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*Happy Holidays
Wishing You Health
and Happiness in 2022*

*Meilleurs vœux pour les fêtes
En espérant que 2022
vous apporte santé et bonheur*

Please note that our QCGN workplaces will be closed for the holidays from December 27, 2021, to January 3, 2022, inclusively. Our offices, virtual and otherwise, will re-open on Tuesday, January 4, 2022.

THE CHANGING FACE OF THE QUEBEC COMMUNITY GROUPS NETWORK

By **Marlene Jennings**
QCGN President



There is an adage that reads: May you live in interesting times. We are indeed living through challenging times. COVID-19 has had profound impacts – both local and global – on our social and economic wellbeing. The pandemic has had tragic consequences for many, and it has fundamentally altered our daily lives. But, despite COVID constraints over the past 20 months, I am proud to say our team and our entire Network have pulled together admirably in the face of the many restrictions imposed by this public health crisis. I credit many of our achievements to the tremendous amount of work that took place before the pandemic to build partnerships within our community. They

have been critical to creating a stronger and more resilient Network and community. Some of our successes are discussed in the QCGN's 2020-2021 Annual Report entitled **Pivoting Past the Pandemic** that has been posted online. As we close out the calendar year, I want to thank our

Exceptional Year

After a little more than a year as President of the Quebec Community Groups Network, I have come to understand that the nature of our work has evolved enormously. QCGN has morphed into an active advocacy organization that our community and political stakeholders look to take the lead to provide the evidence-informed analysis on issues of importance to English-speaking Quebecers. With the introduction this year of language legislation at both the provincial and federal levels, the demands on our organization and our dedicated volunteers have increased greatly as we attempt to move the legislative needle at different levels of government. This had led to an unprecedented level of activity and rapid response, and I want to commend our volunteers and staff for the formidable job over the last 12 months on these two major files. Working together, the QCGN has made a substantial impact on our community.

The last quarter has proven particularly hectic and demanding on our Board of Directors. I want especially to thank my fellow board members who have so frequently stepped up to the plate and taken on additional tasks. There have been extraordinary demands on our organizational structure which wasn't built to meet the demands we currently face. There is a need for an operational structure better adapted to our evolving needs and priorities. I look forward to the report of the QCGN's Renewal Committee and its recommendations on the governance and organizational structure that the QCGN requires to fulfill its mission and vision in an effective and efficient manner.

Meetings with Ministers

Since late spring and until the election writ was dropped, I had regular telephone meetings with the previous Minister of Official Languages, the Hon. **Mélanie Joly**. Discussions centred around the federal policy paper on the modernization of official languages and the bill tabled by the Minister last June. Bill C-32 proposed to abandon the equality of Canada's official languages and linguistic duality as a sustaining pillar of our nation and society and to establish an asymmetrical linguistic policy that would territorialize language rights through the creation of workplace language rights covering French only. Our English-speaking minority in Quebec was left by the wayside given the total lack of measures to address the under-representation of the English speakers within federal institutions operating in Quebec outside of the National Capital Region.

Following September's federal election, Minister Joly was promoted to Foreign Affairs Minister. We congratulate her and wish her well in her imposing new portfolio. I have since had the pleasure of dealing with the new minister, the Hon. **Ginette Petitpas Taylor**, who arranged to speak with me soon after being sworn in on October 26. After a quick call to warmly welcome her, we had a more substantive meeting where I reiterated our community's concerns regarding Bill C-32 and told her we are committed to working with her on the modernization of the Official Languages Act. I also provided the new minister with statistical data demonstrating the high levels of poverty, unemployment, and underemployment among our minority community as compared with our Francophone majority cohort. She was struck by the level of poverty and pointed out that there are many similarities between the socio-economic situation of Acadians in her home province of New Brunswick and that of Quebec's English-speaking community. The Minister committed to meeting with QCGN regularly in the future.

