



**BILL 96 AND THE COLLEGES
THAT OFFER ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

**Brief presented to the hearings
of the
*Commission de la Culture et de l'Éducation***

presented by the English College Steering Committee

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The **English College Steering Committee (ECSC)** groups colleges that offer English-language education. Membership is voluntary. The ECSC has met regularly over more than 25 years to discuss matters of common interest. This group includes the six signatory colleges of this brief:

Champlain Regional College

Dawson College

Cégep Héritage College

John Abbott College

Marianopolis College

Vanier College

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
SECTION I: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON BILL 96	2
1.1 The contribution of our institutions to the development of Québec society	2
1.2 The attraction of English-language colleges: how to explain it?	3
1.3 The thorny question of language substitution <i>or why we are not agents of anglicization</i>	4
SECTION II: SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS ON BILL 96	6
2.1 Questions and concerns about the basis of Bill 96	6
2.2 Article 4 of Bill 96	7
2.3 Articles 58 to 62 of Bill 96	7
SECTION III: RECOMMENDATIONS	10
3.1 On setting enrollment caps	10
3.2 On the Uniform French Exit Exam.....	11
3.3 On the prioritization of “rights holders” (<i>ayants droit</i>)	12
CONCLUSION	13

INTRODUCTION

We would like first to thank the members of the *Commission de la Culture et de l'Éducation* for giving us the opportunity to articulate our considerations and to voice our concerns and reservations about certain articles in Bill 96, *An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec*.

Although we are responsible for the college institutions that offer English-language education, the protection and promotion of the French language is a goal we all share. However, we cannot remain silent on Bill 96 when it proposes such an in-depth reform of civil and legal institutions and the rules that govern them. It is the quasi-subordination of certain aspects of the college system to the prerogative of a possible Ministry of the French Language.

The same can be said of the important reversal of civic and linguistic rights proposed in the Bill, particularly by setting a precedent that the *Charter of the French Language* should prevail over the *Québec Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as well as on the *Canadian Charter*. We cannot remain indifferent on this aspect of Bill 96. It is, in our view, a reform with considerable impact on various sectors of Québec that will have repercussions on the lives of millions of its citizens. Moreover, this Bill touches on several aspects that directly affect college institutions, and specifically, the institutions we represent.

We will leave the debate about the judicial, legal and even constitutional issues raised in the Bill to others. In the matters that concern us, we feel unfairly challenged by this Bill and we are concerned that this Bill was, in part or in whole, developed on the false premise that our colleges act as agents in the anglicization of Québec. We contest this allegation and will establish how this creates an undue burden.

We are therefore presenting before you today, members of the Commission, in order that we may discuss certain elements of this Bill, piloted by the minister responsible for the French language. Consequently, our considerations will address mainly the articles in the Bill that frame the development of college institutions as well as those that affect the policies that deal with employment and the quality of the French language.

We hope that our observations are heard, not only by the minister responsible for Bill 96 and the members of this Commission, but also by the minister who is responsible for higher education.

SECTION I: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON BILL 96

1.1 THE CONTRIBUTION OF OUR INSTITUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUÉBEC SOCIETY

The institutions we represent have, for more than 50 years, been an integral part of the Québec college educational ecosystem. Throughout these years, our colleges have been driven by academic missions that are resolutely in the service of Québec society and its citizens, contributing to the education of highly qualified graduates throughout Québec, who are now working in various sectors to the benefit of a very large number of Québec residents.

More specifically, during these years and more recently, within the sphere of wider global exchanges, our institutions have become inclusive, endeavouring to serve the whole of Québec society, including, the anglophone community.

Our missions have always promoted the importance of learning and using the French language. This commitment over the years has led not only to the offering of French second-language courses in college studies and strict adherence to language requirements, but also to the implementation of numerous support resources for the learning of the French language and activities to promote Québécois culture and socialization in the language.

Characterized by the dynamic nature of their achievements, driven by the spirit of research, and inspired by an academic tradition marked by pragmatism, our institutions have been at the forefront of innovative pedagogical approaches, many of which have taken root in the college network.

