



Association of Justice Counsel
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Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
The Honourable Robert Nicholson, P.C., Q.C., M.P.
105 East Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr Attorney General:

Re: Quebec, Bill 135 and Its Implications for Canada

Earlier this week, the Quebec government fast tracked into law Bill 135, which put an abrupt end to the lawful strike of the province's 1500 prosecutors and crown lawyers. The legislation forces these professionals back to work against their will, abolishes their right to collective bargaining, and makes fundamental freedom of association and expression a punishable offence. A state imposed gag order now muzzles the very people whose voices we depend on to uphold the Constitution.

Bill 135 has resulted in a number of grave consequences for the people of Quebec. First, with insufficient resources and waves of resignations to come, it throws into doubt major cases involving vicious gangs and corruption. Second, as the head of the Barreau du Quebec has publicly stated, this legislation breaks the "bond of trust" between the provincial government and its crown lawyers. And third, Bill 135 is blind to a half-century of labour relations progress, putting the provincial government in flagrant violation of the *Charter* and international conventions to which Canada is a signatory. All indications are that the Quebec justice system is dangerously compromised.

In the most recent Speech from the Throne, the Prime Minister spoke about the Federal Government's desire to crack down on organized crime in order to ensure safe communities. But if Quebec prosecutors and crown lawyers continue to be stifled under Bill 135, more Canadians will be victimized by gangs and other criminals, who will be allowed to carry on with impunity. Bill 135 tears at the fabric of our democracy. We urge you to speak to your counterpart, the Quebec Minister of Justice, and ask him to reconsider this law. It must be repealed, or will face being struck down by the courts. Until then, the strike may be over, but the administration of justice in Quebec will remain in a crisis.

Yours truly,

Marco Mendicino
President