Profile of the English-speaking Community in the Eastern Townships

Second Edition

by
Joanne Pocock
&
Brenda Hartwell
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the various people who have helped in the creation of this publication. Our appreciation is extended to Kalina Klimp for her excellent first edition, which served as a guide and a stepping-stone. We are especially grateful for the invaluable input supplied by Rachel Garber, Valérie Bridger, Natalie Kishchuk, and William Floch. We also owe a debt of gratitude to all those who have supplied a wealth of information and research concerning the English-speaking communities in Quebec, and more specifically the Eastern Townships.

—Joanne Pocock, PhD
researcher and writer

—Brenda Hartwell
writer and editor
**President’s Message**

Dear Friends,

Townshippers’ Association is proud to publish the *Profile of the English-speaking Community in the Eastern Townships, second edition.*

This book offers a concise summary of recent research concerning the English-speaking community in the Townships. It includes key characteristics of this minority community, including its changing demographics, needs, and assets. The Association’s aim is to make this information easily accessible to decision makers and service providers in government, institutions, and community organizations. We hope this book will be a convenient reference tool and foster a greater understanding of the people we serve.

Townshippers’ Association is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that has served the English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships since 1979. Its three-part mission is to promote the interests of the English-speaking community in the historical Eastern Townships, strengthen the cultural identity of this community, and encourage the full participation of its members in the community at large.

In the Townships’ spirit of neighbourliness, the Association has chosen to promote the interests of this community through the avenues of dialogue, bridge-building, and working in partnership. An important aspect of our work is to develop and disseminate a knowledge base about the Townships English-speaking community. We invite you to visit our website, [www.townshippers.qc.ca](http://www.townshippers.qc.ca), to learn more about the Association’s wide-ranging initiatives, designed to strengthen the community and culture of English-speaking Townshippers, open doors of opportunity for youth, and promote access to health, social, and other services in English.

The Association gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the many allies who work with us to support and develop our Eastern Townships community. In particular, we are grateful for those who helped make this book possible: the collaboration of the Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de L’Estrie, and the financial support of the Community Health & Social Services Network (CHSSN) and Health Canada, through the Adaptation des services de santé et des services sociaux program. Thank you!

—Gerry Cutting

*President,*

*Townshippers’ Association*
Introduction

As a minority within a minority, Quebec’s English-speaking community finds itself in an interesting situation. Its people are a provincial linguistic minority within a French-speaking majority, which is itself a linguistic minority within the English-speaking majority in Canada and in North America.

Different English-speaking communities in Quebec have distinct realities. The English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships shares some characteristics with other English-speaking communities in Quebec, but it also has unique characteristics. English speakers in the Eastern Townships are defined by specific demographics and socio-economic realities. They have made different past and present contributions to the community at large, and face distinct future challenges.

The purpose of this publication is to illuminate the current realities of the English-speaking population of the Eastern Townships. It is a summary of research studies conducted primarily during the period of 1996 to 2010. Research includes initiatives from academia, private research institutions, and the public sector at the local, provincial, and federal levels.
Population Dynamics of the Townships’ English-speaking Community

Definition of an English Speaker

There are many different definitions of an English speaker. Methods of data collection, the changing map of the territory, and the evolving definition of an English speaker present challenges in tracing English speakers’ historical role and presence in Quebec. While Statistics Canada has historically used “mother tongue” as the primary concept for language groups, the concept of “first language spoken” (FOLS) has grown in usage and importance in recent years. Within this context, an English speaker is defined as an individual whose first official language spoken, or used most regularly, is English. This is the definition we have adopted for this profile, and the statistics, tables, and graphs within these pages are based on FOLS, unless otherwise specified.

Early Census Collection

Early census information did not include questions concerning language. The 1831 census asked residents of Lower Canada to state their religion, not their language (Statistics Canada, 2006). English speakers in the Townships belonged to a range of faith traditions, encompassing non-Christian and various Christian denominations, such as Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and others. In later censuses, language use was derived from a citizen’s country of origin (Kesteman, Southam & Saint-Pierre, 1998).

Later Census Collection

Since 1951, linguistic census data have been organized in accordance with Canada’s two official languages. The category of “language most used at home” was added to the census in 1971, and the options of “multiple ethnic origins” and “multiple languages” were added in 1986. The category “first official language spoken” (FOLS) was introduced in 1986.

| Number of English Speakers in Quebec, by Various Language Definitions, 2006 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| English Mother Tongue          | 607,163         |
| English Home Language          | 787,892         |
| English First Official Language Spoken | 994,723       |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 20% sample.
The Historical Eastern Townships

Geographical and administrative boundaries defining the Eastern Townships have changed over time. We must keep this in mind when tracing the historical role and presence of its English-speaking community. For example, current maps are divided into “regions” or “MRCs” (Municipalité régionale de comté), but these divisions are fairly recent administrative tools replacing the earlier designations of “township” or “county.”

The historical Eastern Townships includes the Estrie administrative region and parts of Montérégie, Centre-du-Québec, and Chaudière-Appalaches. The population map below shows the number of English speakers in each MRC and their percentage of the MRC’s total population.

