

STRENGTH

PEACE

UNITY

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24, Enniskó:wa /March 2025

The Honourable François Legault
Premier of Quebec
Ministère du Conseil exécutif
Honoré-Mercier Building
835 René-Lévesque Boulevard East 3rd Floor
Quebec City, Quebec
G1A 1B4

Re: Position of the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke regarding Bill 84

Wa'tkwanonhwerá:ton Mr. Legault,

On behalf of the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke ("MCK"), I provide you formal notice of our community's position concerning Bill 84, *An Act respecting national integration*, and our request to meet immediately to address the concerning issues that this bill presents.

We are yet again extremely disappointed by the approach your government has taken to hastily drafting and debating important legislation without ever discussing this with us, let alone informing us about it. This bill has potentially grave consequences for the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke and other Onkwehonwe (original people).

Bill 84 purports to foster the "vitality and preservation of Quebec culture as the common culture and vector for social cohesion, a culture of which the French language is the main vehicle, and which enables immigrants and persons identifying with cultural minorities to integrate into Quebec society"¹. Alongside the *Charter of the French language* and the *Act respecting the laicity of the State*, Bill 84 is clearly part of this government's ongoing nationalist project; a fiction in which Quebec is attempting to assert its "sovereign" identity, by purposefully erasing the Nations, cultures, languages, and histories that predate the arrival of any immigrants, including those who created the province of Quebec.

The only mention of Onkwehonwe in Bill 84 is a single sentence in the preamble which purports to recognize the rights of First Nations and Inuit. The bill is then silent on its intended application to us; our traditional territories and reserves; and our inherent and Aboriginal rights.

The bill is very clear that it intends to impose one culture, one language and one set of values on all. Bill 84 uses the terms "immigrants", "persons identifying as cultural minorities" and "ethnocultural groups" to describe those your government seeks to assimilate. The absence of any definition for these terms begs the question of whether the bill intends to capture Onkwehonwe within its deeply worrying reach.

¹ Bill 84, cl. 1.

It is imperative that the bill be clarified – it does not apply to us. The Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke are not strangers or immigrants to our own lands. Our centuries-long relationship proves that we will not be assimilated into a foreign culture.

If adopted as-is, Bill 84 – much like *An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Quebec* – will make sweeping changes with unpredictable impacts on our participation in many areas of public life. The broad powers that will be developed and exercised pursuant to this bill, such as the application of the National Policy on Integration to professional orders under clause 10, have the potential to negatively impact our ability to preserve our cultural identities and languages. Other provisions, such as those concerning cultural heritage property², may further entrench appropriation of what is, in fact, rightfully ours.

We remind you that your government is currently facing litigation regarding the legality of other laws that make up this nationalist project. This litigation exists, in part, because of the government's repeated failure to consult us and to ensure such legislation respects our rights. This is unacceptable. It also flies in the face of your expressed commitment to peacefully coexist and respect each other's unique perspectives – a commitment you personally reaffirmed a little over a month before the presentation of this bill when we signed the Statement of Understanding and Mutual Respect³. At that time, we also discussed the current and ongoing effects Bill 96 (Law 14) has had on the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke and there was a commitment to work together to find solutions, as well as the undo the effects and not to further exacerbate the situation. That commitment is now questionable, given the movement of Bill 84.

We have the inherent right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit our languages, as recognized by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*⁴. It is high time for the province to bring all of its practices and legislation into compliance with the requirements of the Declaration – another thing your government recently committed to do in the unique context of our relationship⁵. As people who are working diligently toward the preservation and protection of our own language and culture, the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke recognize the tremendous importance of language and culture. However, the right thing to do, and the responsible thing to do, is to pursue these goals in a constructive way that facilitates our peaceful co-existence. Railroading this bill through the National Assembly without ever speaking to us is disrespectful and dangerously irresponsible.

We remind you that most of what you consider to be Quebec is in fact unceded land. Your continued attempts to legislate lands that are not yours must stop. We demand an explicit statement that this bill does not and will not apply to the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke regardless of where we are on our unceded lands.

We fully expect to hear a response from your office as soon as you receive this letter.

In peace and friendship,

**ON BEHALF OF THE OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL OF CHIEFS
MOHAWK COUNCIL OF KAHNWA:KE**



Ohén:ton Iraté ne Ratitsénhaienhs
Grand Chief Cody Diabo of Kahnawake

² See, e.g. clauses 6(3) and 9(3).

³ Statement of Understanding and Mutual Respect, signed December 20, 2024, par. 2.

⁴ *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, art. 1, 14, 16.

⁵ Statement of Understanding and Mutual Respect, signed December 20, 2024, par. 2. The call for your government to do so, however, is far from new. See, e.g. Public Inquiry Commission on Relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Quebec: Final Report, 2019, calls to action 2 and 3.

Cc: National Cindy Woodhouse, Assembly of First Nations
Regional Chief Franis Verreault-Paul, Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador
Chiefs, Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador
Prime Minister Mark Carney, Government of Canada
Gary Anandasangaree, Crown-Indigenous Relations
Ian Lafreniere, Minister Responsible for Relations with the First Nations and the Inuit
Marc Tanguay, Quebec Liberal Party, Leader of the Official Opposition
Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, Québec solidaire, Québec solidaire, Leader of the Second Opposition Group
Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, leader of the Parti Québécois
Nathalie Roy, MNA Conservative party of Quebec