

Canadian Parents for French

**Provincial and National French
Second-Language Education
Stakeholder Consultations**

Newfoundland and Labrador Consultation

St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

March 26, 2004

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Education	3
Question 1: Students and learning	3
Question 2: Teachers and instruction.....	5
Question 3: Public opinion and community context.....	7
Question 4: Institutional support and accessibility	9
Business	12
Question 5	12
Arts, Culture, and Sports.....	14
Question 6	14
Conclusions/Closing	15

Introduction

Leonard Quilty, president, Canadian Parents for French, Newfoundland and Labrador (CPF-NL), greeted participants and outlined the agenda. He noted that the school board in Labrador is considering dismantling the early French immersion program within its jurisdiction. This is one of several issues of concern to the CPF regarding French language education in Newfoundland & Labrador.

Valerie Pike, facilitator for the consultation, is a board member with the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers and is a core and immersion teacher at Prince of Wales Collegiate. She outlined the timetable for establishing the Federal Government Action Plan for Official Languages, which has set a target of doubling the number of functionally bilingual high school graduates throughout Canada by 2013. She noted that the current round of stakeholder consultations on French as a second language (FSL) is being conducted in all provinces and territories, and that these consultations are designed to obtain stakeholder responses to the report from the National Symposium held on March 2–4, 2004 in Toronto.

The Action Plan, which was released after two years of consultations, has identified target groups in three main sectors:

- Education
- Community Development
- Federal Public Service

The government has made a commitment of \$751 million to the Action Plan over the next five years, of which \$381 million in additional funding is dedicated to the education sector. Much of this funding will be used on minority French and English language instruction.

Susan Forward, past president of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) and a presenter at the National Symposium in Toronto, elaborated on the educational component of the consultation. She emphasized the importance of being aware of the origin of the Federal Government Action Plan, since delegates to the consultation bring expertise from several sectors, including education, business, arts, culture, and sports.

She said Canada has just been through a decade where governments have been concerned largely with the reduction of public debt and deficits. Recognition is now given to the importance of investing in second-language education.

The federal government is designing its Action Plan with three considerations in mind:

- Canada's heritage is largely based upon linguistic duality, with the vast majority of Canadians speaking English or French. The government expects this reality to continue into the foreseeable future.

- French is an international language, and is the official language of approximately 65 nations. In addition, French is a working language of the United Nations, as well as in the Commonwealth and the Francophonie.
- Bilingualism is an asset to the labour market, and facilitates mobility of workers. Many other nations are promoting language learning, and bilingualism improves Canada's global competitiveness.

Canada's heritage and future direction are key government considerations. There is government recognition that federal policy on official languages must be modernized and enhanced, because a thorough review has not been conducted since the policy became a priority approximately 30 years ago. There have been many accomplishments, but the country has also undergone many changes during the intervening years. Canada has become increasingly diversified, with many different cultures becoming prominent. The country is also becoming more urbanized, including Newfoundland & Labrador where approximately 70% of the population lives on the Avalon Peninsula. In light of these and other changes, the federal government decided to rethink its policies on supporting Canada's official languages. The linguistic makeup of Canada is seen as the means for making Canada prosper, Forward said.

Pike reviewed progress on building a national action plan, and said the results of this current round of provincial and territorial consultations will be consolidated by CPF and presented to a national symposium on April 21, 2004.

Forward said that the March symposium in Toronto focused on the educational component of the Action Plan. The plan offers challenges and strategies for promoting second languages throughout the education system, as well as for the business, arts, cultural, and sports sectors.

The goal of the Action Plan is to double the percentage of high school graduates who have a functional knowledge of French. Currently, 16.5% of students complete all the French language programs open to them. This is not good enough, she said: the key to making improvements is to focus on doubling the number of students taking advantage of the core French curriculum. Forward pointed out that 90% of children obtain their French language education by enrolling in core French courses. The key element to meeting the Action Plan target is to encourage junior high students to continue their core French in high school. In addition, it is important to ensure that high school students finish their French programs.

It is critical that all stakeholder groups work together at improving the profile and status of French second-language programs at the junior high and high school levels. Making French relevant to students is a challenge that must be met, and it is here that business people, as well as those involved in the arts and sports, play an important role.

In the realm of business, Forward related the example of Mountain Equipment Co-op, which faces the challenge of hiring bilingual, French immersion graduates. Some of these graduates are capable of functioning in a French-speaking environment, while others are not. It is important for students to know that their French language skills are valued and will help them in the world of business.

At the national symposium, delegates were shown how French is important in Canadian arts, culture, and sports, said Forward. She related the experience of Dick Pound, who spoke of how important it was for his career to have learned French. The connection between French language education and Canadian culture must be demonstrated within the education systems of the provinces, she said. Discussions have focused on using federal agencies such as the CBC and the National Film Board to bring arts and culture into the classrooms as a way of promoting the linguistic duality of the country.

There is general agreement that this is a good time to be bringing official languages to the forefront of the national agenda, and that the federal government is receptive to improving French language growth in Canada. She added that she is interested in promoting core French.

