

# ! infoaction

## BULLETIN

Commissioner of Official Languages

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## *A word*

### FROM THE COMMISSIONER

If I had to summarize the Office of the Commissioner's main activities since the last issue of *INFOACTION*, I would have to borrow the title of a symposium that took place in March called "Vision and Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." Over these last few months, we have made a lot of effort to adapt our vision to the challenges of "the second act of Canada's language plan." This is how His Excellency John Ralston Saul defined the phrase that best characterizes Canada's linguistic reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Office of the Commissioner's vision is thus embodied in concrete measures that increasingly ensure the equal quality of the country's two official languages.

I encourage you to carefully read the report on the Symposium on Official Languages: Vision and Challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, which took place in Toronto on March 2, 3 and 4, 2004, and which is presented in *INFOACTION*. This event was marked by a ferment of ideas, perspectives and proposals that made it possible to develop concrete courses of action that cover the primary sectors addressed at the symposium, such as education, business, the arts, culture and sports.

As you surely know, one of the objectives of Government of Canada's Action Plan for Official Languages is to double the number of young Canadians with a knowledge of their second official language by 2013. I have realized more than ever that there is a firm resolve among a significant number of Canadians to work together so that future generations have the understanding and knowledge that are essential assets in tomorrow's Canada and world. After reading some of the discussions and interviews with symposium participants, I am sure you will agree.

Over the last few months, the Office of the Commissioner has published the results of studies and audits, with the highlights presented in *INFOACTION*. These reports show that in each case, we have the same concern: we want the rights of Canadians to receive service of equal quality in both official languages from federal institutions to be respected.

Dyane Adam



Through the various audits conducted by the Office of the Commissioner, I am better able to provide Parliament with an objective evaluation of the linguistic situation in those institutions subject to the *Official Languages Act*. I must therefore appear before various parliamentary committees. On March 1, for example, while budgets were being reviewed, I presented the Senate Committee on Official Languages with an activity report for the Office of the Commissioner and I stated my expectations of the government.

On May 10, I appeared again before the same Senate Committee and the following day before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages to share the results of the Canada Post Corporation audit. At the same time, we discussed measures to be taken following the publication of the studies that addressed the issue of language of work in the federal public service and bilingual services provided by businesses in federal buildings in the National Capital Region. My mandate enables me to make appropriate recommendations, but it is up to the elected officials to implement them; hence, the importance of discussing these recommendations with them.

In "News from the Regions", you will see that everywhere in Canada there are ambassadors of a young (or young-at-heart) generation for whom linguistic duality is a reality that connects and enriches our lives.

Happy reading and have a good holiday and a wonderful summer!

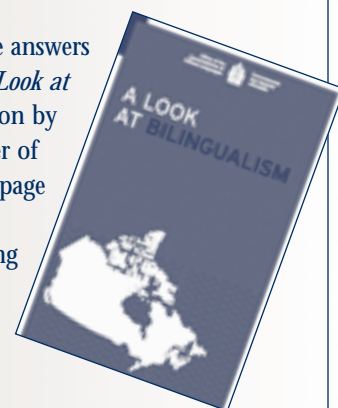
## *Canada at a Glance:*

### A BOOK FULL OF ANSWERS

For all of us, there comes a day when we find ourselves discussing bilingualism in Canada with friends, parents or colleagues. Inevitably, the same questions come up:

- What use is it to be bilingual in Canada? What second language is most often used in the workplace? Italian? English? Spanish?
- What percentage of English-speaking Canadians is bilingual? What is the percentage of Francophones?
- Are young Canadians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century more bilingual than young Canadians were in the 1970s?
- Does the Government of Canada award bursaries to young Canadians who wish to improve their second-language skills?
- What are the economic benefits of bilingualism?

Are you curious to find out the answers to these questions? Consult *A Look at Bilingualism*, a recent publication by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. This eight-page brochure answers dozens of interesting questions. Something to read and remember!



To obtain a copy, please contact OCOL, by calling 1 877 996-6368 or by visiting [www.ocol-clo.gc.ca](http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca) on the Internet.

## *New Regional*

### LIAISON OFFICER

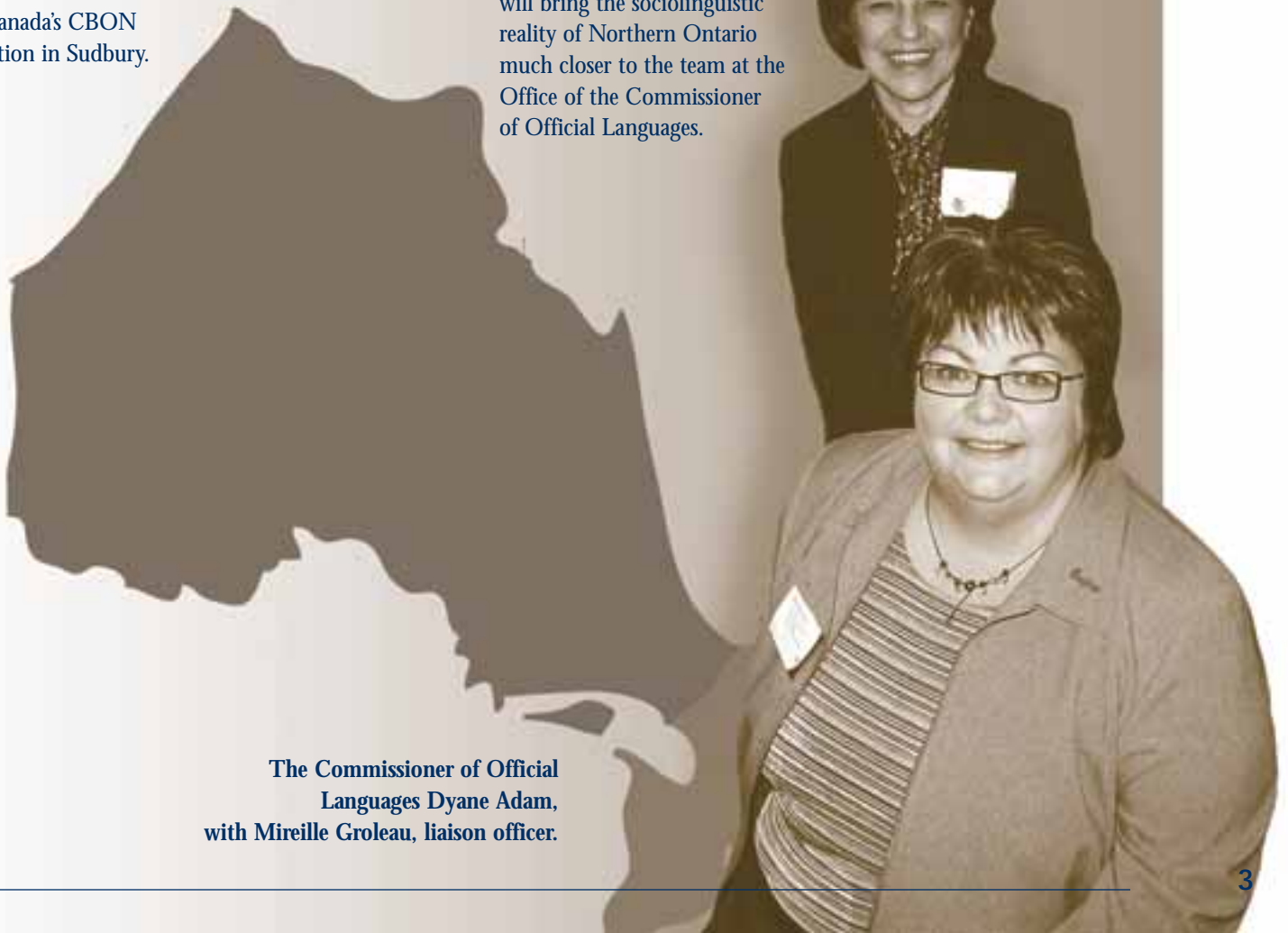
In its previous issue, *INFOACTION* gave an update on a project of key importance to the Commissioner of Official Languages: the creation of regional liaison positions to allow the Commissioner and her team to be in constant contact with the Canadian public.

