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## The language issue in Ottawa and Quebec

While a legislative committee of the Quebec government was listening to hearings from groups and individuals on Bill 1, "Charter of the French Language in Quebec", the federal Secretary of State, John Roberts, tabled in the House of Commons on June 21, the Federal Government's review of the two official languages, *A National Understanding — the Official Languages of Canada*.

### Education under Bill 1

Bill 1, introduced in the Quebec Legislature by Cultural Development Minister Camille Laurin on April 27, promotes the use of French in Quebec and limits the use of English in education, business, the courts and public administration.

Newcomers to Quebec, from other provinces and immigrants, would have to send their children to French-language schools.

Only those children who have one parent who was educated in English in a Quebec elementary school, or with an older brother or sister at present attending an English-language school in Quebec, could study in English at a public or private school subsidized by the province.

Parents who had been educated in English anywhere, and living in Quebec on the date the bill becomes law, would also have the right to send their children to English schools in the province. They would retain that right until the end of the year.

The bill also requires that high-school graduation certificates be issued only to students who have passed a test on spoken and written French.

### Federal Government statement

The following excerpts from the Federal Government's *A National Understanding* deal with official languages and the provinces:

"In reviewing its experience with the official languages policy to date, it is evident to the Federal Government that it cannot by itself ensure that the

policy succeeds. The policy must also have the active support of the provincial governments if it is to make its fullest impact on our country. To say this is not to attempt to tell the provincial governments what they should do. It is simply stating one of the major facts evident in the experience with the policy thus far.

"In perhaps the most significant area of all, that of education, the provinces have exclusive jurisdiction under the the Canadian constitution. In many other areas that have a very important impact on peoples' lives and on the language they speak, such as the courts, social and health services and culture, the provinces have as much and sometimes more authority and influence than the Federal Government. Moreover, the provinces have the authority to determine the language of public administration at the provincial and municipal levels and, except for the province of Quebec, in the debates of their provincial legislatures and their records and journals. Indeed, even in connection with the education of Canadians who may some day wish to enter the federal public service, action by the provinces is of prime importance.

"Many people, including the Commissioner of Official Languages, have recommended that, as a country, we should emphasize the teaching of the official languages to Canadians in general, and to youth in particular, rather than maintaining a large federal establishment for teaching languages to public servants.

"Implementing such measures would place greater emphasis on the role of the provinces and make more obvious that the Federal Government cannot alone be fully effective in regard to the educational, cultural and other rights of Canada's two official language groups. It has, over the years, established programs designed to encourage the provinces to take initiatives in these matters. However, strong independent initiatives by the provincial governments are crucial,

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