To name but two examples, we would like to draw your attention to the development of inclusive pedagogy for students with disabilities and, more recently, to the development of active learning through the use of technologies in teaching and learning.

In the simplest terms, there is no doubt in our minds that we have been throughout our history, a positive contributor to Québec society.

1.2 THE ATTRACTION OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE COLLEGES: HOW TO EXPLAIN IT?

There is no refuting that during the past several years, an increasing number of young Québécois francophones and allophones have sought to pursue their college studies in our institutions. How can we explain this phenomenon? Is there an intention, once concretized, that will threaten the French language in Québec? Does attending a college whose language of instruction is English for what is a relatively short time in an individual's life make them choose to pursue a life in English? This is what many believe. We will see below that there is no evidence to support that supposition.¹

We believe that several factors can explain the attraction that our institutions hold for these young people. Undoubtedly, the social and economic environment in which we live and evolve influences their choices. Whether they are exploring options to enter the job market or thinking about eventually pursuing university studies, mastering English is seen as an asset for many jobs or professions. Whether we like it or not, English is widely spoken. At the university level, knowledge of English is often necessary to understand and work with research results and documentation.²

There is no denying that a better knowledge of English significantly increases the mobility of graduates making life choices, whether for personal or professional reasons, such as access to university studies. Mastery of English as a second language undoubtedly offers these young people new and often unique opportunities for career advancement, just as it presents an advantage for those who want to explore the world.

Nature abhors a vacuum; we should not be surprised to learn that many Québécois youth seek to pursue their college studies in English to gain relative ease in this language after having spent the previous 11 years in the francophone school system. Many feel they have not sufficiently mastered English.

It may also be that the curriculum offered in our institutions presents an attractive option. The Anglo-Saxon academic tradition is pragmatic and stimulates the interest of some young people. Take for example, General Education English literature and humanities courses. These disciplines are based on an approach that offers the student an abundance of choice on contemporary themes of prevailing concern to them and involves multi-disciplinary teaching as a further motivation.

Another, more subtle but no less real aspect, is the process that leads to learning a second language. It has been long-established that the acquisition of a second language is favoured within the context of immersion in an environment. Learning is achieved by hearing words and

¹ In a recent article published in *La Presse +* (September 15, 2021), demo-linguists favouring robust measures for our institutions admit that "crucial variables" such as the language spoken at home and fertility are more likely to explain the decline of the French language.

² See on this subject Michel C. Auger's analysis dated May 17, 2021, titled *La loi de 1977 et le Québec de 2021*. <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1793628/francais-quebec-legault-michel-auger>

phrases that people can understand (comprehensible input)³ This basic characteristic of the learning process is recognized by students who wish to attain a greater mastery of English, and over the years, our institutions have offered them this possibility without changing their identity.

To sum up, we estimate that these factors, among others, might explain the reasons, at their origin, why students choose to pursue college studies in English, rather than their intention to transfer their linguistic practice to English.

1.3 THE THORNY QUESTION OF LINGUISTIC SUBSTITUTION OR WHY WE ARE NOT AGENTS OF ANGLICIZATION

Much has been written in the media over the past few years about how our institutions have contributed to the anglicization of a certain segment of Québec youth, fueling a socio-political debate surrounding the need to apply provisions in the French language charter to the college level.

No doubt this played a large part in the legislator's decision to present Bill 96 with a view to regulating admissions to our colleges. Statistical data was gathered on attendance in our institutions and on the academic and professional paths subsequently taken by students that succeeded in supporting the notion that attending English-language colleges promoted the transfer by francophone and allophone students from French to English as the language of identity.

This assertion, as all conclusions that can be drawn from statistical data, seems somewhat exaggerated if it is based on assuming that attendance in one of our institutions was precipitated by the desire of francophone and allophone students to integrate into the anglophone community. Certain nuances need to be made.

In a recent research project submitted to Université Laval, PhD student Karine Vieux-Fort⁴ examined the paths taken by young francophones who attended an English-language CEGEP in Québec. Using a methodological framework in which the sociology of the social experience to understand the experience of choosing an English-language CEGEP to pursue college studies was combined with the procedural approach that seizes upon the dynamic of socialization in English in the pursuit of an academic path.

