



Office of the
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DISCUSSION FORUM

on the Perspectives of Canadians of Diverse
Backgrounds on Linguistic Duality

FINAL REPORT

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MONTRÉAL



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**DISCUSSION FORUM ON THE PERSPECTIVES OF CANADIANS OF DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS ON
LINGUISTIC DUALITY**

Novotel Hotel, Montréal, Quebec

November 21 & 22, 2012

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1.0 SUMMARY

The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages organized a discussion forum on the perspectives of Canadians of diverse backgrounds on linguistic duality and cultural diversity in Montréal on November 21 and 22, 2012. This forum brought together nearly 60 leaders from various ethno-cultural groups and representatives of multicultural organizations from both the English- and French-speaking communities for two 1-day sessions (one day in each official language), as well as special guests and employees from the Office of the Commissioner's Montréal, Moncton and Ottawa offices. The purpose of these meetings was to gain a better understanding of the issues and perspectives of Canadians of diverse backgrounds.

The discussion forum program was based on the particular situation of Quebec's being the only province in Canada where French is the official majority language and where English-speaking Canadians are in the minority. The participants were asked to discuss their perspectives during two workshops and plenary sessions, which focused on the following themes:

- Integrating into Canadian society, and
- Perspectives on cultural diversity.

The forum was started each day by the Commissioner of Official Languages, Graham Fraser, who gave a historical overview of linguistic duality and cultural diversity in Canada. Later, on each day, a presentation was given by Jillian Tanoja (first day in English) and Aly Ndiaye (second day in French) on their experiences with and vision of linguistic duality and cultural diversity as engaged youth in their respective communities. A bridging event between the two sessions was held on the evening of November 21, 2012, at the Monument-National, enabling forum participants from both the English and French days to meet and network.

Integrating into Canadian society

In the morning sessions, participants were given a set of questions to frame discussions on their experiences of integrating into Canadian society in terms of language, opportunities and challenges, and what might make integration easier.

In general, participants said that language had been an important aspect of integrating into Canadian society, but that accent and any lack of skill in English or French was often an impediment to gaining professional employment. This was perceived by some participants as a pretext for refusing employment to those from cultural communities, especially visible minorities. Those who had located in regions outside of the Greater Montréal Area had also found the transition to be more difficult due to the lack of community and program support.

Participants were asked to reflect on the opportunities and challenges faced by themselves or newcomers. Knowledge of multiple languages, including English and French, was described as an opportunity that leads to many more openings than if they were only able to speak one official language. It was noted, however, that bilingualism alone was not necessarily sufficient for successful integration into society or the labour market.

Participants said that the challenges differed between generations, and that language was not generally considered an obstacle. However, racism and stereotyping were mentioned frequently as challenges, particularly by those who were not of western European descent. Both English- and French-speaking participants expressed frustration that government policies could be a barrier, citing such things as the lack of support for learning French and English outside of schools, as well as the restrictions for English speakers on access to English schooling. Another notable challenge expressed was the recognition of academic and professional credentials in employment positions and Canadian work experience.

Finally, education was cited as the most important element to facilitate integration. Participants mentioned not only language training, but also cross-cultural education for all Quebec residents given the rapidly changing demographic makeup of the province, Montréal in particular. It was also noted that newcomers are not sufficiently prepared by immigration services in advance of their arrival—better preparation would make integration easier.

Perspectives on cultural diversity

In the afternoon sessions, participants were given a second set of questions to frame discussions on their understanding of cultural diversity, the role it plays in daily life and how language and culture have affected integration into Canadian society. For the final segment, participants considered the complementary and contradictory aspects of linguistic duality and cultural diversity.

The description and meaning of cultural diversity for participants was captured in a range of words, such as pride, curiosity, acceptance (of cultural differences), inclusion, richness, respect, coexistence, sharing, openness and celebration (of individual cultures). It was noted that cultural diversity is the opposite of assimilation, and there was some concern expressed about the concept of interculturalism, which is perceived to be about assimilation rather than integration in the Quebec context.

For all participants, the experience of switching between both official languages and their native tongues—among themselves, family members and the general public—was expressed as a prime example of how cultural diversity plays a part in their daily lives. For most participants, the ability to communicate in numerous languages, including English and French, was considered a social and professional asset that facilitated their integration into Canadian society.

With regard to linguistic duality in Quebec, the general consensus among participants was that a paradox exists: you have to be bilingual—to be able to speak both official languages—and yet it is not enough for full integration in Quebec society. Integration, participants believed, goes beyond the question of language. They suggested the need for a de-politicization of official languages and culture due to the polarizing effect on Canadians of all linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Finally, participants considered whether cultural diversity and linguistic duality are complementary or contradictory. For the most part, participants viewed the relationship as complementary given that new immigrants often live in both language communities and speak both languages. Yet they also saw points of contradiction, especially when youth feel they have to make a choice as to which community they belong to, with parental pressure to speak the family's mother tongue and societal pressure to speak

the official languages. They question their place in society as a result. “Which group are we a part of?” they ask.

Suggestions

During their discussions, participants made the following suggestions to improve integration in a context of linguistic duality and cultural diversity:

- Those immigrating to Canada would greatly benefit from better preparation before they arrive;
- Canada must address the issue of newcomers not being able to find appropriate work, even with their academic and professional credentials and ability to speak two or more languages;
- The potential benefits of integration would be more efficiently and effectively realized if there were more consistent and targeted support programs for newcomers, particularly with regard to settlement, employment and language education;
- A far-reaching dialogue on linguistic duality and cultural diversity is required.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 FORUM OBJECTIVES

The Office of the Commissioner held a discussion forum on the perspectives of Canadians of diverse backgrounds on linguistic duality in Montréal on November 21 and 22, 2012. The event was the fourth and final in a series of similar events held across the country (Toronto in 2007, Vancouver in 2008 and Halifax in 2011). The objective of the Montréal event was to gain knowledge of the perceptions of Canadians of diverse backgrounds, whose first official language is English or French, regarding linguistic duality and cultural diversity in Canada. The Montréal forum aimed to help fill gaps in the Office of the Commissioner's knowledge of Quebec's unique perspective on linguistic duality and cultural diversity. In October 2005, the Office of the Commissioner held discussions with experts and policy leaders on the benefits of making linguistic duality and cultural diversity more important ingredients in the development of Canada. A series of recommendations to the Office of the Commissioner resulted from the discussions, including the consultation of ethno-cultural community representatives. The Montréal forum was the last in a series of similar events held across the country that responded to this recommendation.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

The format of the Montréal forum was similar to the two-day event held in Halifax in 2011 in which a full day each of discussions was devoted to English (official language minority community within Quebec) and French (official language minority community within Canada) perspectives on linguistic duality and cultural diversity.

The Office of the Commissioner sent participants a short background document covering the essential elements of linguistic duality and cultural diversity to prepare for the discussion sessions. The program (Appendix A) followed this background paper closely in terms of the content and questions that were used to frame discussions during the forum. Participants were asked to share their perspectives on linguistic duality and cultural diversity through presentations, during plenary sessions and in discussion groups. They were divided into six pre-set working groups. The discussions covered two major themes: integrating into Canadian society; and perspectives on cultural diversity.

2.3 PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Fifty-two people participated in the forum: 26 in the English-speaking session and 26 in the French. They were mostly from the Greater Montréal Area, including leaders from ethno-cultural groups, representatives from multicultural organizations that provide integration services to new Canadians and other interested individuals. In addition, the Office of the Commissioner invited several staff members from its Montréal, Moncton and Ottawa offices to act as facilitators and workshop leaders, and to hear participants' thoughts and views first-hand. A short pre-forum questionnaire on participants' profiles revealed that:

Among English-speaking participants:

- 77% were born outside Canada;
- 38% have English as their mother tongue;
- 12% have French as their mother tongue;
- 85% said they are bilingual in Canada's two official languages;
- There were 17 different countries of origin represented: Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Canada, China, Great Britain, Grenada, India, Italy, Jamaica, Pakistan, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Vietnam;
- 23 languages are spoken: Amharic (Ethiopian), Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, English, French, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Kinyarwanda, Kiswahili, Mandarin, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Telugu, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese;
- Most speak at least two languages, some up to five.

Among French-speaking participants:

- 92% were born outside Canada;
- 19% have French as their mother tongue;
- 69% said they are bilingual in Canada's two official languages;
- There were 18 different countries of origin represented: Algeria, Armenia, Burundi, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Djibouti, France, Iran, Ivory Coast, Lebanon, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Nicaragua and Russia;
- 18 languages are spoken: Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Creole, Dari, English, Farsi, French, Greek, Italian, Kirundi, Lingala, Mandarin, Oromo, Russian, Somali, Spanish and Turkish;
- Most speak at least two languages, some up to five.

2.4 PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT

This report is presented in three parts. The first provides background on the forum, including the discussion framework and summaries of the presentations made to participants. These included three presentations by Graham Fraser, the Commissioner of Official Languages (opening and closing remarks and a presentation at the evening bridging event between the English and French sessions of the forum), an overview of linguistic duality and cultural diversity in Canada, and presentations by Jillian Tanoja and Aly Ndiaye on their experience as engaged youth with linguistic duality and cultural diversity, and their vision of the two.

The report's second part describes the discussions and results of the workshops that focused on the two themes, "Integrating into Canadian Society" and "Perspectives on Cultural Diversity." These discussions gave the Office of the Commissioner the opportunity to listen to accounts of people's experience with linguistic duality, in both English and French ethno-cultural communities.

The third part of the report summarizes the forum's key points. It also includes evaluation results, based on a post-participation questionnaire. This input on participants' experiences at the forum provides the Office of the Commissioner with ideas on how to improve the format and content of future consultations on the same topic.

3.0 DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK

All four of the discussion forums focused participant conversations on linguistic duality and cultural diversity, but each was framed slightly differently to suit its audience and location, for example adapting such aspects as historical overview, immigration, community relationships, strengthening connections and the opportunities and challenges inherent in all of the above. In Montréal, the discussions were framed by two essential questions: the challenges and opportunities for members of ethno-cultural communities integrating into Canadian society, and their perspectives on linguistic duality.

