

QCGN Statement on The Expert Panel on Language of Work and Service in Federally Regulated Private Businesses

MONTREAL, March 5, 2020 – The QCGN applauds the appointment of Me Janice Naymark to the Expert Panel on Language of Work and Service in Federally Regulated Private Businesses. Me Naymark is an experienced lawyer with deep roots in English-speaking Quebec. She is an active member of the QCGN’s Access to Justice Committee, the Quebec Association of Independent Schools and other community organizations serving the English-speaking community of Quebec.

Today, Mélanie Joly, Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, announced the members of the Expert Panel on Language of Work and Service in Federally Regulated Private Businesses. This panel is tasked with developing options and recommendations to implement proposals contained in *English and French: Towards a Substantive Equality of Official Languages in Canada* to protect French as a language of service and work in federally regulated businesses in Quebec and in other regions with a strong Francophone presence. Me Naymark is the only English-speaking Quebecer appointed to this six-member Panel.

“We are getting decidedly mixed messages from Minister Joly,” said QCGN President Marlene Jennings. “On the one hand, she says that the federal government will move forward with its official language proposals while respecting the rights of English-speaking Quebecers, but she appoints one person to represent Canada’s largest official language minority community on a Panel that will make recommendations that could have significant impact on the ability of English workers and consumers to interact with federally regulated businesses in the official language of their choice.”

“We look forward to appearing before this panel, and will be following its work closely,” added QCGN Vice President Kevin Shaar. “There are very real constitutional issues at play, and all Canadians should be watching what is going on here.”

Minister Joly’s proposals include a suggestion that the Office québécois de la langue française (OQLF) play a role in the application of the new federal regime to businesses that choose to voluntarily obtain a francization certificate issued by the OQLF in relation to the management of complaints under the new federal legislative framework.

“It is just unacceptable that a federal Minister of Official Languages would embark on this kind of exercise without explicitly ensuring the rights of workers and consumers in both of Canada’s official languages,” Jennings said. “You don’t protect French on the backs of English-speaking Quebecers. We expect the Government of Canada to do its job and protect the rights of English- and French-speaking Canadians.”

The Quebec Community Groups Network (www.qcgn.ca) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together English-language community organizations across Quebec. As a centre of evidence-based expertise and collective action it identifies, explores and addresses strategic issues affecting the development and vitality of the English-speaking community of Quebec and encourages dialogue and collaboration among its member organizations, individuals, community groups, institutions and leaders.

For further information:

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