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Commissioner of Official Languages

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## A WORD FROM THE COMMISSIONER

In this latest issue of INFOACTION, you will see that I am urging the federal government to act without delay on matters such as immigration and the need for more French content on the Internet. Here is an overview of studies on these topics that we have published recently.

The issue of immigration, which is critical to ensuring Canada's linguistic duality, has been one of my main concerns since I took over the position of Commissioner. On March 12, Statistics Canada published a series of data gathered in the 2001 census. It tells us that the population of Canada, now at 30 million, is experiencing the lowest growth rate in its history. Given this fact, immigration may represent Canada's main hope for growth, since the country's birth rate is expected to keep dropping. As a reminder of this, about half the growth in population that we have experienced in the last 15 years can be attributed to immigration.

This situation has an important impact on Canada's two main language groups, specifically on official language minority



Dyane Adam

communities. I hope that our study on immigration will lead the government to find ways for official language communities to share equitably in the demographic and social benefits of immigration. Without going into too much detail, I simply wish to say that the government must take action to fulfill its commitment to enhance the vitality of, and support and assist the development of, official language communities. The recommendations made in our study were well-received by immigration officials. Needless to say, I was very happy to learn, on March 19, that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Denis Coderre, has taken steps to encourage French-speaking immigrants to settle in Francophone minority communities. Among other measures, his department will conduct a study to assess the settlement capacity of the following cities: Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Sudbury, Ottawa, and Moncton. Mr. Coderre also announced the creation of a steering committee to facilitate the recruitment and selection of immigrants and the settlement and integration of newcomers who move to French-language minority communities. These are certainly steps in the right direction!

Almost ten years after the explosive growth of the Internet began, and despite a number of important initiatives, I find the federal government's performance with regard to French content on the Internet to be lacking. In 1999 the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages published a study on this issue in which it made a number of important recommendations to the federal government. Three years later, I commissioned a study to determine whether these recommendations had been implemented. You will find the highlights from this study included in this issue.

Both in Canada and within international organizations, the challenges posed by language are waiting to be addressed. The federal government can no longer afford to wait. The time has come to find solutions and translate these into concrete action.



**Dyane Adam**

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## DIALOGUE WITH PARENTS AND EDUCATORS

At the end of January, Dr. Dyane Adam and Eva Ludvig, her Representative for the Quebec Region, met with Board members as well as with members of the Education and Rights Committees of the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations (QFHSA). The special meeting held in Montreal came at the request of the Commissioner.

President Norma Cheng raised various topics of concern with Dr. Adam, such as wider access to English schooling and the erosion of the constitutional protection of parental rights affecting minority language education. She also brought up current issues including the use of and accountability for federal funds to the provinces under the Official Languages Programs delivered by Heritage Canada, and the problems of rural communities where English-speaking populations are in decline. Also raised were questions pertaining to the Court Challenges Programs, as well as

the new Quebec curriculum where funding for learning materials and resources is severely limited. Finally, the QFHSA informed the Commissioner about the situation regarding bilingual services in the health sector.

Dr. Adam responded by paying tribute to the Federation for its dedication to the protection of rights in both the education and health sectors. She outlined similar concerns among the Francophone communities outside Quebec and reminded the Federation that her Office would gladly offer assistance as needed, for instance, in accessing information on case law throughout Canada.

The Commissioner discussed and took careful note of the Federation's concerns and assured the representatives of her co-operation. She concluded by reiterating the importance of the Federation's involvement in acting as a strong voice for parents and their children's needs.



## NEWS FROM THE ATLANTIC REGION

This is not the first time that INFOACTION reports on the Federal Councils of the Atlantic Region and their respective official language committees. This time, we would like to tell you about an activity organized by the Official Languages Committee of Nova Scotia in March 2002 as part of the Quinzaine de la Francophonie.

On March 19, the Committee held a meeting in Halifax, attended by officials from various federal institutions and a number of representatives from Nova Scotia's Acadian and Francophone community to discuss and reflect on a number of issues. Community representatives had the opportunity to express their needs and expectations concerning the delivery of services by the federal government in the official

language of their choice. The government officials attending the meeting unveiled their most recent action plans for the implementation of the *Official Languages Act*. Following these discussions, the officials met together to identify measures that would address the needs expressed by community representatives at the meeting.

This is an example of the awareness and leadership demonstrated by the Official Languages Committee of Nova Scotia. This type of dialogue and open-

ness to change will serve to ensure that official languages become an integral part of the organizational culture of federal institutions, as the Commissioner has urged on many occasions over the last few years.



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## IMMIGRATION: CHANGES NEEDED

Since 1867, over 14 million immigrants have come to Canada. As we all know, throughout our history, immigrants and their descendants have contributed substantially to the growth of the Canadian economy and to the social and cultural development of the country. In March 2001, Statistics Canada predicted that population growth will depend increasingly on immigration in the future.

In a study released on February 26, Dr. Dyane Adam concludes that the government of Canada's immigration and integration policies do not go far enough in contributing to the vitality of Canada's two official language groups. The study, entitled *Immigration and the Vitality of Canada's Official Language Communities: Policy, Demography and Identity*, was prepared for the Office of the Commissioner by Dr. Jack Jedwab of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada. The first study of its kind to analyze this important issue in depth, its primary purpose is to paint a statistical picture of immigration trends. "Immigration is now the single most important factor contributing to the real growth of Canada's population and, as such, it has become critical to the demographic renewal of our official language communities. Linguistic duality is a fundamental characteristic of our national identity, and Canada's immigration policy must do more than simply give points for knowledge of official languages when immigrants are selected," declared Dr. Adam.