Meeting with Commissioner Thériège

On December 9, I had an opportunity to catch up with Canada's Commissioner of Official Languages **Raymond Thériège**.

This has proven a busy fall for official languages on the national stage, first with the appointment of Canada's first Innu Governor General, **Mary Simon**, and then with the controversy surrounding Air Canada CEO Michael Rousseau's admission that he does not speak French.

The Commissioner said these events highlighted serious issues with the current Official Languages Act which can only be addressed through modernization. The Commissioner reported that the federal government remains committed to tabling a bill to modernize the Act within the first 100 days of this Parliament (by early February). This leaves little room for improvements to the previously tabled C-32, changes which would address serious concerns among English-

another subject, the Commissioner reported a forthcoming survey on official languages to gauge the attitudes of Canadians toward official bilingualism and linguistic duality.

Meetings with Stakeholders

Meanwhile on the provincial front, the QCGN has been meeting with sector organizations to discuss common ground on Bill 96. These groups include the **Conseil du patronat du Québec**; the **Chambre de commerce du Montréal métropolitain**; the **Syndicat des professionnelles et professionnels du gouvernement du Québec**; the **Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse**, and the **Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec**. We also met Montreal West Mayor **Beny Masella**, who heads the **Association of Suburban Municipalities**. This outreach beyond QCGN's traditional network expands our network of allies and partners on a variety of issues, in particular challenges.

Update on Bill 96

Nothing this year has been more impactful on our community than the introduction of **Bill 96, An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec**. This is the central theme of my end-of-year commentary in **The Montreal Gazette**. After years of relative calm on the language front, Quebec's English-speaking minority community finds itself in the middle of another language storm. As part of its proposed overhaul of the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101), the Coalition Avenir Québec government has placed us squarely in its target.

During the National Assembly's last week of sitting before the holiday break, the **Committee on Culture and Education** returned to its clause-by-clause study of Bill 96. Amendments proposed thus far are not reassuring. Language Minister **Simon Jolin-Barrette** introduced an amendment to the preamble which adds the phrase "sur le territoire du Québec." This, he explained, would reflect the territorial nature of the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101) and allow Quebec to impose it on federally regulated enterprises on its territory. Parti Québécois MNA **Pascal Bérubé** proposed an amendment to add the word "seule" in the phrase: "le français est la seule langue commune de la nation québécoise." Both amendments were adopted.

At its very core, Bill 96 is an attempt to delegitimize our community. The bill denatures the Charter of the French Language, attempting to render it exclusionary and divisive. The Coalition Avenir Québec government is doing its utmost to fundamentally redefine Quebec's English-speaking community. Meanwhile Bill 96 does little or nothing to achieve its stated objective – to promote and protect the French language. These are noble goals that most English-speaking Quebecers endorse. But rather than propose pragmatic measures that would foster the French language, Bill 96 upsets the delicate balance between individual and collective rights. It transforms Quebec into a rights-free zone where even our provincial Charter of Rights and Freedoms cannot be invoked to protect individual Quebecers from the excesses of government now and in the future.

Over the past year, the QCGN has repeatedly called upon the government to withdraw the bill and start over with broad public consultations on how to protect and promote the French language. Barring that unlikely event, we made 14 specific recommendations in our **brief** to the National Assembly to mitigate the damages the current version of Bill 96 would inflict.

The QCGN maintains that the government must not impose temporary permit restrictions in education that would restrict English studies for the children of foreign workers or legislate caps on English CEGEP enrolment that would devastate our regional institutions. The government also ought to remove barriers to access to justice in English and abandon its proposed change to the process for the withdrawal of bilingual status from municipalities. Finally, we insist the right to communication and services in English must never be based on eligibility for English instruction.

The pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause is even more worrisome because it proposes to sweep aside many of our core Constitutional protections. Basic rights and freedoms long enshrined in both the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms would be discarded. The courts would be powerless to review and remedy infringements of rights otherwise protected under either the Canadian or Quebec charters. Finally, we are most concerned about the implications of a proposed unilateral amendment to the

nation.” That is why we continue to ask the government to send a reference question on the constitutionality and meaning of this to the Quebec Court of Appeal.

