

Panel signalling

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Red-and-white City of Montreal sign vandalized with black paint.

Accession Number 1992.31.1-2

Period 3e quart du 20e siècle

Materials metal, paint

Measurements 59 x 59 cm

Historical context

On this bilingual road sign, the English inscription “STOP” has been vandalized to reveal “101”. This message is a reference to the adoption of Bill 101 on the officialization of French in Quebec.

Legislating the French language in Quebec began in the 1960s with the Quiet Revolution and the rise of Quebec nationalism.

Camille Laurin’s Bill 101 was passed on August 26, 1977. It followed similar legislation that was far from unanimous. The law formalized French as the language of government and society in Quebec. Its teaching became compulsory for immigrants, including those from other Canadian provinces.

This vandalized sign bears witness both to the importance of this law and to its being called into question. Indeed, following the adoption of the text, numerous demonstrations and vandalism incidents were organized and perpetrated by both supporters and detractors. At stake were national promotion, economic control of the province by Francophones, and protection of the French language from the English-speaking majority in North America.

The City of Montreal is gradually replacing all its damaged or vandalized ARRÊT-STOP signs with unilingual French ones.