On May 7, Dr. Adam opened a liaison office in Sudbury, Ontario, in the presence of numerous guests representing various sectors, including politics, government institutions, business, education, culture, media, and Anglophone and Francophone community organizations. The Commissioner took the opportunity to introduce the new liaison officer, Mireille Groleau, a well-known figure in Northern Ontario because of her work as a journalist and editor for Radio-Canada's CBON radio station in Sudbury.

Speaking to the guests, Dr. Adam explained the importance and advantages of a liaison office, which she considers to be an asset for Northern Ontario. The presence of a liaison officer will undoubtedly help establish dialogue with federal institutions subject to the *Act*, so that these institutions can serve the people of Northern Ontario in the official language of their choice. She reiterated her support for minority communities being allowed to acquire the means necessary to live and develop in their language.

Dr. Adam said she hopes that Anglophone community organizations will offer opportunities for development, contact and partnership that will foster communication between the two language communities.

The people of Sudbury were very pleased with the opening of the regional liaison office, which will bring the sociolinguistic reality of Northern Ontario much closer to the team at the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.



The Commissioner of Official  
Languages Dyane Adam,  
with Mireille Groleau, liaison officer.

## *Inspired*

### BY CANADA

More than a year ago, the Commissioner of Official Languages was invited to Dublin by Irish associations who asked her to share Canada's experience with official language legislative measures. You may remember that at the time the Republic of Ireland was studying a bill to promote and protect the Irish language (also known as Gaelic) and was considering the creation of a language commissioner.

Ireland enacted its first *Official Languages Act* in 2003. This new piece of legislation recognizes the equality of the English and Irish languages. According to section 8 of the Irish constitution, Irish is the "first official language" of Ireland.

On April 30<sup>th</sup> the Commissioner was invited to speak at the 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of the Association for Canadian Studies in Ireland, "Intercultural Dialogue: Canada and the Other," held in Cork, Ireland. She presented an overview of the Canadian experience with language rights.

Dr. Adam also characterized the mandate and roles of the Commissioner of Official Languages as the "active conscience" of Canadian society in terms of language. She pointed out that her mandate is similar to that given to Ireland's first commissioner.

As the Irish government used the Canadian experience as a model by instituting an official languages act and for creating the position of the commissioner, Dr. Adam discussed the similarities and features of the Irish and Canadian legislation. The two sets of laws have similar objectives, in that they were both enacted to allow and promote the use of the official languages of Parliament in acts and government publications, in the administration of justice, in communications with the public administration, in services delivered to the public and in the public service. As well, both pieces of legislation provide a redress and compensation mechanism for individuals whose language rights have been infringed. Given the unique circumstances of the two countries, the Commissioner thoroughly demonstrated that their respective acts have their own distinct features. She explained the features of the Canadian legislation in light of historical facts.

Dr. Adam concluded by pointing out that an act is not the end, but rather the start of work yet to be completed. It embodies a vision to be achieved and constantly

reaffirmed. She added, "the legal concepts of equality and cultural rights have to translate into the lives of members of the public so that the cultures can flourish and take part in the wealth shared by all of society."

## *Did you know*

- According to Richard Pound (Chancellor of McGill University), civil law and common law are taught in both official languages at McGill University. Consequently, many law firms in cities such as London, New York and Tokyo recruit McGill students for their bilingual skills. (*Vision and Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Symposium on Official Languages*)
- According to Statistics Canada, in the 2002-2003 academic year, almost 2 million students took French as a second language:

French-immersion programs	357,000
Core French programs	1,570,000
English as a second language (Quebec and New Brunswick)	560,000



## *Why Restore*

### OCOL'S AUDIT FUNCTION?

Auditing takes many forms. The form in question, external auditing, is an integral part of the role of Commissioner of Official Languages. Under the *Official Languages Act*, the Commissioner is legally required to report on how federal institutions apply the *Act*. Audits are a way to collect accurate information to this purpose, and the Commissioner has the authority to conduct investigations, including audits, on her own initiative.

In restoring the audit function, which was set aside several years ago for budgetary reasons, OCOL has also adopted a new approach to the entire process. Dr. Adam would like this new external audit policy to focus on prevention. Her wish is for this policy to result in audits that serve as both assessment tools and a consultation mechanism, and identify deficiencies and problems within institutions.