We are not alone in our concerns about the excesses in Bill 96. For more, read this **National Post opinion piece** by Sen. **André Pratte**, who describes Bill 96 as “Bill 101 on steroids”; this **article** by **Pearl Eliadis** for the **Max Bell School of Public Policy** on the overreach of Bill 96; and this **opinion piece** in The Montreal Gazette by **Sheila Kussner**, founder of Hope and Cope. You can find the amendments to Bill 96 and details of future proceedings on the committee’s **webpage** on the National Assembly website. The QCGN is monitoring the hearings to understand and react to changes to the legislation as it is modified.

Community Fights Back

Meanwhile the QCGN’s campaign to oppose the Coalition Avenir Québec government’s notion of an “historic English-speaking community” continues to gain traction. Our **open letter** to Premier **François Legault** and a **companion resolution** send a clear message. English-speaking Quebecers are full and contributing members of Quebec society and that any attempt by the Government of Quebec to define English-speaking Quebecers as an ‘historic’ community or limit their right to receive government communications and services in English is profoundly objectionable.

The letter has been signed by some 4,200 Quebecers and the resolution has been endorsed by more than three dozen organizations and institutions from many regions and many fields of endeavour. Signatories include the Quebec Community Groups Network and many of our member organizations including **Atwater Library and Computer Centre, Black Community Resource Centre, Catholic Action Montreal, Chez Doris, Coasters Association, Contactivity Centre, the English Parents’ Committee Association, the English-Speaking Catholic Council, Phelps Helps, the Quebec Association of Independent Schools, the Quebec Community Newspaper Association, the Regional Association of West Quebecers, Saint Columba House, Seniors Action Quebec, Quebec 4-H Association (4-H Quebec), Townshippers’ Association, and YES Employment + Entrepreneurship.**

Also endorsing the resolution are QCGN stakeholders and partners: **Batshaw Youth and Family Centres Foundation, the Canadian Hellenic Congress, the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation – CEDEC, the English Language Arts Network, the Eva Marsden Center for Social Justice and Aging, Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal, Gay and Grey, Habilitas Foundation, Jamaica Association of Montreal, Lakeshore General Hospital Foundation, L’équipe de La Collective des femmes de Nicolet et region, Linda Leith Publishing, the McGill University Health Centre Foundation, Miriam Foundation, Montreal Council of Women, the Native Women’s Shelter of Montreal, the Quebec English School Boards Association, Quebec Writers’ Federation, the Provincial Council of Women of Quebec, the Secretariat of the Black Community Forum, the South Asian Women’s Community Centre Council, UrbanNature Education, and the West Island Black Community Association (WIBCA).**

We thank all who have taken the time to share their concerns. We still have a long way to go to ensure Bill 96 does not fracture our community. I strongly encourage organizations and institutions – notably those serving English-speaking Quebecers – to endorse this important resolution. We hope to have many more groups on board by mid-January, when the Committee on Culture and Education restarts its examination of the bill. And, if you have not already done so, I also encourage you to sign and to share the open letter widely within and across your networks. If you are interested in signing the resolution, please contact our Director General **sylvania.martin-laforge@qcgnc.ca**.

Cheers to 40 Years

Two of the QCGN’s member organizations, the **English-Speaking Catholic Council** and **Literacy Quebec** are celebrating 40th anniversaries. On behalf of the QCGN and the community, I would like to thank both of these groups for four decades of loyal service to our linguistic minority community and best of luck for many more years of benefitting English-speaking

FULL-FLEDGED ANGLO QUEBECER T-SHIRTS

In response to our open letter to the Premier, which he signed, CJAD host **Aaron Rand** is calling out the provincial government's 'historic' designation of Anglos by adding a new t-shirt to his **Historic Quebec Anglos** collection. This year's "Full Fledged Anglo Quebecer" t-shirt is designed to send a message to the provincial government that all English-speaking Quebecers are deserving of and entitled to their language rights. Again, this year proceeds from the sales of these shirts will support **The Montreal Gazette Christmas Fund**, which helps needy Montrealers through a particularly difficult time of the year. To purchase your Full-Fledged Anglo t-shirt, go to <https://historicanglos.com/>.



