# STATUS REPORT for 1999 - 2000

on

Implementation of Section 41 of the *Official Languages Act* 

Status of Women Canada

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#### Introduction

Status of Women Canada (SWC) is pleased to present its report on achievements for the year 1999-2000 on implementation of section 41 of the *Official Languages Act*.

As the department responsible for the co-ordination of federal efforts to promote gender equality, SWC works in partnership with other federal departments, other levels of government, institutions, and communities to identify and remove barriers that impede full access and participation by all Canadian women in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the country. As such, SWC has an important role to play in assisting women from official language minority communities to contribute fully to the development of their communities and to participate equally in the processes and events that shape their lives, within these communities and within Canadian society at large.

As outlined in this report, SWC facilitates information-sharing and dialogue on gender equality issues with official language minority women and official language minority women's organizations through such means as organizing formal and informal consultations, teleconferences and roundtables. With 16 points of service across Canada, SWC supports the efforts of official language minority women's organizations by providing technical and financial assistance, policy research tools, promotional materials, and additional resources and services to facilitate their participation in gender equality efforts at local, regional, national and international levels. More specifically, in 1999-2000, SWC supported the objectives of section 41 of the *Official Languages Act* by pursuing four principal measures which are to:

- provide social development assistance to official language minority women's organizations and funding for activities consistent with Women's Program criteria and objectives;
- promote greater collaboration between decision-makers and official language minority women's organizations and facilitate the involvement of these organizations in the public policy process, at local, regional, national and international levels;
- encourage official language minority women and official language minority women's organizations to participate in SWC activities related to policy research; and
- promote and facilitate the commemoration of key women's equality dates (Women's History Month, International Women's Day, Persons Day, etc.) by official language minority women and official language minority women's organizations, as well as encourage their greater involvement.

Details on the accomplishments resulting from these principal measures are provided herein.
SWC looks forward to continuing efforts in support of official language minority communities across Canada and of the very vital contributions of official language minority women and official language minority women's organizations.

## Part I. Status Report for 1999-2000

#### Section I. Summary of Achievements for 1999-2000

Minister Responsible: The Honourable Sheila Copps, P.C., M.P. Secretary of State Responsible: The Honourable Hedy Fry, P.C., M.P.

### **Principal Achievements**

During 1999-2000, Status of Women Canada (SWC):

- provided funding in the amount of \$581,116 in support of 13 initiatives aimed specifically at addressing the concerns of official language minority women's organizations, as well as the Women's Program's objectives and areas of focus;
- supported the participation of official language minority women and official language minority women's organizations in various consultations and, in particular, in SWC's December 1999 policy consultation which also involved the Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), several Cabinet Ministers, SWC officials, other federal government officials, other levels of government and other women's organizations;
- involved official language minority women's organizations in SWC preparatory activities leading up to the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in June 2000 entitled *Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*; and
- encouraged the greater involvement of official language minority women and their women's organizations in commemorating key women's equality dates. Notably, two recipients of the 1999 Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case were from official language minority communities.

In the context of the Year of La Francophonie in Canada, SWC:

- pursued Yesterday and Today Francophone Women in Canada as theme for SWC's October 1999 Women's History Month which honoured Francophone women across Canada who have made their mark in Canadian history; and
- ensured that Francophone official language minority women's organizations were informed of Canadian preparations for the international conference on *Women and La Francophonie* held in Luxembourg in February 2000 and supported their participation as part of the Canadian delegation and among the non-governmental organizations represented at this conference.

### Section II. Status Report for 1999-2000

#### **Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate**

The Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate supports all four principal measures pursued by SWC. At the same time, the efforts of the Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate were aimed primarily at the following principal measure:

 To provide social development assistance to official language minority women's organizations and funding for activities consistent with Women's Program criteria and priorities.

The Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate estimates that, in 1999-2000, funding in the amount of \$581,116 was provided in support of 13 initiatives aimed specifically at addressing the concerns of official language minority women and official language minority women's organizations across Canada. Financial resources awarded to official language minority women's organizations vary from region to region, as well as from year to year.

