

MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS WITH MINORITY OFFICIAL LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES

October 27, 2004
Ottawa, Ontario

MINUTES

The Honourable Mauril Bélanger, Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Minister responsible for Official Languages, Minister responsible for Democratic Reform and Associate Minister of National Defence, welcomed participants to the second ministerial consultations with minority official-language communities. He thanked his Cabinet colleagues for having accepted the invitation and noted the presence of the chairs of the two new House of Commons and Senate committees on official languages, Mr Pablo Rodriguez and the Honourable Eymard Corbin, as well as the Opposition official languages critics, Messrs Guy André (Bloc Québécois), Yvon Godin (New Democratic Party) and Guy Lauzon (Conservative Party).

The Minister stated that since the release of the Action Plan for Official Languages in March 2003, solid foundations had been laid in each of the departments responsible for a component of the Action Plan and that work would be stepped up. He informed participants of the main achievements of the Privy Council Office (PCO): the introduction of a consultation process including an annual meeting in the spring with senior officials in the departments affected by the Action Plan and one in the fall with the ministers of those departments, and the development of a Horizontal Results-based Management and Accountability Framework (HRMAF). He indicated that the HRMAF would be a key tool for reporting to Canadians and that implementing the Framework would be at the core of his activities as Minister responsible for Official Languages.

ANGLOPHONE SESSION

Departments' Overview and Perspectives

Health Canada (HC)

The Honourable Ujjal Dosanjh, Minister of Health, noted that implementation of the Action Plan was proceeding apace and underscored the close cooperation between the Department and various stakeholders in the file. He described the striking of advisory committees an exemplary approach and expressed satisfaction with the governance model established. He highlighted the work by the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) (development of 10 community networks) and McGill University (second-language training), and the Réseau communautaire de santé et de services sociaux du Québec (improved helplines). The Minister noted that his colleagues at the Health Ministers' Conference in Vancouver had expressed their commitment to support the work underway. He stated that challenges still remained, such as ensuring enhanced and stable financial support, especially for primary care, for which funding expires in March 2006. He closed by confirming that his parliamentary secretary, the Honourable Robert Thibault, was monitoring the file closely.

Social Development Canada (SDC)

The Honourable Ken Dryden, Minister of Social Development, reiterated the Department's commitment to making its programs accessible to all Canadians. To that end, SDC had established a unit for enforcing compliance with section 41 and ensuring that the needs of minority official-language communities are heeded. He indicated that SDC had forged ties with communities through the consultation process on the HRMAF. In closing, he noted that the two projects on early childhood development in minority communities (\$14.6 million over five years) were running smoothly.

Feedback

Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN)

Mr. Martin Murphy, President of the QCGN, explained that, according to the 2001 Census data, the English-speaking linguistic minority community of Quebec faces a serious demographic decline. In addition, there is a higher than normal unemployment rate and out-of-the-labour-market levels for Anglophones in many regions. He believed that, while the Government of Canada recognizes the specific needs of English-speaking Quebecers, the current funding formula did not respond to its obligations. He felt that the Government of Canada should do more in areas such as minority language services in Quebec, access to justice in English, immigration policies and programs, and representation of Anglophones in the Federal Public Service in Quebec. Mr. Murphy informed the Ministers that the first Global Development Plan for the English-speaking linguistic minority of Quebec would be finalized in December 2004. He also requested a report on funding for Anglophones so far.

Community Table (CT)

Ms. Elizabeth Kater, President of the CT, qualified as timely and effective the development, by PCO, of a logic model to evaluate the outcomes of the Action Plan. She thanked Industry Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada for the consultations they had held in 2003. The CT also applauded the decision of Economic Development Canada in Quebec to consider an entrepreneurship initiative on the Lower North Shore and to study the feasibility of an e-learning program on the basics of entrepreneurship. Ms. Kater shared Mr. Martin's concerns regarding the representation of the English-speaking minority in the federal Public Service in Quebec. She asked that Canadian Heritage consult the community, not just the school boards, on the development of community learning centres. Ms. Kater thanked Fisheries and Oceans Canada, for its work with the English-speaking minority in the Gaspé Peninsula, the Lower North Shore and the Magdalen Islands. However, she said that the CT was still awaiting a sign of interest by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in its initiatives. Ms. Kater closed by reminding participants that partnerships are essential and that she felt the Government of Canada was on the right track with its Action Plan and long-term commitments.