The author analyzed young francophones' accounts of their experiences when they chose to pursue their college studies in English. She also considered the original reason that prompted this decision, the learning experience they lived during their studies, as well as the process of socialization in English in the course of their academic, professional and personal lives, to

³ See Krashen, Stephen, <https://www.sk.com/compinput.mp4>. To cite the author, "we learn another language when we understand *what* is said not *how* it is said".

See also on this subject Lavoie, Émilie <https://pasetemps.com/blogue/pourquoi-les-%C3%A9l%C3%A8ves-sont-ils-g%C3%AAn%C3%A9s-de-prendre-la-parole-en-contexte-dacquisition-dune-nouvelle-langue-n3637>

⁴ Karine Vieux-Fort, *Le parcours des jeunes francophones qui choisissent d'étudier dans un cégep anglophone : une étude rétrospective*, doctoral dissertation, Université Laval, 2019, 333 p.

ultimately “determine if English-language CEGEP contributed to modulating their linguistic and civic identity over the course of their lives.”⁵

What emerged from this retrospective study is that allegations that English-language colleges are agents of anglicization can be disproved. Firstly, the decision of young francophones to pursue college studies in English is motivated primarily by the desire to acquire new language competencies to broaden the perspective on their professional lives, for their own personal development or their wish to meet people from other cultures with a view to opening up the world.

Should we be surprised, the author suggests, that in the context of greater global exchanges (and the proliferation of digital platforms), the attraction of English has grown as the language most used in the “market of languages”, where English and French do not have the same weight demographically, economically, politically and culturally, and that the educational system in Québec does not afford these young people sufficient mastery in English as a second language?

To ask the question is to answer it.

Additionally, in the examination of the impact the educational path in English had on these young francophones on their life choices, it is evident that attendance at an English-language CEGEP for a short transitional period in the life of an individual does not significantly alter *either their linguistic identity or their civic identity*.

The study establishes that, for these young francophones “French remains the language used daily, is the language that defines identity and a life choice.”⁶ To sum up, the research findings show that there is an *absence* of intention, in choosing an English-language college, to integrate into the anglophone community or to adopt values imparted to them in English-language CEGEPs.

In other words, according to the author, the choice of the English language in the pursuit of college studies is not made by virtue of a logic to integrate and does not lead to a path toward the anglicization of Québécois youth. Rather, it presides over the establishment of a “path that navigates between French and English” which is what we agree a mastery of a second language should be.

What should we make then of allophones and young people from immigrant families who, having attended the francophone school system, register to attend one of our institutions? The study, as well as the literature review conducted by Karine Vieux-Fort, reveals that the “mother tongue or the country of birth (...) present a larger influence on the linguistic practices than the college’s language of instruction” and that “linguistic transfers toward English in practices linked to private life and the job market are not explained by their language of instruction, but rather, by their

⁵ Op.cit., p. 242

⁶ Vieux-Fort (2019), p. 238

origins”⁷. This brings us back to the fundamental issues of immigration policy in Québec and the distinction between “francotrope” and “anglotrope” immigrants (immigrants whose mother tongue is neither French nor English, who, by virtue of their education or cultural affiliation, identify with one language or the other).

To sum up, affirmations relative to the role of our institutions as vectors for anglicization are overstated and create an unreasonable burden on our institutions to account for the increase in the usage of English in the daily lives of Québec youth. These affirmations are vague and should be at the very least put in perspective or refuted altogether. Several other phenomena might explain the growth of English usage, especially in a metropolitan region. As was previously stated, within the context of global exchanges, the knowledge economy and wide access to digital entertainment platforms, these constitute the kind of phenomena that make English attractive as the *language of use*.

Have we come to the point where we must hold “anglophone” CEGEPs responsible for this situation and to make them scapegoats? On the contrary, the demo-linguistic social diversity present in our institutions should be seen as an asset in that it allows the “two solitudes” to mingle and socialize, promoting familiarity, understanding and learning between each other in the language spoken by the Other and their culture.

