

Another Victory For Alliance Quebec In Its Efforts To Expand Access Rights To English Schools

Montreal, Monday, July 12, 1999 – Another victory for Alliance Quebec in its efforts to expand access rights to English schools! This morning, in court, the lawyer representing the Quebec government announced that Carmela Mignogna's daughter Genna and her two other children would receive a certificate of eligibility to attend school in English.

Carmela Mignogna was one of the "illegals" taught clandestinely in English in English schools run by the Montreal Catholic School Commission following the passage of Bill 101. She, like at least 1,200 others, received an amnesty in 1986 under Bill 58, so that her studies were officially recognized. But the law specified that those amnestied were to receive no further benefit from their having studied in English: "No one may claim any grant or benefit by reason of the fact that the child contemplated in section 1 received instruction in English before the school year 1986-87."

Last year, Carmela Mignogna applied to have Genna admitted to English school. But her application was refused on the grounds that Carmela's "English instruction was received illegally." So, on June 11 last, with the support of Alliance Quebec, Carmela Mignogna went to court to petition a judge to declare that her children are eligible for English schooling. Alliance Quebec maintains that the Canadian Charter of Rights which states that: "Citizens of Canada who have received their primary school instruction in English... have the right to have all of their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the same language," clearly overrides any Quebec legislation and gives Carmela and other illegals the right to send their children to English schools.

Carmela's three children are now eligible for English schooling. Does that mean that all the children of the "illegals" are equally eligible? In logic, that would seem evident. But the Quebec government, through its lawyer, failed to offer that assurance. The Quebec government seems to prefer a drawn-out process in which each "illegal" will have to apply separately to have the rights of their children affirmed.

We urge all those in Carmela's situation to contact Alliance Quebec and the organization plans to study ways of resolving the situation for all "illegals" in an expeditious manner.