Departments' Overview and Perspectives

Heritage Canadian (PCH)

The Honourable Liza Frulla, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Minister responsible for Status of Women, stated that PCH had worked closely with PCO in developing the HRMAF. On official languages in education, the Minister indicated that the targeted funding then being negotiated would be subject to a separate accountability process from that for core funding, and that PCH would ensure that communities were consulted on the action plans of the provinces and territories. She specified that the Department would retain a portion of the targeted funding to fund emerging priorities, research projects and multilateral initiatives. In closing, the Minister reiterated her commitment to renew the education agreements by April 2005.

Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada (PSHRMAC)

The Honourable Reginald B. Alcock, President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, said he had duly noted the recommendations by the Commissioner of Official Languages in her 2003-2004 Annual Report. He also indicated he was there to listen to the concerns of minority official-language communities.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC)

The Honourable Giuseppe (Joseph) Volpe, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, also accepted the recommendations of the Commissioner of Official Languages. He reaffirmed the Department's willingness to contribute to the implementation of the Action Plan for Official Languages. HRSDC supports communities through the Secretariat, Official Language Minority Communities. The Minister noted new ways needed to be found to support the Comité national de développement économique et d'employabilité dans les communautés francophones et acadiennes and the National Human Resources Development Committee for the English Linguistic Minority. A review of the mandate and objectives of the Support Fund was undertaken in 2004. The Department was working with community groups and other departments to develop a new horizontal model to support the vitality of minority official-language communities.

Feedback

Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN)

Mr. James Carter, President of the CHSSN, explained that contribution agreements with the Government of Quebec had been signed and that resources were now flowing for initiatives in the areas of primary health care (health information line, local services networks projects in several regions, improvement of services to the elderly), training and human resources retention (language training initiatives and promotion of distant service technology in partnership with McGill University) and networking (QCGN's networking and partnership initiative). The CHSSN congratulated Health Canada on its innovative partnership model, which other federal departments may consider adopting. Mr. Carter noted the new openness demonstrated by the Government of Quebec toward accepting a federal contribution to ensure accessibility for

English-speaking communities. Finally, he felt that the Action Plan's measures were helping communities build solidarity and mutual understanding with their Francophone counterparts.

Quebec Association for Adult Learning (QAAL)

Ms. Susan Oliver, President of the QAAL, noted that - while important progress had been made in minority French-language education - in Quebec, English schools had been shut down, McGill and Concordia universities had closed English language teacher training programs, and Anglophone communities lacked opportunities to study and learn at a distance. She explained that challenges such as low schooling and literacy levels, poverty, economic and demographic decline in specific regions were a direct result of the lack of learning and employment opportunities. She encouraged the Government of Canada to reach out to the English-speaking community of Quebec, to use the lessons learned from its successes in the other provinces, and to invest monies wisely and fairly (for example, in community learning centres, distance learning opportunities, apprenticeship and entrepreneurial programs, recognition of prior learning for immigrants, early childhood language training, French language training in the workplace and quality English-language teaching materials).

TRANSITION SESSION

Departments' Overview and Perspectives

Industry Canada (IC)

The Honourable Stephen Owen, Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Sport), took the floor as a partner of the Minister of Industry and the ministers responsible for regional economic development agencies in implementing the Action Plan for Official Languages. He reiterated Western Economic Diversification's (WED's) support for Western Francophone communities, which had given rise to such success stories as the Western Tourism Corridor. He mentioned some other projects underway, including distance learning pilot projects (in partnership with the Faculté Saint-Jean in Alberta and Éducacentre in British Columbia), which help give communities access to services in their own language, where they live, rather than having to go to urban centres. WED also coordinates youth internships in the four Western provinces (two interns per region, per year) and a variety of awareness and communication activities with IC.

Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC)

The Honourable Scott Brison, Minister of Public Works and Government Services, noted that within the Department, the Translation Bureau and the Official Languages Division are the two groups directly responsible for the official languages file. Numerous initiatives had been undertaken in the past year: French-language seminars on effective writing of proposals to obtain federal contracts; renewal of the reduced hotel rate program for minority official-language community associations; distribution of some one hundred computers and some twenty copies of Terminium to community organizations; Internet portal project covering all of the Government's language and terminology tools; financial contributions for translation services at the World Acadian Congress and the 2005 Francophone Games; creation of a National Terminology

Council; internships for translation students; participation in the Rendez-vous de la Francophonie; inclusion of language clauses in federal leases; and cooperation with PCH and the National Capital Commission to improve French-language services in the City of Ottawa.

FRANCOPHONE SESSION

Feedback

Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA)

Mr Georges Arès, President of FCFA, described the second ministerial consultations as historic, because of the impressive number of ministers in attendance. He felt the HRMAF would help better assess whether the Action Plan objectives were achieved. He said the FCFA's concerns included: lack of consultations by federal institutions at the regional level; lack of direct investment in communities; fears that investment in education was not in line with the priorities identified in the Action Plan. He listed communities' main priorities: development of a feeling of belonging, pride and community engagement; recognition and enhancement of current rights and services; organizational capacity-building; expansion of the Francophone space; recognition of new challenges (such as urbanization and rural migration). FCFA was critical that funding for Canada-communities agreements had not increased in six years. It felt horizontal action was required not only at the governmental level, but at the community level as well, and believed it could play a key role in that respect. Mr Arès felt the respective roles of the Minister responsible for Official Languages and the Minister of Canadian Heritage needed to be clarified.

Réseau de developement économique et d'employabilité Canada (RDÉEC)

Ms Claire Bélanger-Parker, President of RDÉEC, also noted the historic nature of the meeting. She pointed out that during the consultations by HRSDC in September 2004, Francophone communities had expressed the wish for an improved horizontal, parity initiative, and for policies, programs and services better adapted to their needs. She indicated the most important underlying principle for the new initiative would be to ensure stable, sufficient long-term funding for RDÉEC at the national, provincial and territorial level. In closing, she stressed the importance of political will and government commitment in implementing the economic development initiative.

Departments' Overview and Perspectives

Canadian Heritage (PCH)

The Honourable Liza Frulla responded to Mr Arès that PCH has statutory authority under Part VII, while the Minister responsible for Official Languages plays a coordinating role. The Minister continued to review the agreements then under negotiation. Agreements on minority-language services had been extended for a year to smooth the transition to a new cooperation cycle starting in 2005. She noted that Quebec was interested in concluding an agreement for the Anglophone community; the provinces and territories wanted to explore new ways to promote culture in French schools, and nine provinces and territories had legislation or a policy on official languages. For the community life component, PCH was exploring ways to strengthen cooperation with communities. The Minister expressed confidence in the results of the consultations underway and reiterated her commitment to renew the agreements before 2005.

Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada (PSHRMAC)

The Honourable Reg Alcock stated that the Innovation Program was a great success. With \$14 million in funding over five years through the Action Plan, the Program supports innovative projects to promote official languages. In the first year, 18 projects submitted by federal institutions and regional federal councils received a total of \$800,000 in funding. For the second year of the Program, which was launched in 2003, \$1.8 million would be allocated to 25 selected projects.