3.1 INTEGRATING INTO CANADIAN SOCIETY

As in other parts of the world, newcomers to Canada face challenges, such as entering the work force, obtaining recognition of international credentials, or experiencing culture shock, isolation, prejudice and discrimination. However, immigration to Canada also offers an opportunity to participate in the linguistic and cultural development of a community. There are tools newcomers need to fully take part in linguistic duality (learning the other official language, receiving federal government services in the official language of their choice, etc.) so they can participate in all aspects of community life. Because second- (and subsequent-) generation immigrants have been educated in Canada, speak at least one of the official languages and are more familiar with workplace customs, the difficulties associated with being a newcomer may be less prevalent for them. However, their experience is nonetheless important.

Each morning during the forum, participants discussed their integration into Canadian society in small groups and then reported back to the plenary session. In sharing their perceptions and experiences of adjusting to this particular language environment, they were encouraged to reflect on the challenges and opportunities presented by linguistic duality. The discussions were framed by the following questions:

- What has been your experience integrating into Canadian society? Did language play a role?
- In your experience as a Canadian of diverse origin, what were the opportunities?
- In your experience as a Canadian of diverse origin, what were the challenges?
- Given these challenges, what could have made your integration easier?

3.2 PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY

By integrating into Canadian communities, newcomers of diverse backgrounds are in a special position with respect to Canada's linguistic duality. They can benefit from bilingualism while contributing to the vitality (community governance, immigration, health and access to government services) of their new language environment. This unique situation at the crossroads of linguistic duality and cultural diversity also presents some challenges.

Each afternoon during the forum, participants were invited to discuss their perceptions of cultural diversity in small groups and to reflect on the relationship between linguistic duality and cultural diversity in the context of each participant's experience integrating into Canadian society. The discussions were framed by the following questions:

- What does cultural diversity mean to you?
- What role does cultural diversity play in your daily life (in your community, in your city, etc.)?

- In your experience, how have language and culture affected your integration into Canadian society?
- What are complementary or contradictory aspects of linguistic duality and cultural diversity?

4.0 FORUM PROGRAM

4.1 OPENING REMARKS – UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages

“Linguistic duality and cultural diversity from yesterday to today”

The Commissioner provided an overview of linguistic duality and cultural diversity as central elements in Canada’s history—elements that now constitute two fundamental values of Canadian society. This is particularly important in the context of Montréal as a place of cultural creativity, innovation and ongoing dialogue regarding the links between cultural diversity and linguistic duality in Canada. Montréal is a vibrant multicultural city and has become an international centre for a whole series of cultural phenomena, such as the independent music and film scenes and the high-tech creative industries.

In addition, Quebec is the only province in Canada where French is the official majority language, and where English-speaking Canadians are in the minority. This, the Commissioner noted, can be confusing because of the contradictory messages from the federal government promoting linguistic duality and the Quebec government emphasizing the importance of using mainly French. Montréal has the highest rate of bilingualism in the country, according to the 2011 Census figures, with more than half the population reporting the ability to converse in both English and French. The Census also revealed that the fastest growing language group in the province is Quebecers who speak French and another language that is not English, rising from 3.8% of the population in 2006 to 5% in 2011. In short, although French is the common and official language of Quebec, both languages have a place in this province and both are part of the common heritage of Quebecers.

The Commissioner proposed that cultural diversity and linguistic duality are two key Canadian values that also complement each other. Canada’s cultural diversity, he noted, is a direct result of the steady growth of its diverse population in recent decades. Canadians of diverse backgrounds adopt one—or even both—official languages, and this contributes to the vitality of linguistic duality while allowing people of all backgrounds to participate fully in Canadian society. This will be particularly important given that, in the coming decades, Canadian society will continue to see significant socio-demographic changes. It is estimated that, by 2031, over one-quarter of the population will have been born outside of Canada, which will lower the proportion of Canadians whose mother tongue is either English or French.

4.2 SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Linguistic duality and cultural diversity: experience and vision of an engaged youth

Jillian Tanoja is a counselor in the arts and culture sector at Youth Employment Services (YES) in Montréal. She spoke at the English-language session of the two-day discussion forum.

Jillian is a second-generation immigrant born and raised in the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce area of Montréal. She described her experience growing up as a Filipino Canadian learning and embracing two official languages and trying to find her place in a diverse Montréal community. She spoke of the challenges of finding harmony between two cultural backgrounds, one shaped by the roots of her immigrant parents,

and the other by her individual culture being moulded by growing up in both English and French in a bilingual suburb of Montréal.

As a child, she had no notion of ethnicity until she started school, when other children in the French immersion program did not know anything about the Philippines or her background. “What are you?” they would ask. As a teenager, she struggled with this question of being a Filipina, a Canadian and a Quebecer in a bilingual Montréal. To resolve the issue and better integrate with a Canadian identity, she decided that she had no attachment to her parents’ home country. It was only once she started her post-secondary studies that she had a strong desire to explore these issues again. Jillian then realized that she was both Filipino and Canadian, and that she needed to discover more about her culture. This led her to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree in community and ethnic studies at Concordia University, which helped her further understand how Canadians define themselves in a context of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Jillian described a number of personal experiences that helped shape her outlook on linguistic duality and cultural diversity: for example, belonging to a church congregation that had members from 35 different countries and listening to the many languages being spoken every day on the Montréal metro. She also spoke about the exchange program in which she participated in Saskatchewan. She noted how eager youth are to learn the other official language and that it sets a good example for newcomers arriving in the country. She remarked how her “Anglo Montréal” roots had inspired her to seek a career path working with entrepreneurs and artists who want to stay in the city, putting her bilingual certificate from high school and her cultural experiences to work. She noted that immigrants often have difficulty understanding the Canadian work setting, and job seekers are not always confident. She can thus help them learn the skills they need, including French, for the workplace.

Jillian concluded by saying that it can be very intimidating to keep up in another language, but that these kinds of challenges are what make us stronger. The dynamic of both official languages makes Montréal unique as a city, and French has therefore become part of her own culture. Being a Canadian does not mean you have to fit within a traditional Canadian definition; rather, as she discovered in her connections between being Filipino, a Quebecer and a Canadian, these relationships can be fluid.

Vignette

Jillian’s cultural journey started when her mother and father moved to Montréal from the Philippines, speaking hardly a word of English or French. There was no Google at the time to help them find out about multiculturalism in Canada. Her father sponsored his three younger brothers, and they all lived in the same house, so Jillian’s upbringing was in a close-knit Filipino family, a setting that was quite foreign to her friends. “Why do you never call your brother by his first name?” they would ask. “Why do you have a roasted pig for Christmas instead of a turkey?”

Linguistic duality and cultural diversity: experience and vision of an engaged youth

Aly Ndiaye is a hip-hop artist and founding member of the Limoilou Starz collective, as well as a speaker on multiculturalism in Quebec. He spoke at the French-language session of the two-day discussion forum.

Aly Ndiaye, alias Webster, was born in the Limoilou suburb of Québec City. His father was from Senegal, and his mother from Quebec. He said he has always been proud of his origins as a “SénéQuébécois pure laine.” He and his sister grew up as the only black kids in their school. As a teenager he was looking for models. But even amongst the few that he found, “What did they have to say to a little guy from Limoilou?” This question led him to his two great passions in life: writing and performing rap music in French and the historic role of blacks in Quebec and Canada.

He talked about discovering American rap music and the appeal of its image as “guys from the street.” This led to a journey that involved learning to rap in English, since there was no rap music in French, then three albums in which he re-invented himself over a nine-year period to develop rap music that would speak not just to a French audience but a French Quebec audience. He reflected on the importance of understanding the language of one’s community, whichever it may be, and of not letting language become politicized. He spent time re-working his art to be more responsive—quite a challenge given that the lyrical style of rap by urban Afro-Americans does not transform easily into French. “I had to come back down the mountain and learn how to sing again, how to move my lips (in French),” he said, but felt he was able to write better and deeper in French as it was closer to what he had learned in his youth.

Parallel to his musical journey, Aly was equally engaged in discovering his cultural past. He said people always ask where he is from, assuming he is a foreigner, despite the fact he was born and raised just down the street in Limoilou. Like many blacks throughout Canada’s history, he has been here since the beginning. He noted that Matthieu Da Costa was a black navigator and interpreter in the early 1600s, serving Samuel de Champlain’s exploration of the St. Lawrence River, and that in 1858 the first governor of British Columbia, James Douglas, was black. In his search for black role models, Aly has been intrigued by the fact that stories of “the regular guy” are only a recent feature of history; previously it was only about major events, such as wars.

Aly believes that changing languages from English to French to express his musical creativity was a positive move, while learning English had nonetheless made travel easier. It was a choice to be inspiring, he said, based on the reality of his own cultural background rather than just playing the role of victim. Following that model, he has, since 2009, been travelling across North America giving workshops, to young and old alike, on how to write hip-hop in French.

Vignette

Aly Ndiaye’s nickname, “Webster,” was given to him in high school because he was always reading books and delving into the dictionary of the same name to learn the meaning of words.

4.3 BRIDGING EVENT

A networking activity was held on the evening of November 21, 2012, at the Monument-National as an opportunity to meet and exchange with forum participants from both the English and French sessions. Opened in 1893 by the Association Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal (the present-day St-Jean-Baptiste Society), the Monument-National is situated at the historical intersection between Francophone neighbourhoods (to the east) and Anglophone areas (to the west). With its daring architecture and imposing dimensions, the Monument-National was the first “monument,” as such, to celebrate the

French-Canadian nation, hence its description as the “National Monument.” It has a long history of theatrical innovation, featuring artists and performances in both French and English.

Participants were welcomed by Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages, who noted that the bridging event was part of the Office of the Commissioner’s mandate to promote linguistic duality and bilingualism in Canada. After providing some background on the series of discussion forums that had been held since 2007, he noted that linguistic duality highlights the concepts of sharing and dialogue between Anglophones and Francophones—an exercise in bridging the “the two solitudes” that takes time and effort. The evening, he remarked, was an opportunity to engage in discussions with other participants who come from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds but who are all interested in building Canadian society together.

The Commissioner reviewed important trends that are affecting Canada’s linguistic landscape, such as support for Canadian bilingualism from the vast majority of Canadians whose first language is neither English nor French, which confirms the unquestionable—and increasing—importance of Canada’s linguistic duality. He concluded by saying that Canada’s two official languages serve as vehicles for citizens to talk to each other as Canadians; and that at a time when language issues are re-emerging in Canada’s political landscape, it is especially important to emphasize that the future of linguistic duality depends on the ability of Canadian institutions to promote a linguistic environment where people are not divided into two solitudes and where there is a place for both English and French in every region of Canada.

