

SUMMARY REPORT

October 6, 2003

Anglophone Community Groups Representatives

On Monday, October 6, 2003, Federal Ministers Stéphane Dion, Lucienne Robillard, Jane Stewart, Allan Rock and Claudette Bradshaw held consultation sessions with representatives from various Anglophone Official Language Minority Community Groups. Also in attendance was Member of Parliament Mauril Bélanger, Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages. The consultation session fulfilled the government's commitment to hold annual consultations with Official Language Minority Communities under section 36 of the Accountability and Coordination Framework of the *Action Plan for Official Languages*.

Opening Remarks :

The Honourable Stéphane Dion opened the consultation session by assuring the assembled community representatives that the commitment made to hold annual Ministerial consultations would not replace the bilateral meetings between community groups and government departments. The Ministerial consultations are an important, additional contact point for community leaders that will allow us to gain momentum during the implementation phase of the *Action Plan* commitments.

Human Resources Development Canada :

The Honourable Jane Stewart spoke first at the evening consultation session. The Minister reassured the community representatives that the *Action Plan* commitments are being implemented due to the diligence of its author, the Honourable Stéphane Dion. The focus for Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) is on linguistic development within communities. HRDC coordinates its official language activities out of its secretariat. The Secretariat is designed to increase support for the linguistic development, particularly in increasing the access to Anglophone programs in Quebec. In this regard, large, multi-million dollar investments have been made. On the local level, HRDC continues its work with eight community economic development authorities, the main focus of which is in the area of employment.

The Honourable Claudette Bradshaw reiterated her desire to listen to the issues raised by the Anglophone representatives, especially with respect to homelessness and how they have been able to address this concern within their linguistic community.

Community Feedback :

The President of the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN), Mr. Martin Murphy, was supportive of the consultation exercise between the Government and the “national official languages representatives in Canada”. The QCGN feedback was a succinct and direct account of the concerns and issues facing the Anglophone community in Quebec. Various statistics were presented outlining the declining Anglophone population in Quebec, and especially in the Montreal region. It was also pointed out that the Anglophone community has become more heterogeneous in its make-up, as evidenced in the school system, as well as the increasing level of unemployment among Anglophones.

Mr. Murphy reiterated the overall goal of the QCGN which is to preserve and protect the ability of the Anglophone community to live in the official language of their choice. With this, however, comes various preoccupations that continue to cause concern. A major preoccupation voiced included the issue of “representative financing” - equitable, not equal financing - for Anglophone groups compared to Francophone groups. This issue is one that will continue to be raised and one which the QCGN feels needs to be addressed in short order.

Industry Canada :

The Honourable Allan Rock, Minister of Industry, reiterated Industry Canada’s mandate under official languages as one that is to ensure that people have access to business opportunities in both official languages. An important vehicle for ensuring this access is the Industry Canada website ‘Strategis’, which provides opportunities, services and information on programs in both official languages. Industry Canada does, however, understand the challenges inherent in the provision of access to services to small communities within Quebec and realizes that outreach services for remote communities must be further developed. In this regard, Industry Canada is committed to working with community associations to make access to relevant programs in all areas possible.

Community Feedback :

David D’Aoust, Executive Director, The Community Table, praised the consultation session with minority language community groups as a demonstration of how the civil service “listens” and how it signals the importance of accountability by federal departments responsible for *Action Plan* initiatives. Specifically, he pointed to the close working relationship that his association has with HRDC, and also the working relationship with Industry Canada. A few ‘reminders’ were provided to the government on *Action Plan* commitments with a focus on how The Community Table could assist in realizing those goals. Treasury Board commitments to increase Anglophone recruitment in the Federal public service in Quebec is an area where The Community Table feels it can help as well

as the utilization of the TableNet initiative.