The statistics on which the study is based show a significant disparity between the proportion of immigrants who know English and French when they come to Canada: 5% French-only speakers,

compared with 48% English-only speakers, 4% who can speak both official languages, and 43% who speak neither. Once they have settled here, most immigrants adopt the English language. Some 83% use English, while 7% use French and 3% use both official languages. Most of the immigrants who speak French upon arriving in Canada – fewer than 10% of the total – settle in Quebec. Consequently, French-speaking communities elsewhere in Canada are deprived of a vital means of ensuring their growth, since the number of French-speaking immigrants who settle in these communities is insufficient to sustain their numbers. Furthermore, the federal government has not been making any proactive effort to recruit French-speaking immigrants overseas who wish to settle in Francophone minority communities.

In releasing the study, Dr. Adam pointed out that Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has shown sensitivity to this issue. In fact, the new *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* recognizes that immigration is to support "the commitment of the Government of Canada to enhance the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada." For the Commissioner, "while this is definitely a step in the right direction, there is still a lot of ground to cover to make this objective a reality."

The study by Dr. Jedwab examines Canadian policy in the area of official languages from 1867 to the most recent federal-provincial agreements on immigration. The study provides a clear analysis of the issues and puts forward a series of recommendations for the federal government. The main recommendations contained in the study are:

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada, in consultation with Francophones from official

\* *L'immigration et l'épanouissement des communautés de langue officielle au Canada : politiques, démographie et identité*

language minority communities, must do more promotion and recruitment in potential source countries for Francophone immigration.

- This study urges CIC to develop benchmarks to increase the number of French-speaking immigrants who will settle in regions outside Quebec.
- In order to assist the official language minority communities in welcoming immigrants, they must receive support from the federal government at all levels of the process—from planning to settlement and integration activities.

With this study, the Commissioner is urging governments to reach out to French-speaking immigrants in minority communities, who are often unaware that Francophone institutions exist and that many services are available in French. Dr. Adam is also asking the federal government to adopt a strategy to recruit French-speaking immigrants and put in place mechanisms to assess progress made each year. Finally, the study urges French-language minority communities to be prepared to adapt to accommodate the diverse needs of ethnocultural Francophones.

The study shows that minority communities have serious problems with regard to the settlement and integration of immigrants. The official language minority communities do not have the resources to put in place adequate institutions and structures needed to help immigrants adapt to their new environment. For official language communities to become engaged in the process, not only in attracting immigrants but also in making them feel welcome and helping them to integrate into Canadian society, the study urges the federal government to adopt a coordinated and effective approach to developing and implementing objectives, regulations and policies.

In short, official language communities need the support of the federal government. In the Commissioner's words, "the federal government, along with the provinces, must consider concrete ways to enable official language communities to share equitably in the benefits of immigration. Policies and action plans must be developed to support this objective. Immigration must not be based solely on economic considerations; we must ensure that it truly contributes to Canada's social and linguistic fabric."

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## IMMIGRATION AND ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES IN QUEBEC

A study conducted by Jack Jedwab of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, *Immigration and the Vitality of Canada's Linguistic Communities: Policy, Demography and Identity*, examines the issue of immigration as it relates to the situation faced by Anglophone communities in Quebec. Anglophones in Quebec face a situation different from that of the country's French-speaking minority communities.

The demographic data on which this study is based highlight the pivotal role played by immigration in the preservation of English-speaking communities in Quebec. This is the first time that this issue has been examined in such detail. Although immigration has contributed to the growth of English-language communities in the province, these communities have been adversely affected by interprovincial migration. Between

1971 and 1986, the number of Anglophones in Quebec dropped significantly. The various English-speaking communities of Quebec therefore face a sizable challenge: in particular, the retention of newcomers to the province. Governments will have to provide community organizations with the means to counter interprovincial migration by instilling in immigrants a sense of community. In addition, governments must ensure better access to French language training for Anglophones immigrating to Quebec. When she unveiled the study, Dr. Adam pointed out that Quebec has made a considerable effort to recruit immigrants who speak French and to assist them in integrating successfully. She also noted that Quebec provides a good example to follow, since it has made impressive gains in this area.

The study by Dr. Jedwab points out that Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) recommended a number of initiatives as part of its action plans regarding the obligations arising from section 41 of the *Official Languages Act*



with respect to Anglophones in Quebec. These recommendations include:

- maintaining co-operative relations with and communicating departmental information to organizations representing Quebec's linguistic minority;
- raising awareness of official language minority communities about the department's citizenship and immigration program;
- participating in joint advisory

- panels whose members include organizations representing Quebec's Anglophone minority;
- consulting on issues of common interest with representatives of organizations representing Quebec's Anglophone community;
- improved understanding of common objectives, identification of avenues for further co-operation, and development of projects for the next three years.

The study notes that CIC must ensure that its action plans are implemented effectively to promote the harmonious integration of immigrants into Quebec's English-speaking community.

