

Transfer of Manpower could sacrifice essential protections for minority-language services and information: AQ

There is an extremely crucial issue facing English-speaking communities in Quebec. As you may know, Quebec and Ottawa are close to reaching an agreement on the devolution of Manpower training to the provinces. This may be well and good if it results in greater efficiency along with being an important signal to Quebecers about Canada's flexibility — but not if it results in a reduction of English-language access guarantees in this important sector.

Alliance Quebec has been extremely active on this matter, urging the federal government to include explicit guarantees in the agreement insuring that the services continue to be available in English after the transfer of responsibility.

What is at stake?

- Guarantees to Manpower training and retraining courses in English for unemployed and laid-off English-speaking Quebecers (this includes completing high school adult students as well as a wide variety of technical and vocational courses);
- Guarantees to career counseling in English;
- English signage, an active offer to be served in English at Manpower office;
- Employment opportunities for bilingual anglophones within the Manpower bureaucracy.

While there is room for improvement in the present situation, we do now enjoy protections outlined in Parts IV and VII of the Official Languages Act as well as associated (and very specific) regulations under federal authority.

What have we done so far?

- AQ has met with Pierre Pettigrew, the Minister responsible for Human Resources Development;
- We brought this issue to the Prime Minister of Canada and some 100 MPs on Lobby Day in Ottawa last March;
- We have written three successive Ministers of Human Resources, and copied

Quebec MPs;

- We have intervened with Eddy Goldenberg in the Prime Minister's office, written to Jean Charest, the leaders in Senate;
- We have alerted provincial and national media to this story.

Alliance Quebec has been and will continue to be active on this issue to insure that transfer of Manpower training to the province is not at the expense of Quebec's 800,000 English-speaking people.