Special Guest

The Commissioner then invited the evening’s special guest, Josh Freed, to talk to participants in the networking activity. Josh Freed is a journalist, author and humorist from Montréal who is noted for his weekly column in the *Montréal Gazette*. In 1997 and 2002, he won the National Newspaper Award for best Canadian columnist, while a collection of his columns also won the Leacock Prize for humour. In addition to writing his columns, Josh is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, an activity that has taken him to Mongolia, Russia and even the North Pole. He is also the author of many successful books, including *Vive Le Québec Freed* and *The Anglo Guide to Survival in Québec*. A collection of his most recent columns, *He Who Laughs, Lasts*, was published the day before the event.

Josh talked about the dichotomies of being an Anglophone in Quebec, the struggle to speak French without too much of an English accent, and his roots as a Jewish Montrealer.

5.0 WORKSHOPS

For both the English and French days of the discussion forum, participants met in workshops to engage in small discussion groups (five each day) on questions about linguistic duality and cultural diversity. This enabled all attendees to fully participate in the dialogue, followed by summary reports from each group to the plenary.

5.1 MORNING WORKSHOPS – INTEGRATING INTO CANADIAN SOCIETY

Synthesis of discussions during English- and French-speaking sessions

a. What has been your experience integrating into Canadian society? Did language play a role?

In general, participants said that language had been an important aspect of integrating into Canadian society, but the extent varied and it was perhaps the only common point as individual experiences were wide-ranging. Some participants also noted that their comments reflected their integration into Quebec rather than Canadian society, because the reality is different in the province due to the predominance of the French language.

Some participants arrived in the country with a minimal or very basic knowledge of either official language and had more difficulty integrating. Those who arrived with the ability to express themselves in both official languages felt more comfortable participating in daily life. A number of the Francophone participants felt that their accent hindered their attempts to integrate into society, even though French is their mother tongue. Another obstacle was their lack of knowledge of English, which they said was often required for professional employment prospects—a requirement they felt was sometimes a pretext to refuse employment to those from cultural communities, especially visible minorities.

The inability to integrate was noted as a potentially lost opportunity, as those who cannot integrate often leave for social and economic reasons, especially if they cannot find employment as a first step to integration.

There were differences between older and younger age groups, particularly among English-speakers who arrived in Quebec before the advent of Bill 101 and those who arrived or grew up afterwards. This age differential was also reflected in perspectives on their cultural background. Younger participants were more likely to express a renewed pride in their cultural heritage. Montréal English-speaking communities were said to be more welcoming of different cultural backgrounds, thus having a tendency to attract cultural communities for social engagement and economic opportunities.

Those who settled outside the Greater Montréal Area found the transition to be more difficult. They said little support existed for cultural communities to learn either of the official languages in the regions, and that old stereotypes persist about those of different ethnicities (e.g. Chinese

people only work in restaurants). The recent poor economic situation had also made it difficult for newcomers to find jobs in the regions and therefore become fully integrated.

Vignettes

“Immigrants move here in order to give the gift of both official languages to their kids.”

“The country where I was born, I had no choice. But the country that I have adopted, that was my choice.”

b. In your experience as a Canadian of diverse origin, what were the opportunities?

Participants reflected on a wide range of opportunities that they saw for newcomers or had experienced themselves. Notable was the perspective that knowledge of multiple languages, including English and French, provides many more opportunities than knowledge of one official language only. This was nuanced by the fact that even though bilingualism was seen as an advantage, it is not sufficient by itself for successful integration into society or the labour market.

Some participants referred to their respective cultural community as an opportunity for employment and social support. Others spoke about the importance of support structures for newcomers, so they can take advantage of the opportunities to integrate through these hybrid communities. Montréal, as a very cosmopolitan city, was seen to provide numerous social and economic opportunities, especially since cultural diversity creates “a neutral ground” in which both older and younger participants can thrive.

c. In your experience as a Canadian of diverse origin, what were the challenges?

Challenges differed from one generation to the next, although language was generally not considered an obstacle. However, racism, stereotyping, mistrust, xenophobia and intolerance were mentioned frequently as challenges by participants, particularly by those who were not of western European descent. Some participants felt that even after many years in Quebec, newcomers are put into boxes or labelled; they did not feel they were fully seen as Québécois by the majority language community. Some felt that this type of distinction was being made because of their name, culture, religion or accent more than just language. Other participants mentioned that they disliked the word “allophone” as it was a categorization that made immigrants feel as if they were second-class citizens, even after many years of living in Quebec.

Another notable challenge related to employment, particularly the recognition of academic and professional credentials and Canadian work experience. A lack of transparency and insufficient information was noted on this aspect, particularly before someone arrives in the country. This compounds an already difficult situation in which immigrants are also trying to cope with a new language and how the workplace functions in Canada.

It was mentioned that minority communities can be too insular and consequently have a difficult time integrating with the majority population. There are also newcomers who have very strong family traditions, including the role of the man as patriarch. This can affect the family dynamic, further aggravating the integration process.

For English-speakers, the restriction on access to English schooling is of great concern (Bill 101). English schools are closing for lack of students, while the children of English-speaking newcomers, from the Caribbean for example, have difficulty in school learning French, and their parents cannot help them.

Both English and French participants expressed frustration that government policies are a challenge, often designed and implemented inappropriately. They cited the lack of support for learning French and English outside of schools, as well as the lack of political representation from their communities to help influence policy.

d. Given these challenges, what could have made your integration easier?

Education was cited as the most important method to facilitate integration. Participants mentioned the importance of not only linguistic education but also cross-cultural education for all Quebec residents, whether they belong to a minority group or not, given the rapidly changing demographic makeup of the province, Montréal in particular. Language and cross-cultural educational opportunities were considered especially important for those living in regional communities where the majority population may be less familiar with Canadians of diverse backgrounds. Such initiatives would be a way to improve communications and find practical ways of working together between majority and minority communities. Participants frequently mentioned the need for more dialogue, both formal and informal, between members of the majority community and those of diverse backgrounds.

The disparity between expectations before coming to Canada and the reality upon arrival was also frequently mentioned as a challenge. Some felt misinformed, others disappointed and yet others unprepared for the political and linguistic issues in Quebec. Many felt that newcomers are not sufficiently prepared in advance by immigration and other services about these issues and about the realities of the job market. If more could be done in these areas, the process of integration would be easier.

Vignettes

The challenge of integration, across the community divide

One of the participants described how African communities are like coconuts, with a hard outside shell that is difficult to break through, but loving on the inside once you do. But as immigrants, they often find that their new home is a peach—soft on the outside, representing everything that is available to help with integration—but once they are settled and have tasted the peach, they find that there is a hard stone on the inside, which makes it difficult to integrate and make friends. Are we coconuts or peaches?

Language is the passport to social, cultural and economic integration, so the longer we delay entry into the work force, the more integration is delayed, and the harder it is to accomplish.

Immigrating to Quebec is not the same as immigrating to another province: in Quebec, you have to learn two languages, French as a social obligation and English for professional advancement.

5.2 AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS - PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Synthesis of discussions during English- and French-speaking sessions

a. Following this discussion, and given your experience integrating into Canadian society, what does cultural diversity mean to you?

The description and meaning of cultural diversity for participants was captured in a range of words, such as pride, curiosity, acceptance (of cultural differences), inclusion, richness, respect, coexistence, sharing, openness and celebration (of individual cultures). Cultural diversity was said to be the opposite of assimilation.

The discussions also focused on Quebec politics and policies, such as Bill 101. Many participants felt that it limited their choices in the areas of education and employment.

Vignettes

Youth are not asking the same questions; they are already living with linguistic duality. They just don't see any contradiction between the two.

Many immigrants believe that speaking French will guarantee them a job when they arrive here. Being proficient in the language facilitates integration, but it is not enough. Immigrants need "pre-immigration" preparation; background research is required before moving here.

b. What role does cultural diversity play in your daily life (in your community, in your city, etc.)?

Some English-speaking participants cited their church as a vibrant demonstration of cultural diversity due to the rich mosaic of cultural representation within the congregations. For all participants, witnessing themselves, their families and even members of the public switching between both official languages and their native tongues was a prime example of how cultural diversity is part of their daily lives. The fact that most participants still maintained strong relationships with members of their cultural communities, whether professionally or socially, was a constant reminder of the important role of cultural diversity.

c. In your experience, how have language and culture affected your integration into Canadian society?

For most participants, the ability to communicate in numerous languages, including English and French, was a social and professional asset that facilitated their integration into Canadian

society. Most participants agreed that the ability to speak their native tongues was a means of bridging the intergenerational gap between youth and their elders. Participants also felt that it is important to learn more than one language. Most people from ethno-cultural communities usually speak more than one language before arriving.

There was some concern expressed about the concept of interculturalism, which in Quebec is perceived to be about assimilation rather than integration. There was a preference for emphasizing multiculturalism as it encourages citizens to maintain their heritage and mother tongue. Maintaining these was not seen as an impediment to integrating into Quebec and Canadian society. Participants said they feel that immigrants can have multiple identities, such as being Muslim, Egyptian and Canadian at the same time.

Vignette

One participant said her daughter was able to use her native language (Italian) to communicate with her elderly customers at the pharmacy where she worked. Customers would prefer to interact with her and chose her exclusively to conduct their business due to her ability to communicate in Italian.

d. What are complementary or contradictory aspects of linguistic duality and cultural diversity?

There was a general consensus among participants that a paradox exists regarding linguistic duality in Quebec—the need to speak both official languages, to be bilingual, is important but is not enough for full integration in Quebec society. Integration goes beyond the question of language, and it was suggested that official languages and culture should be de-politicized; the political elements of these issues only serve to polarize Canadians of all linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Some participants said language in Quebec is overemphasized due to the intrinsic link between language and culture. Some participants felt that there was an underlying reluctance in Quebec to accept newcomers and those of diverse backgrounds. This leaves members of different cultural communities feeling that, even after many years in Quebec, they are not considered fully Québécois. It was pointed out that even highly qualified French-speaking immigrants, such as those coming from the Maghreb and the rest of Africa, have trouble finding a job. Some feel that the conversation about language in Canada takes away from the real problems of racism, racial profiling and underemployment of visible minorities, especially Blacks and Arabs. Language, they said, is becoming a convenient way to ignore social biases.