SECTION II: SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS ON BILL 96

2.1 QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS ABOUT THE BASIS OF BILL 96

We salute the legislator’s wisdom in not extending Bill 101 to college education, despite the fact that the bill before us, while maintaining the possibility of choice, is at its base considerably restrictive in its scope, even when treating the question of free choice in accessing post-secondary education as a delicate matter. As the *Fédération des cégeps* outlined in its brief, it is counter-productive, fuels a false sense of linguistic security, and is needlessly divisive.

Earlier in this brief we expressed our commitment to protect and value the status of the French language in Québec, and we adhere to the notion to “make French the common language, the language of integration, and to promote awareness about the importance of this language and the culture of Québec, to build connections in our society.”

In whichever manner we choose to debate the definition of Québec culture, can it be summed up by Félix Leclerc, Réjean Ducharme, Michel Tremblay, Jean-Paul Riopelle, the Cirque du Soleil

⁷ Idem, pp. 53 & sq. Numerous researchers have examined the reasons allophones and youth issuing from immigration choose English-language college education to demonstrate that there are many factors at the origin of their choices. Not surprisingly and quite similar to young francophones, this category of students makes the choice of an English-language CEGEP as a strategic and functional consideration linked to a profession. Among other factors cited, apart from the proximity of the institution, are the desire to follow their peers and the willingness to increase their mastery of English as well as the “intention to avoid the difficulties they encountered with written French in their secondary studies.”

and company? What then of Leonard Cohen, Phyllis Lambert, Stanley Cosgrove, Louise Penny, Margie Gillis or Oscar Peterson? Do they herald 'Canadian culture'? Or, for the youth of today, where to situate rappers like Loud, Lary Kidd, Calamine or Koriass? Are they the early warning signs of a cross-cultural, hybrid culture that lies in wait for us if do not take notice?

These questions, far from being idle chatter, raise the sensitive issue of the characteristics that shape Québécois culture in this turbulent 21st century and how these different elements in Québec society contribute to a convergence culture of our own.

Moving beyond these considerations, let us focus on articles within Bill 96 of direct concern for college institutions.

2.2 ARTICLE 4 OF BILL 96

This article in Bill 96 modifies Article 6 in the French-language Charter to establish *“that a person residing in Québec who receives English-language instruction in a primary, secondary or college institution has the right to receive French-language instruction from this institution. This French-language instruction must permit the person receiving it throughout their primary, secondary and college education to acquire sufficient competencies to use French as a common language to integrate and flourish in Québec society, and to participate in its development.”*

This statement, reiterated in Article 62 of Bill 96 (articles 88.10 and 88.12), while laudable in its intention, presents a challenge in identifying what these “sufficient” competencies are, and above all, reveals the issue as a responsibility spread over different levels of teaching. How are we to situate them logically and didactically in the curriculum? What will be the mandate for compulsory instruction? Is it legitimate to ask if, at the end of secondary-level education, every student receiving their diploma must have attained these competencies? Which role would the colleges have to assume in such an instance?

An applicant to college studies would normally attest to acquiring French competencies after completing compulsory courses and these competencies would be qualified as “sufficient” to meet the objective determined by the legislator to use French as a common language. If this is the case, what is the rationale to justify having to write a similar exam after their college years? If this is not the case, how does the diploma obtained at the end of compulsory education translate? As an approximation? These questions require an answer if we are to ensure the solidity of the structure and cohesion of the work as a whole.

2.3 ARTICLES 58 TO 62 OF BILL 96

These articles in Bill 96, modifying articles 88.01, 88.02 and 88.03 of the *Charter*, radically change the legislative requirements to which college institutions must conform, and to a lesser extent, to universities. While the *Charter* applies only three articles to college and university education,

Bill 96 has formulated close to 30. These are fundamental modifications that should be looked at closely.

There is not much to say about the general provisions (88.0.1) other than there may be an error in the language distinguishing institutions as anglophone and francophone. Colleges are neither anglophone nor francophone, as they are not *stricto sensu*, speakers. Colleges are colleges, responding *grosso modo* to the same rules and regulations. It would be more accurate to say colleges offering instruction in English and colleges offering instruction in French, which would then render Article 88.0.2 unnecessary.

