



## **MCGILL, CONCORDIA AND BISHOP'S: TOUCHSTONES OF HERITAGE AND IDENTITY**

### **A Statement from the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) (Sherbrooke, Qc, November 2, 2023)**

Quebec's universities contribute to Quebec society in profound ways -- economically, scientifically, and culturally. The province's three English-language universities, McGill, Concordia and Bishop's, are renown as fine institutions of higher learning, consistently rating highly for their programs and their student experience. A large proportion of students at these schools come from elsewhere in Canada or from other countries. For many Quebecers, and especially Quebec's English-speaking community, these schools are sources of great pride and touchstones of heritage and identity. Indeed, these institutions are vital contributors to the community's wellbeing.

The present attack by Quebec's CAQ government upon the province's English-language universities, through the nearly doubling of tuition for out-of-province students, under the guise of protecting the French language, is little more than a cynical effort to diminish the presence of any facet of Quebec that does not fit some narrowly defined “pure laine” mold. These increases, which are astronomical in scope, have the aim of discouraging non-Francophones from studying here, adding yet another iteration of the tired portrayal of English as something that must be stamped out in Quebec. And it is clear that Quebec’s current regime thinks that the English-speaking community, a community with deep historical and cultural roots in this province, should neither have a past nor a future.

On display here is an attitude that contradicts the very *raison-d'être* of institutions of higher learning. The earliest universities in Europe developed in the Middle Ages in Italy, France, England, and Spain. These institutions encouraged a mixture of scholars from throughout the known world and were, mostly, tolerant and intellectually curious places, even in the context of their surrounding sectarian societies. Universities around the world continue to play an important role as bastions of inclusivity and diversity in all its forms, including thought, culture and language. As Latin was the common scholarly language of the Middle Ages, and French was once the primary language of European diplomacy, English is now the chief international language of global commerce, and in many advanced fields of study. To recognize and accept this reality is not an attack on French -- nor on any other language. It is just a fact of the modern world.

The importance of Quebec's English-language universities to the heritage of Quebec cannot be overstated. McGill was founded in Montreal in 1821; Bishop's (in Lennoxville) dates to 1843; and Concordia (Montreal) was the result of the 1974 merger of Loyola and Sir George Williams University (founded in 1896 and 1926, respectively). Apart from the countless Quebecers, both Anglophone and Francophone, who have received degrees from these universities, generations of other Canadians and citizens from around the world have studied here, as well. Many of them have remained in Quebec after the completion of their studies. Their contributions to Quebec, Canada and the world, in a number of fields, are immeasurable.

The proposed increases in tuition for out-of-province students attending these schools poses a threat to the very existence of Quebec's English-language universities. Rather than protecting French or Francophone universities, this proposal is little more than a petty and vindictive gesture towards Quebec's Anglophones and their institutions. And by putting these universities at risk, this proposal will accomplish little more than to diminish the stature of Quebec on the world stage, and further cement Quebec's growing reputation as parochial, insular, intolerant, and xenophobic. Is this really the kind of Quebec we want to leave future generations?

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