

AN OUTLAW GOVERNMENT

Once again, the Quebec government is stalling, violating the law, and depriving us of our rights. Premier Lucien Bouchard added another episode to a black series when he announced Tuesday that the Access Plans for English health and social services might have to go back to the *Office de la Langue Française* for its analysis. This latest delay is absolutely intolerable.

Let us recall a few facts. Bill 142 in 1986 guaranteed access to English health and social services and ordered regional health councils to develop Access Plans to implement the guarantee. By 1989 the Access Plans were in place. In 1991, Bill 120 required that Access Plans be revised every three years. In 1994, then Health Minister Lucienne Robillard ordered that revised Access Plans be submitted by the end of December 1995.

By then, the Parti Québécois had come to power, and it has been stalling ever since. It submitted the plans which came from the 16 regions to the École Nationale d'Administration Publique - even though the ÉNAP had nothing to do with approving Access Plans. The government then submitted the plans to the *Office de la Langue Française*: again, the Access Plans were none of the OLF's business.

Deputy Premier Bernard Landry, Louise Beaudoin and others carried out a campaign to limit and restrict the plans for English services submitted by the regions. It has been one endless shameless campaign of intimidation.

Health Minister Jean Rochon promised that the Cabinet would pass the Access Plans imminently. He repeats the promise about every two months, but nothing ever happens.

We are most concerned for two reasons: first of all the government is required by law to approve the plans every three years. It has been outside the law since 1996. The Quebec government flouts its own law. No one is above the law, not even a Quebec government, and not even a Parti Québécois government. Are we to have the rule of law in Quebec, or are we to have the law flouted at will by the government?

Secondly, rights which are violated and not defended can be forfeited. Our right to have access to English health and social services is now being put at

risk by the government. The government, by its actions, is claiming that it can leave our right to health and social services in English unprotected by law. That way, our rights become mere concessions, revocable at will. Meanwhile, hundreds of English-speaking community volunteers, as well as health and social service professionals, are discouraged because their work in preparing the Access Plans has been repudiated.

There must be an end to the intimidation, the flouting of the law, the violation of rights, the promises made repeatedly and repeatedly broken, and the contempt expressed towards the hundred of thousands of people in the English-speaking community.

On Saturday, Alliance Quebec holds a provincial board meeting at which these violations of our rights will be the central issue. If the government will not act, then we will act.

For further information, contact Alliance Quebec (514) 875-2771