

AQ opposes language laws which prohibit the sale of children's toys based on the language that these toys speak

Montreal, Thursday, December 7, 2000 – Alliance Quebec announced today its opposition to language laws which prohibit the sale of children's toys based on the language that these toys speak.

A recent news item in the Ottawa Citizen reported that Quebec's Charter of the French Language (Bill 101) prohibits the sale of unilingual English-speaking toys. The report indicated that the Oogles English-speaking doll is not allowed to be sold in Quebec toy stores, nor could it be transferred from other stores in Canada to Quebec, because the doll only speaks in English.

"The language laws are unclear on this issue," said Darryl Levine, a member of the Alliance Quebec board of directors. "In essence, the law says that unless the talking toy in question has a cultural significance, it must be available in both English and French. Having to debate whether a toy is culturally significant shows how bizarre and extreme some of these language laws are.

"The very nature of the law, and the fact that it is subject to interpretation, suggests that the day may come when the *Office de la langue française* might decide it has the authority to check Christmas packages coming from the United States to look for contraband toys.

"The sad reality is that in a society where laws exist to limit education choice based on language, and ban words on public signs based on language, can anyone really be shocked that laws exist to ban toys based on language?" Levine said.