

## **Hundreds of Canadian children have no right to attend English-language schools in Quebec**

**MONTREAL, May 14, 2003** – The Quebec government has introduced notes for a lecture by federal Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Stephane Dion as evidence that hundreds of Canadian children have no right to attend English-language schools in Quebec.

“This reference to an academic speech is certainly unusual in a court of law,” said Jacques Labbé, a member of the Alliance Quebec executive and head of its political action committee. “I don’t think a lecture constitutes a legal precedent.”

“I wonder if Mr. Dion knows what the Quebec government is doing with his remarks.”

Alliance Quebec is supporting the parents in their legal battle against the Quebec language law.

The case, which is before Quebec’s administrative tribunal, concerns the latest restrictions on constitutional education rights imposed by the previous Parti Quebecois government and endorsed by the provincial Liberals. The parents argue that they have a constitutional right to send their children to English schools in this province.

A 1984 judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada stated that “the framers of the (Canadian) Constitution unquestionably intended to establish a general regime for the language of instruction, not a special regime for Quebec.”

In a 2002 lecture to the Law Faculty of the University of Moncton, Mr. Dion, a former professor of political science, suggested that the policies of the federal government take into account the distinct character of Quebec culture.

But he added “the Government of Canada has no intention of establishing an abstract legal asymmetry which would mean that a priori, even before considering the needs, the Anglophone minorities would be relegated to second place.”

It is unclear why the Quebec government, in attempting to prevent hundreds of children who attended private English schools in Canada from attending English-language public schools in Quebec, should use a speech by a federal cabinet minister to bolster its case.

It is also unclear whether the federal government approves of such use of Mr. Dion's speech.