The territory of the historical Eastern Townships currently includes 14 whole MRCs and 3 partial MRCs, as illustrated in the map above. Statistics, graphs, and tables within this profile do not include information from municipalities contained within the partial MRCs (Haut-Richelieu, Rouville, and Beauce-Sartigan), unless otherwise indicated.
The Roots of the English-speaking Community
The historical Eastern Townships is one of the few places in Quebec where the first European settlers were not French speakers. When the region was opened for settlement in 1792, the first wave of homesteaders came from the American colonies, followed by a second wave from the British Isles. In 1861, it was home to a numerically strong English-speaking population, comprising 58% of the total population. At that time, the Eastern Townships had the largest regional concentration of English speakers in Quebec, with some 90,000 people, compared to 65,000 in Montreal (Rudin, 1985). Many English speakers in the Townships lived in rural areas, and they held a pivotal role by virtue of population size and influence.

Most of our early settlers were men of limited means. In far off sections we hear of villages and towns springing into sudden wealth and prosperity from the influx of capital; but here, unless in very exceptional cases, the people have been forced to depend on their own exertions.”

Declining Population

Soon after a peak in the late nineteenth century, a steady decrease in the percentage of English speakers within the total population of the Eastern Townships began. This decline has continued until the present day. According to Rudin (1985), the number of English speakers dropped 35% between 1861 and 1931. By 1931, French speakers formed 82% of the Townships’ population, and Quebec’s English speakers were increasingly concentrated in Montreal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>89,748</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>77,789</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>74,141</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>57,933</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>57,830</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>55,275</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>43,050</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>40,308</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>42,300</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada.
1861–1981 based on Mother Tongue; 1996–2006 based on FOLS.
Geographic region: entire historical Eastern Townships.

Immigration in the 20th Century

By the 20th century, immigration to Quebec from European countries decreased and immigration from developing countries increased. Many of these people were Allophones, people whose first language was neither French nor English.

Myth: English-speaking Townshippers are a homogeneous block with Loyalist roots

The English-speaking community has traditionally embraced a culture of inclusion and is comprised of people with diverse origins. When the region was opened for settlement in 1792, several Loyalist families settled in the Townships, but this first wave of immigration was soon followed by an influx of American pioneers. They came seeking good land and opportunity, not because of any particular political affiliation. During the early 1800s, a great number of settlers arrived in our region from the British Isles, but these immigrants were certainly not homogeneous. Immigrants from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England each had a distinct culture and language. Many of these early pioneers were peasants escaping poverty and starvation in their homeland, so they had no great love for the British crown. Later waves of immigration came from various European countries such as Germany, Switzerland, and Holland, and a large number of these people were welcomed into the English-speaking community.

Outward Migration
Historically, English speakers in Quebec have tended to be very mobile. From 1961 to 1971, outward migration by English-speaking Quebeckers was 2.5 times higher than that of their French-speaking counterparts and twice as high as that of Allophones (Rudin, 1985).

The repercussions of the major migration of a large proportion of Quebec’s English-speaking population to other parts of Canada during the 1976–1986 period are still being felt today throughout Quebec. This decade saw the out-migration of 96,980 Quebeckers aged 20–64, and 70,035 of these had English as their mother tongue. It is noteworthy that during the period of 1986 to 2006, the English-speaking minority of Quebec was the fastest declining official language minority group across Canada’s provinces.

During the period of 1996 to 2001, Census Canada data showed a 6.4% decrease in the English-speaking population of the Eastern Townships. In contrast, the French-speaking population showed a 2.3% growth. Consequently, the English-speaking community went from 6.9% to 6.4% of the total population during this 5-year period (Floch & Warnke, 2004). Today, the province-wide trend of young, educated professional English speakers locating their home beyond the borders of Quebec and Canada continues (Floch & Pocock, 2008).
The Challenge of Demographic Vitality

“Demographic vitality” is a relatively new term. This concept includes a blend of demographic characteristics considered important to overall population well-being: population size and proportion, percentage of bilingual persons in the minority community, unemployment rates, and age structure (Health Canada, 2002).

Change in the size of a language minority community as well as its weight within the total population are important factors in its demographic vitality, because access to public services and the ability to maintain minority-language institutions are often linked to the size and weight of a population. While both the English- and French-speaking communities in the Townships have low fertility rates, the challenge of maintaining population size within the English-speaking community has been compounded by language laws that pose obstacles to growth through immigration and linguistic transfers. Language laws restricting access to English schools and selective immigration policies have curtailed the avenues for growth that the community relied upon in its more robust years.

The low demographic vitality of the English-speaking community of the Eastern Townships is evident when we look at its eroding population base, unemployment rates, and age structure. It is a situation that warrants attention, but ongoing decline is not inevitable. In fact, the period of 1996–2006 reveals a relative stability when compared to the more dramatic changes of earlier decades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Speakers</td>
<td>43,050</td>
<td>40,308</td>
<td>42,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Speakers</td>
<td>576,985</td>
<td>590,038</td>
<td>633,943</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Does not include statistics from partial MRCs

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 20% sample.

For the first time in generations, the English-speaking population of the Eastern Townships experienced growth in the last inter-censual period (Floch, 2010). According to the 2006 census, approximately one-third of this increase (740 people) is due to immigration from outside of Canada.

Quebec is our homeland—*notre patrie*. All ten of our children were raised here, and, like millions of other Québécois, we have tangled roots. There’s Irish, Scotch, French, Indian, and British blood coursing in our veins. We don’t think it matters a bit what percentage is more significant. We consider ourselves Québécoises.”