## Examples of this funding follow:

- at the national level: Funding was provided to the Fédération nationale des femmes canadiennes-françaises in support of an initiative entitled Femmes francophones du 3e millénaire: pauvreté, économie et politique. This funding supported information gathering on the Internet and discussion groups, a national forum involving over 200 women representatives from across Canada in the identification of possible solutions to eliminate barriers to women's equality and the publication of the forum's proceedings. This initiative supports national and international efforts leading to the World March of Women in the Year 2000 and addresses critical areas of concern outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action.
- in British Columbia/Yukon: Funding was approved to be combined with a grant from Canadian Heritage, to support the efforts of *Réseau-femmes Colombie-Britannique* in relation to the *Year of La Francophonie* and in lead up to the *World March of Women* to heighten awareness in British Columbia's Francophone communities, women's organizations and society in general of the barriers to women's equality which Francophone minority women face. *Les Essentielles* in the Yukon received funding support for an initiative entitled *Rôle des femmes francophones dans le processus d'élaboration de politiques* which seeks to address systemic barriers to programming and services for Francophone women living in the Yukon.

- in the Prairies/Northwest Territories: In 1998-99, *Réseau de femmes* received multi-year funding in support of *Combattre la pauvreté* to identify the factors contributing to poverty among Francophone and Franco-Métis women in Manitoba. This initiative began with the compilation of a socio-economic profile of the Francophone woman in Manitoba, with assistance from the Centre d'études de l'Ouest, the Manitoba Archives and the Collège Saint-Boniface. In 1999-2000, this initiative included a series of workshops with Francophone and Franco-Métis women to identify the causes of the difficulties which they experience and meetings with appropriate officials in Manitoba's educational institutions to address the unique issues facing these women. The initiative will be completed in the year 2002.
- in Ontario: The *Centre des femmes francophones du nord-ouest de l'Ontario* received funding in support of a ten-month action research initiative entitled *Recherche-Action 2000*. This community-based research will document the needs and experiences of Francophone women survivors of violence in three districts: the Northwest, Algoma and greater Sudbury. The research will evaluate the existing French language programs and services, document needs not currently being met, identify appropriate options and models for support/service delivery and document other related issues such as mediation, custody and access and access to the justice system.
- in Québec/Nunavut: The *Réseau des répondantes diocésaines à la condition des femmes* received funding in support of workshops on spousal violence for clergy, social services and health intervenors and others from Montreal's Anglophone communities. Funding to *Mothering Matters* of Baie d'Urfé supports the development of a Charter of Rights for mothers which will be publicized, in consultation with *Mothering Matters* chapters.
- in the Atlantic: *The Réseau des femmes francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick* received funding to undertake action research entitled *Accessibilité aux études pour les femmes* aimed at examining the impact of policies and programs to assist young women, between the ages of 18 and 35, in the north east region of New Brunswick who are either unemployed or single parents, to return to school.

In addition to funding in support of initiatives aimed specifically at addressing the concerns of official language minority women and their women's organizations, SWC provided funding in support of initiatives aimed at addressing the concerns of a broader constituency of women while also involving significant participation of official language minority women. For example:

• at the national level: Funding was provided to *Nouveau Départ*, a national Francophone women's organization based in Québec, including support for the

preparation of a national symposium on issues which impact on women in their fifties, to be held in spring 2001. Eight roundtable discussions will be held in Alberta, the Yukon and Québec to gather input and ensure that the eventual symposium workshops will respond to the concerns of the greatest number of women and milieus. Initiatives of the West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund Association, the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and the Women's Future Fund, as examples, included the participation of Francophone minority women in conferences and workshops aimed at addressing issues of common concern, identifying strategies for effective action and building a collaborative working relationship among women's organizations, and were funded by SWC.