In terms of provisions specific to college education (§2), stipulations appearing in Articles 88.0.4 and those that follow, have grave consequences, starting with the idea of *capping* enrollment in our institutions, which we do not look kindly upon. We estimate that we have contributed positively to the development of Québec society since our establishment, and we have explained why the allegations pointing to our institution as agents of anglicization are debatable at most. To limit our capacity to respond to the aspirations of a good number of Québécois and to curb the prospect of developing our institutions contingent on our enrollment are not, in our view, the best avenue to take to meet the needs of a modern Québec to assure its rightful place in the world.⁸

The Minister of Higher Education released last June enrollment caps for each CEGEPS of the Greater Montreal region. The caps are subject to an annual review to take into consideration upward demographic shifts and the imminent increased demand for admission to college institutions. According to documents presented by MES officials on this subject, guidelines setting the total enrollment for our institutions are predicated on Bill 96, specifically paragraph 88.0.4. Therefore, in principle, this cap would stand for the 2021-2022 academic year and are subject to an annual review based on subsequent observable data. If we consider the minister's letter, it appears that this the caps *for English CEGEP* would be in effect for a period of 10 years, until 2029.

First things first: either we respect the spirit of Bill 96 that states in the provisions of 88.0.4 that the enrollments *can* be revised each year, or we do not respect it. Either we work with the guidelines presented in Bill 96, including the possibility of the increase permitted in paragraph 2 of 88.0.4, or we do not!

⁸ The most recent research attests to the fact that for a majority of Québécois – anglophones, francophones and allophones – wish for their children to be bilingual. See a report on this subject dated September 3, 2021, <https://globalnews.ca/news/8162699/quebec-parents-raising-bilingual-children-priority/>

Additionally, the management of college enrollment is not an exact science. Fluctuations will have an effect on the number of offers of admissions and actual enrollment. Articles 88.0.7 and 88.0.8 of Bill 96 speak to the ability to impose penalties in cases where the total enrollment cap has been surpassed in a given year. In this regard, we should not underestimate the fact that these new regulatory guidelines for college enrollment in the Greater Montreal region will lead to students exhibiting hard-to-predict behaviours as a result of this quota. Where will they go? Outside Québec? Will they turn towards other modalities of training, such as distance learning? Given the unpredictable character of enrollment management in our colleges and the behaviour of the student population, we believe it is wiser and more prudent to give English-language college some breathing space before enacting these provisions. We will propose a recommendation to this effect.

Furthermore, in 88.0.10, we read that *“an institution (...) offering college education, cannot without authorization from the Ministry of ESRST [Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche, de la Science et de la Technologie] (and after consultation with the minister for the French language) offer instruction in any labour market training, applied research, or technical assistance for a business or information enterprise in a language other than French.”*

If this provision applies to training activities in continuing education and corporate and customized training programs (*services aux entreprises*), does this not risk adding to the burden colleges face in responding to the needs of the labour market and industry? In the context of relying on the agility of our institutions to respond promptly in meeting the need to re-qualify workers and remedy the labour shortage, are we making good use of our legislative and regulatory powers? In our view, this merits more careful consideration.

We have strong reservations about Article 88.0.12 of Bill 96. Quoting the proposed amendment *in extenso*: *“The diploma of college studies (DEC) may not be issued to a student residing in Québec who does not have spoken and written French, the knowledge required by the programs of the Minister of the ESRST. To assess knowledge of French, the Minister must impose a uniform test with the same content for all students who have received college instruction in English or French. However, a student who has received such instruction in English and has been declared eligible to receive instruction in English under Section 1 is not required to take this test for the DEC to be issued to them.”*

This proposal presents several difficulties which merit a closer look.

First, it should be noted that the college curriculum is very different in terms of French courses between the two sectors. In the francophone sector, there are four (4) language and literature courses totaling 240 hours of training. In the English-language sector, there are two (2) courses totaling 90 hours of training, mainly focused on language learning for the vast majority of college students. To imagine administering a uniform test “whose content is the same”, regardless of the language and sector in which the student has undertaken college studies, is worrisome. As things stand, this would amount to the same assessment measure for radically different learning objectives. There is no doubt this is clearly and deeply unfair.

