

Letter to the Minister of Education, Higher Education and Research

Margo Legault, Executive Director of Literacy Quebec

François Brassard, president of the Regroupement des groupes populaires en alphabétisation du Québec (RGPAQ)

Pour la version française de la lettre: <http://rgpaq.qc.ca/communiqués.php?id=20>

Dear Minister,

Since the beginning of the year, several journalists and commentators are justifiably alarmed about the high percentage of adults in Quebec that are classified as having functional low literacy levels. Despite the fact that the figures conveyed are subject to multiple interpretations, the fact remains that over one million people, in Quebec, between the ages of 16 and 65 have low literacy skills. However, everyone agrees on one point; that the consequences of such a phenomenon is affecting a significant portion of the population, and is dramatic for those affected and for our society.

The real scandal does not lie in these statistics but rather in the government's inadequate support in the fight against illiteracy. As such, your recent comments during a press briefing held on the 12th of January¹ were less than reassuring.

In fact, when you claim to have "*launched [...] a call to clarify, [and] to try to further assess what we do well in the field, because we fund many organizations, and [want to see] how we can improve things.*" To improve things, as you say, and to effectively combat illiteracy, one must rely on a comprehensive outlook of the problem, its causes and its consequences. Unfortunately, this vision is severely lacking within your government. The lack of a national strategy that includes structural measures impedes all advancements in the field. Additionally, the amounts that are currently invested to improve literacy are paltry compared to the magnitude of the problem and the challenge it poses to society as a whole.

Moreover, you leave room for doubt as to the recognition and future funding of the only network whose primary mission is adult literacy in Quebec. You say you want to "assess the funds that are available [to you and see] where best to place them to make a difference." If you truly want to make a difference, you should start by adequately funding the 128 literacy organizations whose essential role

¹<http://www.journaldemontreal.com/2016/01/12/analphabetisme--le-ministre-blais-veut-mieux-depenser-largent-disponible>

was unanimously recognized by the elected officials of the National Assembly as recently as the 15th of September 2015.

Need we recall that for 13 years now, our network has been getting poorer, having not even received an indexation equivalent to the increase in the cost of living? It also currently reports an annual shortfall of more than \$ 9.2 million solely to meet the needs expressed in their respective communities.

We invite you, Minister, to quickly clarify your actual intentions about the future of our network, which is already struggling to fulfil its mission. We also reiterate our invitation to come and meet the workers, volunteers and adult learners, who perform small miracles on a daily basis with the limited resources that are at their disposal. We are confident that they will convince you that the little money that is currently invested is being used wisely ... but is nevertheless insufficient!

The RGPAQ represents 77 autonomous community action literacy organisations across all regions of Quebec. It is dedicated/devoted to the promotion and development of popular literacy education and popular literacy education groups as well as advocating for the rights of adults with low literacy.

Literacy Quebec is a network of the 13 community literacy organizations for the English speaking population of Quebec. It connects and represents community-based literacy organizations to empower people, impact lives and build a stronger society.

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