

Justin Trudeau admits bilingual comments were 'cheeky'

Description

OTTAWA – Prime Minister Justin Trudeau admits he may have been a little “cheeky” when he made a comment last week on bilingualism.

When questioned by a Radio-Canada journalist if he supported the idea of Ottawa being designated a bilingual city, Trudeau asked whether the western Quebec town of Gatineau was ready to do the same.

Trudeau said Monday he was fully aware the comment would get him in trouble.

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“I knew it,” he said in an end-of-year-interview with The Canadian Press. “I was being cheeky, I admit it.”

Trudeau said, however, he was not questioning or criticizing Quebec's law making French the sole official language in the province.

“Not at all, not at all,” he insisted. “Quebec has to be French in order for Canada to be bilingual.”

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The prime minister said he is an ardent defender of the country's linguistic duality.

“I taught French in Vancouver,” he said. “I know how important bilingualism is.”

He said any decision about whether Ottawa should become officially bilingual needs to be made by municipal leaders and not by the federal government.

The debate resurfaces periodically and was rekindled due to the attention surrounding Canada's plans to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation in 2017.

Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson has spoken out against the idea on several occasions.

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