

Statement from Alliance Quebec on the Ontario government's failure to grant the new Ottawa megacity official bilingual status

Montreal, Wednesday, December 8, 1999 - The decision by the Ontario Government to create a new amalgamated City of Ottawa without requiring that it be officially bilingual is unreasonable, disgraceful, anti-Canadian. It must not be allowed to stand.

Ottawa is the capital of Canada. The Government of Ontario, by this decision, treats it like a second-rate municipality of Ontario.

This decision, if not reversed, will do incalculable harm to the unity of Canada. It sends the wrong message to all Canadians.

Ottawa, as the capital of a country which enjoys two official languages, owes it to the entire country to respect punctiliously the character of the country. Ottawa enjoys enormous benefits from its status as capital. It brings legislators, public servants, journalists, businesses and tourists from every corner of this country, and many embassies from abroad. This founds the character and prosperity of Ottawa. It brings tax moneys to the Government of Ontario.

Ottawa must be a proud symbol of Canadian identity. Unless it enjoys a bilingual character, Ottawa will be a reproach to Canadian identity, an embarrassment to the country.

Alliance Quebec President William Johnson consulted this morning with Alcide Gour, president of Association Canadienne-Française de l'Ontario, and they agreed to work together to have Ottawa declared officially bilingual. Mr. Johnson promised to write Premier Michael Harris, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson and the Ottawa-Carleton Metropolitan Chair Bob Chiarelli to urge on them the necessity of Ottawa's being officially bilingual.

Alliance Quebec will work together with the ACFO to pressure the Ontario government to ensure that linguistic minority rights are preserved and will unite with ACFO to take part in public demonstrations in Toronto and Ottawa when they are organized.

This outrage to our whole country must not be allowed.