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of Quebec's separatism and its subsequent popularity among Quebecers. Quebec's secessionists have always regarded the protection of the French language as the core element of their political program. To this end, they have served as the foremost advocates of the adoption of protective legislative measures that would make Quebec a bastion of defence for Frenchness in North America (Bishai 120-122).

Until 1960s, however, Quebecers were not excessively assertive in demanding that their linguistic rights be recognized and respected. It was only during a period known as the *Quiet Revolution* (1960-1966) that language matters were elevated to prominence in political debates. The *Quiet Revolution* – a time of thorough economic, educational, and social reforms – transformed Quebec from a rural and underdeveloped province to a secular, modern, and economically thriving society. The successful reforms, which resulted in the Francophones taking the oversight of the Quebec's economy and politics, raised both political self-confidence of Francophones and their linguistic awareness, triggering language debates and leading to the enactments of the first Quebec's language laws openly aimed at making French the privileged language in Quebec (Bourhis 113).

The passage of the first language acts in Quebec coincided with the adoption of the *Official Languages Act* (OLA) in 1969 by the federal parliament. The OLA was a far-reaching legislation – actually, one of the very few addressing Francophone concerns over language barriers. It was also the first law in Canadian history to recognize the official and equal status of English and French in all federal institutions (s. 2). In 1982, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (CCRF), constitutionalized the federal policy of bilingualism and supplemented it by the protection of minority language educational rights (s. 23), which are discussed later in this article.

In 1988, a new federal *Official Languages Act* replaced the 1969 OLA. The new legislation, with over a hundred sections that are still in force, is one of the world's broadest and most precise language laws. It upholds compulsory bilingualism and equality of English and French in all federal institutions and the institutions that serve the public on behalf of the federal bodies. The 1988 OLA also requires that all the documentation – including agreements between the federal and provincial governments and international treaties and conventions – be produced simultaneously in both official languages (s. 13). Bilingualism in courts is enhanced by granting defendants and witnesses the right to be understood in French or English (or both) “without the assistance of an interpreter” by the judges of all federal courts, except the Supreme Court of Canada (s. 16.1).

The adoption of federal official bilingualism has had a number of positive effects on the position of French language in Canada. It inspired the adoption of French-English bilingualism by federally owned institutions or privatized

federal corporations. (Vaillancourt and Coche, *Official Language Policies at the Federal* 16–21). In the long term, it made the federal government services more easily accessible for French speakers and – since the knowledge of French had become a requirement for many job positions – the employment of Francophones in the federal administration increased (Gentil, Bigras, and O'Connor Maureen 83). Furthermore, the constitutional provisions of the CCRF's section 23 forced Anglophone provinces to extend educational rights to their Francophone minorities. This “gave Francophones outside Quebec access to French schools,” creating of what is now called by media a generation of “section 23 kids” who attended these schools (Schwartz).

Nevertheless, the federal policy of bilingualism has its limitations. First, it is sanctioned only on federal level and, save for rare exceptions, it does not oblige provincial (or municipal) authorities to conform to bilingual requirements. Thus, in the areas of provincial jurisdiction, changes were less dynamic and on a smaller scale, despite the federal money being transferred to provinces to boost bilingualism. Second, the right to “communicate with and obtain available services” from federal institutions in both official languages is applicable only to the regions “where there is significant demand” for bilingual services (OLA, 1969, s. 9.2 and 10.3; OLA, 1988, s. 22 and 23). Therefore, in many areas with insignificant Francophone minority (or Anglophone in case of Quebec) federal institutions remain largely unilingual.¹

Given all these shortages, no wonder that in Quebec the reassurances and linguistic rights contained in the OLAs and in the Constitution (which Quebec refused to sign and ratify) were considered insufficient, ineffective and enacted too late. In the opinion of Quebec's leaders, the protection of French language required more rigorous legislative measures.

Quebec's first language law was passed even before separatist *Parti Québécois* (PQ) took the helm of the Quebec's government. Bill 63, or *An Act to promote the French language in Quebec*, adopted in 1969, required that all Quebec's non-Francophone children be taught French as the second language, but did not limit the parents' freedom to choose English instead of French as the language of school instruction for their children (Levine 79-80).

In 1973, a so-called Gendron Commission, or the Commission of Inquiry on the Situation of the French Language and Linguistic Rights in Quebec, observed in its voluminous report that Quebec's economy, labour market, interethnic communication were dominated by English language. Given those

¹ What fulfils the criterion of “significant demand” is explained in the *Official Languages (Communications with and Services to the Public) Regulations* of 1991, according to which a federal office must serve its clientele in both languages if it is located in the area where a minority language population is 5,000 people or more, or at least 500 people but constituting no less than 5% of the population (s. 5).