



# **Brief:** Response to Bill 1

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THE PROVINCIAL EMPLOYMENT ROUNDTABLE

**SUBMITTED ON FEBRUARY 18, 2026**

# Bill 1: Response from the Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT)

Submitted to: Commission des institutions - Consultation générale et auditions publiques sur le projet de loi n° 1, Loi constitutionnelle de 2025 sur le Québec.

## Context

On October 9, 2025, the Government of Québec introduced Bill 1, the *Québec Constitution Act, 2025*. The Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT) recognizes the importance of Québec adopting a constitution. A constitution is a commendable project when drafted to reflect the collective aspirations of a nation, balancing collective and individual rights through substantive dialogue and consultation. In the case of the current proposed constitution, it does not meet these criteria.

We are deeply concerned about the potential impacts of this proposed bill, particularly its impacts on English speakers in the labour market, as well as equity-seeking groups, such as Indigenous peoples and immigrants. In this response, we focus specifically on Québec's English-speaking community, which is a historic and diverse group of communities across Québec's 17 regions. Chief among our concerns is that this bill, as written, does not guarantee the economic vitality of Québec's English speakers.

## Key Facts About Québec's English-speaking Communities

Contrary to widely-held stereotypes, today's English-speaking communities face economic precarity and exclusion from the labour market.

- **Labour Force:** The English-speaking community, which numbers 1.25 million people, represents 15.8% of Québec's labour force.<sup>1</sup>
- **Unemployment Gap:** The unemployment rate for English speakers in Québec is four percentage points higher than that of French speakers (10.9% vs. 6.9%). This gap has doubled in the last decade.<sup>2 3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT), [Employment Profile of English Speakers in the Province of Québec](#), 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> When we adjust the gap for the groups' differences in age, gender, location (CMA level), highest level of education, immigration status, and industry, the gap is 2.5 percentage points and statistically significant.

- **Employment Rate:** At face value, English speakers have similar employment rates compared to French speakers (58.2% and 58.1%, respectively), although English speakers' employment rates are lower by 2.8 percentage points once adjusted for demographic differences.<sup>4</sup>
- **Employment Earnings:** English speakers earn a median employment income that is approximately \$5,200 less than their Francophone counterparts.<sup>5</sup> English speakers' average employment earnings are lower by \$438 annually after adjusting for demographic differences.<sup>6</sup>
- **Employment Services:** Despite high unemployment rates, English speakers face significant barriers in accessing English-language employment services.<sup>7</sup>
- **Economic Impact:** Closing these employment and income disparities between English and French speakers could generate \$1.51 billion in additional annual income.<sup>8</sup>

## Consultation and Process

Bill 1 was introduced without any prior public consultation or a constituent assembly. Key stakeholders, including members of Québec's English-speaking community, were not brought to the table during the drafting phase.

While we acknowledge the government's recent decision to hold public hearings, the exclusion of stakeholders from the English-speaking community from the initial drafting implies that the economic and social realities of our community are not reflected in the proposed *Constitution of Québec*.

### 1. Recommendation:

Halt the current adoption process for Bill 1 and establish an inclusive constituent assembly that explicitly incorporates key stakeholders and representatives from minority communities –

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See: Social Research Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) and the Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT), [The State of Employment Among English-Speaking Quebecers](#), 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Social Research Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) and the Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT), [The State of Employment Among English-Speaking Quebecers](#), 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT), [Employment Profile of English Speakers in the Province of Québec](#), 2025.

<sup>6</sup> When earnings are adjusted and analyzed by relative differences rather than dollar amounts to reduce the effect of outliers (using log earnings), English speakers make 11.9% less in annual average earnings. See: Social Research Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) and the Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT), [The State of Employment Among English-Speaking Quebecers](#), 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT), [2021 Employment Survey of English-speaking Quebecers and Organizations](#), 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Social Research Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) and the Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT), [The State of Employment Among English-Speaking Quebecers](#), 2025.

including the English-speaking community – to draft a new constitution that will unify all Quebecers.

## Omission of Protections for Minority Groups

There is no guarantee or affirmation of the rights of the English-speaking community within the binding sections of the Bill.

In the *Constitution of Québec*, articles 7-8 explicitly declare the collective rights of the nation as paramount:

*The Québec nation is the holder of intrinsic and inalienable collective rights. Those rights are to be interpreted broadly. They contribute to the protection of human rights and freedoms.*

*The nation has the right to protect and promote its existence as well as its distinct culture, language and social values.*

In contrast, the English-speaking community is mentioned only in the Preamble:

*As the State of Québec intends to pursue that objective in a manner that is respectful of the institutions of the English-speaking community of Québec.*

This omission creates uncertainty regarding the rights of English speakers as a linguistic minority. English speakers require affirmation of their rights as a linguistic minority within the Constitution, as well as protections for their institutions, particularly in the realms of health and social services, education, and employment.

### **2. Recommendation:**

Recognize the English-speaking community in the substantive text of the Constitution and guarantee the vitality of the English-speaking community, as well as its institutions.