QCGN ACCESS TO JUSTICE PROJECT INTERVENTION ON CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM UNDERWAY

By Mitra Thompson

Project Manager, Access to Justice in English

As the year winds down, work on the Access to Justice file has been picking up speed. Tasked with growing our community's capacity to access justice in the official language of their choice, our team has been actively learning from other organizations and hearing directly from the community at large about the issues they face in obtaining public services in English.

The Access to Justice team has been active in their outreach activities these past few weeks. In implementing the first phase of our strategic intervention on federal correctional services in Quebec, we have been in contact with several key stakeholders to learn more about the challenges faced by inmates trying to access programs and services in English.

We reached out to more than 30 community organizations working with federal inmates and parolees in various capacities: social rehabilitation programs, housing support, employment services, and equity seeking advocacy. We have met with representatives of the **John Howard Society** and the **Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC)** who were eager to collaborate with us and suggested additional community organizations to reach out to. We are also planning meetings with other groups such as **DESTA Black Youth Network** and **YMCA Quebec**. We will be continuing our follow-up communications with the other organizations contacted into 2022.

Taking the Pulse of English-speaking Quebecers

As we continue to prepare our case for reform within the federal correctional system, we have also begun the process of identifying other services where access in English can be problematic.

A key part of this process was the recent development and launch of a survey to better understand access to justice in English at the community level. Fielded over 10 days in September, the survey reached some 1,750 English-speaking Quebecers across the province, aged 18 and over, with a stated preference for receiving public services in English.

The results are sobering. Nearly half of English-speaking Quebecers who have used municipal and provincial services in the past two years say they found it difficult to access these services in English. The survey takes a broad look at 37 different services at the municipal, provincial, and federal level. While some are perceived as easier to access in English than others, important barriers to understanding were noted that go beyond verbal interactions: websites, road signs, and written communications are challenging for many.

Stay tuned for more in-depth coverage of the survey findings in an upcoming edition of the Network News.

the former Executive Director of **Batshaw Youth and Family Centres Foundation** in Montreal and a current member of the board of Batshaw's foundation, Michael is knowledgeable about Quebec's health and social services sector. Until recently he was QCGN's Director of Access to Health and Social Services in English.

"We welcome Michael's experience and established network in the community and beyond," said **Gerry Sklavounos**, Senior Advisor to the QCGN on Legal Affairs.

SAVE THE DATE: COMMUNITY FORUM TO BE HELD MARCH 15

By Riley Dalys-Fine

Manager of Community Outreach and Engagement

As the next step in our ongoing dialogue with the English-speaking community toward a new shared Community Development Plan, the QCGN is preparing to host a collaborative forum.

Scheduled for March 15, 2022, the forum will focus on the Community Development Plan for 2022-2027. Since January 2020, the QCGN has consulted with community stakeholders to identify the challenges and concerns that we must collectively address. Over the next few months, we plan to work closely with our partners to develop strategies for collective action. A draft of the plan will subsequently be presented to stakeholders during the forum.

"The QCGN has hosted several community forums in the past two years," says **Sabrina Taran**, QCGN's Director of Strategic Community Initiatives. "The most recent forum, 'Building a more Vital Community Together,' was held in March 2021 to present the roundtable model to our members and stakeholders. Holding regular community forums allows the QCGN to create a space where the community can work together to solve common issues.

The March 15 forum where the Community Development Plan will be launched will be the first since the 2012 Strategic Priorities Forum. The Community Development Plan aims to be a shared strategic plan between community organizations that serve and represent English speakers across Quebec.