- in the Prairies/Northwest Territories: The initiative *Challenging the System* involves *Pluri-elles* and *the Fort Garry Women's Centre* in collaborative work to gather community-based information from women and to provide input to the proposed provincial Domestic Violence Act. Their findings and recommendations will be presented to the Women's Advocacy Branch and the Family Violence Prevention Branch of the Manitoba Ministry of Justice, as well as to the Seniors' Directorate.
- in Québec/Nunavut: Multi-year funding was provided *Studio XX*, a bilingual organization, in support of an initiative aimed at increasing the effectiveness of actions taken by women's organizations using cyberspace. It includes a workshop on how to undertake public education campaigns using cyberspace, training on how to use cyberspace to prepare submissions and undertake research and consultations, as well as meetings to discuss how new information technologies offer the means to work for social change.
- in the Atlantic: The collective of *Making Waves* and *Vague par vague*, with funding support from SWC, is pursuing work to ensure that Anglophone and Francophone youth have the skills, knowledge and awareness needed to help each other to work on ensuring that appropriate policies and protocols are implemented in New Brunswick schools on the issue of dating violence. SWC support to the *Coalition for Woman Abuse Policy and Protocol in Prince Edward Island* includes the participation of women from Prince Edward Island's Francophone communities in collective efforts to work toward reducing violence against women by creating opportunities to impact on the development of sustainable policies and protocols for responses to woman abuse in the areas of Justice and Income Assistance across the Island. The *Gander Status of Women Council* in Newfoundland received SWC funding in support of the *Atlantic Women and Justice Conference* which will examine the systemic barriers faced by both Francophone and Anglophone women across the region on issues pertaining to the administration and policies of the legal aid system.

As is standard practice, all requests for funding are reviewed on a case by case basis, according to Women's Program criteria, funding areas and available resources, with particular attention to initiatives which are aimed at addressing the concerns of women facing multiple barriers, including official language minority women.

Additional activities were pursued by SWC across Canada in support of implementation of section 41 of the *Official Languages Act*, in 1999-2000. For example,

- at the national level: SWC's national section 41 co-ordinator participated in consultations organized by Canadian Heritage aimed at the development of an evaluation framework for implementation of sections 41 and 42 of the *Official Languages Act*. The national section 41 co-ordinator also gathered information and advice, reviewed a number of departmental models and drafted a multi-year action plan for implementation of section 41 of the *Official Languages Act* which SWC has now adopted for the years 2000-2003.
- in British Columbia/Yukon: SWC co-chaired the Official Languages Committee of the Pacific Council of Senior Federal Officials; championed the priority issues of Francophone women at inter-departmental and inter-governmental meetings, including those of the Women's Employment Advisory Committee, the British Columbia and Yukon Rural teams, the Pacific Council of Senior Federal Officials (and its Policy and Official Languages Committees), and Homelessness Initiative; initiated and financially supported the participation by federal public servants and community members in a workshop on the non-sexist use of the French language co-ordinated by Réseau-Femmes Colombie-Britannique in Vancouver; met with the new Commissioner of Official Languages to discuss the particular realities of Francophone minority women in general and the proactive role that the Office of the Commissioner can play to assist Francophone official language minority women and participated in her group consultation with Anglophone public servants in the region; included a representative of Réseau-Femmes Colombie-Britannique in a roundtable consultation with eight women's equality organizations hosted by the Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women) in Vancouver.
- in the Prairies/Northwest Territories: In Manitoba, Anglophone women's organizations were encouraged to include representation from urban and rural Francophone women's groups and Franco-Métis women in the planning stages of initiatives. In Alberta, contacts were initiated with an ad hoc team which is involved in the issue of French-language daycare and information on Women's Program funding was provided to a new Francophone women's organization in Lethbridge. SWC provided bilingual display materials including policy research publications, gender-based analysis materials, Women's Program funding guidelines and the SWC publications order form for an October 1999 information fair organized by the Calgary chapter of the *Alliance française*. Information on SWC's 1999 Women's History Month was provided to *Le Franco*, the provincial

Francophone newspaper. Technical assistance was provided to the women's committee of *l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta* which is researching the historical contributions of Francophone women in the Edmonton area. Also, an initial meeting was held with the *Association Multiculturelle Franco-Albertaine*. In Saskatchewan, the *Saskatchewan Action Committee* was encouraged to ensure the involvement of Francophone women in their initiative to influence public policy in the area of women's employment and training. Specifically, this organization actively sought the participation of Francophone women by holding a focus group in Gravelbourg and by inviting a representative of the *Fédération provinciale des Fransaskoises* to attend the provincial forum in Regina. In all three provinces and the Northwest Territories, staff made consistent efforts to ensure that Francophone women were included in all consultations, mail-outs, meetings of a general nature and other information-sharing opportunities.

