

INTRODUCTION BILL 171 - MUNICIPAL BILINGUAL STATUS

Alliance Quebec is upset by the fact that a little reported-on bill would make it more difficult for municipalities to maintain their bilingual status.

Bill 171, currently before the National Assembly, would harden current rules to require that a municipality be granted bilingual status if more than 50 per cent of its residents had English as a mother tongue.

"While all of our attentions were focused on reviewing the contents of Bill 170 - the municipal mergers bill - the PQ government was busy introducing Bill 171," said Alliance Quebec President Anthony Housefather.

"We are very disappointed that the government is showing little respect for the rights of the Quebec population," said Housefather, who is also a town counsellor in Hampstead. "First, without public consultation, they introduce legislation which will have a devastating impact on Quebecers living in cities and towns across the province, then they introduce legislation which restricts the definition of the English-speaking community to the lowest possible levels."

Housefather says that many people who do not speak English as their mother tongue consider themselves part of the English-speaking community.

"Several hundred thousand of them speak English at home and have done so for decades. Unfortunately the government seems to believe that you have to be "pure laine" English-speaking to obtain minority language services in the province," said Housefather. "We encourage the Liberal opposition and all Quebecers to speak out against this very significant change to the requirements for bilingual status that the Quebec government is trying to sneak through the legislature."

"Naturally, this is cause for great concern to our community," Housefather said. "We will continue to oppose forced municipal mergers and will work to ensure the democratic process is respected through public consultation."