

DIRECTION JEUNESSE

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SUBMISSION BY

DIRECTION JEUNESSE

ONTARIO

TO

THE SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE

ON THE

CONSTITUTION OF CANADA

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OTTAWA

Direction Jeunesse is an organization for young Franco-Ontarians founded in 1970 to encourage their activities and promote the presence of French in their environment. Its mission is a political one and has three aspects: to develop a feeling of belonging to the Franco-Ontarian and French-Canadian communities; to develop a strategy of community initiative so as to gain influence over our institutions, our daily life and our future; and, finally, to obtain recognition of our rights.

In fulfilment of its mission, Direction Jeunesse wishes to express its disagreement with the statement of so-called official language minority rights and the absence of any statement of the rights of national minorities in general.

We can in no way support Section 23 of the Proposed Resolution for a Joint Address to Her Majesty the Queen respecting the Constitution of Canada because it does not respond even to the minimum requirements of the Ontario minority with respect to education, and because it does not recognize the right of young people who are members of the Ontario minority, of the so-called French official language group, to instruction in their mother tongue at the collegial and university levels. We wish to remind the Committee that there are no post-secondary institutions, either at the collegial or university level, for Franco-Ontarians, and that the same is true for young people of other national minorities, with the exception of the Anglophone minority in Quebec.

The goodwill of governments is not a sufficient guarantee when our rights are at stake, as is clearly shown by the history of our country. Section 23 restricts our right to education to a question of numbers. This is precisely the reasoning resorted to by the Ontario government to delay for years in establishing educational institutions in Ontario in Sturgeon Falls, Elliot Lake, Cornwall, Windsor, Penetanguishene and other locations.

The proposed constitutional reform again shows a narrow vision of what is required for the full development of a national minority. The rights of the minority in Ontario go beyond the question of language. Our development calls for the power to initiate and control within social, cultural and political as well as educational institutions.

In order to give real meaning to the right of minorities to work out their own development, it is of paramount importance that, after the adoption of a new constitution, any amendments to it affecting national minorities be approved through a referendum involving the minorities in question. Moreover, the least the new Canadian Constitution can do for national minorities in general and the Franco-Ontarian minority in particular is to establish a pan-Canadian administrative tribunal having all decision-making power with respect to the collective rights of minorities.

The Franco-Ontarian minority is entitled to the respect and support of Canadian political institutions at the federal, provincial and municipal levels for the action it is taking, as are so many other national minorities, in the interest of ensuring its existence, survival, development and growth.

This is what the new Canadian Constitution should guarantee.