

CEDEC

THE COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY CORPORATION

BRIEF TO APPELE QUEBEC ON

BILL 40: AN ACT TO AMEND MAINLY THE EDUCATION ACT WITH REGARD TO SCHOOL
ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

NOVEMBER 2019

INTRODUCTION

Good Afternoon Everyone.

My name is John Buck, and I am President and CEO of the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC).

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BACKGROUND

The Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation, CEDEC, has been intimately involved over the last twenty-five years in developing and enhancing the vitality of the English-speaking Minority Community of Quebec.

CEDEC is committed to improving the economic well-being of communities. It is a hub of innovative research and practice focused on enhancing economic activity that benefits communities through public, private, and civil society collaboration.

To translate what I just said into concrete terms, let me share with you an example of our work which we celebrated this week.

- On Monday, CEDEC was in Sutton, Quebec, to celebrate the graduation of the first cohort of adult learners who participated in an innovative “*Earn While You Learn*” initiative.
- CEDEC led and facilitated this collaborative effort, drawing upon the collective expertise and resources of the Brome-Missisquoi Campus Adult Education Centre of the Eastern Townships School Board, the Mount Sutton Ski Corporation, and Emploi Quebec to provide French language training to English-speakers.
- Participants received a salary during their language training and will immediately get a job this winter at Mont SUTTON. This innovative approach to enhancing economic activity provided tangible benefits to English-speakers and their communities.

TODAY’S PRESENTATION

CEDEC is pleased to present this brief to Appelle Quebec on **Bill 40: *An Act to Amend Mainly the Education Act with regard to School Organization and Governance.***

Public education has and continues to play a critical role in the development of Quebec society, both for its French-speaking majority and English-speaking minority communities. Excellence in future-oriented, quality education was, is, and should remain the driving objective of educational reform.

Today, I would like to share with you CEDEC's views on two specific points:

- Critical contextual considerations that this discussion about the organization and governance of English language education in Quebec must take account of;
- The contribution of English language education to the future vitality of the English-speaking minority community of Quebec.

CRITICAL CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

In a world of transformational economic change, education will be the foundation upon which English-speakers and French-speakers in Quebec build their individual and collective futures.

Canada and Quebec's traditional economic paradigm of maximizing profit (wealth) by producing the lowest priced outputs based upon low-cost labour and capital inputs is no longer viable. This formula produced our current prosperity and well-being today but can no longer be counted on to provide the living standards or quality of life we are used to.

In 2017, the Advisory Council on Economic Growth indicated to Canadians and Quebecers that GDP per capita will grow by only 0.8 percent annually over the next 50 years versus 1.9 percent over the past 50 years - a decline that has the potential to severely limit the continuing improvement in our living standards. The Council further indicated that although these trends are also at work in other advanced economies, Canada and Quebec face the largest potential declines in GDP and GDP per-capita growth among the world's advanced economies.

Knowledge and knowledge skills are the capital that Quebecers and Canadians must develop to face the challenges described above. Quebec needs to educate a highly qualified and skilled, future-oriented labour force, one that will enable English-speaking and French-speaking Quebecers to take their place among the best and the brightest in the world, in all vocational areas.

Contextually, the debate about the organization and governance of English-language education must consider the significant, long-term challenges facing Quebec and Canadian society, and the essential contribution education must make to successfully meet these challenges.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE OF THE ESMCQ

At the Heart of the English-speaking Minority Community of Quebec

CEDEC believes that the English-speaking minority community of Quebec is a pillar and key contributor to Quebec society and Canada's linguistic duality.

The school system is at the heart of the English-Speaking Minority Community of Quebec, especially of communities outside of Montreal. Schools play a community, as well as an educational role critical to the development and continuing vitality of the English-Speaking Minority Community of Quebec.

Parental and community involvement is a tradition and a source of ongoing support and success for schools serving the English-speaking minority community of Quebec. English-speaking parents and their children are well served by the schools of the English-Speaking Minority Community of Quebec. It is a documented fact that schools within the English-speaking Minority Community of Quebec perform well. The system compares favorably with the French educational system in Quebec and those in other provinces and countries.

The Unique Role of the Schools of the English-Speaking Minority Community of Quebec

The schools of the English-Speaking Minority Community of Quebec have a unique role and an exceptional opportunity to contribute to the ongoing development of Quebec society.

- On the one hand, the school system has the singular responsibility to nurture identity and attachment with the English-speaking minority community of Quebec, its unique history and cultures, and its ongoing contribution to Quebec society;
- On the other hand, serving a minority within a minority, the schools of the English-Speaking Minority Community of Quebec have an equal responsibility to provide a window to and immersion in French Quebec's culture, as well as help English-speakers acquire the linguistic competencies necessary to operate successfully in Quebec's work environment.

As such, these schools contribute in a critical way to nurturing the vitality of the English-Speaking Minority Community of Quebec. Equally, they prepare students to live, work, and thrive in Quebec, and to successfully face the challenges of a transformational world.

The Question of Control and Management of the School System

The Official Language Minority Communities of Canada constitute one of the bedrocks of Canadian and Quebec society. Their recognition in the Constitution of Canada is a testimony to the importance of their contribution to maintaining the integrity of Canada, defining the unique character of our province and country, and contributing to our prosperity and wellbeing.

As mentioned above, the right to a degree of management and control of the school system is crucial because it enables Quebec's Official Language Minority Community to:

- Nurture identity with and attachment to the English-Speaking Minority Community of Quebec;
- Provide a window to and an immersion in French Quebec's culture without diminishing the identity of English-speaking Quebecers as a part of the broader Quebec character and culture;
- Develop necessary linguistic competencies to operate successfully in Quebec's work environment;
- Prepare students to live, work, and thrive in Quebec, and to successfully face the challenges of a transformational world.

Essentially, the right to a degree of management and control of the school system is about providing English-speakers with an education that is appropriate to their linguistic and cultural identity. And this is what will enable the schools of the English-Speaking Minority Community of Quebec to continue to make their unique contribution to the development of their community, their province, and their country.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for providing CEDEC with the opportunity to present this brief to Appelle Quebec on *Bill 40: An Act to Amend Mainly the Education Act with regard to School Organization and Governance*.

I would like to emphasize again the importance of situating this debate about the future of school organization and governance within the broader context of preparing Quebec students to meet the challenges of a transformational, some would argue, a disruptive world.

It is imperative that the schools of the English-Speaking Minority Community of Quebec be empowered and equipped to make their unique contribution to:

- strengthening the vitality of, identity with, and attachment to the English-Speaking Minority Community of Quebec;
- offering students a window on and an immersion in the French-speaking culture of Quebec society;
- developing the skills of their students to live, work, and thrive in the province;
- preparing students to work and grow in a transformational world.

The right to a degree of management and control of their school system will provide the English-Speaking Minority Community of Quebec with the ability to provide an education that is appropriate to the linguistic and cultural identity of English-speakers in Quebec. It is an essential lever which will enable the English-Speaking Minority Community of Quebec to continue to make its unique contribution to Quebec and Canada.

Respectfully submitted by,



John Buck
President and Chief Executive Officer
CEDEC