Justice Canada (JC)

Mr Michel Bouchard, Associate Deputy Minister, spoke on behalf of the Minister of Justice, the Honourable Irwin Cotler. He reported that several projects had been funded through the Access to Justice in Both Official Languages Support Fund. He added that funding for four jurilinguistics centres was ongoing and that the consultation mechanisms with minority official-language communities was up and running for the most part. The mechanism included an umbrella committee (Justice in Official Languages) and two sub-committees (Access to Justice in Both Official Languages and Section 41 Implementation, the latter composed of a Francophone sub-committee and an Anglophone sub-committee). The Department continued to develop training tools for its counsel. On implementation of the *Contraventions Act*, changes had been made to the agreements with Ontario and Manitoba so as to recognize language rights; a new agreement had been concluded with British Columbia, and agreements were forthcoming with Nova Scotia and Nunavut. The provincial statement of offence used in Quebec would soon be available in bilingual format. In conclusion, the Associate Deputy Minister said the Department was relying on community support to gather the data needed to report on the results achieved.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC)

The Honourable Joseph Volpe stated that literacy was another area in which HRSDC, through the National Literacy Secretariat, was working closely with Francophone communities. Together with the Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français and major provincial and territorial organizations, the Department will invest more than \$4 million over four years in projects by some dozen key partners. The Minister added that, through its youth programs, HRSDC was also facilitating labour market access for hundreds of youth from minority official-language communities each year.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)

The Honourable Judy Sgro, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, stated that progress achieved thus far depended in large part on close cooperation between the Department and FCFA. She felt the Strategic Framework to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities, developed by the CIC - Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee, was an excellent example of the results of such cooperation. She added that the Steering Committee would soon be releasing the national, provincial and territorial action plans for implementation of the Strategic Framework. The Minister mentioned other major achievements, including tours in Central Europe and South America to encourage immigration to Francophone minority communities, the creation of web pages on CIC's site to promote Francophone minority communities as a potential destination for immigrants, and the renewal of the memorandum of understanding with PCH under the Interdepartmental Partnership with the Official-Language Communities. She also noted that Mr Michel Dorais, Deputy Minister of CIC, had received the Commissioner of Official Languages Leon Leadership Award for his outstanding leadership in promoting linguistic duality.

Feedback

Fédération culturelle canadienne-française (FCCF)

Ms Paulette Gagnon, President of FCCF, expressed enthusiasm for the HRMAF but complained that the arts and cultural sector are absent from the Action Plan. She mentioned two initiatives by FCCF that would be in line with the Action Plan: the study documenting minority communities' access to cultural sector programs and agencies, which revealed an annual shortfall of several million dollars; and research on the language-cultural-education link, which was geared to full integration of a cultural project to minority schools' education project.

Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones (FNCSF)

Ms Madeleine Chevalier, President of FNCSF, spoke as a representative of 31 Francophone minority school boards and the Table sectorielle en éducation. After a brief historical overview of Francophone school governance, she described the two priority action sectors in education: promotion, showcasing and marketing of French-language education and, above all, renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding on Official languages in Education between PCH and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). She expressed concern that PCH was considering integrating targeted funding provided for in the Action Plan into the MOU and asked to meet with the Minister of Canadian Heritage as soon as possible. Ms Chevalier wanted to see

FNCSF recognized as an actor in the file and wanted school boards to be able to take part in discussions with CMEC.

Fédération des associations de juristes d'expression française de common law (FAJEFCL)

Mr Tory Colvin, President of FAJEFCL, called for a further \$100,000 for core funding for the eight member associations. He also suggested that before Justice Canada takes a position on language cases, there be an informal meeting among the Minister, FAJEFCL and FCFA to develop a common position. He noted that there would need to be at least 20% bilingual judges (three in each appeal court and five in Ontario). In closing, he noted the excellent cooperation among Mr Michel Bouchard, Ms Suzanne Poirier and Ms Andrée Duchesne.

