

## Bill 104 Contested

**Montreal – April 2nd, 2003** – “Just because the politicians in the current Quebec provincial election campaign don’t want to talk about language doesn’t mean it shouldn’t be an issue,” Alliance Quebec President Brent Tyler said Wednesday.

He made the comment at a news conference called to introduce three of the more than 104 parents who have sought AQ support in their battle against Quebec’s Law 104, a law which comes into effect this fall that poses a serious threat to the future of the province’s English-language school system.

The three – Thayaline Murugendran, Maria-Daniela Aleman and Claude St-Germain – all said they wanted their children to have a bilingual education, something that is restricted to the very wealthy and certain narrowly defined Anglophones who have access to the bilingual schools of the province’s English system at the present time.

All three parties in Quebec’s national assembly support these restrictions although all polls on the subject suggest the vast majority of parents in Quebec would like to have the freedom to choose a bilingual education for their children.

“The politicians are out of touch with the people on this issue,” Mr. Tyler said. “That doesn’t mean the people aren’t right.”

Alliance Quebec as an advocacy group supports the parents in their legal battle against Bill 104. But Mr. Tyler suggested there were community-based approaches as well. Students could make term-length exchanges between Quebec’s two school systems and English- and French school boards could cooperate on bilingual after-school events focusing on sports, recreation or cultural activities.

Later, in interviews, Mr. Tyler said he understood that the audit of Alliance Quebec ordered by the Department of Canadian Heritage had finished its investigative phase and added, “When they make a report, we will make it public.”

He said Alliance Quebec had been informed by the federal Access to Information Commissioner that a request had been made for documentation about Alliance Quebec’s administration as far back as 1997. The federal government has met this request. Mr. Tyler said that the hundreds of pages of documents, which were the subject of this request could also be consulted by journalists at AQ’s Montreal office.

Finally, Mr. Tyler said it was important that recent federal government initiatives reflect the best interests of all members of Quebec's English-speaking communities, whatever their mother tongue or ethnic origin. With this in mind, Alliance Quebec had retained as a consultant a former member of the federal Auditor General's staff to help monitor Ottawa's treatment of Canada's official language minority in Quebec.

"We plan to try and make this an issue in the federal Liberal leadership race," Mr. Tyler said.