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Politically-charged pin movement on the rise in Montreal

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Unity Pin Group's latest pin an attempt to sensitize Quebecers to the usage of the English language



J'aime l'anglais.

It's a pin emblazoned with a slogan that's short and to the point – and one in which the Unity Pin Group is hoping Quebecers of all backgrounds will support.

“We wanted to raise awareness that speaking English is okay,” said Itsik Romano, co-founder of the West Island-based advocacy organization. “It's not bad. I think they are a great way to demonstrate that.”

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Itsik Romano (left) of the Unity Pin Group and Harry Schick (right), owner of Swiss Vienna.

Romano, who also runs a web and graphic design business, created the pin back in November, months after two local businesses – and his clients – were at the centre of language

controversies in Quebec.

Last year, Pointe Claire pastry shop Swiss Vienna and Menchie's frozen yogurts were being investigated for a multi-national welcome sign and English-engraved spoons, respectively.

“It's harassment. These were the types of stories that got me to create the pin,” said Romano.

While the Unity Pin Group has only sold 60 units without any marketing, Romano said he's

recently begun pushing the 'J'aime l'anglais' campaign a little further .

"It's a chance to get people to express themselves that speaking English is okay," said Romano.

One such person is Harry Schick, owner of the very popular Swiss Vienna, who intends on distributing the pins to his customers.

"It's a start. A lot of francophones will wear them I think. A lot people are fed up with what's going in this province," said Schick, his mother a French-speaking Belgian.

Schick's bakery epitomizes the resistance towards the Office Quebecois de la Langue Francaise (OQLF), popularly known as the language police, which has inspected the Pointe Claire institution nearly 20 times in the last decade.

"We'll serve any customer in any language that they want, treat everybody equally. That's why my signs are all 50/50. Until an OQLF inspector tells me a francophone is three times better than an anglo, the signs will stay," said Schick.

Meanwhile, proceeds from the pin, as well as other Unity products like bumper stickers, which sell as little as \$2.49 each will help finance the defense of legal actions brought by the OQLF against local businesses.

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