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# the Alliance Report

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January 1987

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## Appeal Court resolves signs dispute

The Quebec Court of Appeal has just rendered its judgment on the issue of public commercial signs. Alliance Quebec welcomes the judgment as a constructive contribution towards social and linguistic harmony in this province.

Quebec is a dynamic and progressive society, committed to sustaining the vitality, visibility and significance of the French language and culture. It is also committed to tolerance, generosity, and equal participation opportunities for all its citizens.

The very nature of our unique society requires us to establish and maintain a delicate balance. The French language and culture will always be vulnerable in North America, and they must be vigilantly protected by all of us who live here, English-speaking as well as French-speaking. At the same time, our society has a strong and proud tradition of respect for fundamental rights, and a historic commitment to democratic principles; and these too require the constant vigilance of all Quebecers.

Public signs constitute an important feature of the face of our society. Within the lifetime of most of us, we have gone from one unacceptable situation to another: from the posting of many English-only signs in a majority French-speaking society, we move to making it a penal offence to use languages other than French in a society with a substantial English-speaking community and a broad multicultural spectrum of minorities.

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The Appeal Court judgment offers a basis for bringing to rest the delicate balance of the above commitments. By upholding the requirement that French be present on all signs, it recognizes the predominantly French character of our society and the responsibility of public authority for protecting it. By permitting the optional addition of other languages, it recognizes the right of all citizens to express their identity, and it confirms the commitment to tolerance enshrined by our National Assembly in the Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The court's judgment reflects the very real progress towards balanced self-definition which Quebec society has made in recent years. The most consistent polling results tell us that the vast majority of English-speaking Quebecers does not wish for a return to an era of English-only signs; the polls also show that a large majority of French-speaking Quebecers has no objection to other languages as long as French is appropriately prominent.

This broad consensus, reinforced by the court's judgment, has not been achieved easily. There has been vigorous debate, and through it each community has grown in its appreciation of the other. We are today a more sensitive, more friendly, more self-confident society than we were even a few years ago. We must not now slip back into the old patterns of acrimony. We must not give in to the least generous voices, English-speaking or French-speaking, in our midst -- the voices of those who want their society to be a mirror of themselves alone.

The English-speaking community does not want to be unilingual. Our young people especially have worked hard to acquire fluency in French, and have found themselves enriched by the learning experience and by the participation in Quebec society which the learning has made possible.

Alliance Quebec will continue to emphasize the importance for English-speaking Quebecers of learning French and of participating fully in the larger society. We shall continue to encourage our young people to seek within Quebec their professional and personal futures. We shall continue to work to ensure that immigrants, of whatever linguistic and cultural background, recognize the realities of Quebec society and equip themselves to become fully contributing members of it. In sum, we value our identity as Quebecers and our ability to participate in this distinct society.

It is important to understand that we have not been debating whether or not the French language and culture require protection; nor have we been debating the right and obligation of the government to provide that protection. The issue has been what means are acceptable and how far they should be taken. The judgment of the Appeal Court offers a sound foundation; let us build our common future upon it.

**The foregoing statement was issued by Alliance Quebec following the Court of Appeal judgement, December 22, 1986.**

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Government guarantees health and social services in English

Alliance Quebec President Michael Goldbloom expressed satisfaction as Bill 142, which guarantees the right to health and social services in English, was adopted by the National Assembly.

"When we started the campaign for legislative guarantees of health and social services in the English language over three years ago, we had two objectives: to protect those institutions which have traditionally served the English-speaking community; and to establish the right of individuals in our community to receive English-language services throughout the province," he said.

"The new law," he continued, will allow the English-speaking community to protect its institutional network, and this was our initial goal."

Mr. Goldbloom did, however, have some reservations about the law. The right to services "was not spelled out in the unequivocal terms we had hoped for," he explained. "But the law does set up mechanisms for working with the regional health and social service councils to ensure that services are made available."

