

Montreal, Quebec – May 3, 2022

## TASK FORCE DENOUNCES C-13 AND ASYMMETRICAL FEDERAL LANGUAGE POLICIES

*Asks the Government of Canada to re-write or scrap the “White Paper” and Bill C-13*

The *Task Force on Linguistic Policy* (“*Task Force*”) denounces the proposed changes to the *Official Languages Act* (OLA) and the newly proposed *Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act* (FRPBA), as proposed in Bill C-32.

“Bill C-13 is effectively a blueprint for the abandonment of a bilingual Canada and the eventual decline of Quebec’s English-speaking community. It is poorly drafted and will reduce the capacity for English Quebecers to work or be served by the federal government in their language. It borrows from the worst of Bill 96, which seeks to eviscerate the presence of English in Quebec,” said Andrew Caddell, Acting President of the Task Force.

“The baseline of equality between English and French will be ruptured, the Government’s acquiescence to the unconstitutional Constitutional amendment in Bill 96, and Bill 96s’ limitations on English schooling and access to basic social services ensure the *absolute failure of a renewed OLA*,” added Moira Regan Bell, Task Force Director of Outreach.

### **Task Forces’ primary concerns with the “White Paper” and Bill C-13:**

1. Asymmetry is contemplated for the act and interpretation of language rights federally. French will be promoted in the Canada, including Quebec, and English delegitimized in Quebec. The reference to French being a North American minority language is not an appropriate frame of reference for Canadian federal legislation.

2. The bill includes an ill-advised acknowledgement in federal law of Bill 101, with French as the only official language, and the patchwork of inadequate provincial language laws across the country. Bill C-13 purports to assist in implementing, “provincial and territorial language regimes,” yet recognizes only Manitoba, Quebec and New Brunswick’s specific linguistic frameworks. Absent are seven provincial and three territorial language guarantees.

3. Bill C-13 erroneously recognizes that “French is the official language of Quebec,” delegitimizing the official status of the English language enshrined in S. 133 of the Constitution Act, that provides for equality of status for French and English in the laws, legislature, courts and regulations. Bill 101 is referenced, while no other provincial law explicitly is. Conspicuously, the law omits a mention Indigenous languages regimes, like Inuktitut in Nunavut.

4. Substantive parts of the document fail to apply equally to English-speakers in Quebec. The previous OLA frames English and French as equal while promoting minority language rights. Bill C-13 abandons this historical bedrock of Canadian official language policy. Bill C-13 prefers to frame the French-

language as the only minority language in Canada, deliberately omitting English-speakers in Quebec and the necessity of formal legal equality for English and French.

5. The significant inclusion of French-preferential labour markets in Quebec and other undefined Francophone regions proposed in the new FRPBA codifies a new category of rights for French-speaking consumers and employees. **This is a positive measure, which should have beneficial effects for Francophone minorities outside Quebec.** However, instead of allowing the equality of English and French languages for consumers, employees and businesses to operate in the official language of their choice, the Canadian government is proposing an asymmetrical system which ignores its own standards of “substantive equality.” The FRPBA fails to reciprocate new rights for the English-speaking minority in Quebec which suffers from higher unemployment, lower incomes and poorer labour market outcomes than their French-speaking counterparts. This new reality will further marginalize English-speakers in Quebec. The FRBPA should be expanded to include English-speaking communities in Quebec.

“We need compassion, coupled with rational public policy, to guide federal language policies. Despite perceptions to the contrary, English-speakers in Quebec are socio-economically and demographically disadvantaged compared to French-speakers in Quebec and the ROC,” added Nathaniel Lipke, Task Force executive member.

“The FRPBA is a “solution” in search of a problem; Quebec’s current language regime is more than up to the task – to impose upon federally-regulated businesses new language of service and work obligations for French (and French only) seems redundant at best, and, at worst, a (potentially consequential) affront to English-speaking Quebecers who have just as much a right to communicate with, work for and receive services from federally-regulated private businesses in English,” added Nathaniel Lipke, Executive member of the Task Force.

“We call on the Government of Canada, Prime Minister Trudeau, Minister Pepitas-Taylor and the Liberal Party of Canada to re-write or scrap the “White Paper” and Bill C-13 immediately. A flawed **renewal of these initiatives will hurt official-language minorities**,” said Marc Perez, Task Force Executive member.

*About the Task Force on Linguistic Policy:*

The Task Force was founded in June, 2021 to defend the civil rights and constitutional protections of all Quebecers, including those directly affecting Quebec’s English-speaking community.

Find us at:

<https://protectourrights.ca/>

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