Commission nationale des parents francophones (CNPF)

Ms Ghislaine Pilon, President of CNPF, noted that early childhood development had become a priority for governments in Canada, and thanked SDC for its commitment to work with CNPF. She mentioned the following key messages coming out of the consultation tour on early childhood development that CNPF had recently completed: the urgent need to act now for Francophone communities; the importance of obtaining sufficient human and financial resources; the need to benefit from federal-provincial-territorial funding agreements; the importance of leadership by the federal government; the identification of early childhood and family centres as a winning strategy (especially in the context of the announcement of a national child care program); the role of parents in the decision-making process; the importance of recruitment for Francophone schools; the need for communities to develop action plans ensuring a common vision and collective action; the key role of research on Francophone families and children; the importance of developing professional recruitment and retention strategies; the need to solve the problem of recognition of qualifications and accreditation of early childhood professionals. In closing, Ms Pilon said that CNPF hoped to see early childhood be integrated into PCH education initiatives; that it would be strengthening its presence on the Internet thanks to a contribution under the Franccommunautés virtuelles program; and that a protocol for collaboration with Canadian Parents for French was being discussed, notably in connection with the evaluation of the Action Plan for Official Languages.

Fédération Canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français (FCAF)

Ms Colette Aucoin, treasurer of FCAF, said that the initiative on official languages administered by HRSDC's National Literacy Secretariat, for which funding had been made available in January 2004, had enabled the network to work using a logical framework for family literacy. Six strategic action axes had been identified: organizational capacity-building; training and resourcing; development of a framework for reflection and research; networking; development of intervention models; and promotion. The deliverables for the initiative were as follows: easy, ongoing access to family literacy; longer engagement of families in the literacy process; better French-language communications skills in the family and the community; daily use of French by adults and children; enhanced skills and engagement for adults; multi-year financial commitment by the provinces and territories; and diversification of funding sources. FCAF expected it would be able to provide initial indications on the impact of family literacy by March 2005.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada - Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee (CIC-FMC Steering Committee)

Mr Marc Arnal, Community Co-Chair of the CIC - FMC Steering Committee, noted that the immigration file is complex and involves several levels of government, federal institutions and community organizations. He first thanked the Government Co-Chair of the Steering Committee, Ms Diane Vincent; Ministers Bélanger and Sgro, as well as Dr Fry; the different partners in the file; and the Commissioner of Official Languages, Dr Dyane Adam. He pointed out that initiatives had been undertaken in all provinces and drew participants' attention to three points: the forthcoming publication of the summary of initiatives under current programs; the development of a five-year plan that would identify specific objectives and means for achieving them; and the additional funding required to get the file up and running. In conclusion he stated that partnerships were going smoothly; that the role of PCH's Multiculturalism Program had been key; that Manitoba and New Brunswick were leading the way among the provinces; that community organizations had empowered themselves; and that national initiatives were proceeding on track.

Société Santé en français (SSF)

Mr Hubert Gauthier, President of SSF, highlighted the exceptional work by Mr Marcel Nouvet, Assistant Deputy Minister at Health Canada, as official languages champion. He thanked the Government of Canada for the start-up funding and the trust it placed in communities. He said the federal contributions had been levers that had generated provincial and territorial investments. He also thanked the Minister of Health for the mention in the agreement reached in September of targeted initiatives to expand the pool of health professionals in minority official language communities. He expressed concerns, however, that the recent agreement might limit the scope of the federal commitment to the single aspect of human resources, to the detriment of networking and organization of health services. He hoped the federal government would shortly indicate that it would be a long-term partner in this file.