—Heather Keith-Ryan and Sharon McCully, authors of Quebec: Bonjour, eh?
Age structure

The age structure of a population tells the story of its past and suggests its promise for the future. The distribution of the members of a minority population within age categories, and the degree to which this distribution varies from the majority, is an important consideration in understanding its distinct needs and resources. Institutions organized primarily around the needs of the majority may not adequately meet those of the minority, and the nature of minority community resources may be misconstrued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>English Speakers</th>
<th>French Speakers</th>
<th>English Speakers (%)</th>
<th>French Speakers (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 14 years</td>
<td>115,205</td>
<td>5,808</td>
<td>108,848</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 24 years</td>
<td>87,390</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>82,190</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 44 years</td>
<td>173,325</td>
<td>9,595</td>
<td>163,480</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 64 years</td>
<td>205,955</td>
<td>12,688</td>
<td>193,028</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years +</td>
<td>95,705</td>
<td>9,123</td>
<td>86,358</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All age groups</td>
<td>677,570</td>
<td>42,285</td>
<td>633,930</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Geographic region: entire historical Eastern Townships.

An Aging Population

While both the French- and English-speaking communities of the Eastern Townships are considered to be aging populations, the aging process of the English-speaking community is significantly more advanced. In 2006, a full 21.6% of Eastern Townships English speakers were 65 years or older. This is 58% higher, in relative terms, than the proportion of seniors in the French-speaking population. During the period of 2001–2006, the number of children under 15 declined, dropping from 6,593 to 5,808, which represents a loss of 11.6% (Floch, 2010). Such a trend does not auger well for the long-term vitality of a community.

Between 2001 and 2006, the Townships English-speaking population gained 3,545 persons in the 45-plus age groups, while losing 1565 persons under age 45. The sharpest losses were in the 5–9 and 35–39 age groups.
Missing Middle Generation

The configuration of generations in the English-speaking population of the Eastern Townships is shaped like an hourglass, with an over-representation of seniors and a marked under-representation of individuals in the 35-54 age cohort, generally known as the “middle” generation (Floch, 2005). While this population shape can be found in other linguistic communities across Canada, it is more pronounced in the Townships. In the Estrie region in 2001, the English-speaking community had proportionately 80% more individuals in their senior years, and close to 50% fewer individuals in their middle years than the French-speaking population (Pocock, 2009). The relative absence of the middle generation has widespread consequences, such as declining levels of volunteer involvement and work force participation, and heavier care-giving burdens.
Socio-economic Realities

The Missing Middle Class
A marked trend in the Eastern Townships’ English-speaking community is the absence of middle-generation individuals aged 35–54 who, by virtue of profession, education, and income, are typically referred to as middle class. Kishchuk captures this dynamic in the term “a missing middle-middle” (2010, p.10).

The 1991 and 2001 census data reveal that “the gap between leavers and stayers has grown considerably as those who leave are much more likely to be in the high income bracket and less likely to be in the lower income bracket than those who stayed” (Floch & Pocock, 2008, p. 59). In 2001, English speakers who left Quebec were 36% more likely to have graduated from university than other Canadians. They were also twice as likely to have a master’s or doctoral degree than the Canadian population in general. In contrast to the leavers, the English speakers who stayed were less likely to have post-secondary schooling (Floch, 2005). A recent survey suggests that many of the people of the middle-generation group who left the Townships were also bilingual (Kishchuk & Brault, 2005).

The missing middle-middle trend is still present and, in some respects, it is more pronounced than in 2001 (Floch, 2010). In the Eastern Townships, a high proportion of English-speaking youth continue to leave, and the 2006 census reveals that those who remain (aged 15–44) exhibit growing socio-economic vulnerabilities, including high unemployment, low income, and low education levels (Floch, 2010). Indeed, interviewees in a recent study pointed out the rise of a social class difference between older and younger English-speaking Townshippers and a perceived social distance between the age groups (Kishchuk, 2010). This generation gap may impede initiatives organized around concerted social action and a shared sense of belonging, given that core values tend to be more similar within social classes across cultures, than across social classes within cultures (Lambert, 1987).

The absence of this group of English speakers may affect the long-term vitality of the community by weakening the leadership base, undermining community institutions, and reducing the average labour force preparedness of English speakers (Floch, 2005). Interviews with members of the Eastern Townships English-speaking community support the observation that a major impact of the missing middle-middle has been in the community sector, which is witnessing a decline in the volunteer corps upon which so many organizations and services depend (Kishchuk, 2010).
Low Education

Historically, the English-speaking communities of Quebec have been distinguished by their high levels of educational attainment. In 1971, English speakers in Quebec had higher levels of education than other Quebecers and Canadians. Consequently, English-speaking Quebecers aged 65 or older are, on average, somewhat better educated than French speakers of their generation. Currently, 14.6% of English-speaking Townshippers have a university certificate, diploma or degree, compared to 11.2% of their French-speaking neighbours, but this educational advantage is the result of high numbers within the older demographics. According to 2001 census data, this educational advantage has largely disappeared (Floch, 2005). English-speaking youth aged 15–24 in the Eastern Townships are less likely to finish secondary school than English speakers in other areas of Quebec, and the younger generations of English speakers are much less likely to have completed high school than their French-speaking counterparts (Floch & Warnke, 2004).

