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Network News

The news that matters to
English-speaking Quebecers



SPECIAL EDITION CONCERNING BILL 84

From QCGN President Eva Ludvig & Director General, Sylvia Martin-Laforge



Welcome to a special edition of Network News, one devoted entirely to the recently presented provincial **Bill 84** on "intégration nationale," a broad and powerful bill dedicated to ensuring widespread adherence to "Quebec culture."

We want to share with you **three broad areas** here:

Why this Bill is important, which explains why we should all pay very close attention to it;

What the QCGN has done and said about it already, and a bit about other steps we plan to take;

What others have been saying about this Bill in the media and at the hearings being held by the *Assemblée nationale's Commission des relations avec les citoyens*, where we [presented this brief](#) last week; the link contains both French and English versions, with the French version first.

WHY BILL 84 IS IMPORTANT

Along with Quebec's Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, the Charter of the French Language (Bills 101, 96, what is now called Law 14), and Bill 21, which defines a secular state, Bill 84 will serve as a fourth "pillar" of a proposed Quebec constitution the government of Premier François Legault is expected to advance before the next provincial election in the fall of 2026.

Bill 84 is what is called "framework legislation" – a vague, bare bones bill that will be followed by a formal and more detailed Policy that must be presented within 18 months, as well as regulations spelling out more precisely how the Bill will be applied and enforced.

Because there is so little in it as yet, it is deceptively benign.

The Bill follows Bill 96/Law 14 in cementing not only that French is the official and common language of Quebec, but it suggests, in an unspoken sense, that French is the only language Quebecers should use if they are to be considered full participants in this society.

It also seeks to establish a required adherence to a "Quebec culture" that appears to evoke a narrower, more rigid definition of what that culture is – and what it will exclude. Defining this Quebec culture more precisely is crucial, because the Bill places so much emphasis on the need for **all** Quebecers to embrace it – not just the newly arrived.

We are especially concerned that this Bill contains no more than a fleeting reference to the English-speaking community of Quebec. This omission is symbolically powerful and can only be interpreted as deliberate. Ours is a community that has played an enormous role in enriching and developing Quebec – economically, culturally, socially and intellectually – for more than two centuries.

We are also bothered by the clear indications that this Bill creates a framework that could lead to restrictions of Quebec financial assistance to organizations and/or events based on the degree they support the proposed national integration model. Others have echoed those concerns.

That this Bill defines Quebec as a quasi-sovereign nation state, is another worry, as is the fact that the Bill, even without the use of the constitutional notwithstanding clause, further subordinates fundamental rights in Quebec.

A major concern for English-speaking Quebec

We asked ourselves, and we asked Immigration Minister Jean-François Roberge (who is also Minister of the French Language), "Do we have a place in Quebec?" Because, if we are to judge by this proposed legislation, which makes next to no mention of us, nor any role we can and should play in the enrichment and the "vivre ensemble" of Quebec, then the answer appears to be abundantly clear: We have none.

We are left to believe that Bill 84 is an attempt to write us, the English-speaking community, out of history – an assertion that prompted vigorous denials from M. Roberge and other members of the National Assembly, but which has been supported, in not so many words, by many others, including leading Francophone political and academic voices.

We saw indications, however, that M. Roberge is prepared to make changes to the Bill to correct the error; we are waiting to see what those might be.

We should treat this Bill with the same degree of concern we have had for Bill 96, the law that updated the Charter of the French Language several years ago, and which continues to cause problems for individuals, businesses, schools and students, and other institutions linked to our community.



WHAT HAS THE QCGN DONE ABOUT BILL 84 SO FAR?

The most important thing we have done is to secure an opportunity to **present our brief** to the *National Assembly's Commission des relations avec les citoyens*.

We have knocked on that door in response to previous legislation and been rebuffed. Not this time. Our brief was forceful and well received. The Gazette described it the next day as "strongly worded," which it was meant to be, because Bill 84 touches on issues vital to the well-being of our community. The Bill's dismissive approach toward us deserves some strong push-back.

We have issued **two press releases** ...

The first when the bill was tabled

The second following our audience at the National Assembly

... done a number of **radio interviews**, in French and in English ...

Richard Martineau from QUB Radio:

CBC Daybreak with Sean Henry:

Elias Makos show on CJAD

...and been quoted extensively **in the media:**

Anglos 'not the enemy of French in Quebec,' group tells CAQ By Philip Authier

'We are being written out of history': Groups voice concern about Quebec's integration bill by Joe Lofaro

WHAT HAVE OTHERS SAID

There has been, frankly, a surprising degree of opposition to Bill 84 from leading members of the French-speaking media, intelligentsia and political milieu. There isn't room to replicate it all here, but we wanted to share with you some highlights and a lot of links, should you be interested in digging deeper.