## MAKING HISTORY: THE MONTFORT HOSPITAL CASE

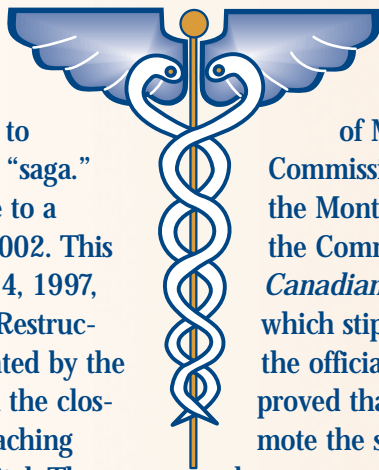
*The Montfort Hospital case is much more than a victory over something unacceptable; it constitutes a beacon for future generations and a milestone in the development of French-language communities across Canada.*

**Pierre Bergeron**  
**Publisher**  
**Le Droit (Ottawa)**

Hundreds of articles, news stories, commentaries and editorials appeared in the print and electronic media in what has come to be known as the Montfort Hospital “saga.” After five long years, the saga came to a happy conclusion on February 1, 2002. This historic battle began on February 24, 1997, when the Ontario Health Services Restructuring Commission, which was created by the government of Ontario, announced the closing of the only French-language teaching hospital in Ontario, Montfort Hospital. The Franco-Ontarian community immediately rallied to set up S.O.S. Montfort, a grassroots organization headed by Gisèle Lalonde.

Following unproductive discussions with the Restructuring Commission, S.O.S. Montfort began a court action in late July 1998. The Commission’s recommendatory powers lapsed in April 1999 without changes to the directions to close the Montfort, so that the case proceeded to hearing before the Divisional Court. In late November 1999, the Divisional Court issued its decision, invalidating the Restructuring Commission directives recommending the closure of the hospital. The Court concluded that the Montfort Hospital was an institution essential to ensuring the development of the Franco-Ontarian community, and therefore the unwritten constitutional principle of respect for and protection of minorities prohibited the Restructuring Commission’s recommendations. The interests of the Montfort hospital were defended by lawyer Ronald Caza.

Several parties, including the Solicitor General of Canada and the Commissioner of Official



Languages, Dr. Dyane Adam, sought leave to intervene in the Court of Appeal in support of Montfort. As did her predecessor, the Commissioner publicly supported keeping the Montfort open. Lawyers representing the Commissioner invoked section 16 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which stipulates that English and French are the official languages of Canada. They also proved that Ontario has the obligation to promote the substantive equality of the two official languages and that the decision by the government to close Montfort Hospital ran counter to this obligation.

On December 7, 2001, Montfort won a historic legal victory. In a unanimous decision, the three judges hearing the case in the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled that the institution is protected under the Constitution of Canada because it is essential to the survival of the Franco-Ontarian community. Their decision is premised upon the unwritten constitutional principle of respect for and promotion of minorities. The Solicitor General had 60 days to apply to the Supreme Court of Canada for leave to appeal.

On February 1, 2002, Ontario’s Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Tony Clement, announced that his government would not be applying to the highest court in the land for leave to appeal. This was a clear victory! February 1, 2002, has therefore become a historic date, marking a great collective victory that will have repercussions well beyond the Ottawa region. As pointed out by Dr. Adam on several occasions, this is a precedent-setting

judgment. Commenting on this victory, constitutional lawyer Marc Cousineau, a member of the Montfort legal team, said [our translation]: “this is one of the most significant and most fundamental decisions in this country’s history, both nationally and politically. This ruling confirms that minorities have a place in Canada” (*Le Droit*, March 16, 2002).

In a letter to *The Ottawa Citizen* dated February 15, the Commissioner restated her unconditional support in all battles on behalf of official language minorities, adding that the ruling by the Ontario Court of Appeal was of paramount importance to these communities.

That is why she supported not only S.O.S. Montfort but also those working to safeguard the language rights of Anglophones in Quebec: in 2001 she applied to the Superior Court and the Court of Appeal of Quebec for intervenor status in connection with municipal mergers.

According to the Commissioner, the Montfort Hospital case marks a turning point in the history of our country, as it permanently defines the scope and application of the principle of respect for and protection of minorities, as well as the obligations of the Government of Canada arising from this principle.

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## PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

The Commissioner of Official Languages considers the work of the various parliamentary committees to be very important and works very closely with the elected officials who sit on them. As Dr. Adam has said in the past, she makes representations to these committees on her own initiative as often as possible because they are the bodies that make the final decisions regarding government policy.

### IMMIGRATION

Following the release of the study on immigration and the vitality of official language communities discussed on pages xx to xx, Dr. Adam was invited to meet with the members of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to discuss the contents of this report. This House of Commons committee is chaired by Joe Fontana, MP for London North-Centre.

After outlining the main points of the study and discussing the issues and challenges involved, the Commissioner presented an overview of her principal recommendations to the federal government. She also discussed the proposed regulations under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* which the Committee is studying prior to their enactment, expected later this year.

Dr. Adam told the Committee that, in their current form, the proposed regulations do not meet the official languages objective included in the new Act. She recommended that special or positive measures be included in the regulations to restore the balance between the official language communities in terms of immigration and to permit that implementation of the Act’s new linguistic duality clauses. In addition, the Commissioner proposed changes to the number of points allotted to prospective immigrants for language skills, so that the importance given to knowledge of both official languages in Canada would be better reflected.

During a productive discussion that followed Dr. Adam’s presentation, the Committee members further explored the main points raised in the study. Dr. Adam thanked the members for showing the political will to ensure that the new *Immigration Act* and the related regulations serve to strengthen the social and linguistic fabric of Canada.

### AMENDING THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

On February 21, the Commissioner had the opportunity to state her position on Bill S-32

before the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. This bill is intended to “give teeth” to the *Official Languages Act*. It was put forward with a view to making the formal commitment made by the government in 1988 a reality and to more clearly define the scope of section 41 of Part VII of the Act. This part of the Act is crucial to ensuring the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities. Section 41 reads as follows: “The Government of Canada is committed to (a) enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minorities in Canada and supporting and assisting their development; and (b) fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.”