Jim Carter, co-chairman of the provincial health and social services committee, applauded the hundreds of volunteers who worked long and hard to bring the legislation into being. "The sustained involvement of volunteers and the coordination of institutions have placed the English-speaking community in a strategic position to shape the future of health and social services and their distribution in the English-speaking community. Our community has a long tradition of volunteer activity, and it is largely to the volunteers that we owe our recent success."

Mr. Goldbloom also applauded volunteers and added that their role would become even more important in the future.

"Our community has every reason to celebrate the adoption of Bill 142, but our work cannot stop here. Those same volunteers who worked for the legislation in the 23 chapters and regional associations will now have to work closely with their regional councils to develop realistic plans for the delivery of services.

"We have been given a powerful tool," he concluded. "Let us use it to establish a true guarantee of services."

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### How well does your government serve you?

How well are English-speaking Quebecers being served by their provincial government in areas such as welfare, occupational health and safety, taxation, employment?

This question is the focus of a committee composed of members and staff from Alliance Quebec and representatives of Communication-Quebec.

The committee is setting up a system of consultation with English-speaking communities in Quebec, starting with the greater Montreal area and working outwards across the province in the spring, on the subject of access to government services. A questionnaire has been prepared to identify major areas of complaint and researcher Michael O'Keefe has already started to meet representatives of Montreal chapters of Alliance Quebec. After community consultation has been completed, Mr. O'Keefe plans to initiate sectorial consultation. Target sectors for this second part of the study are women, young people, the unemployed, senior citizens, business groups and the various cultural communities.

Preliminary research--community and sectorial--should be completed by January. In February the committee will meet with representatives of those government departments and boards where problems of access to English language services are being felt most acutely. Government officials will be encouraged to participate in direct consultations with the English-speaking community to identify immediate needs.

People are experiencing problems of access in a variety of government sectors. The Workman's Compensation Board, for instance, often responds to English letters of inquiry in French. English-speaking citizens have complained of difficulties and delays in obtaining translations in this area which can be quite technical and detailed, and which affects their lives so fundamentally. Revenue Quebec has a good track record of corresponding in English, but taxpayers complain that they often have trouble finding officials who can speak English with them in personal interviews and over the phone. The law of taxation is complicated enough without the added difficulties of trying to decipher it in a second language. It is in the government's interest to make sure that taxpaying citizens are well-informed as to their rights and responsibilities to the province. A third area of complaint is welfare. People are experiencing difficulty in obtaining English services. Allophones and visible minorities seem to be especially vulnerable.

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Chapter members in the Montreal area are being asked to list government publications which they would like to see made available to the English-speaking community. Several manuals which currently exist in the French language only could be translated. For women, the "Guide d'information pour les femmes" is a natural suggestion. Girls of high school age could benefit from "Explorons de Nouveaux Espaces" which discusses possible career alternatives.

Recent experience shows that demand for these publications does exist. The Seniors' Guide, for instance, has been a great success. 2,000 copies were printed and sold within the first month of sale and another 2,000 are currently being printed (see article page 9).

Readers of the Alliance Report who would like to contribute their R views, suggestions and experiences can contact Michael O'Keefe at the Alliance head office, 849-9181.

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### Changes in Bell's Blue Pages

This year's recently issued Bell Canada directory offers English-speaking citizens of Quebec a new, indispensable service.

The blue pages at the very back of the directory now contain an index in English with French cross-listings for every service offered by the Quebec government.

The federal government lists services in both French and English in the blue pages, whereas the Quebec government lists them unilingually in French. This has not facilitated life for Quebec's English-speaking minority who sometimes find themselves unfamiliar with French names of government ministries, departments and boards.

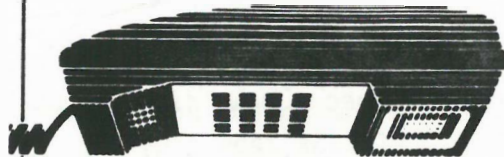
The new index will open up access to public services. People seeking information on **health and safety at work** can now look under "**commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail du Québec**". Newcomers to the province who want information on **immigration** are now directed to "**communautés culturelles et immigration**". **Income tax** information can be found under "**revenue**". People in need of legal aid now know to look under "**commission des services juridiques**", and should they have questions concerning alimony, they simply consult "**Justice - pensions alimentaires perception**".