- in Ontario: SWC staff continued to provide social development assistance to Francophone women's organizations, including encouraging links with Anglophone groups working on the same issues of concern, to facilitate the sharing of resources developed by community groups and to collaborate with other departments and levels of government to share information and plan interventions to meet expressed community needs.
- in Québec/Nunavut: In Québec, staff communicated with a number of English speaking organizations to provide information and technical assistance, including the *Coasters' Association* (Côte-Nord) and *Women Aware* (Montreal). Contacts with the *University Women's Club* (Montreal) led to a meeting between representatives of this organization and the Honourable Hedy Fry, Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women) in February, 2000. In 1999-2000, responsibility for administering SWC's programs and services in Nunavut was transferred to the region of Québec. SWC's regional director for Québec subsequently visited Nunavut and met with the *Association des francophones du Nunavut* to receive information on the Francophone community's needs and provide information on SWC.
- in the Atlantic: SWC supported organizing meetings of Francophone women by providing free meeting space as well as the resources required to translate documents which were relevant to the discussions. Staff in the region also worked to ensure the inclusion and participation of Francophone women's organizations in various provincial collectivities, consultations and regional meetings to address shared priorities such as women's economic autonomy, gender-based analysis, family violence and the prevention of youth dating violence. SWC officers have attended various meetings organized by the Francophone women's organizations of the region. As well, during the Fédération nationale des femmes canadiennes-françaises' national forum entitled Bâtir ensemble vers l'égalité, SWC's Atlantic region representative held a meeting of Francophone women representatives from the Atlantic region to ensure an updating of regional needs and concerns. This

meeting was attended by the Association des femmes francophones de la Nouvelle-Écosse, the Institut féminin francophone du Nouveau-Brunswick, the Société des Acadiens et Acadiennes du Nouveau-Brunswick, the Association des femmes francophones de l'Île du Prince Édouard, the Fédération des Dames d'Acadie, as well as by representatives from the Canadian International Development Agency and Canadian Heritage. The Atlantic region has undertaken the necessary steps to sit on various inter-departmental committees offering co-ordinated support to the communities such as the Canadian Rural Partnership interdepartmental meetings.

SWC staff participated in the Federal Institutions - Francophone Community Consultations co-ordinated by Canadian Heritage at the national level and in the regions, to initiate new contacts, exchange information and promote gender-based analysis. In all regions and at the national level, Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate annual planning with respect to section 41 continues to be integrated into the regional/national program delivery planning and evaluation process.

## Policy Analysis, Development and External Relations Directorate

The efforts of the Policy Analysis, Development and External Relations Directorate were aimed primarily at the following principal measure:

• To promote greater collaboration between decision-makers and official language minority women's organizations and facilitate the involvement of these organizations in the public policy process, at local, regional, national and international levels.

In 1996-97, the then Policy Analysis and Development Directorate released *Gender-Based Analysis: A Guide for Policy-Making*, the purpose of which is to assist policy-makers in taking into account the differing impacts of policies and legislation on women and men. One of the key elements of gender-based analysis is to give consideration to the diversity of women, including race, disability, official language minority status, age and sexual orientation. This guide continues to be distributed widely, including to official language minority women's organizations.

In December 1999, the Policy Analysis, Development and External Relations Directorate, in collaboration with the Communications and Consultations Directorate and the Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate organized a formal policy consultation on gender equality involving over 100 representatives from women's and other voluntary organizations and other representatives of civil society. This consultation served as a mechanism for information sharing and policy input with a focus on four issue areas: economic, health and environment, human rights and violence against women. Official language minority women and their organizations were well represented during this consultation, both as facilitators and participants. Participants had the opportunity to present key policy concerns to a number of Cabinet Ministers during plenary sessions and also had a number of occasions to discuss these

concerns with the Honourable Hedy Fry, Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women). All consultation materials were available simultaneously in both official languages and proceedings in plenary, as well as in all workshops, were in both French and English and were supported by simultaneous translation. A bilingual consultation report is expected to be made available in the coming months.