The history taught in Canada puts too much emphasis on English and French, with the events surrounding the *British North America Act* and its outcome. At what point, participants asked, will we start talking about all the immigrants who came afterwards and contributed to building this country? All children should be able to feel part of Canadian history. But there is little connection between what is taught in school and what kids see around them.

Cultural diversity and linguistic duality can be complementary. New immigrants often live in both language communities and speak both languages. But it can also be contradictory, when youth feel they have to make a choice as to which community they belong to. There are competing interests when it comes to language because parents want their kids to speak the family's mother tongue as well. Youth then begin to question their place in society: which group are we part of?

5.3 SUGGESTIONS

Discussion forum participants were not specifically asked to make recommendations for this report of the proceedings. They did, however, make a number of suggestions for action in the discussions that would, in their opinion, improve integration into Canadian society in a context of linguistic duality and cultural diversity. The specific suggestions recorded during the workshop and plenary sessions have been amalgamated in summary form for this report.

a. Preparation

Those immigrating to Canada would greatly benefit in their integration from better preparation before they arrive.

- This is partly the responsibility of individuals themselves to ensure their expectations are well grounded before they leave their home country. But it is also the responsibility of governments and agencies that recruit and process immigrants to ensure the information they provide does not omit many elements that would otherwise be useful in supporting the integration of newcomers in Canada. It was suggested that such information should be made available in other languages as well as English and French to ensure it is readily accessible.

b. Recognition

Canada must address the issue of newcomers' not being able to find appropriate work, even with their academic and professional credentials and ability to speak two or more languages.

- This was expressed in the discussion forum as a chronic issue for cultural communities, in particular for visible minorities, and viewed as a significant impediment to integration overall. It also negates much of the contribution that newcomers who do speak either or both official languages can bring to the advancement of linguistic duality in Canada.

c. Support

The potential benefits of integration would be more efficiently and effectively realized if there were more consistent and targeted support programs for newcomers, particularly with regard to settlement, employment and language education.

- Without support programs, newcomers tend to retreat into their cultural community; while this provides a measure of support, it often delays and sometimes works against integration and linguistic duality.
- Settlement in the regions outside Montréal will not progress without additional support, especially given the large distances between the city and many regional communities and

the lower level of interaction between the majority population and those of diverse backgrounds.

- Those who work in government and institutional settings who interact with newcomers should be provided with cross-cultural communication and diversity training.
- English-speakers require ongoing support programs to learn French, and French-speakers the same for learning English.

d. Dialogue

A far-reaching conversation across society about linguistic duality and cultural diversity is required. This in turn requires appropriate forums for people to engage in the dialogue. The main goal of the dialogue would be to raise awareness of linguistic duality and cultural diversity. Some of the key issues are the following:

- The question of identity and how it is possible to be a Canadian and a Quebecer and still maintain links to another country's cultural heritage. This is particularly important for the second generation of immigrant families, who are often torn between one language or culture and another.
- The de-politicization of language so that those of diverse backgrounds can embrace linguistic duality without feeling they have to choose sides in a debate between language communities that has historic overtones.
- Discussions on language alone will be insufficient to address the many issues surrounding the integration of those from diverse backgrounds; the dialogue must include the topics of race, ethnicity and discrimination as well as ways to enhance cross-cultural communications and increase the levels of knowledge, understanding and trust.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Participants were pleased to discuss linguistic duality and cultural diversity. Many expressed the need to continue the dialogue and looked forward to more opportunities for such a discussion on a wider scale.

In summary, participants said that the ability to speak one or both official languages, as well as one's native tongue, was an important aspect of integrating into Canadian society—a social and professional asset that facilitated their integration.

However, integration goes beyond the question of language, as bilingualism alone is not necessarily sufficient for successful social or economic integration. Issues of racism and stereotyping were noted as problems that need to be addressed beyond language. With regard to Quebec, concerns were expressed about the concept of interculturalism, which is perceived to be about assimilation rather than integration, and about questions of language and culture, which should be de-politicized.

There is a perceived lack of government support for newcomers, ranging from lack of preparedness before arriving in Canada, to little support for those settling in regions outside Montréal, to lack of support for learning French and English outside of schools. Another notable challenge relates to underemployment, as immigrants' academic and professional credentials are not readily recognized in Canada.

Education was cited as the most important path to facilitate integration. Participants mentioned the importance not only of linguistic education but also cross-cultural education for all Quebec residents given the rapidly changing demographic makeup of the province, Montréal in particular. According to participants, a far-reaching conversation is needed at all levels of society about linguistic duality and cultural diversity.

6.1 CLOSING REMARKS

Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages

The Commissioner thanked participants for their efforts and engagement in the discussion forum, especially their candour and commitment.

He noted that, on the one hand, participants expressed a sense of optimism about linguistic duality and cultural diversity, and complimented the peaches and coconut analogy as a great insight into how different cultures operate; that cultural differences reach beyond different types of meals.

He also noted, on the other hand, that participants expressed a great deal of frustration with regard to Quebec and how the province receives and treats newcomers, a frustration he felt needed to be addressed with some perspective.

The Commissioner described Quebec as a society with a shorter and more recent experience in welcoming others. He mentioned that for most of its history Quebec has been defined in terms of survival, and that French was not the public language but rather the language of an ethnic group. In this context, the 35 years of change that has occurred since the first election of the Parti Québécois and the introduction of Bill 101 is a very short time span in the life of a society. French became the public

language of Quebec only in the 1970s, while the rest of North America has been integrating languages and cultures for over 200 years. “We forget how difficult it can be to welcome and integrate newcomers,” he said.

The Commissioner continued with a number of anecdotes about personal experiences interacting and integrating within Quebec society as the Quiet Revolution evolved. He concluded by saying that non-Francophones have been seen as a threat for 400 years; we must appreciate that change comes slowly, but it does come. In closing, he expressed his hope that language would be a common ground that surpasses the question of race.

7.0 EVALUATION

Background

This section summarizes the responses of a post-participation survey of participants from the Montréal forum on the perceptions of Canadians of diverse backgrounds on linguistic duality and cultural diversity. The summary contains the quantitative and qualitative responses from participants regarding their overall experience of the forum.

Forum objective

The Office of the Commissioner's goal was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions that Canadians of different backgrounds have of linguistic duality and cultural diversity.

Response rate

- 26 participants (50%) attended the English-speaking session on November 21, 2012, and 26 participants (50%) attended the French-speaking session on November 22, 2012.
- Of the 52 participants who took part in the forum, 34 (65.4%) submitted their completed questionnaires. Of those, 29 questionnaires (55.8%) were analyzed, and 5 (9.6%) were rejected because they were incomplete.
- 17 participants (50%) from the English-speaking session and 17 (50%) from the French-speaking session either partially or completely filled out the evaluation questionnaire.

Methodological considerations

The post-participation questionnaire was hosted online between January 11, 2013, and January 25, 2013, with one reminder going out to participants on January 18, 2013.

In the questionnaire, forum participants were asked to respond to a series of statements related to the forum's organization, objectives and content based on one of the following four point scales:

- Strongly agree (4); Somewhat agree (3); Somewhat disagree (2); Strongly disagree (1).
- Very high (4); Somewhat high (3); Somewhat low (2); Very low (1).

The top two responses (4 and 3) for each statement are considered positive responses. Participants were also asked to complete several Yes/No questions and two open-ended questions.

Overall findings

Forum objectives

- Almost every participant (28/29 or 97%) who filled out the questionnaire agreed that the forum's group discussions were productive.
- Every participant (100%) who filled out the questionnaire agreed that they were able to express their ideas freely at the forum's workshops.
- Every participant (100%) who filled out the questionnaire agreed that the forum allowed them to share their experience and perception of linguistic duality.

- Every participant (100%) who filled out the questionnaire agreed that the forum allowed them to share their experience and perception of cultural diversity.
- Every participant (100%) who filled out the questionnaire agreed that the forum allowed them to share their experience and perception of the integration of cultural diversity in official language communities.

Forum organization

- Every participant (100%) who filled out the questionnaire agreed that the forum facilities were appropriate for the event.
- Almost every participant (28/29 or 97%) who filled out the questionnaire agreed that the discussion document facilitated their participation in the forum.

Additional findings

- Almost every participant (27/29 or 93%) who filled out the questionnaire agreed that the forum helped them better understand the realities and perceptions of people of diverse backgrounds regarding linguistic duality and cultural diversity.
- Almost every participant (27/29 or 93%) who filled out the questionnaire agreed that the forum helped them better understand the importance and value of linguistic duality and bilingualism.
- Almost every participant (28/29 or 97%) who filled out the questionnaire agreed that the forum helped them better understand the role of the Office of the Commissioner.
- The great majority of participants (26/29 or 90%) talked about linguistic duality and cultural diversity in their personal, professional or community life after attending the forum.
- Almost every participant (28/29 or 97%) who filled out the questionnaire thought more about linguistic duality and cultural diversity after attending the forum.
- Every participant (100%) who filled out the questionnaire is interested in participating in similar events in the future.

Qualitative findings

The post-participation questionnaire contained two open-ended questions. See Appendix E for full responses.

Comments on the organization of the forum

- The vast majority of comments were positive.
- One participant mentioned “sometimes overhearing the other groups” and felt that “they were seated too close together.”

General comments about the forum and bridging event

- The vast majority of comments were positive.
- One participant noted that, during the bridging event, English was more prevalent than French. Considering the nature of the event, the participant would have liked to see more balance between the two official languages.

