

July 25, 1997

## **All Premiers**

Mr. Premier:

As you prepare to meet with your colleagues from other provinces, Alliance Quebec asks you to consider the following: Quebec's 800,000 English-speaking residents have some real concerns about their future. Your understanding of these concerns can enhance your deliberations and help clarify the fundamental questions that need to be addressed among Canadians.

You are no doubt aware of the constant efforts by the current Quebec government to make scapegoats of English-speaking Quebecers. Whether the issue is statutory guarantees on health care, the legal application of the restrictive laws on signs, long delays approving a school board system based on language not religion, or even the pervasiveness of English on the Internet: the finger of censure always points at English-speaking Quebecers.

This makes us very uncomfortable. But it does point to the fundamental flaw in this government's policy positions: it does not represent all Quebecers. Simply stated, the Bouchard government has no mandate from and no interest in English-speaking Quebec. Moreover, it has turned this failure to make intelligent political appeals to English Quebecers into yet another fault of the English-speaking communities.

This behavior further alienates Quebec English-speaking population from the Parti Québécois. It is from this climate of isolation and antagonism that Monsieur Bouchard comes to meet you in New Brunswick.

M. Bouchard will say that he comes as a spokesman for the interest of Quebec. But it should be abundantly clear that none of the interests he espouses are those of Quebec's English-speaking minority: if there are any points of agreement, they are accidental and do not arise from consultation or concern.

The communities of English-speaking Quebecers are, however, deeply rooted in the mainstreams of all levels of Quebec life. From this direct association with Quebecers comes the following understanding.

French Canadians want a new standing WITHIN Confederation, one that signals not only recognition of past glories but also the present importance of the French fact in Canada. The will to protect Canada's French fact as it exists throughout Canada is critical to the successful completion of the fundamental dialogue among Canadians. This new designation need not amount to a license to inflict hardship upon English-speaking Quebecers or isolation for French Quebecers.

There are issues of importance that need to be properly and seriously addressed; things that need fixing in Canada. But nothing else threatens the survival of the nation or its peaceable character as does the appeal of separation in Quebec to an audience that sees no move by Canadians elsewhere to undertake their concerns as the concerns of the nation. From our vantage point, unity is the issue around which all others are held captive.

Premier Bouchard wants to frustrate Canadian dialogue on this matter for his own political ends.

Alliance Quebec wishes to explore more deeply the situation now facing Canadians inside and outside Quebec. It is our hope that you emerge from your meetings with a sense of new opportunities and not reflections upon past defeats. The next months offer critical challenges and unparalleled opportunities for those who wish to see Canada improve and prosper. Alliance Quebec intends to make a useful contribution to that undertaking. We look forward to an opportunity for a dialogue with you in the coming months about the prospects for change.

Sincerely,

*Michael J. Hamelin*  
President