

VIP Community Forum Notes and Possible Strategies and Actions May 26, 2006

Naming the Issues/Impressions

- There is a lack of communication experienced between Government and English-speaking, bilingual and ethnocultural (ESBE) organizations.
- Regions outside of Montreal feel forgotten- Out of the communication loop.
- Ethnocultural groups and many English-speaking groups in rural areas have a “generic” or holistic mandate to serve all of the needs of their communities and therefore the government’s policy requiring them to box themselves in to only one “home” ministry for core funding does not accommodate their reality. For example, the Bangladeshi population in Montreal or the English-speaking population in Gaspé is too small to have separate organizations for housing, health, women, literacy, immigrant status, seniors, etc. unlike their francophone counterparts so they have one organization that does all of this.
- There is a perceived threat to English-speaking and ethnocultural groups currently receiving provincial funding or ESBE groups wishing to apply. The concern is that ethnocultural and English-speaking groups will not be eligible for funding because it will be seen as a “dedoublement” of a francophone group already funded.
- Feeling the funds are being diverted to mainstream organizations (centralization) which reduces the ability of smaller ESBE groups to exist which reduces the democratic spaces for citizen engagement
- There needs to be further bridging between poverty reduction programs and immigrant/ethnocultural organizations.
- Many ESBE groups have been around for over 100 years but their contributions to Quebec’s social development are not mentioned in any current government or regroupement documents. It is almost as if history has been re-written. These organizations have not applied for provincial funding for many historical reasons. The provincial government is currently focused on consolidating the allocations to currently funded organizations which are primarily francophone. If these older ESBE groups were to apply today for funding, they would be considered “new” organizations and not eligible even though they are over 100 years old.
- Generally speaking, ESBE groups aren’t currently funded by the provincial government nor are they funded by the Federal government. They don’t wish to be seen in competition for funding with French-speaking groups currently funded who wish to increase their current allocation. Therefore, there needs to be more money available for core funding for all community groups (beyond the 1% of the prov. budget) so that linguistic groups are working with each other not against each other.
- Need to extend reflection from individual relationships to poverty towards more systematic analysis.

Brainstorm of Possible Actions:

- Meeting with Mrs. Drouin-Busque to ascertain appropriate contact information of ministries (e.g. which staff in each ministry can speak English and their coordinates)
- Daniel Jean suggests creating a working group with COCo and other English-speaking or ethnocultural groups.
- There is an importance in joining francophone regroupments and coalitions
- There needs to be a push for more open and complex consultative process when policy and laws are being discussed to include ESBE community groups in order to include multiple perspectives
- We need to form sector networks as well as partnerships with the prov. government.
- A small group of ESBE organizations should make a presentation to the *Table inter-ministerielle* to explain the existence and contributions of our network
- A collection of community groups in the same sector could arrange meeting with their home ministry to increase their visibility and to present their work
- Securing observer status at the Table de Concertation de l'Action Communautaire
- There are SACA funds for research within our own sectors to gather information about our own network. This can be done in a collaborative research project.
- Community groups should sign up for the MESS bulletin or the SACA newsletter.
- A bilingual ministerial position needs to be created at the 1-800 number of the SACA office.
- There needs to be a youth liaison for the ethnocultural community at the provincial government
- We need to lobby for more financial development.
- There are many historical reasons ESBE groups are not, for the most part, currently being funded. Applications from ESBE groups need to be considered with equal weight as their francophone counterparts and not put at the bottom of the pile. It could also be argued that increased weight should be given to ESBE applications to help balance the disproportionate funding currently being received by French-speaking groups.
- Funding applications from ESBE groups need to be able to be received in English or the provincial government needs to provide a free translation service for their applications (ESBE groups do not have the \$ for translation). Someone who speaks English at each ministry needs to be appointed as a contact person to help ESBE

groups understand the funding programs available in their ministry and help groups with their applications.

- The community sector deserves to be granted more than 1% of the provincial budget given the impact our contributions have on the social and economic fabric of Quebec. Our network needs to work with the Comité aviseur to make this a reality.*
- There needs to be some form of official (financial) recognition for volunteer run organizations *
- There needs to be changes to the Tax law to offer better incentives for those who might donate. (20% return simply not large enough)*

* These items are not ESBE group specific but may provide opportunities to work in collaboration with the larger community movement