In the context of the Year of La Francophonie in Canada, Francophone official language minority women's organizations were kept informed of Canadian preparations for the international conference on Women and La Francophonie held in Luxembourg in February 2000. The President of the Fédération des femmes canadiennes-françaises participated in this international conference as part of the Canadian delegation. This first-ever conference of La Francophonie on gender equality adopted the Luxembourg Declaration addressing issues of concern to women in member states and governments including power and decision-making, education, health, economic empowerment and peace. The Declaration also addresses the need to develop institutional capacity to promote gender equality in La Francophonie.

## **Beijing** + 5 **Secretariat**

The efforts of the Beijing + 5 Secretariat were aimed primarily at the following principal measure:

• To promote greater collaboration between decision-makers and official language minority women's organizations and facilitate the involvement of these organizations in the public policy process, at local, regional, national and international levels.

This Secretariat was established in August, 1999 to co-ordinate the Government of Canada's preparations for the United Nations Special Session on *Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* to be held in June 2000. The Secretariat works to ensure the broad and effective participation of non-governmental organizations in activities leading to the United Nations Special Session (known as Beijing + 5).

The Secretariat has ensured that official language minority women and their organizations have access to relevant documents produced in both official languages through, for example, the Beijing + 5 web site and through distribution of printed Beijing + 5 documentation.

The Secretariat took into consideration the diversity of women, including official language minority women, in the nomination and selection process for non-governmental representatives to the Beijing + 5 Preparatory Meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) held at the United Nations in February-March, 2000.

The Secretariat involved women's organizations including official language minority women's organizations in international activities including those related to the CSW and preparations for the UN Beijing + 5 Special Session to be held in June 2000. For example, in February 2000, SWC provided support to the *Feminist Alliance for International Action* to hold a national consultation in preparation for the February-March Preparatory Meeting and leading to the Special Session. Official language minority women participated in this event.

#### **Research Directorate**

The efforts of the Research Directorate were aimed primarily at the following principal measure:

• To ensure that official language minority women and official language minority women's organizations participate in SWC activities related to policy research.

In 1999-2000, the Policy Research Fund released five research publications, in both official languages. One report was published under the theme *Reducing Women's Poverty: Policy Options, Direction and Frameworks*, entitled *The Changing Nature of Home Care and Its Impact on Women's Vulnerability to Poverty.* Two reports were published under the theme *Factoring Diversity into Policy Analysis and Development; New Tools, Frameworks, Methods and Applications* – one entitled *Enabling Income: CPP Disability Benefits and Women with Disabilities* and the other, *If Gender Mattered: A Case Study of Inuit Women, Land Claims and the Voisey's Bay Nickel Project.* A collection of four reports was published as a result of an urgent call for proposals and entitled *Women and the Canadian Human Rights Act.* As well, a report on the evaluation of the unpaid work data, introduced for the first time in the 1996 census, was published.

The Research Directorate has continued to ensure that all our stakeholders, including official language minority women and women's organizations, have access to all policy research reports funded by the Policy Research Fund. These research reports are distributed to federal, provincial and territorial Ministers and government officials, SWC regional offices, women's groups, and other targeted individuals. They are available free of charge from SWC to the public, and are posted on the SWC Internet web site in both official languages, thus enhancing their accessibility to linguistic minority women and organizations.

The Research Directorate continues to fund research projects that reflect the diversity of the Canadian population in areas such as women's paid and unpaid work, integrating diversity into policy analysis and development and women's poverty, including research projects on aboriginal women, women with disabilities, and official language minority women.

The Research Directorate has ensured that individuals, women's organizations and other equality-seeking organizations working in either official language are included among those receiving calls for proposals for policy research reports, in the language of their choice. The calls for proposals are also posted in both official languages on the SWC Internet web site, thereby enhancing their accessibility to linguistic minority communities.

