For immediate release

QCGN Welcomes Raymond Théberge, Canada’s New Commissioner of Official Languages

Montreal – December 13, 2017 – The Quebec Community Groups Network welcomes the appointment of Raymond Théberge as Canada’s 7th Commissioner of Official Languages whose nomination was officially endorsed by the House of Commons this afternoon.

“Commissioner Théberge takes the helm at a critical time for Canada’s Official Languages,” commented QCGN President James Shea, noting that Government of Canada will soon unveil its multi-year Action Plan on Official Languages; Treasury Board is conducting a ground-up review of Official Languages Regulations; and work to modernize the Official Languages Act, which will shortly turn 50 years old, has begun.

Théberge, who holds a doctorate in Linguistics from McGill University, has more than three decades of experience serving official language minority communities from leading positions in government, academia, and the community sector. During his confirmation process, Théberge stressed the importance of research, and a firm evidence-base upon which to protect, and build upon the language rights of Canadians. He is also committed to ensuring that the participation of English and French-speaking Canadians in the leadership of his new office, and visiting the English-speaking community of Quebec as a first order of business.

“Commissioner Théberge is now the leading advocate for Canada’s English- and French-speaking minority communities,” commented Shea, noting that the Commissioner’s job requires an equal understanding and commitment to both of Canada’s official language minority communities. “We look forward to him visiting Quebec’s English-speaking communities and QCGN is duty-bound to helping him better understand the needs and challenges of our Community of Communities as well as the many enduring policy gaps that impact our community.”

Traditionally held alternately by a French-speaking and an English-speaking Canadian, Théberge is the third Francophone and first commissioner from outside Ontario and Quebec to be appointed to the post since it was created in 1970 to ensure the application of the Official Languages Act and to promote bilingualism and linguistic duality. The Commissioner, who reports directly to Parliament, is responsible for the full recognition and widespread use of English and French...
within Canadian society, as well as within federal institutions and other organizations subject to the Official Languages Act. The Commissioner of Official Languages is appointed for a seven-year mandate.

“Over the past decade, the QCGN has built a close relationship with the Commissioner of Official Languages,” remarked QCGN Director General Sylvia Martin-Laforge. “This relationship was a critical part of key community victories, like the recent establishment of a Secretariat for Responsible for Relations with English-Speaking Quebecers, and helping us get access to the highest levels of the federal government to ensure English-speaking Quebec’s unique concerns and priorities are heard and understood by policy leaders.

“The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages remains a key community ally and immense source of support, and we will continue to fully support their work,” said Martin-Laforge, extending our organization’s and our community’s appreciation to Interim Commissioner Ghislaine Saikaley and her team who have held down the fort since Graham Fraser retired a year ago after more than a decade of outstanding service.

The Quebec Community Groups Network is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 53 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:
Rita Legault, Director of Communications and Public Relations | rita.legault@qcgn.ca
Telephone: 514-868-9044, ext. 223, cellular: 514-912-6555