Dr. Adam opted for this more preventive approach as a guideline to encourage federal institutions to make the necessary changes with regard to official languages. According to the Commissioner, the reintroduction of the audit function at OCOL is in line with the Government of Canada's Action Plan for Official Languages, in which accountability plays an important role.

The institutions identified in the OCOL annual audit plan for 2003–2004 have been informed that they will be audited. OCOL will be maintaining a dialogue with the institutions throughout this process, and they will be able to comment on the findings and recommendations contained in the preliminary audit report.

The Commissioner will present the final audit reports to the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, the Treasury Board President, and, of course, the institution audited. The reports will also be posted on the OCOL Web site.

In short, the new external audit policy should clearly and straightforwardly assess the language situation within federal institutions. To find out more, contact OCOL for a copy of the new policy and for an information kit on the reinstatement of this new function. You can call OCOL at 1 877 996-6368 or visit [www.ocol-clo.gc.ca](http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca).



## *Walking*

### THE TALK

French remains underused as a language of work in federal institutions located in regions designated bilingual. These conclusions emerged from recent studies conducted by the Treasury Board Secretariat, as well as from numerous complaints filed with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. Faced with these facts, the Commissioner of Official Languages carried out the study, *Walking the Talk: Language of Work in the Federal Public Service*.

In the summer of 2003, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages conducted a sociolinguistic analysis in the National Capital Region, which revealed that there are differences in the frequency and extent of use of English and French in the workplace in federal institutions. "There has been extensive progress with regard to language of work in the last 15 years" stated the Commissioner. "However, in practice, there is still a gap between what employees can reasonably expect and the reality of the matter. The current work environment does not give English-speaking federal employees and French-speaking federal employees who are entitled to work in their preferred official language the same opportunities to use their preferred official language."

The study confirms that there is still unease in this regard among members of both language groups. In fact, French-speaking federal employees fear that, if they speak French, their skills may not be fully recognized by their supervisors, their colleagues may not understand them,

and they may be made to wait longer for work tools and training courses of the same quality as those provided to English-speaking employees. As a result, these employees unavoidably resort to using English most of the time.

As well, the study shows that English-speaking federal employees in general would like to use French more but that the organizational culture does not provide any encouragement for them to do so. The study also revealed that a large number of English-speaking supervisors have not received adequate language training to allow them to carry out their supervisory duties effectively.

In her study, Dr. Adam makes a number of recommendations and proposes a management framework for official languages in the workplace. The framework includes three complementary strategic priorities: clear and consistent leadership; personal capacity; and institutional capacity. Once again, the Commissioner urges senior managers to lead by example and to become models of bilingualism. She encourages them to remind federal employees that all of them will be treated equitably and that their contribution will be equally valued, whether they speak English or French in the workplace. The Commissioner recommends that the government provide greater assistance for its employees at all levels so that they can develop and maintain their language skills.

"In this study, we wanted to emphasize the ways in which the necessary change in the government's organizational culture can be achieved more quickly in order to produce expected results. I expect the federal government to take all necessary steps to create a framework and conditions to encourage the use of both official languages within federal institutions." For Dr. Adam, the next step is perfectly clear: it is time to walk the talk.

## *Did you know*

- The most widely used languages in Canada, after English and French, are Spanish, German, Italian, Hindi, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Hebrew.
- In 2001, the population of Canada was 30 million, 18% (5.2 million) of whom spoke both English and French.  
*Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001, population according to knowledge of official languages, provinces and territories*

## A poster

### IS WORTH MORE THAN A THOUSAND WORDS

The Commissioner of Official Languages launched a brand-new poster, "Respect," at the Vision and Challenges symposium, in Toronto. This poster is the latest in a series that also includes three posters published previously: "Tradition," "Perspective" and "Vision." These three posters promote harmony and mutual respect between the two official-languages groups in Canada. They were distributed for the first time during Canada 125, held in 1992 to celebrate Canada's 125<sup>th</sup> birthday, and they have remained popular at the national level for the last ten years.

The new poster is a joint project of the National Gallery of Canada and the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. It features two works of art: *Dualité*, by Claude Le Sauter, and *Indian Hut*, by Emily Carr. "The message conveyed by the poster is that respect for the official languages drives our ability to appreciate diversity and an open attitude toward differences," stated the Commissioner at the launch of the poster. "Learning a second language is much more than personally and



economically rewarding; it also instills respect for others. The best way to show respect for other people and their language group is to learn to speak that language."

Copies of the poster can be ordered online through the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages' Web site or by contacting OCOL headquarters.



Students from  
Cedarbrae High School  
in Scarborough:

Ashley Shah, Caroline Hardy,  
Amanda Dell'Aquila, Nelie Huang  
Stephen Dainty, Neville Jacobs  
Matt Jones, Andrew Chang and  
Phil Hunter.

## *News*

### FROM THE REGIONS

#### CONNECTING IN NEW BRUNSWICK

More than 600 French-immersion students in the Saint John region in New Brunswick have been invited to take part in the CONNECTIONS program, which was developed especially for them by Avantage Saint John Advantage, Canadian Parents for French and School District 8. This initiative, which is both bilingual and provided at no charge, encourages French-immersion students to continue their schooling in French by showing them the economic, professional and cultural benefits of bilingualism.

CONNECTIONS includes a presentation by young professionals from the region who have experienced the benefits of bilingualism. An information kit containing various files, posters, stickers, temporary tattoos, magnets and brochures should help to remind them that bilingualism gives them broader choices in terms of post-secondary education and thus encourage them to continue their studies in French.

#### THE PACIFIC FEDERAL COUNCIL INNOVATES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

An pilot project in British Columbia has been reviewing the availability of bilingual services to the public at 181 designated federal bilingual offices. The initiative, called RESPECT INSPIRES, involve a four-hour interactive workshop for managers. RESPECT INSPIRES promotes and supports the official languages program and in fact has the potential to serve as a community-based innovative partnership model for possible application across Canada.