According to the 2006 census, 30% of English speakers have no educational certificate, diploma or degree, compared to 29% of French speakers. When we take age into consideration, the gap is more substantial. Within the age group of 15 to 44, 45.6% of English-speaking Townshippers are without a high-school leaving certificate, compared to 38.3% their French-speaking counterparts.

Fewer English speakers have an apprenticeship or trades certificate/diploma than the majority group, and the gap is widening. In 2006, only 4.9% of English speakers aged 15–24 claimed such certification compared to 11.8% of French speakers of the same age, and compared to 10.7% of English speakers over 65 years of age.

There was usually but one window in the room, under which a temporary shelf or desk was made, and the larger boys and girls took turns in occupying it with paper not much better than our common wrapping, ink from the bark of the white maple, and the primitive goose quill. Many of the scholars, thus educated, have since been distinguished in public life in our own country and elsewhere.

—Mary Lovejoy Taylor in Hubbard’s Forests and Clearings, 1874.
High Unemployment

Quebec’s English-speaking population continues to show the highest rate of unemployment among Canada’s official language groups and a greater likelihood to be out of the labour force than other Canadians (Floch & Pocock, 2008). Indeed, unemployment is a major issue for English speakers who make their home in the Eastern Townships. According to the 2006 census, 8.1% of English-speaking Townshippers are unemployed compared to 6.2% of the French-speaking majority living in the same region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language group</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>In the labour force</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Unemployment rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English speakers</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>19,798</td>
<td>1,595</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15–24</td>
<td>2,988</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25–44</td>
<td>7,618</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45–64</td>
<td>8,373</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>10,728</td>
<td>830</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15–24</td>
<td>1,568</td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25–44</td>
<td>4,035</td>
<td>303</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45–64</td>
<td>4,548</td>
<td>163</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>9,073</td>
<td>795</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15–24</td>
<td>1,418</td>
<td>275</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25–44</td>
<td>3,580</td>
<td>305</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45–64</td>
<td>3,825</td>
<td>190</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French speakers</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>331,883</td>
<td>20,480</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15–24</td>
<td>53,568</td>
<td>5,815</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25–44</td>
<td>140,408</td>
<td>7,490</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45–64</td>
<td>131,843</td>
<td>6,765</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>6,065</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>178,373</td>
<td>11,095</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15–24</td>
<td>28,038</td>
<td>3,245</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25–44</td>
<td>74,015</td>
<td>3,893</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45–64</td>
<td>72,173</td>
<td>3,743</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>4,148</td>
<td>215</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>153,523</td>
<td>9,405</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15–24</td>
<td>25,528</td>
<td>2,570</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25–44</td>
<td>66,390</td>
<td>3,570</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45–64</td>
<td>59,675</td>
<td>3,035</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>1,930</td>
<td>230</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Does not include statistics from partial MRCs.
When considering the rate of unemployment across the generations, it is evident that the disparities between the minority and majority populations are distributed across all ages, but they are most pronounced among those aged 15–24. The rate of unemployment among English-speaking youth is almost double the rate of youth whose first official language is French.

**Labour Force Participation**

In the Eastern Townships in 2006, a higher percentage of English speakers (44.2%) were out of the labour force than French speakers (35.1%). When we consider those out of the labour force by gender, these levels go as high as 50.6% for English-speaking women, compared to 40.9% for French-speaking women. Employment statistics concerning the younger generation of English speakers are notable: English speakers not in the labour force aged 15–24 (40%) and those aged 25–44 (17.9%) far exceed the levels for French speakers of the same age, living in the same territory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td><strong>Age group</strong></td>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Number</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15–24</td>
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<td>9,288</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>3,963</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>45–64</td>
<td>6,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>4,975</td>
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*Does not include statistics from partial MRCs. The term “out of the labour force” refers to persons 15 years and over (excluding institutional residents), who were neither employed nor unemployed. It includes students, homemakers, retired workers, seasonal workers in an “off” season, and those not looking for work because of a long-term illness or disability.
Low Income

The 2006 census reveals that a large portion (46.9%) of English speakers living in the Eastern Townships earn less than $20,000 per year. The low income of English speakers during their prime working and childrearing years is particularly significant: a sizable 35.8% of English speakers aged 25–44 have an annual income of less than $20,000 compared to 29.4% of French speakers in the same age group.

Close to half of employed English-speaking women in the Townships (49.7%) are earning less than $20,000 per year. This may be due, in part, to the high levels of family caregiving and community volunteering that English-speaking women, particularly those in the middle generation, are undertaking.

The English-speaking community has a higher proportion of women than men who are 65 years or older. A much greater proportion of these women (57.9%), compared to men (31.7%), are located in the low-income bracket.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language group</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Population 15+</th>
<th>Less than $20,000</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>16,680</td>
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<td>15–24</td>
<td>4,998</td>
<td>3,730</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
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<td>3,325</td>
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<td>51.3%</td>
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<td>17,215</td>
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<td>1,630</td>
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<td>4,585</td>
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<td>45–64</td>
<td>6,143</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>65+</td>
<td>3,950</td>
<td>1,260</td>
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<tr>
<td>French speakers</td>
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<td>15–24</td>
<td>79,918</td>
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</tr>
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<td>93,038</td>
<td>23,340</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>45.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>28,165</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>45–64</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>47,305</td>
<td>34,760</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
</tr>
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</table>


*Does not include statistics from partial MRCs.
Myth: English-speaking Quebecers are wealthy

The perception that most English-speaking Quebecers are wealthy members of the business class is a long-standing and pervasive myth in Quebec society. When we review the numbers of English-speaking Townshippers who currently earn less than $20,000 a year, it is evident that this myth does not reflect reality.

