

“English Rights” Billboard sparks questions, complaints (Paid Subscription)

Description

A billboard in downtown Moncton proclaiming “English have rights too Get the facts” is designed to promote an upcoming meeting of the Anglophone Rights Association of New Brunswick, organizers say.

The sign, near the corner of Main and King streets, was been paid for by the anglophone rights association, a group whose goal is to “preserve and promote the rights of anglophones in the province.”

The group will host a community session on Aug. 11 to discuss the current state of language laws in New Brunswick, says president Sharon Buchanan.

The sign was not made to create controversy, she says, but as a way to offer anglophones an avenue to speak out

“I certainly did not think anyone would take offence about an advertising for a meeting, but I guess they have.” said Buchanan Wednesday, noting she has received calls complaining about the sign. “It’s just a billboard with a generic message.”

Philippe Beaulieu, interim president of La Societe de l’Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick, says he is not offended by the sign, but is confused on what the message is trying to achieve.

“I’d like to know what rights are being stripped away or what rights anglophones have lost because everyone has rights as Canadians,” says Beaulieu, whose organization works to defend and promote the rights and interests of Acadian and francophone communities in New Brunswick.

“It’s not that anglophones can’t form associations. I’m fine with that. But what facts are they talking about? Is there a missed understanding of what bilingualism means? They should come out and say what’s really on their minds.”

The billboard, which will be up for another three weeks until the meeting, greets drivers as they head west on Main Street into downtown Moncton from the City of Dieppe.

The Aug. 11 meeting is one of 20 public sessions the anglophone group has held across the province since it formed in early 2015

“We, as an association, became concerned with how language laws are being applied and we have discovered that there a lot of people who feel these concerns as well,” says Buchanan. “The sessions give us a chance to talk about our concerns and see if they are valid. We’re trying to work for changes that are fair to both communities ”

Buchanan says her group has grown heavily in size since the billboard first was shown, with around 70 people signing up in the past few days, giving the organization about 800 members.

“Our intention was to be in your face, but this is not what we expected at all,” she says.

Beaulieu says he hears a lot of complain. that French-language services are hurting the economy, something he says may be “the facts” mentioned in the anglophone group, sign He calls that theory flawed “If this is about the economy, then let’s talk about the economy and not language,” says Beaulieu. “Blaming the French because the English can’t get jobs? Come on, get serious.”

Beaulieu, who grew up in the mainly anglophone town of Grand Falls, says he know it can be hard to learn both languages, but notes this is what New Brunswickers agreed to achieve when making this province the first and, to date, only officially bilingual province in Canada.

“As society, changes take time, but I know its better now than it was,” says Beaulieu. just hope its not a racist or bigotry thing because I think we:re past that. We now can start talking among ourselves and finding ways to better ourselves together.”

Buchanan says she agrees with Beaulieu about working together and invites French-speaking New Brunswickers to the information session on Aug. 11. “We have a number of French people in our association already and they help bring balance,” she says. “I think its really important for every citizen here to be involved in these discussions.”

<https://www.telegraphjournal.com/times-transcript/story/47934103/english-rights-billboard-sparks>

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