8.0 APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: AGENDAS

DISCUSSION FORUM ON THE PERSPECTIVES OF CANADIANS OF DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS ON LINGUISTIC DUALITY

Novotel Hotel, Alsace-Lorraine Room
Montréal, Quebec
November 21, 2012

Session: English-Speaking Canadians of Diverse Backgrounds

Time	Activity	
9:00 a.m.	Registration and coffee	
9:30 a.m.	Opening remarks and presentation of key concepts	Facilitators: Eva Ludvig and Charles Taker
9:50 a.m.	Understanding the context	Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages <i>Linguistic duality and cultural diversity from yesterday to today</i>
10:10 a.m.	Break	
10:25 a.m.	Workshop 1	<i>Official languages from a cultural diversity perspective: Opportunities and challenges (in sub-groups)</i>
11:25 a.m.	Plenary session	Highlights of workshop discussions
12:00 p.m.	Lunch	
1:00 p.m.	Presentation	<i>Linguistic duality and cultural diversity: Experience and vision of an engaged youth – Jillian Tanoja</i>
1:30 p.m.	Workshop 2	<i>Interaction of linguistic duality and cultural diversity: Towards a better cohesion (in sub-groups)</i>
2:30 p.m.	Break	
2:45 p.m.	Plenary session and summary	Highlights of workshop discussions and thoughts on next steps
3:30 p.m.	Next steps	Carsten Quell, Director, Policy and Research, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages
3:45 p.m.	Closing remarks	Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages
4:00 p.m.	End of session	

DISCUSSION FORUM ON THE PERSPECTIVES OF CANADIANS OF DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS ON LINGUISTIC DUALITY

Novotel Hotel, Alsace-Lorraine Room
Montréal, Quebec
November 22, 2012

Session: French-Speaking Canadians of Diverse Backgrounds

Time	Activity	
9:00 a.m.	Registration and coffee	
9:30 a.m.	Opening remarks and presentation of key concepts	Facilitators: Eva Ludvig and Charles Taker
9:50 a.m.	Understanding the context	Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages <i>Linguistic duality and cultural diversity from yesterday to today</i>
10:10 a.m.	Health break	
10:25 a.m.	Workshop 1	<i>Official languages from a cultural diversity perspective: Opportunities and challenges (in sub-groups)</i>
11:25 a.m.	Plenary session	Highlights of workshop discussions
12:00 p.m.	Lunch	
1:00 p.m.	Presentation	<i>Linguistic duality and cultural diversity: Experience and vision of an engaged youth – Aly Ndiaye</i>
1:30 p.m.	Workshop 2	<i>Interaction of linguistic duality and cultural diversity: Towards a better cohesion (in sub-groups)</i>
2:30 p.m.	Break	
2:45 p.m.	Plenary session and summary	Highlights of workshop discussions and thoughts on next steps
3:30 p.m.	Next steps	Carsten Quell, Director, Policy and Research, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages
3:45 p.m.	Closing remarks	Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages
4:00 p.m.	End of session	

APPENDIX B: OPENING ADDRESS

Graham Fraser
Commissioner of Official Languages

Notes for an address at the discussion forum on the perspectives of Canadians of diverse backgrounds on linguistic duality

Opening remarks

Montréal, Quebec
November 21–22, 2012

Good morning.

First, I would like to welcome you all to the discussion forum on the perspectives of Canadians of diverse backgrounds on linguistic duality.

Thank you for accepting my invitation.

Your participation here today will help us to improve our knowledge and understanding of your perspectives on, and experiences with, linguistic duality and cultural diversity.

This is the fourth forum of its kind that my office has organized.

Building on the success of the first three forums, which were held in Toronto, Vancouver and Halifax, we decided to pursue this initiative in Montréal.

The fact that Canada has two dynamic languages and cultures is a source of creativity, innovation and ongoing dialogue.

It can also be, from time to time, a source of tension and disagreement.

But the fact that the two language groups must constantly work together has helped Canadian society develop its values, which include respect, compromise, empathy and acceptance.

Exploring the links between cultural diversity and linguistic duality in Canada would not be complete without input from Montréal.

Montréal is a buzzing, vibrant multicultural Canadian city and has become an international centre of attraction for a whole series of cultural phenomena, like the independent music and film scenes and the high-tech creative industries.

People from all over the world, with all kinds of linguistic backgrounds, are attracted to Montréal because of its cultural vitality, its energy.

Quebec is the only province in Canada where French is the official language, and where English-speaking Canadians are in the minority.

The complete opposite of the situation exists in the rest of Canada, except for New Brunswick, which has two official languages—English and French—just like Canada.

This can be confusing because of the contradicting messages coming from the federal government, which is promoting linguistic duality, and the Quebec government, which emphasizes the importance of using French only.

There has been a long-standing tradition of suspicion in Quebec that learning another language, particularly English, is a slippery slope towards assimilation.

I don't think that's true.

I think this reaction stems from a profound misunderstanding.

Montréal has the highest rate of bilingualism in the country, according to the 2011 Census figures, with more than half of the population claiming to be able to have a conversation in both English and French.

The Census also revealed that a growing number of immigrants who don't speak English are becoming bilingual by learning French.

In fact, the fastest-growing language group in the province is made up of Quebecers who speak French and another language that is not English, rising from 3.8% of the population in 2006 to 5% in 2011.

In short, although French is the common and official language of Quebec, both languages have a place in this province and both are part of the common heritage of Quebecers.

Personal bilingualism—although not an obligation—is to be encouraged for all Quebecers in all spheres of their lives. Quebecers of all backgrounds are responding well to that: the province is the most bilingual in Canada.

English and French are Canadian languages, not foreign languages.

There is no question that the French language has to be protected in Quebec, but it has to be done while respecting the rights of the English-speaking minority.

There is a fundamental difference between the indisputable rise of English—an international language of communication used by industries, businesses, researchers and tourists—and the needs of Quebec's English-speaking communities.

Gérald Godin, former Quebec minister of cultural communities and immigration, who passed away in 1994, understood this distinction well.

Thirty years ago, he stated quite clearly that Quebec's Anglophone community was very much a minority and posed no threat to French.

The threat, he said, came from elsewhere. Three decades later, the impact of globalization shows how right he was.

I knew Gérald Godin personally, and I remember very clearly the role that he played in terms of reaching out to the various cultural communities.

He saw the government's commitment to multiculturalism and ethnic diversity as a chance to articulate deeper goals for Quebec society.

He thought that what was missing in Quebec was a social project that was stimulating for the mind and that referred to values that are not materialistic, like fraternity, generosity to others, openness and solidarity.

I think cultural diversity and linguistic duality are two key Canadian values—values that complement each other. Canada's cultural diversity is a direct result of the steady growth of its diverse population over the past few decades.

Canada's openness and spirit of accommodation, which are the result of the development of the two major language groups in Canada, have helped to encourage immigration and diversity in the Canadian population.

The fact that there are two official languages in Canada helps convey this difference.

It is important, however, not to be carried away by the somewhat idealistic values we convey to our newcomers.

In a workshop on Canadian values during the forum in Halifax, I heard an account given by a man originally from Colombia.

The participants were all referring to typically Canadian values, good values—tolerance, inclusiveness, cooperation. But when the man from Colombia spoke, he said that this was not at all what he had found when he arrived in Canada. What he noticed was competition, individualism, materialism. Only when he left the city for a small community did he discover that those values he believed in, such as solidarity and inclusiveness, really did exist in Canada.

That led me to think about the way in which we welcome new immigrants.

We repeat fine words about Canadian values.

We promote an idealistic version of Canada as welcoming and inclusive, without necessarily acknowledging that the reality is at times entirely different and that there is enormous variation from province to province and from city to city. Comparing ourselves favourably with other countries can sometimes blind us to what needs to change here.

This is why it is particularly useful for us to hear about your experiences directly from you, which may be quite the opposite of what we want to hear.

We like to think of Canada as a welcoming country, but it is useful to be told that this is not always the case.

Only you, who have personal experience, can tell us that, so we can gain a better understanding of the challenges that we must overcome in order to live up to our image as a country that truly embraces its diversity.

Linguistic duality and cultural diversity are central elements in Canada's history, and now constitute two fundamental values of Canadian society.

Canadians of diverse backgrounds adopt one—or even both—of the official languages and contribute to the vitality of linguistic duality, and this allows people of all backgrounds to participate fully in Canadian society and to enrich it in all respects.

In the coming decades, Canadian society will continue to see significant socio-demographic changes.

Recent projections by Statistics Canada show that, by 2031, between 25% and 28% of the population will have been born outside Canada, which means we can expect to see an increase in the proportion of Canadians whose mother tongue is neither English nor French.

Linguistic duality will also continue to evolve.

All English- and French-speaking Canadians, regardless of their origins, must have the opportunity to learn the other official language, and federal government services need to be available in both official languages in many regions of the country.

In reality, there are still some obstacles to overcome before we can take full advantage of the complementary nature of our linguistic duality and cultural diversity policies.

One of these obstacles is most definitely the disconnect between our aspirations for linguistic duality, as expressed by our laws and political discourse, and our present reality, in which linguistic duality is absent from the day-to-day life of many Canadians.

By participating in this forum, you can help bridge that gap.

As we have witnessed in other parts of the country, newcomers and cultural communities seem to have a complex relationship with Canada's official languages.

The discussions you are about to take part in are about the future of Canada as a multicultural country where the national dialogue takes place in two languages.

Before you start, I would like to remind you of a few historical facts.

In 1963, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism proposed a new partnership between English- and French-speaking Canadians.

In the future, the Government of Canada would function more effectively in both official languages.

In 1969, the Trudeau government passed the *Official Languages Act*.

This legally established the obligation of the federal government to serve Canadians in English or French, as they wished.

Just two years after the *Official Languages Act*, in 1971, the Government of Canada developed a multiculturalism policy within the general framework of linguistic duality.

This led to the adoption of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* in 1988.

The main goal of today's discussion is to get a better understanding of your perceptions of linguistic duality and the links that exist between linguistic duality and cultural diversity.

We want to connect with you in order to continue and enrich the dialogue we began a few years ago with the Vancouver, Toronto and Halifax forums.

I encourage you to share your experiences and perceptions in your own communities, and to discuss your role in relation to Canada's linguistic duality.

Feel free to make suggestions and propose action plans. Your point of view counts, and I would like to thank you in advance for sharing it with us.

I look forward to hearing what you have to say, and will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Thank you.

APPENDIX C: DISCUSSION DOCUMENT – ENGLISH-SPEAKING SESSION, NOVEMBER 21, 2013

Forum on the Perspectives of Canadians of Diverse Backgrounds on Linguistic Duality: Session for English-Speaking Canadians of Diverse Backgrounds

“In Quebec, the cohabitation of—and yes, the friction between—two great cultural communities has spawned a strong bilingual work force, as well as unique cultural institutions. The Centaur, Blue Metropolis and the Quebec Writers’ Federation are cultural assets for all Quebecers. Nor would Montréal be Montréal without Schwartz’s smoked meat and Montréal bagels.”

