

## **Alliance Quebec wants Quebec Premier Jean Charest to hold a public inquiry into improper conduct and gross incompetence in the administration of the province's last referendum**

**Montreal, June 9, 2003** -- Alliance Quebec wants Quebec Premier Jean Charest to hold a public inquiry into improper conduct and gross incompetence in the administration of the province's last referendum.

The organization made the request to Premier Charest more than a week ago after lawyer Michael Bergman completed his interviews under oath of 12 senior officials in the office of Quebec's Director-General of Elections, including Pierre-F. Cote who was Director-General at the time.

The result is some 10,000 pages of sworn transcripts that have been filed into the court record. Mr. Bergman has scheduled June 12th to present amendments to legal proceedings now underway

"During the referendum campaign, the mission of Quebec's Director-General of Elections was to attack the federal government and its supporters," Mr. Bergman said.

"On referendum day, the objective of the Director-General's office was to keep its eyes shut tight," he added. "And officials made sure the subsequent investigations and prosecutions of the spoiled ballots were designed to achieve an end result that produced nothing."

"It is legitimate to ask if experienced and intelligent people had a sudden loss of basic common sense or if there was a purposeful, well-executed design behind all this?" Mr. Bergman said.

He added that there is good reason to believe the referendum results were skewed purposefully by the Parti Quebecois government and its allies to favor the Yes vote. Many people were aware of this plan and the government caucus was briefed on it.

The results of this plan are plain to see. Thousands of eligible voters were prevented from voting. Others were deliberately discouraged. Results in some polls were reversed in favor of the Yes side. In some polls more than 100 per cent of registered voters cast their ballots. In other places a disproportionate number of No ballots were declared spoiled.

While all this was going on, Mr. Bergman noted that the Director General of Elections and some of his officials failed in their duty to scrupulously protect the neutrality of their office and facilitate a fair and well-balanced exercise in democracy. And the sworn transcripts demonstrate that the subsequent investigation into the spoiled ballots was limited so severely by the Director-General of Elections and his officials that it could not have achieved any significant conclusions.

Mr. Bergman believes that a re-examination of all documents relating to the referendum will show that a victory by pro-Canada forces in the referendum was actually much greater than the narrow margin initially reported. And he said it is particularly important to have an inquiry now because many of the officials involved still play an active role in Quebec's electoral structures.

Commenting on the case, Alliance Quebec President Brent Tyler said a full and complete investigation would be in the best interests of the province's residents whether federalist or separatist.

"It's about democracy," Mr. Tyler said.