

ALLIANCE QUEBEC BUILDS ALLIANCE AGAINST FORCED MERGERS

Montreal, November 10, 2000 - Alliance Quebec president Anthony Housefather and Political Action Committee Co-Chairs Steve Pinkus and Ed Manis are calling on all Quebecers to oppose forced mergers by attending the following public rallies:

November 15, 2000, at 7:30 pm

Hampstead Community Centre

30 Lyncroft, Hampstead

November 16, 2000 at 7:30 pm

Holiday Inn Pointe Claire

6700 Trans Canada Highway, Pointe Claire

Joined by mayors and city councillors and supported by a letter from Quebec Liberal MNAs, Alliance Quebec reiterated its objections to the PQ government's plan for forced mergers and fears of the probable loss of bilingual status for Quebec municipalities at an Alliance Quebec Political Action Committee press conference earlier this week. Mayors and city councillors present encouraged their constituents to discuss their own concerns with members of government at all levels.

"Residents must get involved, by attending rallies, by distributing flyers, by talking to the mayors and representatives in their towns and the MNAs of their riding," said Anthony Housefather, president of Alliance Quebec and Hampstead City Councillor. "Members of the English-speaking community must join their French speaking neighbours in ensuring that are local cities are not wiped off the map against our will."

Alliance Quebec announced that it is cooperating with a francophone group in Quebec City and has helped set up a parallel English web site to the existing French site www.nonauxfusions.com. The English site is called www.notomergers.com and is already up and running thanks to the help of Dr. Alec Cooper, Vice President of Voice of English Quebec in Quebec City. Alliance Quebec and the elected officials present all expressed their concern that mergers would lead to the loss of bilingual status for many Quebec municipalities in the Montreal area, South Shore and other areas where mergers are being discussed.

Under the Charter of the French language, in order for a municipality to be eligible for bilingual status it must have a population, which is at least 50 percent non-

francophone. Municipalities that have bilingual status are able to post signs in French and English, can offer services in both languages and city employees must have working knowledge of both languages as well. In many instances the mergers would lead to new cities being formed that would no longer have a non-francophone majority and in order to retain bilingual status for the merged municipalities an amendment would be required to the Charter of the French Language to pass on bilingual status to the new entity.

In the Montreal area, the Bernard Report proposed the forced mergers of cities into Montreal districts. Since the Charter of the French Language does not recognize districts as entities, bilingual status would be wiped out for those municipalities that currently enjoy it unless there was an amendment to the Charter of the French Language. Housefather called upon the Quebec Government to amend the French Language Charter to guarantee bilingual status to districts of any new city that are formed out of bilingual municipalities and to grandfather bilingual status to all areas which currently have it before the law on forced mergers is adopted. Housefather also encouraged the government to listen to its citizens and to hold referendums in any city before requiring it to merge.

The press conference was co-chaired by Housefather and Political Action Committee chairs Steve Pinkus and Ed Manis, Montreal West Commissioner. Representatives of municipalities at the press conference included Robert Libman, Mayor of Côte Saint-Luc, John Simms, Mayor of Montreal West, Marvin Rotrand, Montreal City Councillor, Jacques Labbé, Pointe Claire City Councillor and Glenn J. Nashen, Executive Director of Alliance Quebec and Côte Saint-Luc City Councillor.