The graphics below offer a striking visual example of the discrepancy between the popular myth and the reality in 1871 (Donovan, 2009).

Marginalised Youth

The low levels of education, income, and employment among English-speaking youth constitute a clear socio-economic weakness in their age group and their communities (Floch & Warnke, 2004). It has been suggested that these factors have led to the marginalisation and demoralisation of many young English-speaking Townshippers.

On a more positive note, the Youth Standing Committee of the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) reported that young English-speaking Quebecers expressed a desire to stay in Quebec and contribute to Quebec society: “They wish to move away from past conflicts and insecurities as they embrace bilingualism, social cohesion, and an authentic desire to put an end to the ‘two solitudes’” (2009, p. 9). Although this age group already exhibits high levels of bilingualism, English-speaking youth articulated the need for access to improved French-language training at all levels, so they could become truly bi-literate and full participants in Quebec society, while maintaining their culture and heritage.

English-speaking youth in Quebec want to participate and be engaged in an open, supportive, and democratic local community (Quebec Community Groups Network, 2009). Certainly, empowering this group to become active and contributing citizens in our region would be advantageous to the community as a whole.

Myth: French speakers are more bilingual than English speakers

According to 2006 census data, 68.8% of English speakers (FOLS) and 29.4% of French speakers (FOLS) within the entire historical Eastern Townshippers region could communicate in the other language well enough to carry on a conversation. In the younger demographic (ages 15 to 24), 81.2% of English speakers, compared to 38.6% of French speakers, said they were conversationally bilingual (Statistics Canada, 2007).
Population Health

Health Services
Despite high levels of bilingualism, access to health and social services in English remains a high priority for English-speaking communities across Quebec. A Health Canada report notes that “Regardless of whether English-speaking people go to a doctor’s office, use a health information line, a local community services centre or a hospital, an overwhelming majority of them (over 80%) affirm that it is very important to receive their services in English” (2007a, p. 24). Medical terms concerning diagnosis and treatment options can be difficult to understand, even in one’s own language. Communicating in a second language adds to the stress experienced by those suffering from a physical or mental illness.

Factors Affecting the Need for Health and Social Services
The English-speaking minority in the Eastern Townships has particular needs with respect to public services and caregiving. These needs sometimes differ from those of the French-speaking majority, or are more acute. Besides using a minority language, factors that challenge the overall health status of this population are a large proportion of seniors, few members of the middle care-giving generation, and many low-income households.

The high proportion of seniors is a major factor affecting the need for health and social services. Currently, seniors (65+) are the least bilingual segment of the English-speaking population in the Townships. Only 18.4% are conversationally bilingual (Statistics Canada, 2007), and as people age they tend to need more health services. For example, home-based health care services and services for chronic diseases are in greater demand among older persons.

Low levels of education, employment, and income among younger English speakers are also factors affecting the need for health and social services. These key health determinants place them at greater risk for health problems, especially in the areas of mental health and social difficulties (Groupe Recherche Focus, 2005). A substantial body of research demonstrates the link between low income and low levels of population health and well-being.

Myth: Older Anglophones do not speak French because they never tried
The social fabric of Quebec society in the 1930s to 1950s was very different from today. Most elderly English-speaking Townshippers grew up in rural communities, and they devoted many hours to hard physical work. Leisure time was limited, and people, in general, were less mobile. These constraints meant that social life was centred almost entirely around school and church. If they lived “in English,” this was most likely due to restricted time and opportunity.

When I grew up, there were only English families on this road. There was no connection between the two communities... except for hockey. That brought us together.
—Ron Fisk (Townships Outlet, May 12, 2010).
When in Need: A Cultural Difference?

When in need, Quebec English speakers have reported they tend to turn to family first rather than public institutions, unlike French-speaking Quebecers (Saber-Freedman & CROP, 2001). According to the Survey of Community Vitality conducted in 2005, 84.6% of English-speaking respondents living in the Estrie region said they would turn to informal networks of family, friends, and community organizations in the case of illness. Only 11.7% would turn to public health and social services, and 3.7% would have nobody to turn to, or would turn to other sources. French speakers reported they were much more likely to turn to public institutions (Pocock, 2006a).

The root cause of this difference is unclear. Key informants in a recent study suggested that the English-speaking community is under-represented in health services utilization because of apprehensions or lack of knowledge about the services. Service providers who work with the English-speaking population said their clients’ apprehensions could be based on fears concerning their ability to understand and navigate the system, especially if the initial telephone contact is unfriendly or unwelcoming, as well as being in French. It has been observed that once services are offered in English, usage levels climb (Kishchuk, 2010).

Unpaid Caregiving

A population with reduced numbers in the middle generation, who typically are family caregivers, and a high proportion of senior citizens lead to a notably high level of unpaid family caregiving among English-speaking households. In fact, Quebec’s English-speaking minority communities lead all other official language minority communities in Canada by a wide margin with respect to total hours of unpaid care to seniors (Pocock, 2006b). This pattern remains consistent for the Eastern Townships, as illustrated in the graph below.