Dr. Adam has noted a lack of progress in this regard, despite the commitments made and the mechanisms introduced. She is pressing the

government to demonstrate greater leadership in order to define more clearly and strengthen the application of the Act. This would make the legislation more effective.

In her presentation to the Committee, the Commissioner put forward amendments to improve *Bill S-32*. In her view, it would be preferable to clarify the wording of the Act rather than waiting for the elaboration of a judicial interpretation that would result from an extended series of cases before the courts.

Dr. Adam concluded by commending Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier, who is sponsoring *Bill S-32*, for his unfailing dedication to the cause of official languages in Canada. She added that Senator Gauthier enjoys a solid reputation with both his parliamentary colleagues and the official language minority communities across the country.

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## GOOD THINGS COME IN TWOS

The members of the Association des juristes d'expression française de la Saskatchewan had good reason to celebrate at the closing banquet of their annual general meeting, held in Regina on February 2. The Honourable Chris Axworthy, the province's Minister of Justice, who is also responsible for the Office of French-Language Coordination, made two positive announcements in response to the Association's requests. Mr. Axworthy first announced that he was committed to establishing a policy on the delivery of legal services in French by the Provincial Court. He also announced that a Francophone judge would be appointed in the summer of 2002 to serve the southern region of the province.

Mr. Axworthy also said he was willing to study the proposal put forward by French-speaking lawyers in Saskatchewan for a bilingual itinerant Provincial Court. Mr. Axworthy stated that the constitutional right to legal services in French is neither a special accommodation nor a privilege,

but rather a full-fledged right. His announcements attest to the government's political will to respect the language rights of French-speaking Saskatchewanians. Not only the lawyers but also the entire community welcomed the news.

In the speech she gave at the same banquet, the Commissioner publicly applauded Mr. Axworthy's support for the French-speaking community. She greeted the two announcements in these words: “Mr. Axworthy stated earlier today that his department would be developing a policy on the provision of legal services in French jointly with the Association des juristes d'expression française de la Saskatchewan and the Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise. I was truly delighted at hearing this news. This is an historic event. The announcement attests to the fact that the government is willing to take steps to ensure that French-speaking

Saskatchewanians have access to justice in their language.”

## THE BETTER TO ... READ WITH YOU

Magic happens when characters from well-loved children's stories such as Little Red Riding Hood open up a world of wonders, the world of books, to young children. Does this still happen nowadays? Yes! At least it does at Toronto's **Le Petit Chaperon Rouge**.

Once upon a time ... twenty years ago ... Le Petit Chaperon Rouge opened its doors as Toronto's first French-language daycare centre. It now has two branches, one in the city's east end and one in the west end. These "oases" of French care for 90 children under the age of five and another 100 who are five or older. Thirty-five educators work with this culturally diverse group of children (among them, they represent some 20 nationalities). The daycare workers themselves come from many different lands.

The spotlight is on Le Petit Chaperon Rouge because it is the national winner of the *Prix du Commissariat aux langues officielles pour la petite enfance* (Commissioner of Official Languages Prize for Children's Learning Activities). The prize is given jointly by the Commissioner and the Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française (ACELF) to recognize and reward projects developed by organizations working with preschool-aged children. Dr. Dyane Adam made the presentation in Quebec City on March 17.

The winning project developed by Le Petit Chaperon Rouge was called **UN LIVRE PAR MOIS** (one book per month). It contributed to making parents aware of the importance of

getting members of their families to read more and to read together when possible. While helping the children to improve their French skills, the activities involved in this project have also made books a part of their lives (and of the lives of big kids, too!).



From left to right: Ms. Nancy Leblanc, Executive Director of Le Petit Chaperon Rouge, the Honourable Lise Thibault, Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, and Dr. Dyane Adam, Commissioner of Official Languages.

As a four-step program, **UN LIVRE PAR MOIS** aimed not only to instill a love of books but also to make reading the subject of discussion among parents, children and educators. In other words, the project aimed to expand on the stories in children's books through a variety of activities. The following steps were involved.

- I. A conference on the importance of reading in young children's development was held for parents, educators and anyone interested. A fact sheet describing the project was distributed to all parents, inviting their comments, questions and suggestions.
- II. On the first day of the month, a book was given to each family with a child attending the daycare. A week after the books were distributed, the educator read the book to her pupils and invited the children to read the book again with their parents.
- III. After two months, during which the families received the books for free, a book sale was held in conjunction with a local French bookstore, so the families could continue to buy children's books.
- IV. A questionnaire was distributed to parents to assess the project and determine the next step.

The project has been a great success! Nancy Leblanc, Executive Director of Le Petit Chaperon Rouge, hopes it has made both parents and children want to read more and helped them to develop a love of the French language. The

Commissioner, for her part, hopes the success of projects such as *UN LIVRE PAR MOIS* can be repeated across the country. Perhaps Le Petit Chaperon Rouge will lead children to “devour” ... books!

## OTHER WINNERS:

### LEGAL, VILLE SAINT-LAURENT, CLARE

Four organizations, one in each of the regions (Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, and Western and Northern Canada), were awarded the inaugural *Prix du Commissariat aux langues officielles pour la petite enfance* (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages Prize for Children’s Learning Activities) in 2002. Each winner received \$1,000. The national winner, Toronto daycare centre Le Petit Chaperon Rouge, was also awarded a plaque and a trip for two to the awards ceremony, held in Quebec City on March 17.