Second, it is understood that the student "who has been deemed eligible to receive instruction in English" would not have to undergo such an assessment. Does this mean that it is less important for this category of students (the *ayants droits* or "rights holders") to verify their French language skills and, as a result, are not expected to "use French as a common language to be able to interact and flourish within Québec society and to participate in its development"? On the contrary, one would have expected that specific measures to consolidate the mastery of French among this category of students would be put forward. There is nothing in the Bill to this effect.

Without neglecting to mention that "*non-ayants droit*" (or those not holding rights) will have to take two tests, the one that verifies French competency and the one they currently write, the English exit exam. As mentioned above, in principle, the student should have already acquired these skills by the end of their eleventh year of school in compulsory education. In short, this would create a double standard in graduation requirements. Is this double standard what we can expect? We will make a second recommendation in this regard.

Finally, article 62 of the Bill would require that institutions offering instruction in English adopt a language policy that is significantly different from that prescribed in Article 88.1 of the current Charter, by laying down new requirements, including the requirement to "provide for measures to promote admission (...) for students who have been declared eligible to receive instruction in English (...) when the number of applications for admission exceeds the number of students who can be admitted." (Article 88.3).

Such a provision introduces a new criterion in the processing of applications for admission, one of a socio-linguistic nature that goes against the accepted method to assess applications to higher education, which is based on the quality of the academic dossier submitted by the applicant. The development of such a policy will require a great deal of discussion and consultation with stakeholders to balance correctly and without prejudice the prospects for the successful application of language-based admission criteria as opposed to the prevailing criteria used in higher education: the weight of the academic record. We will make a third recommendation on this point.

SECTION III: RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 ON SETTING ENROLLMENT CAPS

The first recommendation concerns the determination of total enrollment, which is based on the considerations and reservations expressed above. Conditions imposed on attendance in the network of public college institutions to begin in the 2021-2022 academic year will cause significant fluctuations in student behaviour when the foreseen increase in demand for college education is set against a backdrop of fewer available spaces. The Ministry of Education's forecast data suggest that that several regionally based English-language school boards will see an

increase in their student populations in the coming years, which will only exacerbate the problem caused by the lack of spaces.

In this context, considering that the management of applications is based on a probability calculation relating to the acceptance rate of admission offers and the rate of returning students, fluctuations will inevitably occur. The system will have to be given time to adapt, to favour flexibility, especially if the requirements concerning "rights holders" refer to questions of who will be able to benefit from this status. For example, are First Nations, Inuit and Métis students considered to be "rights holders"? If not, what are they? And how will students coming from abroad who have been given an exemption at the secondary level of education be treated?

Consequently, we recommend:

RECOMMENDATION 1

THAT the enrollment caps imposed by the Ministry of Education last June for institutions in the public college network be for a period of three years, that is from Fall 2021 to Fall 2024, rather than the established timeframe (2021-2029) and that this number be revised at the end of this period on the basis of:

- **a better understanding of the contingent known as rights holders (*ayants droit*) who may be admissible to our institutions;**
- **a better understanding of the status of First Nations students;**
- **an analysis that takes into account the behaviour of the student population and its impact on our institutions' capacity to admit students;**
- **an understanding of the impact on new conditions imposed upon the capacity of institutions to respond adequately to the needs of the labour market.**

THAT, accordingly, the application of the financial penalties set out in the Bill be deferred until the end of the period.

3.2 ON THE UNIFORM FRENCH EXIT EXAM

The second recommendation concerns Article 88.0.12 of Bill 96, which imposes a uniform test to assess the language skills at the end of a college education for all students except those who are "rights holders". We have seen to what extent this provision contains its share of incongruities, the least of which is not knowing what is meant by "sufficient" skills; at which point in the educational process are students expected to have acquired these competencies; how it has created a potentially inequitable situation by establishing two categories of students (rights holders and others) and a double standard for graduation requirements. Moreover, if such a requirement were to be applied, it would inevitably have an impact on the College Education

Regulations General and Vocational Colleges Act, which would have to be amended to revise the delivery of French courses through General Education and to make a decision on the imposition of two final tests for graduation purposes.