In 1998-99, funding was provided for two research projects of specific interest to Francophone official language minority women. Both are still in progress. The first is entitled Qui prends pays...l'impact du parrainage sur les droits à l'égalité des immigrantes francophones en Ontario/The Impact of Sponsorship on the Equality Rights of Francophone Immigrant Women in Ontario and is being undertaken by La Table féministe francophone de concertation provinciale de l'Ontario. The other is entitled Reconnaissance légale des couples de même sexe: une analyse féministe des besoins, des modèles et leurs principales conséquences sociales, économiques et juridiques pour les femmes dans une union lesbienne/ Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Couples: a Feminist Analysis of Needs, Models and Their Major Social, Economic and Legal Impacts for Women in Lesbian Relationships and is being undertaken by La Coopérative Convergence, a French-speaking group of feminist researchers based in Ottawa.

## **Communications and Consultations Directorate**

The efforts of the Communications and Consultations Directorate were aimed primarily at the following principal measure:

• To promote and facilitate the commemoration of key women's equality dates (Women's History Month, International Women's Day, Persons Day, etc.) by official language minority women and official language minority women's organizations, as well as encourage their greater involvement.

A variety of bilingual communications products for special events such as International Women's Day, Women's History Month, National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women and the Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case were sent to individuals and organizations on SWC's mailing lists, including women in official language minority communities and official language minority women's organizations.

In the context of the *Year of La Francophonie in Canada*, SWC's eighth annual Women's History Month, celebrated in October 1999, honoured the contributions of Francophone women across Canada who have made their mark in Canadian history. The theme selected was *Yesterday and Today – Francophone Women in Canada*. A variety of bilingual information highlighting the achievements of Francophone women was prepared and made available in print and on the SWC Internet web site. The 1999 Women's History Month was publicized in Canadian Heritage's autumn 1999 issue of

Bulletin 41-42. As well, with the assistance of Canadian Heritage, SWC's mailing list for distribution of Women's History Month materials was expanded to include a number of additional national and regional official language minority organizations.

Five Canadian women were chosen to receive the 1999 Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case. The Honourable Hedy Fry, Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women) announced the names of the recipients on October 14, 1999. The recipients included Ms. Anne Marie Perry of Tignish, Prince Edward Island who continues her lifelong commitment to the active promotion of French language education and of the Acadian culture in her province. Ms. Perry was the Prince Edward Island representative of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Another 1999 recipient, Ms. Enid Page of Aylmer, Québec played a pivotal role in establishing MATCH, an international organization working for women's equality.

## **Executive and Information Services Directorate**

The efforts of the Executive and Information Services Directorate support all four principal measures pursued by SWC.

The Executive and Information Services Directorate provided translation services for all SWC public documents, ensured correspondence and information services, and provided library services by appointment to the public, in both official languages. This Directorate also maintains the SWC Internet web site, which is accessible in both official languages. Regular input of new SWC publications and documents continues to be assured. The SWC Internet web site includes hyperlinks to the sites of official language minority women's organizations and other women's organizations across Canada, as well as links to Parliament and to federal government departments.

In 1999-2000, the SWC Internet web site was expanded to include a distinct, bilingual site of interest to women and their organizations across Canada on the five-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the global *Beijing Platform for Action* adopted at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women held in 1995. Online reference with library services has also been added to the SWC Internet web site. As well, the section of SWC's Internet web site devoted to the 1999 Women's History Month was modified to include a hyperlink to the *Year of La Francophonie in Canada* Internet web site.

# Section III. Distribution of the Status Report

Florence Ievers

Status of Women Canada

Co-ordinator

Part II. Signatures

This Status Report will be distributed to all SWC staff as well as to key organizations at the national and regional levels, to the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. It will also be available for consultation, in downloadable format, on the SWC Internet web site.

Helen Doyon	Date
National Co-ordinator	
- Section 41	
Status of Women Canada	
Telephone: (613) 947-0206	

Date