The winning project is the subject of our feature article. The stories of the other regional winners are also inspiring.

#### LEGAL: A COLLECTION OF CHILDREN’S STORIES

Perhaps you have heard of Legal, an isolated village in northern Alberta with a population of 1,000. Students from a wide area attend La Citadelle, the only French school in the district. Few resources in French are available to parents and educators, and many Francophone students who grow up there become assimilated. La Petite École, a daycare centre, took the much-needed step of publishing a collection of illustrated children’s stories to help children develop their communication skills in French. Cassettes and videos featuring the children accompany the collection. In addition to putting together the book itself, those in charge of the project had some of the children present the stories: to seniors residing at the Château Sturgeon retirement home, as part of the spring concert given by La Citadelle

students, as well as to their parents and others. Although emphasis was placed on the children’s involvement, the parents’ volunteer work was instrumental in making this project a success.

Everyone involved in the project reported that the children were very proud to be speaking French and singing French songs. Congratulations to Elisabeth St. Onge, who headed the project, and to her team, as well as to all the parents and children who took part. We trust that this valuable collection will grace many a bookshelf in years to come!

#### A MOBILE FRENCH-LANGUAGE LIBRARY: PUTTING WHEELS IN MOTION IN VILLE SAINT-LAURENT



Standing in the centre, Ms. Eva Ludvig, the Commissioner’s Representative for the Quebec region; to her left, accepting the certificate, Ms. Christine Durocher, Executive Director of Tchou Tchou inc.; Back row: Mr. Bernard Cormier, coordinator of the home daycare program; to his left, Mr. Guy Allard, representing ACELF; and home daycare providers.

The Tchou-Tchou inc. daycare centre in Ville Saint-Laurent won first prize for the Quebec Region. This centre takes care of 80 children between the ages of six months and five years, and its home daycare program meets the needs of another 50 children under five, almost all of them from multi-ethnic backgrounds. Everyone in charge of the program is a first-generation immigrant as well.

The project was designed to give self-employed workers who care for children in their homes access to resources they would not otherwise have. It involved creating a mobile French-language library so that children could bring home books in French on a regular basis. The hope was that introducing children to quality reading material would instill in them a love of books and help them to develop their communication skills in French.

In fact, the children themselves have become the “mobile librarians,” since they are the ones who bring home books that they have carefully selected and placed in their backpacks. By fostering a positive and stimulating climate for learning, educators hope to help the children build their reading skills and encourage them to develop an interest in the French language.

Our congratulations go out to Bernard Cormier, coordinator of the home daycare program at Tchou-Tchou inc., as well as to the parents and, especially, the children. Together they got things rolling!

### CLARE: SINGING IN FRENCH

The prize for the Atlantic Region went to Notre Jardin d’Enfance, a daycare centre in Clare, Nova Scotia, which is teaching young children to sing their song ... in French.

Managed by a committee of parent volunteers, this daycare centre serves 54 French-speaking children aged three and four. Parents’ participation in the centre’s daily activities gives them the opportunity to take responsibility for the way their children learn French and try to counter the tendency for children to assimilate with the linguistic majority.

With the project “Chantons en français,” the daycare administrators wanted to create an instructional tool for parents that allows them to play an active role in their children’s language development. To this end, they prepared kits including an audio cassette and an illustrated booklet containing the words to the songs used in the preschool program. The kits ensure continuity

between the daycare and the family.

They help to promote the use of the language and keep reading and songs front and centre in children’s lives as vehicles of French-language and Acadian culture. Families in which one parent is Anglophone and may not know the songs found the kits especially useful.

“Chantons en français” is a valuable resource for both children and parents.

INFOACTION congratulates Alice LeBlanc-Boudreau, who heads the project. Parents are singing her praises ... and the children have found their voices!



Mr. Gérald Boudreau, President of ACELF (left), with employees, parents and children from Notre Jardin d’Enfance.

## THE INTERNET: THE FUTURE IS HERE

The future has arrived. The Internet may not quite have transformed the way we live, but there is no doubt it has become a part of the fabric of our lives. The digital revolution affects everyone, even the federal government. As you may know, all the main services provided by the federal government will be available through the Internet by 2005.

Is the federal government doing all it should to address the numerous challenges that the Internet of the future will pose? In a study published on March 25, the Commissioner of Official Languages takes stock of the situation with regard to the availability of information in Canada's two official languages on the Internet. This study, *French on the Internet: Key to the Canadian Identity and the Knowledge Economy* by Alain Clavet of the Commissioner's Office, concludes that the federal government still has not adopted an integrated strategy or an overall perspective to improve the presence of both official languages on the Internet. In 1999, the Commissioner presented a series of recommendations in an initial study on the matter. According to the follow-up study, fewer than half of the Commissioner's recommendations have been followed up in any significant fashion.

The study does point out the government's successes, notably with regard to Industry Canada and Canadian Heritage. It goes further, however: it examines the current state of affairs, proposes a

coherent governance framework, and sets out three strategic initiatives aimed at making the Internet a social, economic, and cultural tool that fully respects Canada's linguistic duality.



In this era of globalization, Canada must act on both the national and international levels. "It is not only a question of respecting our identity as Canadians that is at stake, but also the image that Canada would like to project to the world. We must also remember that the Internet and the language industries are increasingly important factors in economic growth," notes the Commissioner.