Treasury Board Secretariat :

The Honourable Lucienne Robillard began her presentation by noting that public service is the focus of the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) and that linguistic duality is a value of the Public Service. She acknowledged that Anglophones are under-represented in the Federal Public Service in Quebec and that this is a situation which she is committed to change. In this regard, she invited community groups to work with TBS to provide insight into how to address this specific issue. She also cited studies that demonstrate the differences in sensitivity towards linguistic duality across the country. The less contact one has with 'the other language', the less sensitive to the issue one is. Language training was another area on which the President focussed. The *Action Plan* will allow TBS to follow through on its proactive approach to language training that would focus on public servants achieving second-language competency levels early in their careers. The *Action Plan* will also reinforce the audit role of the TBS, an area where it had little capacity before. She cited the examples of airports and telephone service as two areas where TBS could have an important impact.

Canadian Heritage :

On behalf of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Ms. Judith A. LaRocque, Deputy Minister of Canadian Heritage, spoke of the longstanding relationship with the communities' connection with minority-language education, second-language learning, bursaries, monitors, service agreements and support for community life. The Deputy Minister recalled the objectives of the *Action Plan* in the area of education, and the fact that the Minister has launched negotiations with the Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) on this subject; the Department has also entered into talks with the provinces and territories on the targeted education funds. Service agreements with the provinces and territories expire in 2004 and an assessment is underway. In terms of support for community life, Ms. LaRocque pointed out that her Department is no longer the only vehicle to obtain assistance for community life, adding that the program assessment will be made public shortly and that information sessions on the main findings will be organized in the near future.

Community Feedback :

Cindy Duncan-McMillan, President, Quebec Farmers Association (QFA), applauded actions taken by the Government that attempt to redress rural disparities. She stressed the need to learn more about the other minority language communities of the country and the practices that are being undertaken to help them, be they farmers, nurses, contractors, etc. The QFA's experience as a rural, linguistic minority would be beneficial to other similar linguistic minority groups in regions outside Quebec and vice versa. The impetus stems from the reality that rural issues, and agricultural producers specifically, live under different circumstances than urban members of the same linguistic minority. Therefore, the more sharing of information and experiences, the better for all concerned.

Department of Justice :

Yves de Montigny, Chief Legal Counsel, Public Law spoke on behalf of the Honourable Martin Cauchon. He outlined specific details under the *Action Plan* relating to the Department of Justice such as its legal commitment with respect to contraventions as well as initiatives to promote access to justice in both official languages. There are four priorities of the Department that were identified by findings of the study titled '*Environmental Scan: Access to Justice in Both Official Languages*', which the Department commissioned. The first relates to implementation of language provisions of the *Criminal Code*, which were found to be incomplete. The Department has given priority to projects designed to improve this situation. The second priority relates to base funding for the associations for French-speaking jurists and their national federation. The third priority involves the creation of a consultation mechanism with community associations which will be the counterpart of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Access to Justice in Both Official Languages, created in 2002. The QCGN and representatives of the Quebec English-speaking legal community will be invited to sit on the main advisory committee and subcommittees. Finally, the development of tools for Justice Canada's legal counsel is the fourth priority, the purpose of which is to educate them on issues involving language rights.

Community Feedback :

Casper Bloom, Co-Chair, Comité sur l'accès à la justice en langue anglaise, stressed the idea that the need for access to justice in English is not centred exclusively in Montreal, but outside the city as well. Two activities undertaken by Mr. Bloom were the focus of his comments. The first is in his capacity as Co-Chair of the Comité sur l'accès à la justice en langue anglaise and the development of an "Implementation Committee" that gathered the reactions and impressions of a substantial cross-section of the English-speaking lawyers in the Greater Montreal area. The

purpose of the committee's work was to address the concerns which characterized the system of justice and its accessibility in a real and meaningful way to the English-speaking community. The final report is in the review phase and will be presented to the Minister of Justice of Quebec in due course.

The second concerns the English version of the *Quebec Civil Code*. In many respects the English version was unacceptable as it contained many literal translations, bad grammar and choice of words, non-existent expressions, incomprehensible language, etc. A committee was formed to examine the matter, of which Mr. Bloom was the Chair. The committee is now at the stage where the assembled teams (10 teams of lawyers, each examining one book of the *Code*) have completed their tasks of 'deciphering' the French version of the *Civil Code* into English. Once the 10 different pieces are assembled into a coherent whole, it will be presented to the Quebec Department of Justice for approval and finally, presented to the National Assembly for adoption. Given the fact that both French and English versions of the *Code* are official and have equal value, this project is considered vital for English speakers in Quebec.

