

## **Alliance Quebec expressed its profound disappointment with Judge Maurice Lagacé's judgement - Bill 170.**

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**Montreal, Friday, June 29, 2001** - Alliance Quebec expressed its profound disappointment with Judge Maurice Lagacé's judgement in the Superior Court case against the Parti Quebecois's municipal merger law, Bill 170.

"We disagree with some of Justice Lagacé's assertions; particularly that linguistic and minority language rights are only those which are explicitly spelled out in the Constitution" said Housefather. "We are going to have to study this judgement very carefully to analyze the potential effect it may have on Quebec's English-speakers and official language minority communities across the country."

Despite the ruling against the municipalities, Housefather noted that Judge Lagacé had attacked several aspects of the law that had been opposed by Alliance Quebec. In commenting on the categorization of Montreal as a French City", Judge Lagacé noted:

« To have us believe that Montreal is a French City does not change the reality of demographics and doesn't help promote the social peace with the English-speaking minority. If Montreal must have a language, why not bilingual or multicultural? Above all, don't try to ignore reality to the point of writing useless clauses in a law that say Montreal is a French city. The proposal from the government's lawyers that the expression is simply an interpretive disposition that restates the general principles of the Charter of the French Language, demonstrates the uselessness of the article. If it is only declaratory why include in such an important law? We can only assume the legislators were speaking for no reason.

In relation to Bill 171 which changed the criteria for bilingual status, Judge Lagace stated:

In regards to Article 6 of Bill 171, the court observes that despite the use of the expression "English mother tongue" in Article 23 of the Canadian Constitution, the demographic proof shows that a majority of citizens will not be able to classify under the new criteria. How can you convince the English-speaking minority that the coincidental passing of Bills 170 and 171 is not part of a general program of francisization of the Island of Montreal targeted towards marginalizing their presence?

"Judge Lagace clearly agreed that both Article 1 of Bill 170 and Bill 171, serve no purpose in the context of municipal reform," Housefather said. "Alliance Quebec is

calling on Premier Bernard Landry and his government to immediately withdraw both Article 1 of Bill 170 and Bill 171 in its entirety.”

Housefather says he will meet with municipal and community leaders in the coming days to discuss a potential appeal of this decision and a common approach to the continued combat against forced mergers.