

Alliance Quebec fund for Avonelle Titus

Montreal, Thursday, May 20, 1999 -- Alliance Quebec announces plans to establish a trust fund to help end a nightmare for 13-year-old Avonelle Titus. President William Johnson says Alliance Quebec will do all in its power to ensure Avonelle has an opportunity for a proper education in English in her adopted home of Quebec.

Avonelle was born in Trinidad and joined her mother in Canada five years ago. She was compelled to attend French schools, in accordance with Bill 101, despite her having completed two grades in English in Trinidad. And then she ran into serious difficulties.

"Because of her faulty grasp of French which amounts to a learning disability, she has made little progress in the French school system and she has fallen several years behind," Johnson stated. "What's worse, the education authorities who should have been vigilant to defend her interests have not done so. Instead of taking her out of the French system and establishing her in an English school where she might do much better she is being kept back in classes with children four years younger and much smaller than she."

Bill 101 provides that after two years of lack of progress in a French school, a child may apply for English instruction because of a learning disability. But the advice that this option was available to her was never given to Avonelle's mother by school authorities.

There are worrisome rumors that her case is not unique. Avonelle's lawyer, Brent Tyler, says that he has heard that "there are hundreds of children" in a similar situation.

"If Mr. Tyler turns up evidence that the education system has many more Avonelles who are unable to progress and have been deprived of their right to transfer to English, we shall investigate with Mr. Tyler the chances for a class action on their behalf. But for that kind of legal action, we will need to hold a fund-raiser next month to ensure that children in Quebec are no longer treated in this inhumane manner."

The details of the trust fund will be released as they are finalized. Further information can be had by contacting Alliance Quebec.