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Another innovation in the blue pages is the inclusion of an all-purpose reference and telephone number for federal or provincial government services or programs. When Quebec citizens need specific information and are unsure where to look for it, they can now telephone Communication-Quebec at 873-2111 for help. (see below)

**FOR ALL GOVERNMENT  
INFORMATION**

- **FEDERAL**
- **PROVINCIAL**




**CALL  
COMMUNICATION-  
QUÉBEC**

**873-2111**

**Information Desk**  
Complexe Desjardins  
(Ste-Catherine & St-Urbain)  
(metro Place-des-Arts)

**Québec** ::

 **Gouvernement du Québec**  
Ministère des  
Communications

**Canada**

 **Gouvernement  
du Canada**  **Government  
of Canada**

### English civil servants in Quebec?

According to 1981 census data, 11% of Quebec's entire population is English-speaking. Despite this elevated figure, only 1% of civil servants working for the Quebec government are from this linguistic group.

The Office des ressources humaines, responsible for hiring personnel to work in the Quebec public sector, has expressed concern over the "dramatic under representation"\* of cultural communities and, more particularly, over the dearth of English-speaking government staff.

Members of the Alliance Quebec civil service committee recently met with Francine Boivin, vice president of l'Office des ressources humaines, to discuss the problem and to attempt to devise solutions for it.

Discussions focused on recruitment of personnel and on hiring practices. Suggestions for attracting English-speaking workers included increased English-language advertising of positions in the media and better recruitment and publicity at schools, cegeps and universities.

Once English-speaking personnel have been hired, it was suggested that a policy of reasonable accomodation should be followed. Probation periods could be extended for English-speaking employees; translation services could be made available; French-speaking staff could be sensitized to language needs. The possibility of classifying government jobs according to requirement of French language proficiency is also being discussed. While high level government jobs require fluency, other jobs might only require conversational French.

Under the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms the government has an obligation to adopt a hiring policy that reflects the population at large. It must "require its departments and agencies to implement affirmative action committees" to increase representation in the public sector of cultural communities, women and handicapped persons.

The government is trying to meet this obligation. At the present time, the Conseil du Trésor is working hard to develop affirmative action programs and Alliance Quebec plans to meet with officials soon to ensure that the needs of the English-speaking community are understood and respected.

\*see Report prepared by the Office des ressources humaines, February 1986.

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### The Senior's Guide: Where to get it

The Seniors' Guide, published by Communication-Quebec, and discussing a host of issues of interest to all retired or soon-to-be retired Quebec citizens, is fast becoming a best seller.

To date, all 2,000 copies from the first printing run have been sold and demand for the book shows no sign of waning. A second printing has been arranged and copies should be available by the end of December.

Response is unanimously favourable. The guide, which provides helpful tips for senior citizens in areas such as taxation, housing, transportation, recreation and health also informs them of the many advantages available to their age-group, has been acclaimed as an indispensable book of reference.

Congratulations should be extended to all those people who conceived of the book, initiated, contributed to and promoted the project. Special thanks go to members of the Townshippers' Association who possessed the foresight to recognize the need for a seniors' manual and who set the wheels of the project in motion.

The Seniors' Guide can be obtained by sending a cheque or money order for \$9.95 made out to Les Publications du Quebec, C.P. 1005, Quebec City, Quebec G1K 7B5. It can also be procured at the Alliance Quebec head office, at local chapter offices, and at local bookstores.

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### Alliance conducts language study

The Alliance research department has asked Statistics Canada for recent data on language in the province of Quebec. Two geographic regions have been targeted: Alliance Quebec chapters and associations and the census tracts which they comprise; MRC and CLSC regions. Linguistic data collected within these regions--home language, mother tongue and knowledge of official language--will be cross-tabulated with all relevant questions on the Statistics Canada census forms.