RESPECT INSPIRES workshops are held at Francophone community centres in targeted cities. This gives the managers the opportunity to have direct involvement with and exposure to the client base to which they offer the bilingual services. One of the three segments of the

workshop is presented by a local Francophone association and deals with the history and status of the Francophone community in that specific area. During Phase 1, 125 seats were made available to federal staff in Greater Vancouver, Victoria, Prince George and Kelowna, although the original proposal targeted 40 managers within Greater Vancouver. Eleven workshops will be presented throughout the region in 2004–05.

#### RÉSEAUTAGE FRANCO FUN

In British Columbia, networking in French is a happy event where work is a synonym of fun! Réseautage Franco Fun revolves around 12 monthly armchair discussions with public servants and Francophone community representatives. It promotes and maintains use of French in the workplace and networking with the Francophone community of British Columbia. The 90-minute sessions are held during the employees' lunch break. Participation in the activities is open to federal public servants with at least a BBB level, as well as to provincial and municipal employees.

Réseautage Franco Fun plans on reaching all federal departments and agencies, with Pacific Federal Council and Educacentre establishing activities that will engage the Francophone community and public servants in maintaining the bilingual component of Canada.

Canadian youth residing in B.C. will be invited, to make them aware of federal government bilingual services, thus reminding them that the Government of Canada is a bilingual employer of choice.

Karsten Kaemling, liaison officer at the Vancouver Regional Office, participated in these initiatives and will be happy to respond to your inquiries.

You can also go to:

<http://pfc.gc.ca/app/commit.cfm?commit=OFF LANG>, for more information.



## NEW B.Sc.N. IN ALBERTA

The Faculté Saint-Jean in Edmonton and the School of Nursing at the University of Alberta are offering a new four-year program leading to a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Under this program, students can obtain a degree in both of Canada's official languages. Graduates will be able to provide nursing care in both official languages. This program thus meets the needs of Francophone and Francophile applicants. Graduates of this new program will be able to provide nursing care in both official languages. For the first two years, students take courses in French at Faculté Saint-Jean. In subsequent years, they take most of their courses in English in the Faculty of Nursing. They also have the opportunity to get training in clinical practice either in a bilingual or a French-speaking health-care setting. As well, students can choose to complete the requirements for the fourth year of the program in another Canadian university where French is the language of instruction.

This project was developed under the guidance of Claudette Tardif, the then-dean of Faculté Saint-Jean.

## A FIRST IN NOVA SCOTIA

The Acadian community in Nova Scotia had been hoping for a French-language health-services network for many years. This dream became a reality on March 30<sup>th</sup> this year. At a forum held in Dartmouth with the support of the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE), the Réseau Santé adopted a strategic plan and bylaws. It also elected its first executive committee.

The principal objective of the Réseau Santé is to promote access to quality health services in all French-speaking regions in the province. The network also intends to conduct various training initiatives for health-care providers and publish a directory of existing health services in the province. The Réseau Santé is planning to develop a strategy for recruiting and retaining health professionals.

Stan Surette, president of FANE, considers March 30<sup>th</sup> a historic day for Acadians in Nova Scotia, a major step towards permanently establishing French-language health services.

## SYMPOSIUM IN THE ATLANTIC REGION

In the spirit of cooperation, four provincial teachers' associations in the Atlantic region, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA), the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants Francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick (AEFNB), the Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU) and the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation (PEITF), joined the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) in organizing a symposium. The education faculty at the Université de Moncton and the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities (CIRLM) were also involved in organizing this event.

The symposium was held in Saint John on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004. The purpose was to allow participants to become aware as a group of the challenge that faces them and consider how to respond, to foster conditions that will help young Francophones in the Atlantic provinces achieve academic success and develop a greater sense of identity. The participants attended workshops and held panel discussions on the teaching methods followed in a French-language school setting and on how to foster the development of cultural identity in young Francophones in official-language minority communities. Representatives from two school-community centres, in Saint John and Fredericton, spoke about some of their success stories.

One of the highlights of the symposium was the opening presentation, when Rodrigue Landry, a professional educational researcher with more than 30 years' experience, discussed the results of a scientific-research project he conducted on behalf of the Centre for Research and Information on Canada. These results are contained in his report, *Libérer le potentiel caché de l'exogamie : le rôle de l'éducation tout au long de la vie*,

which reviews the language data gathered in the 2001 Census on children under 18 years of age who are eligible for French-language instruction. The study concludes there are fewer such children, especially preschoolers, and that this trend will worsen with time. Mr. Landry's report provides an in-depth analysis of the subject. At the symposium, the author explained the consequences of exogamy and proposed ways to address this problem.

The symposium was a great success, and participants were very much in favour of following up with another such event in the near future.

## WHEN IN WINNIPEG...

... why not visit Old Saint-Boniface? There, you can have a unique learning experience in living history at Maison Gabrielle-Roy, located at number 375 on the famous Deschambault Street. Maison Gabrielle-Roy is administered by a non-profit organization founded in 1995 to restore and maintain the house in which one of Canada's most internationally renowned authors was born. The house was officially inaugurated on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Everything inside the house provides a glimpse into the life of Gabrielle Roy and that of her father, a well-known immigration officer, and draws visitors into the world of a French-Canadian family from Quebec that settled in Manitoba in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The National Library of Canada donated archives, photographs, vignettes and documents. Radio-Canada has generously made all of its existing audiovisual archives relating to the life of Gabrielle Roy available to this establishment.

As Carol Harvey, a professor of French at the University of Winnipeg, noted recently, Gabrielle Roy put Manitoba on the literary map in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Professor Harvey added that Gabrielle Roy has often been called English Canada's favourite French-speaking author.

Visiting Maison Gabrielle-Roy is a way of paying tribute to the great author that Gabrielle Roy was while enjoying a wonderful literary and historic experience that inspires all visitors.

For further information, please contact (204) 231-3853. You can visit Maison Gabrielle-Roy virtually at [www.maisongabrielleroy.mb.ca](http://www.maisongabrielleroy.mb.ca) on the World Wide Web. This is something everyone is sure to enjoy.

## A UNIQUE APPROACH TO A UNIQUE SITUATION

Incorporated in 2002, the Centre de Santé Saint-Thomas Health Centre in Edmonton now has a membership drawn from 19 local Francophone organizations. The bilingual centre provides supportive affordable housing within the assisted-living, community care model; primary care to the Francophone community; and outreach and support programs to aging Francophones in the Edmonton area. The project will house approximately 200 residents and the centre will be staffed with an interdisciplinary team of bilingual health care providers. Funding will come from a variety of sources, including all three levels of government and the community itself.