As we know, the Internet has become a global communication medium. It would be to Canada's advantage to make official languages an important part of its foreign policy and its policy with regard to international cooperation. Official languages reach beyond the borders of our country. French is an international language; it is one of the official languages of many international organizations of which Canada is a member. Unfortunately, some of the Internet sites belonging to these organizations include very little French. Could Canada not urge them to include a French version of the information they make available on their Internet sites? For example, as host of the Kananaskis Summit, shouldn't Canada require that Canadian Internet

sites include content in both of Canada's official languages? On several occasions, Dr. Adam has urged the federal government to foster greater use of French on the Internet through various forums, especially the Francophonie, so that French can retain its status as an international language. The Secretary-General of the International Organisation of the Francophonie, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has more than once decried the fact that use of French is in decline internationally. Last March, at a symposium in Brussels attended by representatives of some forty countries belonging to the Organisation, Mr. Boutros-Ghali once again deplored the reduced role played by French within agencies of the United Nations and the European Union. Dr. Adam agrees with the Portuguese delegate to the European Parliament, Vasco Graça Moura, who has said that, on a political level, French serves as a bulwark that protects the other languages. The Canadian government cannot remain indifferent and must assume a leadership role commensurate with its international status.

The study recommends ways for the government to ensure that the network of networks reflects Canada's linguistic duality and serves to advance English and French. These recommendations are grouped according to three strategic initiatives:

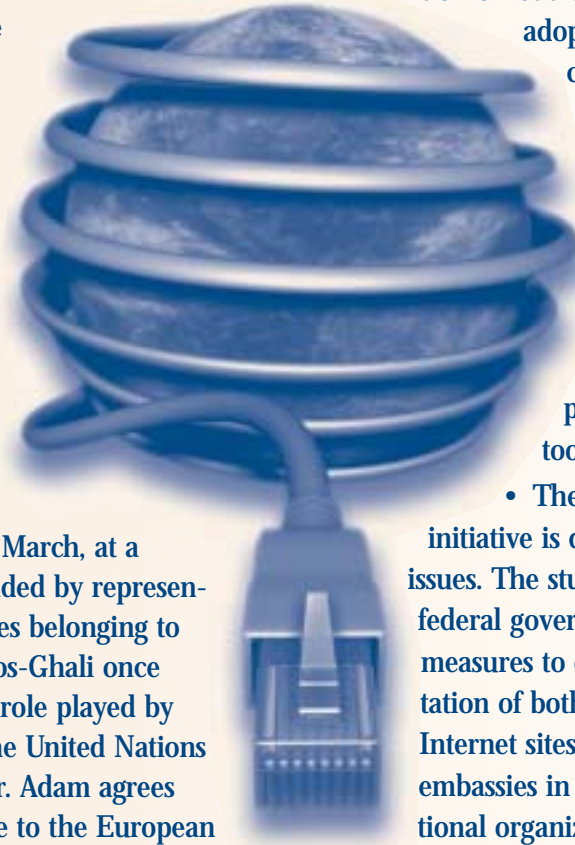
- The recommendations belonging to the first strategic initiative aim to accelerate the creation of French-language content on the Internet in order to achieve a critical mass.

These recommendations also pertain to the language quality of federal sites, the digitization of federal collections, and the adoption of a strategy to support content development in the private sector.

- The recommendations relating to the second strategic initiative focus on support for research and development for language industries and the provision of technolinguistic tools over the Internet.
- The third and final strategic initiative is devoted to foreign policy issues. The study recommends that the federal government take immediate measures to ensure the equal representation of both official languages on Internet sites maintained by foreign embassies in Canada and the international organizations of which Canada is a full member.

The Commissioner is also asking that the government do more to encourage use of the Internet in developing countries of the Francophonie and take steps to further the creation of an Interamerican Network to promote English, French, Spanish and Portuguese in an integrated America.

In spite of some successes, Dr. Adam finds the government's overall performance with regard to French on the Internet to be lacking. She hopes that these recommendations will make the government realize that it must act without delay and take the steps necessary to bring about concrete change and tangible results.



## DID YOU KNOW...

- In the year 2000 in Canada, one household in two (51%) had at least one member who was a regular Internet user. This was up from 42% in 1999.
  - Canada is one of the most connected of the G-8 countries. We rank third behind the United States (60%) and the United Kingdom (55%).  
(According to CyberAtlas)
  - In 2000, nearly 60% of English-speaking Canadians used the Internet. On the other hand, less than half (44%) of French-speaking Canadians used it.
  - All provinces showed an increase in the rate of Internet use, but the rate remains the lowest in Quebec (44%). However, that was an improvement from 33% in 1999, the greatest proportionate growth for any province.
  - Quebec has the lowest rate of Internet use for youth between 15 and 24 years at 77%, compared to 87% in Ontario and 92% in British Columbia.
- Sources: Statistics Canada, Household Internet Use Survey 2000 and Dryburgh, Heather, Changing our ways: why and how Canadians use the Internet (Statistics Canada).
- According to a PricewaterhouseCoopers (2000) study, more than 44% of Canadian households connected to the Internet consult government

sites. Canada ranks fifth in the world in terms of use of government sites.

- The language industry sector in Canada: language training, translation and interpretation, electronic document management, translation and speech-recognition software and technology, localization and writing assistance software.
- A preliminary analysis conducted by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages of the Internet sites of 42 Canadian embassies abroad, shows that English and French carry equal weight, with a few rare exceptions.



