

Keeping our children in Quebec; [FINAL Edition]

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This week, Mothers Against Their Children Having to Leave Quebec (MATCH-LQ) held its inaugural meeting to set in motion what we hope will be a grass-roots movement to help stem the flow of young adults out of the province. The meeting, which was organized in less than two weeks, attracted a great deal of media attention locally and in other parts of Canada. This is understandable given the urgency of the issue of the future of our youth and their exodus out of the province.

A Lot of Interest

In preparing for the meeting of printed material, we were amazed at the interest this topic elicited. Strangers offered words of encouragement and help once the group establishes itself. They lamented the departure of their young and hoped that through our collective wisdom and brain-storming, we might come up with some recommendations for job creation, which would be an incentive to keep Quebec children here.

There are many of us who have decided to stay and fight the system. People are looking to us for answers but understand that we are not politicians, nor do we profess to have any quick solutions to a long-standing problem. We are ordinary people attempting to deal with an issue we feel has not been addressed.

When politicians want to make a point, they tend to throw out statistics to defend their policies. While statistics may impress our representatives, we know that there is one undeniable fact: there are more young people leaving the province than coming in. Some parents, we learned, are actually encouraging their offspring to leave now - before the economy worsens. We hope to inspire these people to work with us by impressing upon them that leaving the province is not the answer. The solution lies within ourselves to redirect our energies into taking positive steps to rebuild the province. This could take the form of discussions with leaders of industry, convincing them to keep their companies here to ensure that young people will have jobs. we want dialogue with provincial ministers to convince them that repressive language legislation only serves to drive away potential industries that might otherwise invest here.

We might not have be able to convince our government to redirect its priorities toward creating a healthy economic climate, which would be conducive to job-creation for those entering the work force, but we can make strides if people involve themselves in the solution, not the problem. Bridges must be built to link representatives of the various school committees across the province in order to become a force to be reckoned with.

We must begin focusing on things which unite us, not divide us and our children are the common denominator.

Indifferent PM

One heartfelt letter sent to our prime minister was met with an indifferent, two-line response. It was not signed by the prime minister himself but by his special assistant, who offered the perfunctory acknowledgement of a government official, communicating with a common citizen. One would think that given the subject of the letter was the prospective heads of industry and future leaders of our country, it might have deserved his personal attention. However, hundreds of thousands of letters expressing consternation regarding the exodus of youth can't be ignored. Our strength lies in numbers.

What we are proposing is a sensitization campaign aimed at elected officials to underline the urgency of the slow trickle of young people, planning to make their future elsewhere. Our campaign calls for, among other things, a barrage of letters to political leaders to wake them up from their hibernation. Numbers mean votes in upcoming elections and demonstrations in front of the offices of selected politicians to draw attention to their indifference to this problem. In addition, we must get our youth involved in this issue. It is vital that they become part of the solution since it is their future at stake.

When mothers and children united in their cause, they become a stronger link in a chain that will be difficult to break. One match makes a small flame but many matches can light up the world. Our children are our most precious commodity and their future here must be assured, one way or another.

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