Proportion Who Devote 5+ Hours Weekly in Unpaid Care to Seniors by Gender and Language — Eastern Townships, 2006

Based on data from the 2006 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada.
Families in Distress
The data on caregiving and access to health services sketch a portrait of a growing number of Townships English-speaking families in distress. Factors that contribute to this distress are disproportionately low numbers of English-speaking health professionals such as social workers, nurses, and psychologists; a reduced number of related family households in geographical proximity; and a growing number of households that are unable to pay for private services.

English-speaking family caregivers, sandwiched between a growing senior group and a younger group of dependents, are experiencing levels of responsibility which far exceed the high-intensity levels established by Statistics Canada research (more than 8 hours monthly on care of elders). In fact, many English-speaking family caregivers provide 20 hours or more of unpaid care to elders per month (Pocock, 2006b). These high-intensity levels are linked to the likelihood of caregivers to experience negative health effects (such as increased psychological stress), work-related problems (such as reduction of work hours), and isolation due to curtailment of their social activities (Williams, 2004).

Myth: The services needed by English speakers in the Townships are no different from those that French speakers need
The English-speaking population in the Townships has a larger proportion of older persons than the French-speaking majority. It also has a much smaller proportion of people aged 18–44, and this age group has lower levels of education, employment, literacy, and revenue. These major health determinants are widely recognised as placing a person at a higher risk for poor health. These characteristics strongly suggest that specific support and resources are needed in order to enable the Townships English-speaking population to be a healthy community, which can contribute its fair share to the socio-economic vitality of the community at large.

We need to do all we can to become a more tolerant and understanding society; a society that values every human being for who they are and endorses the integration into society of those who have been marginalized.

—Judith Ross, executive director of Mental Health Estrie.
Cultural and Social Factors

Diversity

Today, the English-speaking communities of Quebec are more ethno-culturally diverse than their French-speaking counterparts, and are the most diverse of all of Canada’s provincial official language minority communities. English-speaking Quebec is composed of a greater percentage of members of visible minorities (20.8% greater), a greater percentage of individuals of non-Christian religious affiliation (15.6% greater), and more individuals born outside of Canada (30.9% greater) than other official language minority communities within Canada (Pocock, 2009). This pattern of diversity, while more marked in the urban Montreal region, remains consistent for the Eastern Townships. According to the 2006 census, 3.9% of the English-speaking population living in the Townships are members of a visible minority, compared to 1.6% of the French-speaking Townships population. Individuals who claim immigrant status constitute 13% of English-speaking Townshippers compared to 2.8% of the French-speaking majority sharing the same territory (Statistics Canada, 2007).

The history of the English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships is one based on immigration. As a minority within a minority, the English-speaking community can play a unique role in helping immigrants understand Quebec society and assisting them to become active and engaged contributors to the region’s socio-economic vitality. The shared experience of living as a minority in this increasingly pluralistic society is a bridge that can foster cross-cultural exchange and understanding (Townshippers’ Association, 2007).
Myth: English speakers don’t integrate into mainstream French society and culture

Many English-speaking people work, live, and have friends in both languages. A large number of English-speaking Townshippers have French-speaking spouses and have embraced a bicultural lifestyle. According to Government of Canada statistics (2003), 6 out of 10 married English-speaking Quebecers have a non-English-speaking spouse. Many within the English-speaking community enjoy the dominant French language and culture that surround them. Their vision of the Eastern Townships is that diverse cultures and linguistic groups can coexist and thrive together. Conserving one’s unique heritage, language, and culture does not rule out appreciating and integrating into the community at large.

Sense of Belonging
While Quebec’s English-speaking citizens are increasingly fluent in French, they are not necessarily feeling more comfortable in the province (Jedwab, 2005). English-speaking Quebecers are the least likely, among all official-language minority communities, to feel that the interests of their community are represented by their provincial government (Pocock, 2009). “In the Townships, 77.4% of Estrie English-speaking respondents to the 2005 Survey on Community Vitality felt that the future of the English-speaking community in their region was threatened” (Pocock, 2006b, p. 87).

In 2010, feedback from Townshippers’ Youth Council participants aged 13–20 showed a tentative sense of belonging in both the local community and the Eastern Townships. The lack of warmth appears to be related to the minority status of the English-speaking community (Garber & McAuley, 2010). In a 2005 qualitative study including focus groups with 110 English-speaking Townshippers aged 15–21, some participants reported feeling they were not always accepted by members of the French-speaking majority, especially prospective employers. This perception of discrimination was cited as a factor contributing to their plans to move out of the province (Kishchuk, Karpenko & Brault, 2005).

In 2009, QC GN’s Youth Standing Committee noted that young English speakers expressed a desire to stay in Quebec and contribute to Quebec society. Although they acknowledged the charged political history of the province, they expressed a desire to leave the “two solitudes” behind them “through new partnerships, collaboration, and increased participation. They want to participate in frank and open discussions with their Francophone counterparts to avoid carrying negative patterns into the next generation” (Quebec Community Groups Network, p. 3).