## French Language

The *Constitution of Québec* reinforces the status of the French language in articles 5 and 21:

*French is the only common language of the nation.*

*The only official language of Québec is French.*

We support the status of French as Québec's official language. However, we have previously raised concerns regarding the impact of language legislation on English speakers, specifically in *Bill 96: An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec (Law 14)* and *Bill 84: An Act respecting national integration*. Bill 1 reinforces the status of French as the sole official language of Québec in its substantive text. This is done without any specific clauses to ensure the vitality of English-speaking communities, which often face linguistic isolation and exclusion from the labour market.

Although it reinforces French as the sole common and official language of Québec, Bill 1 does not guarantee any language learning services to support Quebecers with limited proficiency in French. Previous research has demonstrated that many English speakers desire French language learning.<sup>9</sup> Yet Québec has not provided the French language learning framework needed to meet the current demand. Our research demonstrates that English speakers face challenges when it comes to accessing, finding, and meeting the eligibility criteria for French-language training programs, even when they live in urban regions with lower barriers to access.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, they often lack access to workplace-oriented language training, which helps directly address the language barriers they face in the labour market.<sup>11</sup> These challenges have also been outlined by the Commissioner of the French Language in 2024, who identified long wait times for individuals seeking French language learning services through Francisation Québec, as well as low service quality and efficiency challenges.<sup>12</sup>

The bill also poses challenges for English speakers' access to services in English. For those in the labour market, accessing employment services in English ensures that they can fully understand and participate in the job process, including enrolling in training opportunities, identifying employment opportunities that match their skills, and making informed career decisions. An example of this is Ontario's *French Language Services Act (1986)*, which ensures that provincial government agencies actively offer services in French in designated areas across the province with a significant number of Franco-Ontarians. Publicly-funded organizations providing direct services to the public can additionally opt in to receive a special designation as an organization providing French language services under the FLSA, improving access to services for French speakers in the province.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT), [2021 Employment Survey of English-speaking Quebecers and Organizations](#), 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT), [User journeys of language learners navigating Québec's French language training ecosystem](#), 2024.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Commissaire à la langue française, [Rapport annuel 2023-2024: Chapitre 4 – Évaluation continue du déploiement de Francisation Québec](#), 2024, p. 40.

<sup>13</sup> Government of Ontario, [User Guide - Designation of organizations under the French Language Services Act](#), last modified December 10, 2025.

### **3. Recommendation:**

Include a specific charter of French language learning rights, ensuring that all Quebecers have access to French language learning services.

### **4. Recommendation:**

Ensure access to government services in English, including government-delivered and third-party-delivered employment services.

### **5. Recommendation:**

Include a specific charter of economic rights for linguistic minority communities, guaranteeing that no person is denied access to employment and employment services solely based on their linguistic identity.

## **Prohibition on Public Funds for Court Challenges**

We are alarmed by the provisions in the *Act Respecting the Constitutional Autonomy of Québec* regarding legal challenges.<sup>14</sup> As stated in the Bill's explanatory notes, it:

*forbids certain bodies from using public funds to contest certain Acts which state that they protect the Québec nation as well as the constitutional autonomy and fundamental characteristics of Québec.*

If current or future legislation inadvertently discriminates against English speakers, this clause would prevent publicly funded institutions from challenging the legislation and seeking judicial redress. This undermines the democratic checks and balances necessary for a functional and inclusive society.

### **6. Recommendation:**

Remove the prohibition on the use of public funds for court challenges in the *Act Respecting the Constitutional Autonomy of Québec*.

### **7. Recommendation:**

Remove school service centres, general and vocational colleges, educational institutions at the university level, and professional orders from the Schedule I list of organizations subject to the *Act Respecting the Constitutional Autonomy of Québec*.

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<sup>14</sup> Government of Québec, [Bill 1, Québec Constitution Act, 2025: Act Respecting the Constitutional Autonomy of Québec](#), 1st sess., 43rd Leg., art. 5.

# Summary of Recommendations

We recommend that the Government of Québec:

1. Halt the current adoption process for Bill 1 and establish an inclusive constituent assembly that explicitly incorporates key stakeholders and representatives from minority communities – including the English-speaking community – to draft a new constitution that will unify all Quebecers.
2. Recognize the English-speaking community in the substantive text of the Constitution and guarantee the vitality of the English-speaking community, as well as its institutions.
3. Include a specific charter of French language learning rights, ensuring that all Quebecers have access to French language learning services.
4. Ensure access to government services in English, including government-delivered and third-party-delivered employment services.
5. Include a specific charter of economic rights for linguistic minority communities, guaranteeing that no person is denied access to employment and employment services solely based on their linguistic identity.
6. Remove the prohibition on the use of public funds for court challenges in the *Act Respecting the Constitutional Autonomy of Québec*.
7. Remove school service centres, general and vocational colleges, educational institutions at the university level, and professional orders from the Schedule I list of organizations subject to the *Act Respecting the Constitutional Autonomy of Québec*.

## About PERT

The Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT) is a non-profit organization working to address the employment challenges and opportunities of English-speaking communities across Québec.

Through policy & research, development, and engagement efforts, we collaborate with various partners, including regional and community organizations, educational institutions, employment service providers, employers, and government. PERT is dedicated to building and strengthening employment support networks and ensuring inclusion in Québec's labour market for generations to come.



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