

Alliance Quebec Identifies Priorities for the Coming Year

Montreal, Tuesday, June 1, 1999 –Delegates at Alliance Quebec’s 18th Annual Convention affirmed the organization’s role as the voice of Quebec’s English-speaking community by adopting policy resolutions and laying the grounds for an action plan that will rally a consensus within the English speaking community.

Highlights of some of the policies / key issues the organization identified for the coming year:

Securing a future for our youth

Alliance Quebec will introduce new measures that will encourage English-speaking young people to remain within Quebec. The Board of Directors and Executive of Alliance Quebec will seek out partnerships with other organizations that have experience with employment issues and other youth related issues with the aim of providing additional job placement assistance for English-speaking youth.

The Youth Commission sent a letter to Premier Bouchard requesting a meeting to discuss the provincial government’s plan to address the under-representation of minorities in the Quebec public sector and the future of our youth.

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Alliance Quebec takes a stand on the issue of Municipal Mergers and bilingual services

Alliance Quebec calls upon the city councils of the suburban communities that are threatened by proposals for forced mergers to co-operate in holding referendums on the issue so that the population of those municipalities can express their opinion on the matter. The Alliance demands 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.

Another resolution was adopted 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 stating 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 Board.

Alliance Quebec petitions the MUC to apply for bilingual status and demands that the Quebec Government grants bilingual status to the MUC. In addition, the Alliance requests 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 sent a letter to Louise Harel, Minister for Municipal Affairs, in April expressing concern with several recommendations of the Bedard Report, notably; the municipal mergers and the recommendation to bring all school administration within the authority of municipal officers. The Minister has yet to address our concerns and we have sought a meeting with the Minister to express them to her directly.

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Access to English schools

With respect to Education, delegates at the Alliance Quebec convention reiterated the organization's stand on freedom of choice –that all parents should have the right to choose the language of schooling of their children, be it French or English.

On the Issue of secession

Alliance Quebec demands that in the event that the Government of Quebec should be determined to secede from Canada, the four fundamental principles laid down by the Supreme Court of Canada in its opinion of August 1998, be upheld, namely the rule of law, the democratic process, federalism and the protection of the rights of the minorities. Alliance Quebec also reiterated its belief that regions within Quebec as well as the aboriginal peoples must have the right to remain within Canada, should they so desire and that such issues would be settled by negotiation should Quebec ever attempt to secede. Delegates also unanimously endorsed the call of lawyer Guy Bertrand for a National Commission to set the rules for secession.

Alliance Quebec reaffirms its commitment to Community Development

One of the main priorities for the Alliance in the coming year will be its commitment to Community Development particularly in mainland regions of Quebec. To that end, the organization will focus its attention on addressing and meeting the human development (i.e. upgrading French-language skills to prepare for the job market,

retraining programs for employment, obtaining English-language health-care and ensuring adequate facilities are available for English-speaking seniors) needs of the English-speaking community.