"These organizations have collective ownership of the plan," says Taran. "It is a framework for collective action, to do together what they cannot achieve on their own."

Community Roundtables

The current Community Development Plan was developed by the Priority-Setting Steering Committee (PSSC), a standing committee of the QCGN mandated to identify community priorities through consultation. The community roundtables represent a concerted way for the QCGN to engage partners in priority-setting.

Through repeated discussion on key themes affecting community vitality, roundtables will identify a set of objectives to be worked toward over the next five years.

"The roundtable themes represent areas where community representatives can collaborate to have the greatest impact for their organizations" explains Taran. "The themes are based on recurring themes from consultations held over the past two years, which include funding, data needs, representation of the community and the global health and well-being of our organizations and networks."

The current roundtables began meeting in November with 31 participants representing community organizations serving English-speaking Quebec. Over the winter, the roundtables will meet again to finalize their plans for their respective areas. These plans will be compiled into a draft Community Development Plan for 2022-2027, which will be presented to the broader community for feedback and validation.

The QCGN will send invitations to the forum in the new year, at which point you will be able to register for the event. For now, we invite you to save the date and we look forward to providing

QUESCREN PUBLISHES BRIEFS ABOUT QUEBEC'S ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Working in collaboration with its **Inter-Level Educational Table** (ILET), the **Quebec English Speaking Communities Research Network** (QUESCREN) has published eight research briefs about the education system in English-speaking Quebec.

The series focuses on priority issues and challenges within Quebec's English-language education sector as identified by ILET.

"The briefs provide evidence as to how and why these issues are problematic," said QCGN's Public Policy and Research Analyst, **Andrew Palucci**. "Filled with pertinent information and current statistics/demographics, these briefs paint a picture of the challenges being faced by the English-speaking community and its educational sector."

The topics of the briefs are: Decline of Enrolment in Quebec's English Language School Sector; Representation of English-Speakers in Quebec's Education Ministries and Curriculum Development; Challenges Around Resources and Services in Quebec's English Language Schools; Provision of Services to Special Needs Students in Quebec's English-Language Public Schools; The Demography of Quebec's English-Language Schools: Complexity, Changes, and Community Issues; Issues of Bilingual Education in Quebec's English-Language Schools; Brief 7: Outmigration of Quebec's English-Speaking Youth; and The Community School Network in Quebec's Official Language Minority.

In addition to the completed briefs, one can also find 3 separate reference lists with links to research and statistics used to compile the briefs. These reference lists also enable individuals to conduct their own research.

All the briefs and reference lists can be found on the QUESCREN website [here](#). The **Secretariat for relations with English-speaking Quebecers** funded the production of these documents. If you have any further questions, contact **Andrew Palucci**.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING CATHOLIC COUNCIL CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY



(Photo courtesy of The Catholic Times.)

Pictured above is the 1984-85 ESCC Board of Directors: President Alphonsine Howlett, Diane Berty, Vice-president John Parisella, Past-President Patrick Rourke, Executive Director Harold Thuringer, and Vice-president and Treasurer Richard Macklem.

Submitted by Anna Farrow
Executive Director of the English-Speaking Catholic Council

On December 1, 1980, some 200 members of the English Catholic community met at the Board of Trade Building and elected a board of 17 to the newly formed **English-Speaking Catholic Council**. The Council was incorporated in 1981, receiving its letters patent on July 15, and hence this year the Council celebrates its 40th anniversary year.

In 1981, the province of Quebec was witnessing fierce debate and political action around language and identity. Bill 101, the Charter of the French language, had been introduced in 1977 and in 1980 the first referendum on Quebec sovereignty was held. As a way of proactive response, the Council was founded with four primary objectives: to ensure representation on public boards and committees to ensure that the needs and concerns of English-speaking Catholics were heard; the development of a strong voice at all levels of government; the encouragement of English-speaking Catholics in Quebec to take up positions of leadership on government, social service and school commission boards; and the coordination of the development of programs to assist the youth, seniors and vulnerable of the community.