Construction is expected to begin soon, with completion scheduled for early 2006. The partnering and support is in place and the project is moving ahead and on schedule. The Centre de Santé Saint-Thomas Health Centre is a one-of-a-kind project of which the Edmonton community has every reason to be proud.

## BOOKS COME TO LIFE IN SUDBURY

The City of Greater Sudbury is a world-renowned nickel producer. However, it will henceforth also be known as the place where thousands of books come to life to the great delight of Francophones and Francophiles in the region.

The first *Salon du livre du Grand Sudbury* took place from May 6 to 9, 2004. *Vivre le livre*, the theme of the event, brought together members of the French-language community and was a great success.

More than 12,000 visitors took part in 70 literary activities, including book launches, roundtable discussions, writing workshops, literary dinners, film screenings and even a nature photo hunt.

Dr. Dyane Adam gave the opening address at the fair, presenting books as powerful vehicles for a people's culture. She stressed the importance of distributing literary products, both from French-speaking Ontario and Canadian French-language publishing houses, which were well represented at the fair. The Commissioner congratulated the organizers and partners for this major success, singling out the hundred volunteers.

The Salon du livre is the first book fair of its kind to be held in the Sudbury area in 30 years. Some 40 authors and exhibitors took part in the literary activities held at the Salon. They included Francophone writers from Ontario as well as Francophone authors from across the country, among them Arlette Cousture, Daniel Poliquin, Gaston Tremblay, Doric Germain and Louise Tanguay. Celebrated astrophysicist Hubert Reeves, as well as artists such as Chloé Sainte-Marie and the inimitable Sol, were among the many attractions at this event.

Congratulations to the organizing committee and the hundreds of volunteers who made such a large-scale event possible, and many thanks to all the visitors who dropped by!

French-Canadian literature and culture are thriving, and the *Salon du livre du Grand Sudbury* has proved that they will be doing so for a very long time.



## *Don't Let the Fear*

### OF BILINGUALISM SLOW YOU DOWN

**Peter Robinson**

These are the words of a very successful businessperson. We met him at Vision and Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Symposium on Official Languages, in Toronto, where he was taking part in a business and economics discussion panel. *INFOACTION* is pleased to introduce its readers to Peter Robinson, a Canadian with enthusiasm and optimism to spare. He firmly believes in linguistic duality as one of his business' keys to success.

As the president of Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC), Mr. Robinson has made bilingualism a fundamental component of his business, which he founded in Vancouver in 1971. MEC provides quality products for self-propelled wilderness-oriented recreation.

When Mr. Robinson planned to expand into Quebec, he decided to make his company bilingual. In less than 18 months, a MEC store had been built in Montréal, and all of its staff complement was bilingual. Mr. Robinson tells us that he had to have all of his promotional material translated and printed, a total of 700,000 words, at a cost of almost \$2 million. In his view, this was the only way to ensure that his new store would be successful.

He adds that his strategic plan provided for the hiring of bilingual people who would hold key positions at the company's Vancouver head office in computer systems, marketing, communications, human resources, management and so on. According to Mr. Robinson, it was imperative that managers in all these areas be bilingual. Very soon, Mr. Robinson came to realize that these investments netted profits for his company.

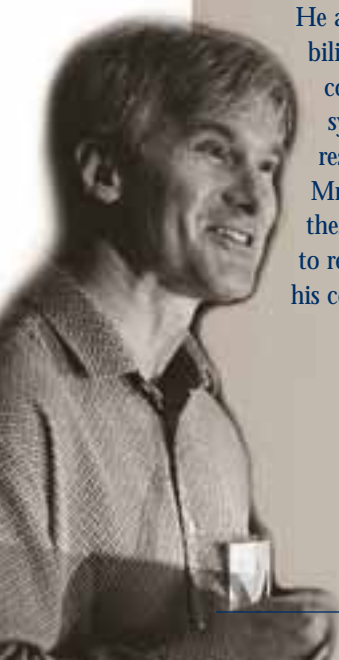
MEC now boasts a store in Ottawa, where customer service is provided in both English and French. As well, the company opened a store in Quebec City on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003. For the first time, a MEC catalogue, the fall-winter 2003–2004 issue, is available in French. MEC is now having all of the terms pertaining to the organization translated. More than 200 employees who work at the head office and at the company's various stores are bilingual.

Mr. Robinson notes: "We identify key positions that have to be bilingual in the organization because we operate in two languages. Those are typically better-paying jobs because they are leadership positions" As well, the Mountain Equipment Co-op Web site is bilingual.

Mr. Robinson states that multiple economic benefits have accrued to the company as a result of its becoming bilingual, over and above, of course, the enthusiasm demonstrated by staff working in a bilingual environment. He suggests that businesspeople hire bilingual staff immediately when starting a business, rather than apply for government funding under language-training programs. He also suggests that a human-resources database be created, in order to have access to the most qualified applicants. Wisely, he likes to say that one should not fear change. Making an organization bilingual does create a certain amount of unease, which can be overcome if one wants to institute change.

On March 22<sup>nd</sup> this year, MEC was named recipient of the M<sup>é</sup>rite du français award by the Office québécois de la langue française, in the "language of commerce and business" category, for the quality of the French produced by the company. Both Mr. Robinson and his staff have many reasons to be proud.

Mr. Robinson is a true agent of change in business and economics, fields where bilingualism is not always considered a fundamental asset for success.





## *Vision and Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

### SYMPOSIUM ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The symposium on official languages, Vision and Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, which took place on March 2 to 4, 2004, in Toronto, was certainly a key event in the ongoing debate on Canada's language situation. The symposium was organized by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, in conjunction with Canadian Parents for French, the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs and the Department of Canadian Heritage.

The symposium was the result of one of the main objectives of the federal government's Action Plan for Official Languages, which is to double the number of young Canadians with knowledge of their second official language by 2013. A preparatory meeting provided a sound basis for the March symposium by bringing together some 20 specialists and opinion leaders representing key sectors in Canadian society. The discussion focused on issues that will have to be considered to attain the objective set out in the Action Plan. Some 120 stakeholders—from areas such as education, business, economics, the arts, culture and sports—took part in the symposium.

