



Statement of Concern Bill 14

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

If implemented, Bill 14 will add another layer of bureaucracy to the educational system and will create an additional drain on the human and financial resources currently available to English schools, centres, colleges and universities in Quebec.

Government budgetary cutbacks over the past two years and proposed for the future, have seriously compromised services available for student education in the English sector. The purpose of Bill 14 is to tighten up existing language laws and to add more restrictions to regulations and procedures affecting the English educational community.

- Provisions of the current *Charte de la langue française* require English school boards to produce French versions of all official documents. This means that reports required by law, minutes of the meetings of commissioners, web sites and signage in schools must be translated and produced in the French language. The cost for this, which does not apply to the French educational system, must be absorbed by the English school system. The new additions to the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* proposed in Bill 14, such as the statement in article 3.1 – “Every person has the right to live and work in French in Quebec to the extent provided for in the Charter of the French language (chapter C11).” – could create additional obligations to translate and produce materials in French. These could include report cards, parent bulletins or cafeteria menus.
- New policy development, monitoring practices and report writing required by Bill 14 will add to the administrative burden of school boards and colleges. These bureaucratic obligations will occupy the personnel of these institutions and interfere with current efforts to improve schools and instructional practice and programs to ensure school success for students.

The replacement of the term “ethnic minorities” by the term “cultural communities” in the preamble of the *Charte de la langue française*, as proposed by Bill 14, is a cause of general concern.

As reported in the media, this amendment could have far reaching consequences for minority rights in Québec. The contention is that the existing designation as an ethnic minority is recognized and protected in Canadian and International law, whereas the designation of cultural community has no resonance or weight legally. The fear being that this wording change would be stripping away minority rights and protections.

- The LCEEQ committee does not have the means of validating these claims but urges that this point be clarified during the parliamentary hearings on Bill 14. Of particular concern would be the impact of this wording change on the ethnic minorities and first nation students who currently have admissibility certificates to attend English schools and centres.

The language of Bill 14 not only speaks to the urgent need to tighten existing French-language laws, but also infers that the English community continues to be responsible for the undermining of the French language and culture.

Although the LCEEQ committee members were instructed to concentrate on the provisions of Bill 14 that impact on education, most could not ignore the message implied by the proposed modifications, namely that the English minority in Quebec is a threat to the Francophone majority.

- The proposed change to article 88.2 of the language law suggests the need for stricter language policies in French colleges and universities to prevent “...widespread institutional bilingualism.”
- The bill proposes that the following be added to Article 73.1 which deals with the eligibility requirements for students attending English schools – “...no points may be given, in applying that regulation, for instruction received in any context of illegality or circumvention referred to in section 73.0.1.” The assumption here is that English schools have been duplicitous, are actively admitting students who do not meet admissibility requirements under the current law, and that there is a need to rectify this situation.
- The spirit of Bill 14 fails to recognize that English schools, colleges and universities make a positive contribution to Quebec culture and language by graduating students who are proficient in both English and French, and who have the employability skills and talents to make positive contributions to Quebec society.