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## TAKING STEPS TO MAKE THINGS BETTER

Some things do bear repeating: filing a complaint with the Commissioner of Official Languages is more than simply complaining. On the contrary, it is up to each of us to bring to the attention of the Office of the Commissioner situations that constitute failure to comply with the Official Languages Act. This is how we can make

complaints an instrument of real change. The following is a case in point.

### Background:

In May 2001, a French-speaking resident of Montreal wishing to complete an Employment Insurance claimant's report by phone called the

1-800 number (TELEDEC). He heard a recorded message in French. The recording was of inferior quality; the message contained grammatical errors; some expressions had been translated incorrectly; the speaker's pronunciation was poor. All of this made the message almost impossible to understand. The client filed a complaint with the Commissioner. As a result, an OCOL officer contacted Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) to investigate the matter pursuant to Part IV of the Official Languages Act, relating to communications with and services to the public, and to determine whether the spirit of the Act had been contravened.

### Outcome:

As a result of this complaint, HRDC reviewed and changed the voice message; it recorded a new message of better quality. The officer who received the complaint checked the new recording and noted that HRDC had taken the corrective action required, to OCOL's and the complainant's satisfaction.

This case, like hundreds of others that have been brought to the attention of the Commissioner, shows that filing a complaint can result in changes that can benefit all Canadians.

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## ON TARGET: A JOURNEY THAT BEGAN IN 1999

When Dr. Dyane Adam assumed her duties on August 1, 1999, she spoke of her role as an agent of the Parliament of Canada and, specifically, as a facilitator and agent of change. In a December 1999 interview with INFOACTION, she described this objective as follows: "I intend to work very closely with parliamentarians, decision-makers, and with public servants in pivotal positions. I would like to help ensure that the *Official Languages Act* becomes an inherent part of the culture of all federal institutions. I would like to see departments and agencies increasingly incorporate the Act into daily operations at all levels of their organization and in their delivery of services to the public. This is one of my primary objectives."

For almost three years, since she took over the position of Commissioner of Official Languages, Dr. Adam has not deviated from her original objective. Over the last few months, she and members of her team have held meetings with management committees from about a dozen federal institutions and agencies, including:

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada

- Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission
- Canada Post
- Human Resources Development Canada
- Treasury Board Secretariat
- Ottawa Airport Authority
- Transport Canada
- Industry Canada
- Department of Finance (official languages committee made up of managers from each branch).

Meetings are also being planned with officials from:

- Health Canada
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Public Works and Government Services Canada
- National Defence
- Canada Customs and Revenue Agency
- ... and several others.

The purpose of these meetings is for the Commissioner to build an open dialogue on

official languages with the members of management committees and their partners. The parties will also be discussing the changes needed to find lasting solutions to persistent language problems.

In April 2001, the Commissioner published a report titled *National Report on Service to the Public in English and French - Time for a Change in Culture*. Such a change cannot take place in a vacuum. Dr. Adam will maintain a dialogue and hold discussions on how organizational culture can accommodate official languages. The report states that official languages must be made an integral part of the service philosophy that underlies policies,

decisions, attitudes and actions within the public service. Through discussions with management committees, it will be possible to identify appropriate solutions and measures to ensure that service delivery is not treated simply as a legal obligation.

Many challenges need to be addressed if we are to bring about the needed change in culture. The Commissioner feels that such meetings are useful and can lead to a better understanding by all parties of each other's viewpoints as they strive for full implementation of the *Official Languages Act*.

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## TECHNOLOGY BRINGS NEW SOLUTIONS

The English-speaking community in Quebec has identified distance education as a priority, in both the fields of education and community development. Over the years, English-language school boards have attempted to meet the ever-increasing needs of small, frequently isolated English communities. As we all know, in many of these communities, school is the focal point for the provision of all educational, social and health services. While the needs of these small communities are similar to those of larger urban centres, resources tend to be concentrated mainly in the cities.

The Distance Education and Community Network (DECN) is an initiative of three English-speaking school boards: Central Quebec, Eastern Shores, and Western Quebec. Through partnerships between the school boards and with the support of the Quebec Ministry of Education, as well as financial assistance from Canadian Heritage, the DECN offers promising new solutions through technology-based distance

education. For students living in small, isolated communities, distance education allows for:

- access to a wider variety of courses than is presently available in their school;
- the opportunity to take courses that are prerequisites for certain college or CEGEP programs;
- access to teachers who are well versed in their subject area as well as in the distance education technology used;
- the opportunity to become independent learners;
- improvement of their communication skills and knowledge of leading-edge technology.

The Commissioner of Official Languages fully supports this project, having urged Canadian Heritage to provide the required financial resources. She hopes that the necessary resources will be made available so that this becomes an ongoing initiative and may be expanded to the rest of the province.