Language is a characteristic of a culture—it is not its definition.
—Mike McDevitt, editorial, The Record, May 12, 2010.
Social Participation

Levels of volunteer activity in a population are an important indicator of attachment to a community. Despite the perception of exclusion and discrimination that has been reported by some members of the English-speaking community, English speakers continue to show high rates of social participation. The General Social Survey, Cycle 17, reveals that Quebec’s English speakers exhibit a higher rate of volunteerism than Quebec’s French speakers (Pocock, 2006b). “Many of Quebec’s English-speaking regional populations exceed the Canadian national average in their hours of unpaid community work” (Pocock, 2009, p. 48). A substantial percentage (60%) of Quebec’s English-mother-tongue population are involved in one or more groups or organizations. This is considerably higher than levels (53%) reported by Quebec Francophones (Pocock, 2006b). The primary language of community sector participation for Quebec’s official language minority is overwhelmingly English.

According to the 2005 CHSSN/CROP Survey on Community Vitality, the Eastern Townships region exhibits some of the highest rates of unpaid community work. Among English speakers, those 65 years and older displayed the highest levels of volunteer work, while youth showed the lowest levels. In contrast, the highest levels of volunteerism within the French-speaking community were found in the 45–64 age group (Pocock, 2006b).

The combination of the missing middle generation and low levels of youth engagement poses serious implications for the future of the Townships’ English-speaking minority, which greatly depends upon its volunteers to sustain its essential community organizations.

Myth: Quebec’s English speakers are the best-treated minority in the world

English speakers developed many institutions that now help support both the English-speaking community and the French-speaking majority. Some examples in the Townships are Bishop’s University, Champlain Regional College, Sherbrooke Hospital (now the Institut universitaire de gériatrie de Sherbrooke), and the Brome-Missisquoi Perkins Hospital in Cowansville. They established this infrastructure when their community had a larger population base, greater economic power, and more influence. A strong tradition of community fundraising and volunteerism was often instrumental in developing educational and health institutions. These were not “given” to the English-speaking community. As well, only about 10% of the federal government resources reserved for official language minorities are distributed to the English-speaking minority in Quebec, although its population is similar in size to that of the French-speaking minority outside Quebec (Stephen Thompson, personal communication, July 8, 2010).
Artistic and Cultural Life
The English-speaking community’s dynamic artistic and cultural life is one of its strengths. Based upon the concentration of artists as reported in the 2006 census, three of Canada’s 10 most artistic small and rural municipalities are found in the Eastern Townships: West Bolton, Eastman, and Potton (Hill, 2010). In the Estrie region, English speakers are more than twice as likely to work in the domain of arts and culture than are their French-speaking neighbours. This is the highest minority-majority ratio for this characteristic in all of Quebec (Quebec Community Groups Network, 2005).

In the Eastern Townships, the most active English-language arts sectors are theatre, music, and visual arts. Literature, photography, and film are also sectors with high participation rates (Rodgers, Garber & Needles, 2008).

This creative class makes a vital contribution to the region. A report by Creative City Network of Canada found that “Arts, culture and heritage are viewed not only as amenities to improve the quality of life, but as a foundation upon which the future of these rural/small communities rests” (cited in Hill, 2010, p. 6).

“Rural festivals, events and facilities can help create and maintain rural identities, foster a collective sense of belonging, as well as enable community-building and community cohesion.” Unfortunately the income of the creative class rarely reflects the added value that they bring to a community’s vitality. On average, artists earn 37% less than the overall labour force (Hill, 2010, p. 6).

When asked what could be done to improve the financial situation of creative workers in the region, local artists expressed a substantial need for help in marketing and selling their work, especially outside the region (Patterson, 2008). In areas where distances, isolation or financial need are extreme, community workers identified several basic needs necessary to develop the artistic and cultural vitality of their community. “Four key needs they mentioned were arts in schools, financial support, information in English, and professional arts mentors or development agents to develop local talent” (Rodgers, Garber & Needles, 2008, p. 120).

Participation in community life through cultural expression is considered a health determinant, because it fosters positive social identity, solidarity, and community-building (Kishchuk, 2010). Considering the pockets of poverty within the Townships’ English-speaking community and the high proportion of English speakers who earn less than $20,000 a year, it is obvious that many within the community cannot afford to participate in cultural events. The vastness of the region is also a factor that restricts access to English-language cultural experiences. Transportation to events can be especially problematic for seniors and low-income families.

My intention is to reflect my Eastern Townships roots, to capture that Appalachian foothills feel. This is my heart’s home.”
—Sarah Biggs, singer/songwriter
Community, Roots, and Heritage

Many English-speaking Townshippers have a profound sense of their roots in the region and are proud of their heritage. A great number have a family history in the Eastern Townships that dates back to the late 1700s or early 1800s, giving them a deep appreciation for the land that has nourished and sustained their ancestors for generations. They are justifiably proud of the accomplishments of their community: prosperous farms that grew from hardscrabble homesteads, successful family businesses, a rich architectural heritage, and numerous institutions built with their forebears’ taxes, donations, and volunteer labour.

English speakers who have arrived more recently have chosen this area because of the quality and pace of life, the natural beauty of the region, its cultural vitality, or employment opportunities. Many of these individuals have enriched the community with their various talents, fresh perspectives, and energy.

Most English-speaking Townshippers have built a network of friends and colleagues, have contributed to the social fabric of the Eastern Townships, and enjoy living among their French-speaking neighbours. They have put down roots and call this place “home.”

