

AQ Calls on the Provincial Government to Guarantee Bilingual Status for All Districts that Would be Eligible as Autonomous Municipalities

Montreal, Wednesday, October 11, 2000 – Alliance Quebec calls on the Quebec government to ensure that the Montreal Metropolitan Community, the proposed island-wide City of Montreal and the proposed City of Champlain on the South Shore, outlined in the Bernard Report, will guarantee bilingual status for all districts that would be eligible as autonomous municipalities and will grandfather that status, for any city which had it before, into the new district.

“We must ensure the English-speaking community has access to English-language services, said Alliance Quebec President Anthony Housefather. “The very thought that someone would be faced with a situation whereby they would be unable to communicate with, for example, a fireman, is unconscionable.”

“We are most concerned that some residents whose bilingual municipality ceases to exist under this plan will no longer be entitled to services in English, while other residents, who depend on English language services at their local City Halls will lose this privilege when certain departments are merged into the new island-wide jurisdiction”, concluded Housefather.

At its Convention last May, Alliance Quebec was at the forefront of the debate already addressing the issue of municipal mergers and their impact on the English-speaking communities of Quebec.

At that time, Alliance Quebec called upon the city councils of the suburban communities that were threatened by proposals for forced mergers to co-operate in holding referendums on the issue so that the population of those municipalities could express their opinion on the matter. The Alliance demanded that the Quebec government respect the wishes of the populations of those municipalities should they vote against forced mergers. Alliance Quebec also called on the government to amend the Charter of the French Language to ensure that if any municipality is merged its bilingual status would be passed on to the new entity regardless of the linguistic breakdown of the new entity.

In addition, the Governing Council of Alliance Quebec adopted a resolution stating that the Charter of the French language should be amended to lower the threshold for a municipality or institution to be accorded bilingual status from 50% to 10% and stated that municipalities or institutions with less than 10% English-speaking residents or users be accorded bilingual status automatically if a resolution expressing their

desire to be recognized as bilingual institution is adopted by its Council. (Currently, Ontario grants bilingual status to municipalities with at least 10% French-speaking population).

Alliance Quebec petitioned the MUC to apply for bilingual status and demanded that the Quebec government grant bilingual status to the MUC. In addition, the Alliance requested that the MUC immediately begin erecting bilingual signage in cities already designated as bilingual and requiring employers working in those areas to be bilingual.

Alliance Quebec will continue to oppose forced amalgamations and will work to ensure the English-speaking communities maintain their bilingual status.