Graham Fraser, Speech at the Annual General Meeting of the Quebec Community Groups Network, June 1, 2007

INTRODUCTION

Linguistic duality and cultural diversity are defining features of Canadian society. These features—each in its own way and interacting together—have helped shape the evolution of Canada since its early days. Today, linguistic duality and cultural diversity are important values and symbols in Canadian society that play a role in defining both how Canadians see themselves and how they are perceived around the world. While linguistic duality is not always apparent throughout the country, the majority of Canadians support bilingualism.¹

Because of the significant role of linguistic duality and cultural diversity in Canadian society, and because Canadian society has been experiencing socio-demographic changes for several years now, and will continue to experience them to a significant degree in future, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages will be holding a discussion forum to hear the perspectives of Canadians of diverse backgrounds on linguistic duality. This discussion forum, which will take place in Montréal on November 21 and 22, 2012, is a follow-up to the forums held in Toronto (2007), Vancouver (2008) and Halifax (2011). Building on the success of the first three forums, the Office of the Commissioner decided to continue this initiative in Quebec. The Montréal Forum will have two parts, one focusing on the experience of English-speaking Canadians of diverse backgrounds who have settled in Quebec (November 21, 2012) and the other focusing on the experience of French-speaking Canadians of diverse backgrounds who have settled in Quebec (November 22).

This background paper has been prepared to give those attending the November 21 session the information they need to prepare for the discussion forum. Participants can thus begin thinking about the issues before the meeting, so they can fully take part in the discussions.

The participants invited to this session are representative of English-speaking Canadians of diverse backgrounds who have settled in Quebec. They were selected from multicultural organizations, organizations that welcome newcomers and help them get settled and integrate, and other concerned individuals. Participants were also selected because of their active involvement in and commitment to Canadian society.

¹ Survey conducted by Environics Focus Canada/Canadian Opinion Research Archive, Queen’s University/Decima 2006 at the request of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages: 72% of respondents were in favour of bilingualism throughout Canada and 26% were opposed. Apart from Quebec, the Atlantic provinces posted the highest support for bilingualism (77%).

LINGUISTIC DUALITY

Linguistic duality refers to the fact that Canada has two official languages with equal status. Each language is associated with a community that, through its history and cultural traits, contributes to making Canada the country we know today. The idea of linguistic duality also highlights the concepts of building bridges between communities, and of discussion and exchange between the English-speaking community and the French-speaking community. For *official language minority communities* (i.e., communities whose official language is not that of the majority in their province), linguistic duality is an opportunity to create their own institutional and cultural spaces, while at the same time being able to meet and interact with the linguistic majority.

Like all values that are central to Canadian society, linguistic duality is evolving and changing as Canada undergoes significant socio-demographic changes. Today, Canada's English- and French-speaking communities are increasingly composed of Canadians of diverse backgrounds. Thus, our understanding of linguistic duality and the meaning we give it will be changing accordingly.

The *Official Languages Act*, which has been in force for more than 40 years, guarantees and protects linguistic duality. The Act applies only to federal institutions; it therefore does not apply to provincial, territorial or municipal governments. Some provinces and territories, however, have adopted legislation and policies to protect English, French or Aboriginal languages within their jurisdiction. For example, New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province; Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island have a French-language services act; and Newfoundland and Labrador has an Office of French Services. Quebec has the Office québécois de la langue française and the *Charter of the French Language*.

Canada's *Official Languages Act* has the following three objectives:

- ensure respect for English and French, and equality of status and equal rights and privileges with respect to their use in federal institutions;
- support the development of English and French minority communities (Quebec's English-speaking community and Francophones outside Quebec);
- enhance the equality of status and use of English and French within Canadian society.

In July 1969, the federal government passed the *Official Languages Act* in response to the work of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. The Commission examined issues such as the status of English and French in the country, as well as the growing diversity of Canadian society. In its report, it recommended the implementation of measures to guarantee the equal status of English and French in Canada. The Commission also recommended that more be done to recognize the contributions and heritage of other cultural communities.

In 1988, the government amended the *Official Languages Act* to take into account the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which was enacted in 1982. The Charter guarantees the language rights of Canadians, including the right to obtain federal government services in the official language of their choice. The 1988 amendment broadened the scope of the Act by setting out the rights of citizens and the obligations of federal institutions as they pertain to language of service. It also recognized the right of both English- and French-speaking Canadians to equal employment opportunities in the federal public service, and stipulated that the federal government has a responsibility to enhance the vitality and support the development of official language minority communities.²

² The expression "official language minority communities" generally refers to English-speaking Canadians living in Quebec and Francophones living outside Quebec.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE MINORITY COMMUNITIES

The expression “official language minority communities” generally refers to Francophones living outside Quebec and English-speaking Canadians living in Quebec. In Quebec, English is the first official language spoken³ by 1,058,250 people, or about 13.5% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2011).⁴ Today, the development and vitality of the English-speaking minority community in Quebec, two concepts established in the Act, are no longer defined solely in quantitative terms. The development and vitality of communities have taken on a broader meaning, encompassing such things as community governance, the ability to live one’s life as an English-speaker, immigration, health and access to government services.

IMMIGRATION

Immigration is increasingly driving Canada’s demographic growth and its economic, social and cultural vitality. This is especially true for Quebec, as it is the province that welcomes the second-highest number of immigrants. This immigration has grown over the years to a point where immigrants represent 11.5% of Quebec’s population (Statistics Canada, 2006).⁵

In terms of population renewal, immigration has had marked effects on Quebec’s reality. In 1971, the total fertility rate fell below two children per woman. It has since oscillated between 1.4 and 1.7 children per woman. This means that over the past few years, Quebec’s population has not been renewed through births. Immigration is therefore an important, if insufficient, asset for the maintenance of the demographic balance. Furthermore, in a not-so-distant future, births will no longer be sufficient to fill the labour force needs of the province, and immigration will thus become indispensable.⁶

This trend shows no sign of slowing down. Between the 2001 and 2006 censuses, Canada’s foreign-born population increased by 13.6%. This was four times higher than the growth of the Canadian-born population (3.3%). Therefore, from 2001 to 2006, immigration to Canada accounted for more than two thirds (69.3%) of Canada’s population growth. In this same period, Montréal’s foreign-born population—the third-largest foreign-born population in Canada—increased by 19%, nine times the growth rate of Montréal’s Canadian-born population (2.1%).⁷

In Quebec, since the 1991 census, the number of immigrants who speak French is higher than those who speak English.⁸ This trend of increased French-speaking immigration has been accompanied by a change in the composition of Quebec’s immigrant population. At the beginning of the 20th century, immigrants to Quebec were primarily from Europe, particularly England, Scotland and Ireland. However, since the 1970s, immigration to Quebec has become diversified, consisting of newcomers from more than 100 cultural communities.⁹ Allophones in Quebec are now the most multilingual group in Canada.¹⁰

³ The “first official language spoken” variable is calculated by Statistics Canada using census data. This variable is used to approximate how many Canadians speak mainly English, how many speak mainly French and how many use both languages interchangeably.

⁴ After distribution of multiple responses (equally distributed among the languages reported).

⁵ Michel Pagé and Patricia Lamarre, *L’intégration linguistique des immigrants au Québec*, IRPP, no. 3, February 2010.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Statistics Canada, *Immigration in Canada: A portrait of the foreign-born population*, 2006 census.

⁸ Ministère de l’Immigration et des Communautés culturelles du Québec, *Fiche synthèse sur l’immigration et la diversité ethnoculturelle au Québec*, March 27, 2012, www.micc.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/recherches-statistiques/FICHE_syn_an2011.pdf.

⁹ Ministère de l’Immigration et des Communautés culturelles du Québec, *Historical Overview*, October 6, 2010, www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/choose-quebec/society/overview.html.

Owing to these changes, linguistic duality will also continue to evolve. However, for linguistic duality to benefit from these changes, all English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians, regardless of their origins and whether they live in a minority or majority language context, must have access to tools that will enable them to play a full part in it (learning the other official language, receiving federal government services in the official language of their choice, etc.).

CANADA TODAY: AT THE CROSSROADS OF LINGUISTIC DUALITY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Linguistic duality is deeply rooted in 400 years of Canadian history. These years have occasionally been marked by tense relations and difficult negotiations, but it is clear that dialogue has been present throughout. In fact, from a language point of view, Canada is the result of a series of encounters that have led to the recognition of a dual heritage. In the *Constitution Act*, the Fathers of Confederation explicitly secured a place for this dual heritage by recognizing the right to use English and French in the Parliament of Canada.

It is perhaps this concept of openness and respect for the differences between Anglophones and Francophones that has facilitated diversity in Canadian society. Yet, as has been the case with Anglophone-Francophone relations—which have not always been without their difficulties—this very Canadian tolerance and openness has had to be cultivated. Over the decades, thanks to the leadership of certain individuals and groups, Canada has amended some of its legislation, and adopted various judicial and political tools for eliminating sources of discrimination.

Linguistic duality is a key element in Canada's history, but so is cultural diversity. Diversity has always been part of the country; Canada's social fabric, beginning with the intermingling of Aboriginal, French and English cultures, has been enriched over the decades by the contributions of Canadians of diverse backgrounds.

The unique contribution of Aboriginals to cultural diversity in Canada and the province of Quebec will not be discussed in this forum, given that Aboriginal languages are not addressed in the *Official Languages Act* and therefore fall outside the mandate of the Commissioner.

"The recognition and accommodation of diversity have been central features of Canadian political history, and contemporary debates over multiculturalism are simply the continuation of an ongoing Canadian conversation."

Keith Banting, Thomas J. Courchene and F. Leslie Seidle, *Belonging? Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada*, Institute for Research on Public Policy, Montréal, 2007.

Linguistic duality and cultural diversity now constitute two dominant values of Canadian society that continue to interact with and complement each other. On the one hand, Canadians of diverse backgrounds adopt official languages and contribute to the vitality of linguistic duality. On the other hand, linguistic duality allows people of diverse backgrounds, including new Canadians, to fully participate in Canadian society and to enrich it in every respect.

In the coming decades, Canadian society will continue to see significant socio-demographic changes. By way of example, recent projections by Statistics Canada show that by 2031, between 25% and 28% of

¹⁰ Patricia Lamarre, *Le multilinguisme des jeunes allophones québécois : ressources sociétale et défi éducatif*, Colloque Panaméricain, Industries culturelles et dialogues des civilisations dans les Amériques, Montréal, April 22-24, 2002, www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/gricis/actes/panam/Lamarre.pdf.

the population will have been born outside Canada.¹¹ It can therefore be expected that the proportion of Canadians whose mother tongue is neither English nor French will continue to increase.

