

"The people who speak French in this country are not minorities. That is what the Official Languages Act says and that is what I want the Constitution to say. They are Canadians who exercise a right to speak one of the Canadian languages."

Honourable Richard Hatfield, Premier of New Brunswick, before the Special Joint Committee, Ottawa, December 4, 1980

"I do not object to the constitutional entrenchment of French and English language rights. The right to use French or English, or the right to receive some government services in either of those languages, is not, after all, a right which we claim as humans. It is an essential fact of Canada, an essential element of the Confederation bargain, and, as such, is an obvious candidate for inclusion in the Constitution."

Honourable Allan Blakeney, Premier of Saskatchewan, brief to the Special Joint Committee, Ottawa, December 19, 1980

Minority Language Educational Rights

23. (1) Citizens of Canada

- (a) whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province in which they reside, or*
- (b) who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province,*

have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province.

This section of the Charter contains significant guarantees of minority language educational rights.

There are three main criteria that determine the rights of Canadian citizens of the English and French-speaking minorities in each province to have their children educated in their own language.

1. *Mother tongue.* If your mother tongue (first language learned and still understood) is French and you live in a mainly English-speaking province, you will have a constitutional right to have your children educated in French. This criterion is of vital importance to French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec as it ensures that