

February 4, 2023

Ms. Eva Ludvig  
President  
Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN)  
By email

Re: A Zoom event about how a new Quebec constitution could help to better unite the province, with the Hon. Benoît Pelletier and Julius Grey as guest speakers

Dear Eva,

Congratulations on moving from being the interim to a confirmed president of the QCGN. We wish you the best of luck in this role at this challenging time.

We are writing to you with a suggestion for a QCGN Zoom event. It would replicate one that Richard has been working on with the Regional Association of West Quebecers (RAWQ), being a Zoom event in which two friends of our community, the Hon. Benoît Pelletier and Julius Grey, would speak to the potential benefits of Quebec adopting its own provincial constitution like the subnational state-level ones in the United States and Australia. Both men have agreed to speak at both a RAWQ and a possible QCGN Zoom events.

While not often talked about in anglophone circles, the idea seems to be steadily gaining momentum among francophones of influence. Could the adoption of such a document be so far off in a CAQ era? And should the English-speaking community automatically view it as a potential threat rather than as an opportunity to forge a common vision with those with whom we share a homeland?

In 1991, we proposed recognizing Quebec's "distinctness" in a new Quebec constitution to the National Assembly's Belanger Campeau Commission on behalf of the Equality Party Youth Association. And a sort of updated version of our commission brief appeared more recently in a 2019 & 2020 series of five articles (four of five being interlinked) in The Montreal Gazette and on the CTV Montreal website.

(The links to these articles, as well as a June 2, 2022 Montreal Gazette op-ed by Mr. Pelletier mentioning this prospect, are available to you in a reference document we have also included with this letter to you.)

In addition to the public policy and legal aspects of what we are proposing, a byproduct of our conversations about this prospect with "bleu" nationalists since 1991, who in the past were in the Parti Québécois and are now in the CAQ government, has been some insight into how they see our community. And what have we learned?

You will probably not be surprised that a cycle of mistrust exists between this type of "bleu" nationalist and the English-speaking community, based on perceptions of each other that risks continuing to influence how we interact. The good news is that our support for a Quebec

constitution was received warmly and with surprise, and seemingly altered their perception — at least of us — to a more positive one. While they knew we were concerned with aspects of Quebec's language legislation, they still seemed to view us as being 'loyally concerned' if you would; and from there a reproachment can begin. Of course, agreement on such a document will not be a quick matter, but the negotiation process itself can be beneficial in helping to air concerns and mend rifts.

In the wake of Bill 96's passage and anglophones' disappointment with it, there is a risk that our community may inadvertently develop a reactionary political tendency that could not only serve to further reinforce a negative anglophone stereotype, but also repeat what former Israeli diplomat and politician, Abba Solomon Meir, used to say of the Arabs that they "never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity".

In hosting such a Zoom event, the QCGN can reassert a proactive approach to anglophone/nationalist relations. The organization can make it perfectly clear that it is not necessarily endorsing a Quebec constitution at this time, but simply finds the prospect worth exploring. Moreover, the QCGN can still maintain its opposition to Bills 21, 40 and 96, but also stress its committed to leaving no stone unturned in trying to reverse a growing divide between English and French-speaking Quebecers.

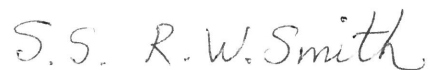
There are examples of steadfast leaders in history who were still able to seize the initiative to reach out rather than just waiting to be approached. Richard Nixon's opening to China in 1972 comes to mind. And it was Martin Luther King who showed us that we don't have to be serving at a cabinet level to provide leadership by articulating a uniting vision that can inspire and appeal across racial and socioeconomic lines.

We hope to hear from you about this Zoom opportunity as one small step in that direction, consistent with our community's history of helping to build Quebec and Canada.

With warm regards,



Richard Walsh Smith  
rwsmithgqm@gmail.com



Giuliano D'Andrea  
dandrea.giuliano@gmail.com

cc: Arthur Ayers  
Hon. Benoît Pelletier  
Julius Grey