolution of the Foundation, production of the Forum was supported through the Red Feather Fund set up within the Foundation of Centraide of Greater Montreal, of which Red Feather was a principal founding member and financial supporter.

But over time, and as the original Red Feather agencies were absorbed into other institutions over the years, people involved in new agencies no longer identify with the Red Feather history, Ménard acknowledges. "It served its purpose over the years connecting people to activities and the philosophy of Red Feather. But it's time had come."

Since announcing her retirement, Ménard has been inundated with calls with well wishes from the multiple contacts that she was nurtured over the years.

"She deserves all the well wishes," says Mrs. Goldbloom. "She did a wonderful job for these 35 years."

"As founder and editor of the Forum for 35 years, it has been my privilege to meet and report on the many "angels" who work in and volunteer for the fine organizations serving Montreal's English-speaking community," Ménard wrote in goodbye note to her collaborators. "My thanks to all those who have been so cooperative in my research and who have made my work such a pleasure. And thank

efforts in bringing our community together for more than three decades," said QCGN President Marlene Jennings, adding: "Remember Gloria, retirement is a journey – not a destination." Learn more about the history and mission of the Red Feather Forum at redfeathermontreal.ca.

Photo: Gloria Ménard with Sheila Goldbloom, that last chair of the Board of the Red Feather Forum.

HISTORICAL VIEWS: A WEALTH OF STORIES IN THE GRAND BIOGRAPHY OF ENGLISH QUEBEC

Submitted by The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network



The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) is pleased to announce the publication of its brand-new anthology *Historical Views: Selections from Quebec Heritage News 2000-2020*, in honour of our twentieth anniversary. Edited by QAHN executive director **Matthew Farfan** and longtime member **Rod MacLeod**, this stunning 2-volume collection includes an array of historical articles selected from the first twenty years of QAHN's acclaimed quarterly magazine *Quebec Heritage News*. The collection, which is available in soft cover, comes with a slipcase, and includes 120 articles by more than 60 authors. It is lavishly illustrated with nearly 150 archival and contemporary images in full colour and black and white.

The subject matter focuses on the history and heritage of Quebec's English-speaking communities and covers the entire province of Quebec. Topics are divided into 15 chapters ranging from "Local Heroes" to "Indigenous"; from "Settlement and Immigration" to "Industry"; from "Military" to "Burial and Lore," and more.

"This project has been nearly a year in the making," says co-editor Matthew Farfan. "But it's been a labour of love. And we're really pleased with the results."

That sentiment has been echoed across the heritage community, any by educators and members of the general public, as well.

Doug Brown of John Abbott College, calls the anthology "a testament" to "community of memory," a "celebration of life in Quebec," and "QAHN's gift to everyone for whom that life and heritage have, or will have, meaning."

Bev Taber Smith, of the Richmond County Historical Society, says the articles are "informative, entertaining and always well-written."

"It takes good storytellers to impart a sense of the meaning of history. The many voices in this anthology bring to light a wealth of stories in the grand biography of English Quebec," adds **Mary Ducharme**, of the Hemmingford Archives.

Meanwhile, **Raymond Th  berge**, Canada's Commissioner of Official Languages, says the anthology will "help make the rich history and heritage of Quebec's English-speaking communities more widely known and appreciated."

For those in the Eastern Townships, there is much of interest in this collection. Among the topics covered, there are stories about forgotten heroes; long-lost burial grounds; a famous horse; an elusive fish; a deadly disease; suffragettes; steamships; Prohibition; Fenian Raiders; and much, much more.

This publication, which is limited to 250 copies, sells for \$45 (\$40.50 for QAHN members), plus \$20 postage. To order by e-transfer or Paypal, please make payments to home@qahn.org. By cheque, send payment to: QAHN, 3355 College, Sherbrooke, QC J1M 0B8. Or just make an appointment to stop by the QAHN office to pick up a set!

Photo: Co-editor Matthew Farfan with the new 2-volume set, "Historical Views."

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 and/or Twitter.

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