

Alliance Quebec president praises school board voters, slams voting process

MONTREAL, June 15, 1998 -- Alliance Quebec President William Johnson praised all members of the English-speaking communities who participated in Sunday's school board elections and harshly criticized the process that led to the vote.

"The school board elections were a triumph of the civic-mindedness of English-speaking Quebecers over an unjust and inept process that from start to finish, discriminated against those who chose to support the English-language school boards," Johnson said in a letter to Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard.

"I congratulate everyone who ran for office and everyone who registered for the English-language boards and turned out to vote," Johnson said. "They won out over a process that was fundamentally flawed."

Voters turned out in unprecedented high numbers thanks to efforts by all the representative institutions of the English-speaking community. But bureaucratic snafus were widespread from the start.

The Alliance believes that the problem stems from a presumption that nearly everybody in Quebec would prefer to identify with and support French-language institutions. As a result, election officials were totally unprepared for the vast numbers of people who tried to register with and vote for the English boards.

AQ members complained of long delays in the registration process as late as Sunday when voting was underway. Many, who live in areas where the school board members were elected by acclamation or appointed by the government, still do not know whether they are listed with the board which they wish to support.

The government has a responsibility to all Quebecers to make sure that such a questionable process is not repeated, the Alliance Quebec president said.