Since 1981, the English-Speaking Catholic Council has served the community in a multiplicity of contexts and has remained a consistent voice advocating for the English-speaking community of Quebec. Throughout the years, many prominent Quebec leaders have served on the Board of the Council. This includes the former Solicitor General, **Warren Allmand**, and former MNA and MP, **Clifford Lincoln**, both of whom were Presidents of the Board.

Throughout the years, the Council has spoken before federal and provincial governments at public consultation hearings on a broad spectrum of topics, all of which have a bearing on the vitality and future of our community. A few examples include: the 1996 presentation before the Montreal Regional Health Board on health and social services for the English-speaking population, and a 2014 brief submitted to the Committee on Institutions on the matter of Bill 60, or the Charter affirming the values of State secularism etc. More recently, the Council has been actively engaged in the community's efforts to raise awareness around the problematic Bill 96, An Act respecting French.

lectures, receptions, and information sessions, the Council contributes to a dynamic and rich environment. One of the premier events which the Council is involved in is the Catholic Community Rally. First held in 1983, the Rally in recent years has been staged in conjunction with the Parish Vitality Conference hosted by the Office for English Pastoral Services of the Archdiocese. The most recent Rally saw more than 50 different community organizations and 250 guests gathered under one roof.

Throughout the past 40 years, the Council has seen the face of its community change. In 2019-2020, the ESCC developed and implemented a survey, Parishes & Newcomers, which gathered data on the demographic mix of the English-speaking Catholic parishes in the Montreal area. Many of the parishes are seeing that the majority of their congregation were born outside of Canada. The Council has been proactive in the last few years in seeking ways to support and assist these English-speaking Quebecers as they adjust to their new life and new country.



Picture above in 1991 are Archbishop Jean-Claude Turcotte, ESCC President Martin Murphy and Bishop Leonard Crowley. Photo courtesy of The Catholic Times.

Tonight, December 15, the Council is hosting an online **celebration** of its 40 years of serving the English-speaking community. Please join us!

LITERACY QUEBEC PUBLISHES ANNIVERSARY BOOK TO FETE 40 YEARS

By Laura Thompson
Project Manager for Literacy Quebec



The year 2020 marked the 40th Anniversary of Literacy Quebec. While the pandemic delayed our celebrations, we are excited to present to you our 40th anniversary book.

We had looked forward to celebratory gatherings, new initiatives, and partnerships, and moving Literacy Quebec into the next 40 years. Though change sometimes causes anxiety and fear, this change enabled us to take a step back and look at what Literacy Quebec stands for and focus our efforts on keeping our mission alive. Now, our

the members manoeuvre through the changes their own programs required and provide a network of support and idea sharing.

The Board of Directors works hard every year, but COVID-19 has solidified the team effort, and unleashed a newfound energy to make sure Literacy Quebec becomes a voice for English-speakers struggling with literacy in Quebec and represents this target population on the Pan-Canadian front. We are moving forward in a positive light, with great opportunities, projects, ideas, and motivation. We remain committed to supporting our members, the community, our networks, but mostly those who need us most: the vulnerable population struggling with low literacy.

Our 40th Anniversary book highlights the exemplary work of all our members, staff and volunteers who have played an important part in Literacy Quebec's story. We look back on 40 years of dedication, enthusiasm, and creativity.

We also highlight some of our latest projects and initiatives, including the "What's literacy got to do with it" podcast, the Literacy Helpline, the Scotiabank Charity Race, Verdun Stories, as well as a look at our Freda Hudson Volunteer Recognition Award winners.

Thank you to all who have played a role big or small in our first 40 years and here's to 40 more.



To order your own copy of this 40th Anniversary book, please visit: <https://www.literacyquebec.org/40thanniversary>

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.