



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **Bill 8: The Government of Quebec adds new obstacles to First Nations and Inuit students' educational success**

**Wendake, June 5, 2026** – The First Nations Education Council (FNEC), the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec (FNHRDCQ) and the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) strongly condemn the Fréchette government's plan to extend the *Charter of the French Language* to general adult education and vocational training. While the new prime minister calls for a "Nation-to-Nation" relationship, her actions paint a very different picture.

### **From words to action: another missed opportunity for educational reconciliation**

Just last week, speaking before the leaders of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL), Premier Fréchette stated that relations with First Nations and education were "priorities," and that she wished to "move forward together" on the basis of "informed and constructive" dialogue. She herself acknowledged that "the defence of one language should not come at the expense of another." And yet, her government is once again preparing to impose new language requirements on hundreds of First Nations students—without proper consultation, without a solution and without a "path forward."

*"For years now, we have been documenting the real effects of assimilationist policies on our students. Despite our repeated efforts and our continued commitment to finding cost-neutral solutions, Quebec continues to advance a colonial approach that risks increasing barriers to graduation, access to higher education and the development of a skilled workforce in our communities,"* says Denis Gros-Louis, director general of the FNEC.

### **Hundreds of students directly at risk: a "path forward" that leads to a dead end**

For many First Nations students, French is a second or even third language, coming after their Indigenous language and English. Enforcing strict language requirements at all levels of education creates a systemic barrier to the success of First Nations learners throughout their lives.

*"This is not about education in English. This is a matter of access, equity, workforce development and economic development in our communities,"* says Joe Ortona, president of the QESBA.

The consequences and impacts are already measurable and well-documented. Within the provincial system, the majority of First Nations students enrolled in English-language programs fail the French courses imposed by Bill 14, jeopardizing their graduation. The expansion that has just been announced will directly exacerbate these impacts and lead to an increase in the number of people affected.

### **Ignoring the evidence: Minister Roberge sweeps the real impacts on First Nations and Inuit under the rug**

The *Charter of the French Language* applies to First Nations and Inuit. Despite numerous requests from the AFNQL, the FNEC and other Indigenous stakeholders, Quebec has consistently refused to grant Indigenous people a blanket exemption from the Charter's application.

It was this refusal that prompted the AFNQL and the FNEC, as soon as Bill 96 was introduced, to alert the current government and to file an application for judicial review against the *Act to amend the Charter of the French Language* (Bill 14).

The so-called "exemptions" for First Nations and Inuit referred to by Minister Roberge in Bill 8 are the same "exemptions" that were challenged in the appeal. These measures violate our ancestral rights

and create additional systemic barriers to our learners' educational success, they limit our communities' ability to regulate education and they hinder efforts to preserve and revitalize our ancestral languages.

In addition to the language issue, this bill also raises a major economic concern. Against the backdrop of a persistent labour shortage, every additional obstacle to First Nations and Inuit students earning their degrees undermines the training of future teachers, healthcare workers, educators, professionals and entrepreneurs—people whose communities and all of Quebec need.

*“We adamantly reject any measure that creates barriers to success for our communities or that interferes with our ability to educate future generations. For too long, we have faced policies that limited opportunity rather than expanded it. We will continually challenge all measures that place our students at a disadvantage or undermine our efforts to build a stronger future for our Nation,”* says Lance Haymond, member of the FNEC Chiefs' Committee and Chief at Kebaowek First Nation.

Bill 8 is a failure in terms of Nation-to-Nation relations. By choosing to legislate without consulting First Nations and Inuit and by reopening the *Charter of the French Language*, the Quebec government has once again missed an opportunity to include the blanket exemption that has been repeatedly called for.

### **Our demands**

The FNEC, the FNHRDCQ and the QESBA are calling on the premier to withdraw the bill and to fully honour the commitments she has made to First Nations and Inuit, or alternatively, to amend the bill by clearly stating that it does not apply to First Nations and Inuit learners.

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### **About**

The First Nations Education Council (FNEC) is an association made up of 22 First Nations in Quebec that has been working for more than 40 years toward the recognition of First Nations' right to exercise full control over their education through the establishment of a complete educational system, equipped with the necessary resources that are designed and managed based on their values and cultures. To learn more, visit [www.cepn-fnec.com](http://www.cepn-fnec.com)

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