Consortium national de formation en santé (CNFS)

Mr Gilles Patry, co-chair of CNFS, felt the Government of Canada could be proud of the creation and operation of CNFS. Some 200 health professionals were trained under Phase I, headed up by the University of Ottawa's Centre national de formation en santé. Four action components had been identified for Phase II, in which ten post-secondary institutions were then participating: recruitment; training (with the objective of 2,450 new professionals); research and coordination. The objectives for Phase III were as follows: increase training capacity to 4, 300 new professionals; develop reception capacity in the regions; increase the number of institutions able to deliver programs; expand recruitment pools; pursue development of research capacity; ensure ongoing professional training in the regions; and continue to forge ties with communities. As a member of the steering committee of the Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne (AUFC), Mr Patry pointed out that colleges and universities have a role to play in implementing the Action Plan, that their leadership was concerned about the slow pace of negotiations and the questioning of their institutions having direct relations with departments; and that Francophiles coming out of immersion programs ought to be given the opportunity to pursue university studies in French.

Departments' Overview and Perspectives

The Honourable Mauril Bélanger called on the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of State (Public Health) and the Honourable Irwin Cotler, Minister of Justice, who had just joined the participants, to take the floor.

Minister Bennett said she was well aware how important it is for patients to be able to speak with health professionals in their own language. She said she was ready to take on the challenge ahead. Minister Cotler said the official languages file was a priority for him, that the vitality of both official-language communities is not a question only of language but of identity, and that access to justice in both official languages was tied to human rights.

OPEN DISCUSSION

English Speaking Catholic Council (ESCC)

Mr. Warren Allmand, President of the ESCC, noted that Minister Owen gave a good report on his economic development responsibilities, but did not report on Sports Canada, where there had been some concern about official language policy and the national sports federations, national teams and national events. He added that the previous year, he had asked why CIC had a \$9 million budget to promote Francophone immigration outside Quebec despite the serious decline of the English-speaking population in that province, with the resulting loss of Anglophone institutions (closing of schools, services, etc.). He felt the threat was not assimilation, but loss of community. Mr. Allmand said the Minister did not answer this question.

The Honourable Mauril Bélanger indicated to Mr Allmand that the chairs of the standing committees of the House and the Senate, Mr Pablo Rodriguez and the Honourable Eymard Corbin, as well as the Opposition official languages critics, had duly noted his comments and would certainly bring them to the committees' attention. Ms Diane Vincent, Associate Deputy Minister at CIC, acknowledged there had been a demographic decline, but noted that 40% of immigrants to Quebec spoke or understood English. She added that Quebec planned to increase its immigration levels and encouraged Anglophone community representatives to take part in the public consultations organized by the province.

Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN)

Mr Martin Murphy, President of the QCGN, said he had had the opportunity to speak with Premier Charest at the Forum of Generations, and felt the time was right to consider reopening the Canada-Quebec Agreement.

Alliance Quebec (AQ)

Reverend Daryl Gray, President of AQ, appreciated the consultations with visible minorities organized in December 2003. He felt members of Quebec's Anglophone communities who belong to a visible minority, who are a double minority, are under-represented, except for unemployment, illiteracy, etc. He noted QCGN's efforts, but said they were not enough, citing

the absence of members of visible minorities around the table. The Honourable Mauril Bélanger noted his comments.

Société des Acadiens et Acadiennes du Nouveau-Brunswick (SAANB)

Mr Daniel Thériault, Director General of SAANB, called on participants to put things in perspective, pointing out that it is Francophones who are being assimilated. He asserted that initiatives like the Action Plan for Official Languages and the Interdepartmental Partnership with the Official-Language Communities yield real results only if funding reaches communities. He stressed that communities need to be consulted in connection with negotiations with the provinces and territories and said in closing that integration of early childhood into education initiatives was key.

CONCLUSION

The Honourable Mauril Bélanger closed the meeting and regretted there had not been more time for discussion. He committed to reviewing the format of future consultations to allow for a better exchange between communities and ministers. He reiterated that an interim report on implementation of the Action Plan for Official Languages would be released in late 2005. The Minister also noted the presence of the Honourable Stéphane Dion, Minister of the Environment and architect of the Action Plan. Minister Dion received a warm round of applause.