

Quebec minister reminds university of its linguistic duty

Dave Rogers, Ottawa Citizen

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Benoit Pelletier, the Quebec provincial cabinet minister responsible for the Outaouais, says Gatineau's Universite du Quebec en Outaouais should recognize that it must serve the whole community as it considers a plan to phase out the only English-language university courses in West Quebec.

Mr. Pelletier said the university needs to adapt to the dual reality of the Outaouais, which has a population of 53,000 anglophones and 249,000 francophones. The statement is the first indication from a Quebec cabinet minister that the university's role to promote French should not exclude others in the region.

For the past two months the university has been consulting students, professors and the public about a proposed language policy that would end English-language MBA and graduate project administration programs for about 400 of its 5,500 students.

Jean-Paul Perreault, the director of l'Imperatif Francais, an Outaouais French-language rights group, said Tuesday the Quebec government should recognize that French-speaking people are discriminated against in access to post-secondary education in Ottawa-Gatineau. He said anglophones receive 27.7 per cent of university funding in Quebec, while they are only 8.4 per cent of the population.

Mr. Perreault, who is a University of Ottawa professor, said eliminating English-language university programs in Gatineau would avoid diluting the Universite du Quebec en Outaouais and strengthen its ability to educate the francophone majority.