Department of Health :

Marcel Nouvet, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Canada, spoke on behalf of the Honourable Anne McLellan. In his opinion, the consultation session provided an ideal opportunity to listen and to learn from community associations. He also acknowledged that language barriers have an adverse effect on access to health services and, in turn, on the health and well-being of individuals. The investments made by Health Canada under the *Action Plan* call for funding in such areas as training and retention of health professionals, networking and primary health care renewal initiatives. Overall, Health Canada has prioritized its activities, and identified funding commitments which correspond to recommendations made by consultative committees of both the Francophone and Anglophone communities.

Community Feedback :

James Carter, Coordinator, Community Health and Social Services Network, supported Health Canada's commitment to community involvement in the prioritization of activities. He pointed out that the measures enacted by the Department reflect the priorities defined by the Consultative Committee for English-Speaking Minority Communities submitted to the Minister of Health in July 2002. The Network was pleased to report that the Federal *Action Plan* accurately reflected

the collaboration between the consultative body and Health Canada officials. The Network took great pride in detailing a project submitted by McGill University to improve English-language communication skills of Francophone professionals serving English-speaking people in the regions. Overall, cooperation between both Federal and Provincial governments with respect to application of the *Action Plan* measures has been very encouraging for the Anglophone community. The Network is confident of success and believes that further collaboration between Federal and Provincial officials will be critical in meeting their goal.

Open Discussion :

- The Honourable Warren Allmand began the open discussion session by raising a point in regard to immigration issues and asked how the Government would address the question of the large drop in the Anglophone population in Quebec. Statistics show a drop from 13.1% to 8.3% Anglophone as a percentage of the total population between 1986 and 2001.

(Note: Citizenship and Immigration Canada has been asked to prepare a written reply.)

- James Carter raised the issue of Health Canada cutting back from some programs and projects and he wanted assurances that other programs would not suffer similar cutbacks, in particular the Interdepartmental Partnership with the Official Language Communities (IPOLC) which he had heard would be cut.

Judith LaRocque, Deputy Minister of Canadian Heritage assured the participants that IPOLC would not be cut given how well it has been received and used across the country. However, IPOLC's focus may change to focussing on more "high profile" projects. The reason for such a switch in focus is that with so many more groups that have their own funding sources through the *Action Plan*, IPOLC does not have to be relied on for all proposed projects, large and small. Community groups can hone in on smaller projects and IPOLC can be used mainly, but not exclusively, for larger, more high profile projects.

- Martin Murphy made an appeal for more funds to hire more full-time staff for the QCGN. In order to establish their "fair share" of funds for official languages, the QCGN needs to know how to access the source(s) of funds. The QCGN is an organization representing over 900,000 members, but has only one paid executive director which leaves it lagging when it comes to lobbying efforts and adequately representing all the member groups.

- Jane Needles (Quebec Drama Federation) spoke in support of the drama/arts community and how IPOLC is a major income source for the artistic community and that it must remain strong and vibrant.

Judith LaRocque reassured her that IPOLC would not be cut.

- Cindy Duncan-McMillan asked what would happen next. For example when her request for dialogue with other similar linguistic minority groups outside Quebec is made, what will happen?

The Honourable Stéphane Dion agreed that dialogue with other like-minded groups is important and that follow-up would be made by officials.

- John Trent reiterated Martin Murphy's earlier point about greater funding resources for the QCGN. It was suggested that if the resources are not available soon, QCGN will be very limited in the help that it can provide on implementing the *Action Plan* agenda.

Closing

The Honourable Stéphane Dion closed the session by thanking all the participants for the exchange of ideas and information that they put forward. He summed up the main message of the consultation process as being one that asks 'How can we [the Government] help you?'. He also remarked that he looked forward to learning of the results of the consultation sessions between community groups and Government officials planned for the Spring of 2004.