To sum up, we see redundancy in the imposition of such a measure at the end of a college education and we believe that there is no added value in it. To avoid finding ourselves in an unfathomable situation by changing such a fundamental aspect of graduation requirements and for all the reasons we elaborated earlier, including the one that relates to adequate prior learning necessary to pass such a test, it would be best not to apply such a measure.

Therefore, we make the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 2

THAT the provision 88.0.12 that appears in Article 58 of Bill 96 be removed.

Should such a requirement be maintained, despite the ambiguities and incongruities contained therein, we ask that the application of this provision, in the interest of fairness in the assessment of language skills, be deferred until Fall 2024 in order to give colleges time to do the necessary work to:

- establish optimal conditions to preside over the introduction and implementation of such a test;
- make the necessary adjustments to French General Education courses to ensure the acquisition of prescribed skills, for both rights holders and non-rights holders (*ayants droit* and *non-ayants droit*);
- make necessary amendments to the rules governing college education (College Education Regulations)).

3.3 ON THE PRIORITIZATION OF RIGHTS HOLDERS (*AYANTS DROIT*)

With respect to Article 88.3 in Article 62 of the Bill, we reported on the significant change brought about by this provision with respect to existing provisions in the current *Charter of the French Language*. This change affects important aspects of French-language learning in our institutions and requires serious reflection and discussion to ensure that the policy will do its work and to guarantee the support of stakeholders both on the objectives to be prioritized and on the modalities to achieve them. Not to mention the potential impact on current agreements and on the professional development of staff to perform their tasks. It is a considerable exercise that will take time and effort to achieve.

In addition, the request to include measures in this policy to promote the admission of rights holders when demand exceeds supply will provoke fierce debate that will need to calibrate, within the perspective of promoting academic success, the use of socio-linguistic criterion for admission with that which relates to the academic record presented by the applicant. To this end, we make the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 3

THAT the prioritization of rights holders (*ayants droit*) come into effect in Fall 2024, allowing sufficient time to ensure that the development of a policy will gain the support of stakeholders and establish the best conditions for academic success.

CONCLUSION

You will have noted that Bill 96, with regard to the sections that concern college education in our view raises a number of problems and issues in terms of relevance and implementation. Whether it is managing the enrollment caps planned for college institutions, the determination and assessment of what are “sufficient” language skills, or the notion of rights holders (*ayants droit*), questions are being raised about the cohesion we would like to see in a piece of legislation of such importance. Faced with this state of affairs, we recommend exercising caution and ask the legislator to provide a minimum three-year transition period that will allow everyone to see things more clearly and to take the time to do them right. Everyone will benefit by not rushing in to change the course of events. Education remains the nerve centre for the future of individuals and society.

Since their creation, our institutions have been committed to serving the needs of the anglophone community in Québec. But we have also endeavoured to assure over the course of time that the achievement of our academic missions is of benefit to the whole of Québec society, focussing on excellence and in sync with the needs of Québec society. In this way, our institutions have become an agora representing the face of a modern Québec.

In this spirit and in the context of the 21st century, we have strived to strike a balance and reconcile our commitment to ensuring access to our institutions with offering quality education. Our first priority is the success of our students, whether it is to prepare them for university studies or to enter a job market that has become more and more demanding and open to the world.

Nothing we have heard or observed lends credence to the claims that we are agents of anglicization. On the contrary, access to our colleges has allowed every young (and not so young) Québécois to build bridges between the so-called “two solitudes” while offering them the opportunity to perfect their skills in a second language, a strong asset required to evolve in today’s world regardless of the intention to pursue university studies or start a career. We are

determined to follow this path, convinced that this is in the best interests of the Québec of today and of tomorrow. We are just as resolute in continuing our efforts to promote the French language, to contribute expanding its reach and to participate in the development of a welcoming, open and generous culture within our institutions.

We are simply waiting for the means to be able to do more.

We hope that the observations we have presented on the aspects that affect our colleges can help to inform you in your continued deliberations that, as parliamentarians, you will have to undertake on this Bill to ensure it is an asset for all Québécois. In short, to make it a law that will bring everyone together, rather than to divide, regardless of mother tongue, ethnic origin or cultural affiliation.

Québec deserves no less.