WHY HOLD A DISCUSSION FORUM?

The Office of the Commissioner organized a series of forums in 2007 designed to continue and deepen the dialogue started with Canadians of various ethno-cultural backgrounds a few years earlier. For the Office of the Commissioner, this was also an opportunity to better understand what linguistic duality means to Canadians of diverse backgrounds and how they see it fit into the context of cultural diversity. It was in the interest of continuing this dialogue that the Office of the Commissioner decided to have a day of discussion devoted to English-speaking Canadians of diverse backgrounds who have settled in Quebec.

As in other parts of the country, newcomers who choose to settle in Quebec face a number of challenges, such as entering the work force, obtaining recognition of international credentials, or experiencing culture shock, isolation, prejudice and discrimination. In addition, they find themselves in a unique situation in which they are a cultural minority within a linguistic minority.

Historically, English-speaking communities in Quebec have played an important role in the province, particularly in the business and financial sectors. Although Quebec's official language is French, both English- and French-speakers living in certain areas may be faced either with integrating into the province in French or using English to integrate into the labour market. Indeed, shortly after their arrival, newcomers may realize that French is not the only working language, particularly in Montréal.¹²

We believe that it is important to hold this discussion forum, given the persistence of these challenges. Since they are one of the main groups involved, Canadians of diverse backgrounds can play a key role in the dialogue by reflecting on the links between these two defining features of Canadian society and the challenges they face.

In short, the Office of the Commissioner is devoting a session of the discussion forum to Canadians of diverse backgrounds precisely for this purpose: to gain a better understanding of their situation in the context of regional and national linguistic dynamics. More specifically, the session will provide an opportunity for English-speaking members of this group to share their experiences and perceptions.

The Office of the Commissioner hopes to obtain information from this forum that will enable it to promote linguistic duality in Canadian society more effectively and better ensure the vitality and development of official language minority communities.

¹¹ The 2006 Census revealed that 19.8% of the Canadian population was born outside Canada.

¹² Michel Pagé and Patricia Lamarre, *L'intégration linguistique des immigrants au Québec*, IRPP, no. 3, February 2010.

APPENDIX D: DISCUSSION DOCUMENT – FRENCH-SPEAKING SESSION, NOVEMBER 22, 2013

“If anybody says to you that there is some difference between multiculturalism and two official languages, let me tell you that they are nurtured at the same wellspring, make no mistake about it. And that is diversity. If we do not respect one another’s diversity, then our ability to be able to live with some kind of harmony will be diminished around the world.”

David Crombie, then Secretary of State. Speech to the Canadian Education Association (Alberta, 1987).

INTRODUCTION

Linguistic duality and cultural diversity are defining features of Canadian society. These features—each in its own way and interacting together—have helped shape the evolution of Canada since its early days. Today, linguistic duality and cultural diversity are important values and symbols in Canadian society that play a role in defining both how Canadians see themselves and how they are perceived around the world. While linguistic duality is not always apparent throughout the country, the majority of Canadians support bilingualism.¹³

Because of the significant role of linguistic duality and cultural diversity in Canadian society, and because Canadian society has been experiencing socio-demographic changes for several years now, and will continue to experience them to a significant degree in future, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages will be holding a discussion forum to hear the perspectives of Canadians of diverse backgrounds on linguistic duality. This discussion forum, to take place in Montréal on November 21 and 22, 2012, is a follow-up to the forums held in Toronto (2007), Vancouver (2008) and Halifax (2011). Building on the success of the first three forums, the Office of the Commissioner decided to continue this initiative in Quebec. The Montréal Forum will have two parts, one focusing on the experience of English-speaking Canadians of diverse backgrounds who have settled in Quebec (November 21, 2012) and the other focusing on the experience of French-speaking Canadians of diverse backgrounds who have settled in Quebec (November 22, 2012).

This background paper has been prepared to give those attending the November 22 session the information they need to prepare for the discussion forum. Participants can thus begin thinking about the issues before the meeting, so they can fully take part in the discussions.

The participants invited to this session are representative of French-speaking Canadians of diverse backgrounds who have settled in Quebec. They were selected for their interest in sharing their experiences and discussing their relationships with the Francophone community, their involvement in this community and their perceptions of linguistic duality.

LINGUISTIC DUALITY

¹³ Survey conducted by Environics Focus Canada/Canadian Opinion Research Archive, Queen’s University/Decima 2006 at the request of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages: 72% of respondents were in favour of bilingualism throughout Canada, and 26% were opposed. Apart from Quebec, the Atlantic provinces posted the highest support for bilingualism (77%).

Linguistic duality refers to the fact that Canada has two official languages with equal status. Each language is associated with a community that, through its history and cultural traits, contributes to making Canada the country we know today. The idea of linguistic duality also highlights the concepts of building bridges between communities, and of discussion and exchange between Francophones and Anglophones, whether they are in the minority or the majority.

Like all values that are central to Canadian society, linguistic duality is evolving and changing as Canada undergoes significant socio-demographic changes. Today, Canada's French- and English-speaking communities are increasingly composed of Canadians of diverse backgrounds. Thus, our understanding of linguistic duality and the meaning we give it will be changing accordingly.

The *Official Languages Act*, which has been in force for more than 40 years, guarantees and protects linguistic duality. The Act applies only to federal institutions; it therefore does not apply to provincial, territorial or municipal governments. Some provinces and territories, however, have adopted legislation and policies to protect French, English or Aboriginal languages within their jurisdiction. For example, New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province; Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island have a French-language services act; and Newfoundland and Labrador has an Office of French Services. Quebec has the Office québécois de la langue française and the *Charter of the French Language*.

Canada's *Official Languages Act* has the following three objectives:

- ensure respect for French and English, and equality of status and equal rights and privileges with respect to their use in federal institutions;
- support the development of French and English minority communities (Francophones outside Quebec and Quebec's English-speaking community);
- enhance the equality of status and use of French and English within Canadian society.

In July 1969, the federal government passed the *Official Languages Act* in response to the work of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. The Commission examined issues such as the status of French and English in the country, as well as the growing diversity of Canadian society. In its report, it recommended the implementation of measures to guarantee the equal status of French and English in Canada. The Commission also recommended that more be done to recognize the contributions and heritage of other cultural communities.

In 1988, the government amended the *Official Languages Act* to take into account the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which was enacted in 1982. The Charter guarantees the language rights of Canadians, including the right to obtain federal government services in the official language of their choice. The 1988 amendment broadened the scope of the Act by setting out the rights of citizens and the obligations of federal institutions as they pertain to language of service. It also recognized the right of both French- and English-speaking Canadians to equal employment opportunities in the federal public service, and stipulated that the federal government has a responsibility to enhance the vitality and support the development of official language minority communities.¹⁴

¹⁴ The expression "official language minority communities" generally refers to Francophones living outside Quebec and English-speaking Canadians living in Quebec. According to 2006 Census data, French is the first official language spoken by more than

MULTICULTURALISM

Following the work done by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, Canada became officially open to multiculturalism in 1971 when it adopted a policy recognizing the equal value and dignity of all ethno-cultural groups. Later, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) and the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (1988) more clearly defined the scope of this policy. In the Act, the Government of Canada recognizes that the diversity of its population (in terms of race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion) is a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society.

Furthermore, through this Act, the government has committed to respecting the Canadian policy on multiculturalism, which is designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while ensuring the full and equitable participation of all individuals and all communities in the various aspects of life in Canada. This Act also stipulates that the federal government will promote multiculturalism in conjunction with its commitments to official languages. This Act has been a pillar of Canadian immigration policy ever since.

IMMIGRATION

Immigration is increasingly driving Canada's demographic growth and its economic, social and cultural vitality. This is especially true for Quebec as it is the province that welcomes the second-highest number of immigrants. This immigration has grown over the years to a point where immigrants represent 11.5% of Quebec's population (Statistics Canada, 2006).¹⁵

In terms of population renewal, immigration has had marked effects on Quebec's reality. In 1971, the total fertility rate fell below two children per woman. It has since oscillated between 1.4 and 1.7 children per woman. This means that over the past few years, Quebec's population has not been renewed through births. Immigration is therefore an important, if insufficient, asset for the maintenance of the demographic balance. Furthermore, in a not-so-distant future, births will no longer be sufficient to fill the labour force needs of the province and immigration will thus become indispensable.¹⁶

This trend shows no sign of slowing down. Between the 2001 and 2006 censuses, Canada's foreign-born population increased by 13.6%. This was four times higher than the growth of the Canadian-born population (3.3%). Therefore, from 2001 to 2006, immigration to Canada accounted for more than two thirds (69.3%) of Canada's population growth. In this same period, Montréal's foreign-born population—the third-largest foreign-born population in Canada—increased by 19%, nine times the growth rate of Montréal's Canadian-born population (2.1%).¹⁷

one million Canadians living outside Quebec. In Quebec, English is the first official language spoken by 885,000 people (Statistics Canada, 2006).

¹⁵ Michel Pagé and Patricia Lamarre, *L'intégration linguistique des immigrants au Québec*, IRPP, no. 3, February 2010.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Statistics Canada, *Immigration in Canada: A portrait of the foreign-born population*, 2006 census.

In Quebec, since the 1991 census, the number of immigrants who speak French is higher than those who speak English.¹⁸ This trend of increased French-speaking immigration has been accompanied by a change in the composition of Quebec's immigrant population. At the beginning of the 20th century, immigrants to Quebec were primarily from Europe, particularly England, Scotland and Ireland. However, since the 1970s, immigration to Quebec has become diversified, consisting of newcomers from more than 100 cultural communities.¹⁹ Allophones in Quebec are now the most multilingual group in Canada.²⁰

Owing to these changes, linguistic duality will also continue to evolve. However, for linguistic duality to benefit from these changes, all French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians, regardless of their origins and whether they live in a minority or majority language context, must have access to tools that will enable them to play a full part in it (learning the other official language, receiving federal government services in the official language of their choice, etc.).

CANADA TODAY: AT THE CROSSROADS OF LINGUISTIC DUALITY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Linguistic duality is deeply rooted in 400 years of Canadian history. These years have occasionally been marked by tense relations and difficult negotiations, but it is clear that dialogue has been present throughout. In fact, from a language point of view, Canada is the result of a series of encounters that have led to the recognition of a dual heritage. In the *Constitution Act*, the Fathers of Confederation explicitly secured a place for this dual heritage by recognizing the right to use French and English in the Parliament of Canada.

