

October 9, 2020

Simon Jolin-Barrette
Government House Leader
Cabinet du leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Édifice Pamphile-Le May
1035, rue des Parlementaires
1er étage, Bureau 1.39
Québec (Quebec) G1A 1A4

André Fortin, Official Opposition House Leader
Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, House Leader of the Second Opposition Group
Martin Ouellet, House Leader of the Third Opposition Group
National Assembly of Québec
Hôtel du Parlement
1045, rue des Parlementaires
Québec (Quebec) G1A 1A4

Dear House Leaders:


On October 1, 2020, Government House Leader Simon Jolin-Barrette introduced a motion in the National Assembly regarding the exclusive use of French by members of the legislature in their addresses to members of the press gallery, unless dealing with issues of safety and public health. The motion was supported by all parties. English-speaking Quebecers are disappointed at this unnecessary motion, which is hurtful and divisive.

We are disappointed that Members of the National Assembly collectively dismissed both the fundamental human rights of Quebecers and 13.7 per cent of Quebec's population. The effect of this motion is to limit the ability of elected officials to communicate with English-speaking Quebecers through the news media. Notwithstanding the Constitutional guarantee that English and French may be used by any person in the debates of the National Assembly, s.3 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* acknowledges that every person possesses the fundamental freedom of expression. This fundamental freedom is a cornerstone of democracy, which the legislature must respect and refrain from restricting. Nothing in the *Charter of the French Language* restricts the freedom of an elected member of the National Assembly from expressing themselves in the language of their choice to members of the media. To the contrary, the preamble of the *Charter of the French Language* states that the statute's objectives will be pursued in a spirit of fairness and open-mindedness, that is respectful of the institutions of Quebec's English-speaking community.

It is surprising that the Government House Leader, who is also Minister of Justice in addition to being the Minister Responsible for the French Language, would introduce a motion that offends fundamental freedoms possessed by Quebecers. It is equally astonishing that Opposition House Leaders did not challenge the motion on these grounds.

The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) respects French as Quebec's official language. We insist that the Government of Quebec respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of Quebecers, and the constitutional language rights of elected members of the National Assembly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Geoffrey Chambers".

Geoffrey Chambers
President

CC: Members of the National Assembly of Quebec