Alliance Quebec worried about
federal-provincial manpower talks

Montreal, Dec. 16--Alliance Quebec is afraid that federal manpower negotiators may have abandoned their responsibility to English-speaking Quebec citizens who are unemployed.

There is already a general concern that the federal government is prepared to bargain away the interests of Quebec's English-speaking communities in order to come to terms with the Parti Quebecois.

Currently, in the area of manpower, unemployed English-speaking people in Quebec are entitled under the Official Languages Act to have access to counseling and training in English administered by English-speaking officials. Minority language concerns in the Employment Insurance Act are addressed only vaguely.

Ottawa is on fast-track negotiations to hand responsibility for manpower over to a Quebec government which has failed on many occasions to accept its obligation to offer many services in English.

Federal ministers responsible for manpower and official language minorities have repeatedly refused to meet with Alliance Quebec to discuss worries about the continued access to English-language services for unemployed Quebec citizens.

The Prime Minister's Office has even pressed Alliance Quebec to stop voicing its concerns on the subject.

The manpower negotiations follow fast on the heels of a decision by the CBC to ignore its obligations under the Official Languages Act.

"English-speaking Quebecers are not about to count on the good will of a Parti Quebecois government to deliver English services," said Michael Hamelin, President of Alliance Quebec.

"The federal government has a responsibility to ensure bilingual services in Manpower. They had better honor that responsibility before any agreement is even considered.

"I can assure you that we are not going to see our communities sacrificed as the federal government looks for a national unity strategy."

For further information, contact Rob Bull, director of communications , Alliance Quebec in Montreal (514) 875-2771.