The data should be available to the Alliance by the end of January. In the new year, Vered Talai, head of research, will be consulting with the Alliance network to establish analysis priorities. The data will be useful in developing profiles for chapters and associations. The knowledge it brings will facilitate strategies for membership drives, and help to identify issues of concern to the various communities.

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### Youth attitudes Survey

Alliance Quebec plans to conduct a survey in 1987 on the attitudes of young, English-speaking Quebecers. Students across the province in their final year of high school (11th grade) will be asked to fill out questionnaires prepared by the Alliance research department. They will be asked to provide basic background information on residence and family and to discuss their plans for a future in Quebec.

The study will use two complementary approaches:

i) a large sample of 11th grade students in English educational institutions across the province will be asked to complete questionnaires on their future plans;

ii) two smaller samples of 11th grade students, one on the island of Montreal and one off-island, will be asked to complete questionnaires and will participate in an in-depth, more detailed study of youth attitudes.

The Alliance youth survey differs from previous studies of a similar nature in three ways. It features a large quantitative survey as well as a more in-depth qualitative study with smaller samples. It features a control group of 11th grade students in French educational institutions. It draws its sample from regions across the province whereas previous studies have been more circumscribed in scope.

The project was initiated by the youth sub-committee of Alliance Quebec which draws members from a number of chapters as well as from C.V.E.S.P.A., the Outaouais Alliance, C.A.S.A., and the Townshippers'.

In order to ensure the success of the study, support from the entire Alliance network will be crucial. Chapters and associations will be encouraged to establish contact with schools, teachers, and parents in order to ensure access to local schools.

A pilot project for this study is planned for January 1987. The quantitative study will be conducted in April, 1987, and the in-depth qualitative one should take place sometime next fall. Once the data have been compiled, the Alliance research department will analyze and distribute findings throughout the network.

Results of the survey should be useful for formulating general policy, and for designing strategies to heighten the involvement of young people in Alliance Quebec.

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**Get involved in the 1987 Alan Jones history contest**

Members of the Alliance history committee are awaiting contest entry forms from elementary and high school classes around the province. This year's competition is entitled "Immigrants and Pioneers: Our Community's Roots", and emphasizes the contributions that Quebec's many cultural groups have made to the development of the province. Students are invited to submit photograph montages, maps, sketches and models depicting the history of their regions.

Competitors will be judged in four age/grade categories: i) grades kindergarten to three; ii) grades four to six; iii) grades seven and eight; and iv) grades nine to 11. Selection criteria will include human interest value, visual appeal, historical value and originality.

In each category an Alan Jones memorial plaque will be awarded as first prize and honourable mention will be given to the runner-up. Projects will be displayed at Convention '87, and samples of award-winning work will be featured in the summer issue of The Quebecer.

The deadline for entry forms is March 30, 1987. They should be sent to the Alliance Quebec head office at 1411 Crescent Street, Suite 501, Montreal, Quebec, H3G 2B3.

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**Alliance fund-raising**

The West Island Chapter of the Alliance has undertaken a promising and unprecedented fund-raising project. During its 1986/87 membership drive renewal campaign it solicited donations for the Alliance Education and Research Institute.

Traditionally, the Institute has been responsible for fund-raising; however, Alliance Quebec's urgent financial needs are compelling members to participate in fund-raising projects at the local level. Chapters are in optimal positions to seek funds in their communities. They are familiar with local businesses and institutions and know where to look and who to contact. The West Island Chapter's initiative proved successful, with returns of over \$3,400. Congratulations for a job well done!

On March 10, the Alliance is organizing a Night at Centaur Theatre. Alliance members and guests are invited to attend the opening night performance of "The Real Thing", a Tom Stoppard play on modern love, directed by Maurice Podbrey. A wine and cheese reception will precede the play.

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**A good new year to all our members!**

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