



Press Release

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Public Discussion on Antibilingualism, Acadia and Francophone Communities

Moncton, January 22, 2019 – A public discussion was held on the Université's Moncton campus in order to understand the antibilingualism that is gaining ground in political circles in Ontario and Acadia and to consider possible actions.

The discussion began with eight academics and was then extended to the audience. More than 150 persons were in attendance.

“The interest raised by this discussion and the rapid mobilization of participants show how urgent it is to understand and act upon language issues in New Brunswick and Ontario, as well as elsewhere in the country,” said Éric Forgues, co-organizer of the event.

This year we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the provincial *Official Languages Act*, yet the current political situation with respect to language is not exactly reassuring for Acadia and Canada's Francophone communities.

“After 50 years of the *Official Languages Act*, it's incredible that we are still in this position in Canada, with prejudices, fears and leaders who are ready to do anything to gain political credit on the back of minorities fighting bravely against assimilation. We wanted to hold this debate to encourage others and to protest. I think that it's time for Francophones to make ourselves heard much more strongly than in the past, and to fight against being bullied as a community.” Christophe Traisnel, co-organizer of the event.

This discussion showed the importance of working together on language issues in order to allow Acadia and other Francophone communities to continue their progress.

Other considerations, other discussions and, most of all, other actions are needed to spread awareness among the public and to encourage public engagement in these issues, which are crucial not just to the development of Acadia and Francophone communities but to all of Canadian society. As in any crisis, the situation should encourage leaders not just to resist antibilingualism but to find novel solutions to make it apparent that one community is not flourishing at the expense of the other.

“In the current climate, the Acadian and Francophone population of the province absolutely has to rally around our community and university institutions and make a common stand in our demands to maintain what we have already obtained. After 50 years of official bilingualism, it is absolutely out of the question for our communities to back off one iota on our linguistic rights. We have to find a way to live together in our land. That being said, it is essential that the individual character of Acadia and Acadians and the contribution of our Francophone citizens to the advancement of our province be respected,” stated Robert Melanson, President of the Société de l’Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick.

The event was organized by the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, the school of Hautes Études Publiques at the Université de Moncton, the Société de l’Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick and the Réseau International des Chaires Senghor de la Francophonie.