In her opening address, the Commissioner expressed her support for the work that participants had set out for themselves: "This symposium is an opportunity to engage in dialogue and come up with ways of advancing this Canadian initiative: doubling the number of young Canadians who know their second official language by 2013. This symposium is all about young people and what lies ahead for them. It must also convey the things we can give them and the instruments we can add to the toolbox they will use to take hold of the future."

#### **The symposium featured:**

- Speeches by guest speakers;
- Panel and group discussions on three themes: education; business and the economy; and the arts, culture, and sports;
- Assessing challenges, and determining possible strategies and action relating to each theme; and
- Personal commitments to contribute to the attainment of the common objective.

#### **The symposium participants identified four major challenges:**

- Determining how to provide ongoing language training to students from elementary school through to the postsecondary level;
- Taking steps to have public opinion onside; this support is indispensable;
- Making English and French an integral part of daily life across the country; and
- Renewing the frameworks for the teaching and learning of both official languages.

Participants deplored the fact that access to cultural resources is limited and that there is inadequate cooperation among stakeholders. In addition, participants would like to see improved coordination between the various government policies on second-language teaching and learning.

In light of the different ways into which bilingualism is used in the various sectors of Canadian life, participants identified possible solutions as well as specific initiatives to foster greater interest in acquiring and maintaining a second language.

They examined strategies that could contribute to doubling the number of high-school graduates with knowledge of their second official language, including the following:

- Coordinating government activities more effectively;
- Fostering language exchanges;
- Ensuring greater consistency with regard to distribution and dissemination activities;
- Emphasizing the commonalities that connect Canadians while celebrating our differences; and
- Promoting the benefits of bilingualism more effectively, and facilitating access to the resources of major broadcasters.

In her closing address, Dr. Adam quoted His Excellency John Ralston Saul, inviting participants to “prepare for the second act of Canada's language plan.” She reminded attendees that all players need to co-ordinate their efforts and work together.

The Commissioner added that she was pleased “that the Minister responsible for Official Languages, the Honourable Pierre Pettigrew, has made commitments, in partnership with Canadian Parents for French, that will enable the smooth integration of the Action Plan for Official Languages, most notably by starting up provincial and territorial consultations with groups involved in teaching French as a second language.” She added: “This will allow us to define specific needs and put forward recommendations adapted to each province and territory. We see here that the federal government recognizes the importance of developing an implementation plan for each province and territory that is suited to its own reality.”

The Commissioner thanked participants for their constructive efforts and for the commitment they continued to demonstrate. She concluded by stating that the symposium will no doubt spark further action in this area.

## *Food*

### FOR THOUGHT

#### **Meeting His Excellency John Ralston Saul at the Symposium on Official Languages**

It is a well-known fact in Canada that His Excellency John Ralston Saul is one of the most enthusiastic and dedicated advocates of bilingualism. Since 1998, he has been bringing together French immersion and francophone students across the country for the annual French for the Future/Français pour l'avenir conference, which has grown to become a cross-country forum linking students through video satellite technology in 12 different Canadian cities.

Mr. Saul delivered the keynote address at the Vision and Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Symposium on Official Languages. We would like to share some of his views and thoughts on the future of bilingualism in Canada as

expressed informally to a representative from the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, who met with him on behalf of *INFOACTION*.

According to Mr. Saul, for the past 30 years, Canada has been laying down structures that have changed it linguistically. The first phase has been successful and is complete. Canadians must now come up with a plan for “Act Two” or they risk losing a great deal of what has been gained. He said: “It is important to recognize that it is not necessary for everyone to become bilingual, but a critical mass must be developed, comprised of authors, playwrights, business people and others, not just government officials. This critical mass is essential for internal purposes and from an international perspective. The opportunity to become bilingual should exist for all Canadians, to enable the country to benefit from the intelligence and experience of all people.”

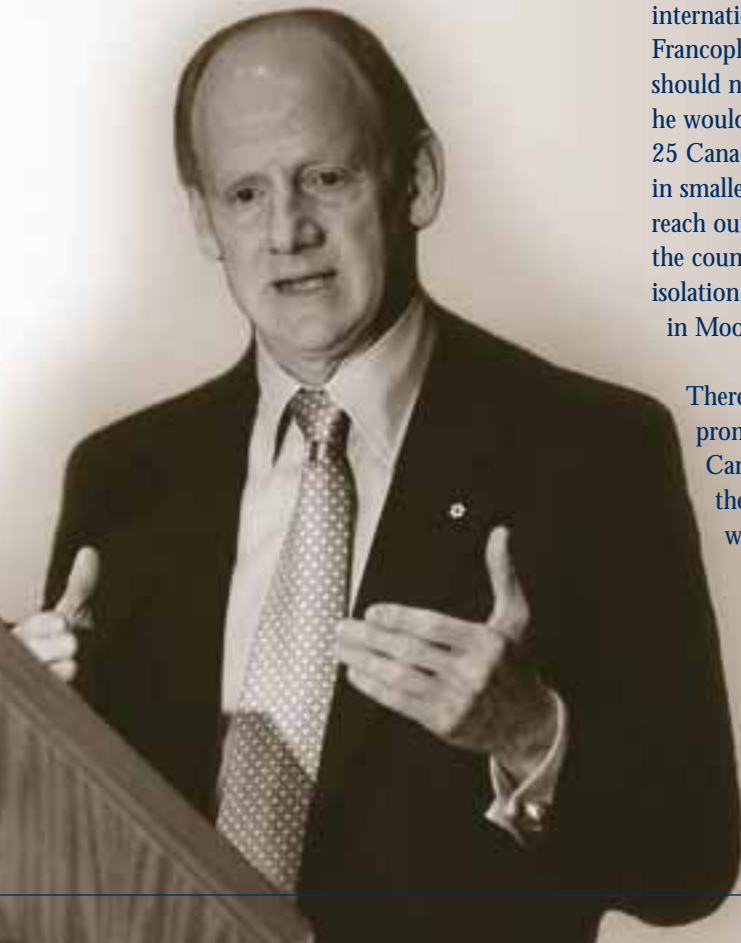
Unquestionably, Mr. Saul has full confidence in today's generation of students. In fact, he counts on them to carry on the Canadian tradition of linguistic duality. "The biggest problem in Canada today is that the education specialists are not designing programs that treat kids as intelligent people," he says. "Students are asking to be challenged, not for memory work or spelling. They are just exploding with creativity."