It is perhaps this concept of openness and respect for the differences between Anglophones and Francophones that has facilitated diversity in Canadian society. Yet, as has been the case with Francophone-Anglophone relations—which have not always been without their difficulties—this very Canadian tolerance and openness has had to be cultivated. Over the decades, thanks to the leadership of certain individuals and groups, Canada has amended some of its legislation, and adopted various judicial and political tools for eliminating sources of discrimination.

Linguistic duality is a key element in Canada's history, but so is cultural diversity. Diversity has always been part of the country; Canada's social fabric, beginning with the intermingling of Aboriginal, French and English cultures, has been enriched over the decades by the contributions of Canadians of diverse backgrounds.

The unique contribution of Aboriginals to cultural diversity in Canada and the province of Quebec will not be discussed in this forum, given that Aboriginal languages are not addressed in the *Official Languages Act* and therefore fall outside the mandate of the Commissioner.

¹⁸ Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles du Québec, *Fiche synthèse sur l'immigration et la diversité ethnoculturelle au Québec*, March 27, 2012, http://www.micc.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/recherches-statistiques/FICHE_syn_an2011.pdf.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Patricia Lamarre, *Le multilinguisme des jeunes allophones québécois : ressource sociétale et défi éducatif*, Colloque Panaméricain, Industries culturelles et dialogues des civilisations dans les Amériques, Montréal, April 22-24, 2002, <http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/gricis/actes/panam/Lamarre.pdf>.

“The recognition and accommodation of diversity have been central features of Canadian political history, and contemporary debates over multiculturalism are simply the continuation of an ongoing Canadian conversation.”

Keith Banting, Thomas J. Courchene and F. Leslie Seidle, *Belonging? Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada*, Institute for Research on Public Policy, Montréal, 2007.

Linguistic duality and cultural diversity now constitute two dominant values of Canadian society that continue to interact with and complement each other. On the one hand, Canadians of diverse backgrounds adopt official languages and contribute to the vitality of linguistic duality. On the other hand, linguistic duality allows people of diverse backgrounds, including new Canadians, to fully participate in Canadian society and to enrich it in every respect.

The results of the most recent census serve as evidence of the interaction between these two values. According to Statistics Canada, nearly 98% of Canadians could speak English in 2006. The latest census also revealed a slight increase from 2001 to 2006 in Anglophones’ and allophones’ knowledge of French (from 9% to 9.4% and from 11.8% to 12.1%, respectively). Outside Quebec, New Brunswick had the highest proportion of allophones who indicated they were bilingual, at 16.9%.

In the coming decades, Canadian society will continue to see significant socio-demographic changes. By way of example, recent projections by Statistics Canada show that by 2031, between 25% and 28% of the population will have been born outside Canada.²¹ It can therefore be expected that the proportion of Canadians whose mother tongue is neither French nor English will continue to increase.

WHY HOLD A DISCUSSION FORUM?

Canada’s policies on linguistic duality and multiculturalism help not only to strengthen our social cohesion, but also to define us as Canadians. However, in practice, there are still some obstacles to overcome before we can take full advantage of the complementary nature of these policies and ensure their full implementation. One of these obstacles is the disconnect between the aspirations for linguistic duality, as expressed by our laws and political discourse, and reality, which shows linguistic duality is absent from the day-to-day life of many Canadians.

It is within this context that the Office of the Commissioner is holding a discussion forum on the issue. Specifically, the main goal of the session on November 22 is to gain a better understanding of how French-speaking Canadians of diverse backgrounds living in Quebec perceive linguistic duality, and the links that exist between linguistic duality and cultural diversity.

Immigration is extremely important, as the arrival of French-speaking newcomers is a sign of demographic, linguistic, economic and cultural vitality. “Traditional” Francophone regions are being changed and enriched by the arrival of French-speaking immigrants with very diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds.

²¹ The 2006 Census revealed that 19.8% of the Canadian population was born outside Canada.

As in other parts of the country, newcomers who choose to settle in Quebec face a number of challenges, such as entering the work force, obtaining recognition of international credentials, or experiencing culture shock, isolation, prejudice and discrimination.

Historically, English-speaking communities in Quebec have played an important role in the province, particularly in the business and financial sectors. Although Quebec's official language is French, both French- and English-speakers living in certain areas may be faced either with integrating into the province in French or using English to integrate into the labour market. Indeed, shortly after their arrival, newcomers may realize that French is not the only working language, particularly in Montréal.²²

In short, the Office of the Commissioner is devoting a session of the discussion forum to Canadians of diverse backgrounds precisely for this purpose: to gain a better understanding of their situation in the context of regional and national linguistic dynamics. More specifically, the session will provide an opportunity for French-speaking members of this group to share their experiences and perceptions.

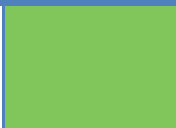

The Office of the Commissioner hopes to obtain information from this forum that will enable it to promote linguistic duality in Canadian society more effectively.

²² Michel Pagé and Patricia Lamarre, *L'intégration linguistique des immigrants au Québec*, IRPP, no. 3, February 2010.

APPENDIX E: DETAILED QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE EVALUATION RESPONSES

Montréal Forum Evaluation

Question 1) Which session did you attend as a participant?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Session for English-speaking Canadians of diverse backgrounds, November 21, 2012		50%	17
Session for French-speaking Canadians of diverse backgrounds, November 22, 2012		50%	17
Total Responses			34

Question 2) To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses
The discussion document facilitated my participation in the forum.	14 (48%)	14 (48%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	29
The forum facilities were appropriate for the event.	24 (83%)	5 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	29
The forum's group discussions were productive.	21 (72%)	7 (24%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	29
I was able to express my ideas freely at the forum's workshops.	26 (90%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	29

Question 3) If you have any comments on the organization of the forum, please write them below.

#	Response
1.	Quelles pourraient être les contributions des « nouveaux immigrants » pour qu'ils puissent contribuer au développement du Canada et se sentir valorisés et utiles.
2.	All good. I felt I could have been a bit more prepared, but maybe that's my own fault. I felt the size of the room was a little too cramped.
3.	We were sometimes overhearing the other groups—too close to each other.
4.	No comments

5.	Félicitations, bonne organisation.
6.	Tout en reconnaissant les coûts associés à un tel évènement, le dossier aurait mérité davantage de temps de discussions, d'échanges et du temps de construction de consensus.
7.	Rien à signaler.
8.	It was organized very well, giving room to all participants to express their views.
9.	Le forum a été excellent et bien organisé, agréable à participer.
10.	The organization was excellent, and it provided a fantastic platform for networking.
Total of 10 responses, or 19%	

Question 4) To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses
The forum allowed me to share my experiences and perceptions concerning linguistic duality.	25 (86%)	4 (14%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	29
The forum allowed me to share my experiences and perceptions concerning cultural diversity.	20 (69%)	9 (31%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	29
The forum allowed me to share my experiences and perceptions regarding the integration of cultural diversity in official language communities.	16 (55%)	12 (41%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	29
The forum helped me better understand the realities and perceptions of persons of diverse backgrounds regarding linguistic duality and cultural diversity.	16 (55%)	11 (38%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)	29
The forum helped me better understand the importance and value of linguistic duality and bilingualism.	16 (55%)	11 (38%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)	29
The forum helped me better understand the role of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.	18 (62%)	10 (34%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	29

Question 5) After attending the forum, have you:

	Yes	No	Total Responses
Talked about linguistic duality and cultural diversity in your personal, professional or community life?	26 (90%)	3 (10%)	29
Thought more about linguistic duality and cultural diversity?	27 (93%)	2 (7%)	29

Question 6) What was your level of understanding of linguistic duality and Canada's official language communities?

	Very High	Somewhat High	Somewhat Low	Very Low	Total Responses
Before participating in the forum	7 (24%)	15 (52%)	7 (24%)	0 (0%)	29
After participating in the forum	14 (48%)	15 (52%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	29

Question 7) Did you attend the intercultural event on November 21?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		24%	7
No		76%	22
Total Responses			29

Question 8) If you answered "yes" to question 7, did attending the evening event enable you to create or strengthen relationships with:

	Yes	No	Total Responses
Forum participants	8 (100%)	0 (0%)	8
Forum facilitators	7 (88%)	1 (12%)	8
Others you may have met at the event	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	7

Question 9) Would you be interested in participating in similar events in the future?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		100%	29
No		0%	0
Total Responses			29

Question 10) If you have any other comments about the forum or the evening event, please write them below.

#	Response
1.	Bonne initiative.
2.	Thank you very much for such a great opportunity to discuss the issue of cultural diversity. As a social integration counsellor helping new immigrants and doing my masters in social work related to the topic of multiculturalism/interculturalism, it was an important event for me. Thanks again.
3.	I think more of these events should be held with different people and leaders of the communities in order to get a broader perspective on the subject. I thoroughly enjoyed my participation.
4.	Je suggère de créer une plateforme pour permettre aux immigrants de pouvoir avoir une occasion de s'exprimer leurs aspirations et ce qu'ils voudraient apporter au Canada (leur pays de choix).
5.	I really enjoyed the forum. I felt we skimmed the surface. I would have loved to explore some topics further. It was great meeting participants, though I felt I didn't make enough of the networking opportunity. I wish I had gone to the evening event. I felt too shy before the day so had made other plans and regret that decision of mine. Looking forward to hearing the outcome of all your work.
6.	I think it was an enriching experience. I did know about the realities and importance of linguistic duality and cultural diversity even before I attended the forum. I think it is so essential for all Canadians. Thank you once again.
7.	Vous pouvez considérer la possibilité d'organiser une session plus courte d'une demi-journée.
8.	No comments.
9.	Lors de l'évènement passerelle, j'ai constaté que l'on parlait plus l'anglais que le français. Selon moi même au niveau de l'office des langues, l'on privilégie plus l'anglais. Puisqu'on parle de bilinguisme, on devrait avoir un réel équilibre entre ces deux langues. Surtout que le forum s'est tenu au Québec, l'on gagnerait à faire comprendre que ces deux langues sont égales. J'ai bien compris la préoccupation de l'office, et bien compris son importance mais j'ai été un peu déçu sur cet aspect.
10.	WE NEED MORE SESSIONS LIKE THIS.
Total of 10 responses, or 19%	