

## No laughing matter: English important for immigration, Rozon says

### Quebec needs both languages for strong future, comedy fest boss tells foreign relations group

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Quebec should rethink its immigration policy to make a knowledge of English as essential as that of French for would-be residents of this province, says the founder of Montreal's Juste Pour Rire/Just For Laughs comedy festival.

"I do not all think that we in Quebec are racists or that we are not open (to other cultures)," Gilbert Rozon told an audience of about 300 during a speech delivered to the Conseil des relations internationales de Montréal. "On the contrary, I think we are quite open.

"Our immigration laws ... require that people coming here learn how to speak French. ... It's clear they're attracting a lot of immigrants of francophone origin.

"And we have to open up more than that, because Toronto is second behind New York City with the largest number of ethnic communities, and that's their greatest asset."

Rozon, who stressed that Quebec's French language and culture must be maintained, also said financial incentives should be established to lure and keep artists and other "creators" from leaving Montreal.

"Every city in the world is competing for creative talent," Rozon said.

Asked by reporters after the speech to elaborate on his comments on immigration policy, Rozon replied: "We had something to settle for ourselves. We franco-phone Quebecers had to go through a certain frustration, build an establishment, build confidence in ourselves - and we did that over the past 40 years.

"But more and more anglophones are speaking French and more francophones are speaking English," Rozon said. "We're not stupid, we live in North America, we need English to have access to that market.

"We have to find a way to maintain a very strong, very rich French culture - not as some miserable second language - the francophone culture (in Quebec) is one that must be maintained.

"And then, after that, we can get some anglophone culture."

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