

July 26, 2022

Dear Senator,

I am writing to you with a great sense of urgency on behalf of the Task Force on Linguistic Policy (in French, *Comité spécial sur la politique linguistique*), a group founded in June 2021 to defend the civil rights and protections of all Quebecers. We have grave concerns with Bill 96, passed recently by the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) Government of Québec, and with the federal government's Bill C-13.

Bill 96 declares French to be the sole official and common language in the self-defined “nation” of Québec. To achieve this, all languages other than French will be suppressed, with stiff penalties for non-compliance. Since many Bill 96 clauses are potentially unconstitutional, preemptive use of the Canadian and Québec notwithstanding clauses have been invoked to override fundamental Charter guarantees. Of key concern to any federal legislator, Bill 96 illegitimately seizes power over federal jurisdictions, notably federal labour markets and trademarks and purports to modify the 1867 Constitution Act.

Our reservations with Bill 96 revolve around, but are not limited to, three themes:

1. Bill 96 is a fundamental and illegitimate restructuring of our society, province and country.
2. Bill 96 excises the English presence, language, community and institutions from Québec.
3. Bill 96 diminishes the civil and human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Québecers, regardless of mother tongue, official language preference, and ethnic background. In particular, the rights of Québec's First Nations and Inuit communities are significantly compromised.

Similarly, Bill C-13's revisions to the *Official Languages Act* (OLA) are a repudiation of half a century of *symmetrical* bilingualism and equal services for Canada's two official language minority communities, 1.2 million English-speaking Québecers a million-plus francophones outside Québec.

The Task Force's concerns with the OLA revisions and Bill C-13 are as follows:

1. Asymmetry is contemplated for the act and interpretation of language rights federally. This means French will be promoted in the rest of Canada and English will be delegitimized in Québec.
2. The acknowledgement in law of French as the only official language and the patchwork of inadequate provincial language laws across the country. This would be ill-advised, legally and constitutionally.
3. Substantive parts of the document fail to apply equally to English-speakers in Québec who are socio-economically and demographically disadvantaged.

4. French-preferential labour markets in Quebec and other areas should be expanded to include English-speaking communities in Quebec. The Office Québécois de la langue française (OQLF), are invited to administer investigations of federal laws and complaints without recourse.

These pieces of legislation contain detrimental proposals to the future of language rights, a bilingual country, a vibrant Anglophone community in Quebec and a united Canada. As the chamber of ‘sober second thought’ we are asking the Senate to consider the ramifications these bills could have on our country.

Our Legislative Brief on Bill 96 is available [here](#), and our Executive Summaries in [English](#) and in [French](#). Please consult our website for additional [information](#).

I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss these concerns with you directly at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your attention to these urgent matters.

Sincerely,



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