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Kids at the sugaring off would answer in whatever language they were addressed, quite accent free. Adults switched with ease in mid-paragraph at the Kingsey Falls farm, owned by an English-speaking Townships family of many generations now well integrated with the majority population.

—Scott Stevenson, writer/editor/publisher (Townships Outlet, May 12, 2010).
Cultural Identity
The English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships has an evolving identity, in tandem with its changing composition, social structure, values, and arts. As a minority, its culture is also influenced by the characteristics of the Francophone majority within which it lives, and the relationship between these two groups.

Its traditional values of self-reliance, creativity, and volunteerism are sources of pride. Its ethnic diversity is considered by many to be a source of enrichment. Multi- or bi-culturalism and bilingualism are valued attributes that many of its members embody, hand in hand with a strong sense of community that encompasses both the English-speaking minority and the Townships community at large.

Its thriving artistic community creates music, written word, theatre, and other arts that breathe life into the region and its peoples. One challenge that confronts the community’s evolving identity is the perceived gap between the artistic community and English speakers in general (Rodgers, Garber & Needles, 2008). Closing this gap could be an important strategy for strengthening the half-hearted sense of belonging among many youth and revitalizing the community’s cultural identity.

This cultural identity goes beyond linguistic or ethnic identity. It is the force that unites the Townships English-speaking community despite local, generational, socio-economic, ethnic, and religious diversity. It is the wedge between out-migration and assimilation, permitting people to envisage a distinct minority that is nevertheless integrated into the community at large. It is the basis for a potentially vital future for this small minority group.
Looking to the Future

Concerns
The English-speaking population of the Eastern Townships has traditionally been characterized as mobile, entrepreneurial, well educated, and community minded. As their numbers have steadily declined, demographics have shifted and new challenges have arisen. As indicated in this profile, there are several areas of deep concern facing the English-speaking community today, including the declining population, high unemployment, low-income levels, low educational attainment, access to health services, out-migration, marginalized youth, the perception of discrimination, as well as a lack of support and visibility for English-speaking artists. The future of the community greatly depends on addressing these problems.

Strengths
Despite the many challenges facing the English-speaking community, the future is not necessarily bleak. The traditional strengths shown by the ‘Townships’ English-speaking minority (such as artistic expression, hard-work, perseverance, self-reliance, entrepreneurship, emphasis on education and literacy, volunteerism, and community involvement) provide some optimism for the future of the community. The deep roots of the English-speaking community have instilled a sense of pride in the accomplishments of the past among its members, and can provide inspiration for the future. In addition, the slight population increase reported in the last census may indicate a positive shift in perception concerning employment opportunities in the region.

As the world economy moves steadily towards increased globalization, the skills of Quebec English-speaking youth should become more widely recognized within the majority community. Their high level of bilingualism and English-language proficiency suggests that they could play a special role as the region’s ambassadors in the tourism industry and the international and inter-provincial business arena.

On the entrepreneurial front, the emerging Green movement can provide new business opportunities for English-speaking Townshippers. Family farms willing to shift their emphasis to organic, locally grown products can supply a growing niche market, and English speakers in the Townships are well positioned to build eco-tourist destinations.

The Eastern Townships English-speaking community has enormous creative and innovative potential. Many English-speaking Townshippers have a strong attachment to the region and are more than willing to contribute to Quebec’s vibrant society. Certainly, the Eastern Townships community at large has a great deal to gain from having a healthy and vital English-speaking minority.

Source: Al Barber
Building Bridges

Saber-Freedman and CROP (2001) identified a reduction in the social distance between French and English speakers, and increased social contact. This has led to a greater number of marriages between the two linguistic groups and has helped to dispel some of the myths surrounding the English-speaking population. Over the past several years, many French speakers in the Eastern Townships have shown a high level of sympathy for a number of challenges facing the English-speaking community, including access to health and social services.

Building bridges between the two linguistic groups is paramount to the survival of the Townships’ English-language minority. Fortunately, the English-speaking population is increasingly bilingual, facilitating interaction and fostering a greater understanding between the two groups. Breaking down the common misperceptions of “the others” can result in a new vision of a wider, more inclusive community—one that shares many common values and concerns. Working together, English- and French-speaking Townshippers have the tools to build a vibrant, flourishing society, one that is the envy of the whole world.


Sources and Information

References


Suggested Reading


General Information / Inquiries
Townshippers’ Association
100-257 Queen (Lennoxville), Sherbrooke, QC J1M 1K7
819-566-5717 (toll free 1-866-566-5717), ta@townshippers.qc.ca
www.townshippers.qc.ca

Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN)
www.qcgn.ca

Megantic English-speaking Community Development Corporation
www.mecd.info

Arts
English Language Arts Network (ELAN)
www.quebec-elan.org

Quebec Drama Federation (QDF)
www.quebecdrama.org

Quebec Writers’ Federation (QWF)
www.qwf.org

Health and Social Services
Community Health & Social Services Network (CHSSN)
www.chssn.org/default.asp

Townshippers’ Association
www.townshippers.qc.ca

Heritage, History
Eastern Townships Resource Centre
www.etrc.ca

Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN)

Youth Resources and Employment
Dobson-Lagassé Entrepreneurship Centre
www.dobsonlagasse.ca

Eastern Townships School Board
www.etsb.qc.ca

Job Links
www.etsb.qc.ca/joblinks

Townshippers’ Association