

RAWQ STATEMENT ON THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF QUEBEC AND CANADA

JUNE 28, 2021, Gatineau, Québec: the REGIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WEST QUEBECERS (RAWQ)

The members of the elected Board of Directors of the **Regional Association of West Quebecers (RAWQ)** issue the following statement on the official languages of Québec and Canada.

Canada is a country constituted of ten provinces and three territories. We support an Official Languages Act of Canada that recognizes two official languages, English and French, in all provinces and territories of Canada. We support an Official Languages Act of Canada in which the federal government of Canada is the protector of the two official languages in all ten provinces and three territories. We continue to support the principle of symmetrical federalism from sea to sea to sea.

We support that Québec, as the only province of Canada with a majority of Francophones, may promote and protect the French language in Québec and the rest of Canada. We also insist that the provincial government of Québec must respect the constitutional rights of Anglophones in Québec.

The RAWQ applauds the proposing of means to enhance the French-language education of non-French speaking residents, as notably articulated in subsections 156.23, 156.24, and 156.25 of Bill 96.

However, we have great difficulty in observing a provincial government with a substantial majority of seats in the National Assembly of Québec continuing to resort to the undemocratic tactic of closure (le bâillon) to silence debate from the Official Opposition and the two other opposition parties.

Furthermore, we also find disturbing the use by the provincial government of Québec of imposition of the Notwithstanding Clause to override the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as their own Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

We strongly believe that individual rights must not be stamped by a government's continuing use of the Notwithstanding Clause to promote collective rights.

We call on the Prime Minister of Canada to fulfill his constitutional duties under the Canadian Constitution and the Official Languages Act of Canada to continue to be the protector and promoter of minority rights throughout all ten provinces and three territories of Canada

Furthermore, we call on the Premier of Québec to fulfill his constitutional duties under the Canadian Constitution and the Official Languages Act of Canada to continue to be the protector and promoter of minority rights in Québec, which are no threat to the French language and culture.

It brings to mind the memorable words of Mr. Clifford Lincoln, former Member of the National Assembly and former Cabinet Minister, during debate in the National Assembly of Québec:

“Rights are rights are rights!”

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