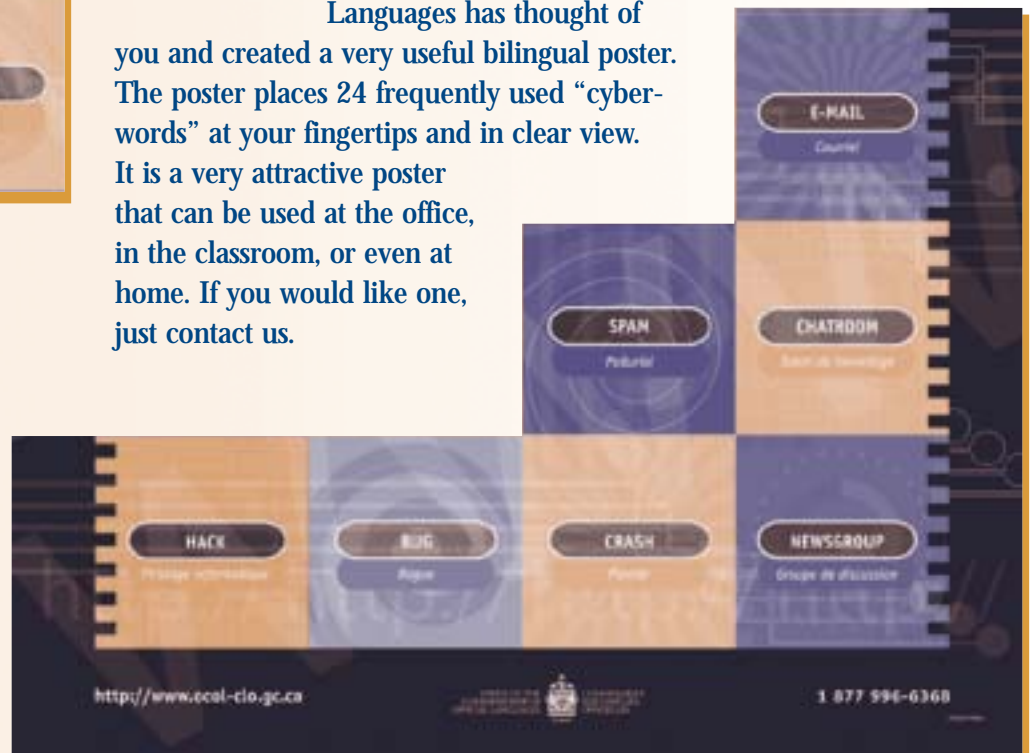
## TERMINOLOGY AT YOUR FINGERTIPS



This is for all you veteran Netheads out there who use computers as part of your daily life

and are constantly searching for the appropriate term in English or French. The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages has thought of

you and created a very useful bilingual poster. The poster places 24 frequently used “cyber-words” at your fingertips and in clear view. It is a very attractive poster that can be used at the office, in the classroom, or even at home. If you would like one, just contact us.



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*Here are a few interesting excerpts from speeches delivered by the Commissioner in the past few months.*

- Language, as we all know, is not merely a tool for communicating. It is a fundamental feature of individual identity and our sense of community. It conveys our values and is the primary medium of culture. It is therefore not surprising that, at the beginning of this new millennium marked by unprecedented growth in “acculturative” communication technologies, the pendulum has swung sharply in the other direction, in favour of linguistic, cultural and regional identities.
- Official-language minorities are not marginalized groups; they are essential to our social and political cohesion. Their vitality and development help build a new Canadian society that is more pluralistic and open to the far-reaching diversity that is increasingly evident in the great liberal democracies.
- Linguistic duality is not a millstone around our neck, it is a golden opportunity. Canada, like other great industrialized countries, has the essential tools for the flexible governance of a post-modern state. It can do so by calling on all its resources and above all by building on the greatest social and political unity possible. This greater cohesion can be achieved by fully developing the knowledge and know-how of these two great language communities.

*Speech on language governance delivered to the “Canada in Perspective” symposium organized by the Centre for Research on French-Canadian Culture, Ottawa, March 14, 2002*

- The right to a trial in French cannot indefinitely exist solely in the abstract. French-speaking Canadians must be able to exercise



this right in the near future [in Saskatchewan], and the steps that are taken to apply these rights must be concrete, effective and timely. Too often we seem to forget that, behind any instigating action, there is a human being of flesh and blood seeking justice, wanting to speak out and to be understood. When individuals must wait too long, justice can become injustice.

- You can count on me to remind the federal government and the ministers responsible that it is crucial that adequate financial and human resources be invested to ensure full and proper implementation of the action plan. I will stand by these three words: respect, protection, and advancement.

*Speech delivered in Regina, Saskatchewan, February 2, 2002*

- We know that languages are the expression of communities and cultures, that one doesn't speak to oneself, that language rights exist so that linguistic communities will be secure. Language rights make the bridge between the individual's use of language and the well-being and vitality of his or her minority language community.
- The Supreme Court's invitation to us – delivered via its decisions in the last three

years – is to reconsider our understanding of the language rights of Canadians and the corresponding obligations that rest with the State. We have all been summoned. Together, we must explore the paths that will allow us to pursue our progression towards substantive equality of the English and French languages.

*Speech delivered to the Colloque sur l'application des droits linguistiques au Canada, at Faculté de droit de l'Université de Moncton, February 15, 2002*

## LOUISE SÉGUIN 1958-2002



On April 15, 2002, Louise Séguin, an administrative officer at the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages in Ottawa, left the office in the early afternoon for a training session being held in the Laurentians. A tragic automobile accident ended her life.

Louise Séguin's untimely departure has left a great void for all who worked with her over the past 20 years, most of that time at the Public Service Commission. We will remember her as a devoted and conscientious person. Her smile and great warmth will be treasured by those who had the privilege of knowing her.

We would like to express our sincere condolences to her son, Jean-Philippe, her family, friends and colleagues.

Saviez-vous que le Commissariat aux langues officielles était présent partout au Canada? Vous pouvez vous adresser au bureau du Commissariat de votre région en tout temps.

RÉGION DE L'ATLANTIQUE 1 800 561-7109

RÉGION DU QUÉBEC 1 800 363-0628

RÉGION DE L'ONTARIO 1 800 387-0635

RÉGION DU MANITOBA ET DE LA SASKATCHEWAN 1 800 665-8731

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