However, he worries that not enough is being done to take French beyond the classroom. Students should be shown the tangible benefits of having French as a second language. "One of the barriers to moving forward with the establishment of a bilingual nation is a lack of understanding of the true value of speaking a second language," he adds. "People have become obsessed with the political aspects of bilingualism. They have failed to perceive the economic advantages of a second language in today's global marketplace."

Mr. Saul strongly believes that French learning needs to be not only extended but also better integrated into the postsecondary level. "The more that you get bilingualism into the universities, the more the concept of being bicultural before bilingual will establish itself and bleed backwards into the schools." To do so, he suggests that universities and colleges reach out to students while they are at the secondary level and that postsecondary institutions rethink their students' first year of studies. He hopes that these institutions will be able to ensure that students keep on developing their second official language, while also applying it in a more pragmatic setting. When asked if more emphasis should be put on exchange programs, Mr. Saul responds that they are only successful insofar as they teach students to be bilingual and bicultural once they return to their respective communities.

While discussing the many successes of Canadian exchange programs, we noted that French for the Future had grown significantly since its beginning in 1998. We asked Mr. Saul whether it was viable to make it an international program involving the member states of La Francophonie internationale. Mr. Saul replied that one should never close the door to anything and added that he would like to see the program expand to at least 25 Canadian cities and regions. Since many citizens live in smaller communities, he felt that only once they could reach out to the regions would they be able to truly cover the country. "One of the problems in Canada is the isolation you feel if you live in Corner Brook or in Moose Jaw."

There are undeniably several challenges ahead in promoting linguistic duality as an intrinsically Canadian value. Mr. Saul concludes by asserting that the next 30 years of official languages in Canada will be very telling indeed.



## *An Aboriginal Elder's View*

### ON BILINGUALISM

*"There has to be a way to pull people across the country together and language is one way of doing it."*

Gloria Cranmer-Webster, a respected Aboriginal elder, was one of the participants in the Symposium on Official Languages held in Toronto. *INFOACTION* met with her to benefit from her unique perspective and wisdom.

Gloria Cranmer-Webster was born in Alert Bay, British Columbia. In 1975, she returned to her hometown after being away for 30 years. Her first language is Kwakwala, the aboriginal language of the Alert Bay area. English became her second language. She is well known for developing an orthography for her language and for producing materials for teaching Kwakwala in the local schools.

Being fluent in several languages, Ms. Cranmer-Webster knows that acquiring a second language consists of much more than mastering grammar and spelling. It also involves reading, playing and living in one's second official language. She believes that more needs to be done to promote arts, culture and sports: "I think it is hard for young people to link business and bilingualism; it has to be in the areas of arts, culture and sports that young people can be engaged."

In her opinion, we must talk less about a bilingual society and more about a multilingual one. In some Vancouver schools, the student population speaks approximately 50 languages. To Ms. Cranmer-Webster, the future of French as an official language in Canada seems to be uncertain, given the huge immigrant populations in major Canadian cities, who arrive speaking neither official language. "For French to survive, it will require new ways of ensuring its survival."

According to Ms. Cranmer-Webster, Canadians should embrace their two official languages, regardless of their age. As for linguistic duality, she believes it to be a matter of national unity. "There has to be a way to pull people across the country together and language is one way of doing it."

Ms. Cranmer-Webster concluded the discussion by saying that governments must make more of an effort "to be creative and imaginative about using culture to reach young Canadians." She added: "We must endeavour to highlight our Canadian heroes, people like Guy Lafleur (my hockey-playing son's hero who became mine as well), Daniel Lanois and Denys Arcand. They have helped move Canada's linguistic duality forward so successfully in the past 30 years."

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Thank you for taking the time to write us.



## Worth

### THINKING ABOUT ...

So many excellent thoughts, suggestions, proposals and comments were voiced at the Symposium that we would like to share every single one of them with our readers. Mission impossible, of course! However, *INFOACTION* is eager to spread the good word on bilingualism from the participants, who emphasized the importance of a holistic new approach to this national reality.

If a full range of bilingual services could be offered across Canada, young people would have greater choices when planning their future. We have to be inventive. We have to find what works for young people across the country. If bilingualism always starts and ends with money, it will get nowhere.

*His Excellency John Ralston Saul*

Young people must be given hope and encouragement. The message is, "Bilingualism is a living future." A communications strategy is needed. Young people must have role models. To answer these needs, Canadians must work together. The Symposium gives hope; it is a survival kit.

*The Honourable Denis Coderre*

After becoming Minister of Learning in Alberta, I tried to discover Albertans' opinions and found that bilingualism is important for business and culture, and 99% of the people I spoke to wanted their children to learn a second language.

There were varying degrees of acceptance of second language legislation in the Alberta caucus but what has won the day is globalization. It is recognized that second languages are needed for international business.

*The Honourable Lyle Olberg, Minister of Learning, Alberta*

There is a need to recognize students' achievement in learning a second language. Survey results indicate that, to 40% of students, French is the most important course. If bilingualism is so important, then French deserves more status. A certificate, and support from the business and sports communities and the media, would offer recognition to students who finish core French. Upon graduation, they could receive a high school diploma plus a certificate for French learning.

*Susan Forward, Teacher of Core French and French Immersion and Vice Principal, Brother Rice Junior High School, Avalon East School District (St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador)*

The ability to speak one language moderately well is not a major accomplishment. In fact, I often meet people who believe that speaking only two languages is an intellectual weakness. At international meetings, it is essential to be able to converse outside the meeting room as well as inside it.

Bilingualism opens up the country. You cannot understand Canada in one language. We should stop talking about French as a language that should be protected. We should promote it, make it exciting.

*Richard Pound, Chairman, World Anti-Doping Agency, Chancellor of McGill University.*

The genius of Canada is that its culture is constantly changing. Learning a second language is a powerful gesture, an indication of commitment to Canada, as long as it is voluntary and not by coercion. Canada must be linked by common values. The most powerful art form to accomplish this is cinema.

