

"HATE IS HATE"

Montreal, October 29th – Three prominent English-speaking human rights activists demanded Wednesday that Montreal city council condemn the encouragement of hatred against any language, ethnic or cultural group and endorse the democratic election of Anne Myles as Mayor of Beaconsfield-Baie d’Urfe.

Brent Tyler, president of Alliance Quebec, Fo Niemi, executive-director of the Center for Research Action on Race Relations and the Rev. Darryl Gray, pastor at Union United Church, called on all parties at city hall to endorse the resolution.

They also demanded that Montreal and Quebec provincial police and the attorney general of Quebec take a hard line against all forms of hate crime in the province.

“There is an unacceptable and growing prejudice against people who use English in the city’s democratic institutions,” Mr. Tyler said. He said the current climate was worsened by unfortunate remarks by Montreal Mayor Gerald Tremblay during the recent Beaconsfield Baie D’Urfe byelection campaign.

“All our elected representatives must recognize and endorse the bilingual reality of Montreal or accept responsibility for fostering hate crimes like the ones committed in Baie D’Urfe Monday night.

“There can be no language requirements for elected public office anywhere in Canada,” he added. “Certainly nobody complained about the Bloc Quebecois sending unilingual French-speaking MP’s to Ottawa.”

Mr. Niemi noted that the Criminal Code of Canada condemns any criminal act motivated by hatred based on such characteristics as race, language, ethnic origin or sexual orientation. And he said Quebec, in comparison with other Canadian provinces, has been lax in prosecuting hate crime.

Montreal is the only major city in Canada without a special hate-crimes police unit and prosecutors, he said.

“Hate is hate,” Mr. Niemi added. “It has to be stopped now with the full force of the law. The government of Quebec and the City of Montreal should not dismiss what has been happening as an isolated incident or another minor crime.

Mr. Tyler said the federal government had to act as well. He called on Ottawa “to state publicly and decisively that anglophobia and other forms of hate literature distributed on the web are totally unacceptable.”

Rev. Gray told reporters that he himself had problems expressing himself in French but this hadn't prevented him from being a candidate in the last municipal election in Montreal and feeling fully capable of representing those who voted for him.

He added, “What happened at Baie D’Urfe is not an isolated incident. There were seven people involved and others out there in the larger society cheering them on. People have to realize that when there is this kind of crime, the majority of people in the group that is targeted feel affected.

“Anglophobia is another kind of racism. Trivializing these kinds of discriminatory acts opens the door to similar acts against other groups.”

And he said that “violence is not an acceptable means to an end.”

Margaret Wilhelm, director of the Minority Rights Association of Greater Chateauguay, said there had been an escalation in anglophobia and other hate crimes in Quebec.

“Violence is escalation,” she said. “It’s a step up from graffiti and stuff on the web.”

“When you target a particular group,” she added, “you target everybody in that group and encourage similar acts against other groups.”

She said her organization has seen an increase in anti-black activities in the South-Shore suburb where she lives.

“It all ties together,” she observed.