We have been heartened by this, feeling that on the relatively rare occasions when we are in violent agreement with these respected voices, we have stumbled across some very real and important common cause – which is essential, if we are to advance understanding of our positions and desire for a real role in advancing Quebec society.

Éric Grenier, a noted pollster, has concerns: <https://lactualite.com/politique/ce-que-nous-sommes/>

It's not so much the integration of immigrants that the bill seems to rely on, but rather their integrity. Do they know they're immigrating to a democracy? This kind of question seems to underlie the bill, as if there were a suspicion about immigrants' values. The host society's reciprocity is limited to offering them the means not to import habits and customs it might find strange. The First Peoples and the English-speaking minority only figure in the initial considerations, which put them on the back burner rather than being seen as an integral part of ourselves.

An astonishing collection of voices, including former Péquiste notables like **Louise Beaudoin** and **Louise Harel**, along with staunch federalists like former Liberal cabinet minister **Kathleen Weil**, signed this letter in Le Devoir, which compares numerous policies of past governments with the new approach:

<https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/idees/843580/idees-pl84-est-rupture-interculturalisme?>

"These [previous] policies reflect a Quebec identity freed from its exclusively French-Canadian roots and mark a major turning point in our history: French-speaking Quebec is called upon to diversify and take into account the different origins of its population. The civic framework they defined continues to guide government action in terms of living together.

"Several aspects of Bill 84 distance it from the intercultural, balanced and inclusive model, in favor of a logic with assimilationist tendencies. Firstly, it requires immigrants to "adhere" to a common culture, presented as the "melting pot" of a united nation. Yet this notion, associated with the American melting pot, evokes the erasure of different cultures and is far removed from Quebec's pluralist tradition. What's more, the bill says nothing about the relationship between the French-speaking majority, the English-speaking community and the First Nations, apart from mentioning them in the recitals. In so doing, Bill 84 represents a radical departure from the pluralism at the heart of interculturalism."

Long-time Quebec City observer and columnist **Michel-C. Auger** weighed in in a La Presse piece that got to the heart of the Bill, noting a reach for identity issues is a timeworn strategy for governments on the ropes. The problem, he argues is, "that the National Integration Act runs the risk of being badly received, and therefore of not having the desired effect on those it is aimed at. Because it's a law about minorities, but not for minorities."

<https://www.lapresse.ca/contexte/chroniques/2025-02-02/encore-une-petite-dose-d-identitaire.php>

"In fact, the real purpose of the law is transparent. It establishes from the outset what is expected of immigrants, an obligation to integrate into 'a host society distinct' from Canadian multiculturalism but fails for the moment to specify the modalities of a 'national policy of integration into the Quebec nation and common culture.'

"In short, immigrants are obliged to integrate immediately into French-speaking society, but the government is still unable to provide the francization that its policies now require....

"One can only smile to hear the Minister of Immigration, Francisation and Integration, Jean-François Roberge, ask what well-known cultural events – such as the Nuits d'Afrique festival, which caters to all those who love

African music – would have to do to meet the national integration criteria that would enable them to obtain state subsidies."

More links:

<https://www.lesoleil.com/chroniques/lise-ravary/2025/02/02/voulez-vous-me-dire-cest-quoi-ca-lintegration-nationale-QH6PXG67BZEQZPVAAIVJOLUMEA/>

<https://www.lapresse.ca/dialogue/opinions/2025-02-09/loi-sur-l-integration-nationale/un-modele-flou-pour-une-fin-encore-a-definir.php>

<https://liguedesdroits.ca/des-droits-et-libertes-menaces-pour-la-population-quebecoise/>

<https://ftq.qc.ca/projet-de-loi-n-84-loi-sur-lintegration-nationale-pl84-une-diversion/>

IN CONCLUSION

Quoting freely from our brief, we would note that Bill 84's expressed intent to use the state's financial stick to encourage compliance concerns us; many of our member organizations are funded at least in part by the provincial government. As we have seen repeatedly, Bill 96 and its associated regulations have provoked misinterpretations by officials at all levels who have been left to enforce that law – whether it be in a library or a hospital emergency ward. The same could happen here.

That is why the United Nations declaration on human rights, adopted in 1948, was titled the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* – written largely, it so happens, by John Humphrey, a legal scholar and a Montrealer from early in his university days at McGill, who is also seen as a source of great pride for Quebec on the international stage.

In establishing the pillars of a constitution, it seeks to enshrine, we maintain that Quebec would do well to balance the understandable need to protect and promote the French language with a healthy measure of respect for the precepts of fundamental and universal human rights that its proposed plan for integration now lacks – and to clearly demonstrate the principles its very own Charter espouses.

Thank you for reading our regular newsletter. For up-to-date news about the Quebec Community Groups Network you can visit our website at www.qcgn.ca or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram.



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