Cultural enterprises such as Cirque du Soleil have been great successes. Can this enthusiasm be extended throughout the entire country?

*Jacques Bensimon, Commissioner, National Film Board of Canada*

Culture and education are inextricably linked, and a language must be learned outside the classroom as well as inside it.

More than one million Ontarians speak French, but less than one quarter of them are Francophones. Television is the most widespread and popular mode of delivery of content, which gives TVOntario a prime opportunity to promote the French language.

TFO (TVO's francophone network) is developing a language program to support anglophone parents of immersion students with the aim of strengthening French learning outside the classroom. A partnership has recently been formed between TVO and Canadian Parents for French.

*Isabel Bassett, Chair and Chief Executive Officer, TVOntario*

Bilingualism is often defined in purely Canadian terms, but learning a second language gives one the ability to appreciate another culture, different values and lifestyles and generally broadens one's horizons. These are qualities that young Canadians will need to make their way in today's global marketplace. The mind is like a parachute: it works much better when it's open.

*The Honourable Pierre Pettigrew*

I consider the conference a resounding success in demonstrating that bilingualism goes beyond the realm of the classroom.

The government has to do more than just preserve bilingualism. It has to broaden its scope and convince the population of how important those who speak English and French are to the economy. It is crucial to promote dialogue and open consultation with all levels of government, stakeholders and francophone individuals, as well as with people who believe in multiculturalism.  
*The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Culture, Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs, Ontario*

Even though bilingualism is at an all-time high, most Canadians live in unilingual communities and have no contact with the other official language. Most people still believe English to be the universal language, yet one Canadian in six does not adequately understand English. In economic terms, then, there is an advantage to learning French.

Canada, due to its bilingualism, is poised to benefit economically in international relations and international trade. Evidence of this is seen in Montréal, which has attracted a number of international organizations because of its bilingualism. The acquisition of a third language is much easier than learning a second, predisposing young



bilingual Canadians to become multilingual. The influx of immigrants will only enhance that process. A bilingual/multilingual population will also give Canada an economic advantage over its unilingual neighbour to the south.

*Michael Goldbloom, Publisher, Toronto Star*

A second language is a key to the whole world. One should, by all means, take every opportunity to retain a second language. The progress will be lost if the language is not actively practised. French immersion graduates should watch French television as well as films in French, read French books and consult the many excellent French Web sites.

The AMICUS Web, a bilingual information resource developed and maintained by the National Library of Canada for libraries, researchers and the public, is a precious tool to those interested in improving their second language and learning more about the cultural life of Canada, be it French or English. AMICUS Web makes 26 million full records from 1,300 Canadian libraries available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It provides you with different services to suit your needs.

In many Canadian libraries, French books and various French materials are listed under "foreign languages." I do hope that this will be corrected. It proves that a certain number of Canadians still have to be educated and better informed on official languages. Quite a challenge!

*Roch Carrier, National Librarian*

## *In Closing*

### **The Commissioner takes the floor**

In the current health care climate, with attempts to reduce the cost of treatment and hospital stays, the language factor and the human dimension take on critical importance. The reorganization of services frequently places an additional burden on families. And when they cannot bear it, the communities must ultimately take on the responsibility. Minority language communities, however, have few resources and few institutions to meet the demand. Research should explore new ways of equipping communities to help bear this social burden and ensure that their members are not disadvantaged. It is, quite simply, a question of equality of opportunity.

Research would appear to indicate that knowledge of an official language is itself a determinant of health, potentially through an interaction with socio-economic status, ethnicity and other factors that have yet to be defined. However, a great deal of work remains to be done to identify strategies and concrete action plans that address the needs of communities and that make an asset of the linguistic dimension rather than an obstacle from the standpoint of universal health care.

*Speech to a workshop on "Needs, gaps and opportunities: improving access to health care services in minority French- and English-language communities," Canadian Institutes of Health Research, March 11, 2004*

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Duality has helped tremendously in making Canada an open society that is prepared to shape its future. Negotiating a successful compromise between our two major cultures, French and English, has shaped not only our Constitution, but also our values and our ways of living together. Ultimately, Canadians day after day cultivate and renew this spirit of respect and appreciation of differences.

The people who best understand the meaning of these values are perhaps those who have most recently joined the Canadian family. It is also significant that immigrants are proportionately more supportive of linguistic duality than are Canadians born in Canada. When asked if having two official languages makes Canada a more welcoming country, 70% of Canadian-born citizens agree, compared to 75% of immigrants (The CRIC Papers #13, March 2004).

The effectiveness and scope of our immigration policy and, ultimately, the future of our model of society depend partly on research and on the specific action we take so that minority communities can welcome diversity. Linguistic duality is what has enabled us to establish an open, tolerant society in Canada and it will continue to provide us with the tools so that we can welcome and assimilate immigrants from all over the world, and together build strong and vibrant communities.

*Speech, "Duality, diversity, communities: research avenues to promote immigration in official language minority communities," Metropolis Conference, Montréal, March 28, 2004*

In recent years, Canada may have made greater progress than any other country with regard to diversity and its celebration. We live in a country whose strength and identity are increasingly to be found in its many IDENTITIES . . .

Diversity is now a part of the fabric of our nation and has given birth to Canadians who are continuing to evolve and to adapt to the outside world—by virtue of literally living with the world IN their community, on a daily basis, as soon as they notice their neighbours.

The Aga Khan, a philanthropist and Muslim spiritual leader, described Canada as "the world's most successful pluralist society."

When talking someone else's language, you are not only communicating with them, you step into their skin. Gradually you understand how they think ... and that makes you more aware of other cultures in general.

Looking at other countries, it is clear that few of them are as determined as Canada to welcome people WITH their traditions.

*Speech, "The Social Fabric of Canada: Welcoming duality and diversity," Laurier Speaker Series on Diversity and the Future of Canada, Vancouver, April 6, 2004*

## Did you know

- The Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC) analyzed data collected by Environics Research, stating that 88% of Canadians agree that "in today's global economy, people with an ability to speak more than one language will be more successful and 82% accept that learning a second language is one of the more fulfilling things that you can do for yourself as a person." (Reported in *The Globe and Mail*, 28/02/04)