Pike reiterated concerns about student enrolment in French programs. About 90% of students are in French core programs, while French immersion serves a much smaller clientele. She pointed out that statistics demonstrate a significant generational difference in opinions towards French language education. Studies show that some 80% of young people in Canada consider second-language education important, but these numbers decline significantly among the adult population. Youth are the focus of the future, she said.

Education

Question 1: Students and learning

What are the first steps to be taken in marketing bilingual education to students at all levels—from elementary to high school entry, from high school graduation to post-secondary education and life-long learning—and making it a genuine experience to learn a second language? How can resources and support from outside the classroom be mobilized to enrich FSL instruction and capture the magic of bilingual education?

Recommendations

- Produce and market a quality FSL product.
- Make French “authentic” and “real” for students, in part by promoting student exchanges and study opportunities.
- Promote French as a medium rather than French as a subject.
- Stress the importance of access to French as a second language.
- Promote bilingualism and study in French as an asset in business, technology, etc.

Discussion

CPF-NL Executive Director Larry Vaters asked the business stakeholders to share their perspectives on bilingualism and opportunities for bilingual employees within their sectors,

highlighting potential directions for marketing French language study to students.

One participant said of the communications sector, “there are few borders in this business anymore.” He attributed New Brunswick’s success in attracting call centres, which operate in a global context, in part to the availability of a bilingual workforce. The participant noted that the challenge was to create a bilingual workforce in *this* province, one that has the ability to converse readily and functionally on a remote basis. He suggested that there would be increasing need in Newfoundland for various information technology enterprises that can offer bilingual services in a global context.

“Having a second language is clearly an asset to have in addition to the technical skill set that we’re looking for,” remarked another business stakeholder involved in the accounting sector.

A participant from the travel industry spoke about the requirement for their front-line people to speak both official languages. She expressed concern about students in outport Newfoundland being at a disadvantage in entering the tourism/travel industry if they do not have the same early access to French language education as their urban peers.

In their second breakout session, participants agreed that there are many competing demands on students, at both the secondary and post-secondary levels. For example, towards the end of the academic year at university, students are typically completing exams at the same time that they are applying for summer employment. For most students, they do not have time to conduct a thorough search for a French language component to their summer employment.

The group noted that because of a lack of financial resources in the education system, schools have tended to focus on French immersion at the expense of core French programs.

Group members agreed that teacher training is important, but said that it is difficult to encourage teachers to take summer French courses through the Francoforum in St. Pierre.

In its report back to the plenary session, the rapporteur for the first group stated that to open the door to bilingual education, French must be included in the regular curriculum. For example, nursing students are looking for ways to make French instruction useful for the workplace. Students must become aware of how their French is useful outside of school; and educators should make French a living, working language in their schools. The rapporteur emphasized the importance of strengthening core French, and not focusing solely on French immersion.

More teacher exchanges should take place in schools, he said. For example, this could mean that French would be taught in history classes, where perhaps it had not been used previously.

Resources already exist to assist in teaching the basics of the French language: for example, Environment Canada has a Web site in French that is easily understood by the vast majority of the population. Radio Canada also has a French news service that can help teachers. A campaign may be needed to make teachers aware of existing resources.

Educators must promote the employment opportunities available to students who learn French.

This means that cross-disciplinary resources should be applied to teaching.

The second group to explore this question said that the best way to market French is to promote it as a living language, rather than isolating it as a school course. French should be the medium rather than the message. To achieve this, the education system needs quality teachers with a firm understanding of French.

French must be seen as “real.” Most core French students believe their French education is over once they finish high school; therefore studying French in university should be promoted. Overall, it is important that French be considered as a part of life for every Canadian.

Pike said that it is important to encourage government investment in Web development as a resource for students and teachers. She pointed out that the study of French or English as a second language is seen as having a lower status than mathematics and science, for example, and said it may be time to stop referring to language training as ESL and FSL. Rather, she said it could be time to change the terminology to French Official Language and English Official Language. This would enhance the perceived value of the French language, she said.

Question 2: Teachers and instruction

What are the prospects for attracting and training the next generation of competent, enthusiastic FSL instructors, and for ensuring that they have the resources and support that they need to succeed?

Recommendations

- Decrease the gap between high school FSL competencies and university requirements.
- Increase professional development opportunities for teachers in the system (i.e. tap into the pool of retired teachers for a mentorship program, and increase support for sharing of ideas and methodologies among FSL teachers).
- Have school boards track and encourage university students who are potential FSL teachers.
- Utilize distance education to reach students in remote/rural areas.
- Inform high school students about opportunities in pursuing further FSL studies.

Discussion

Participants spoke about the difficulty in attracting and retaining FSL teachers and French-language specialists in rural parts of the province. The group also broached the topic of promoting FSL teaching as a profession to current FSL students. But one participant said that many FSL students “look at French not as the end result but as a vehicle to pursue something else.”

Several participants spoke about prevailing attitudes toward French immersion and core French

programs, noting that the latter are perceived as inferior, primarily because parents observe more success with immersion students. Participants agreed that there is a need to promote more activities in core French.

One participant spoke about the general enthusiasm of FSL teachers, but identified a real need to provide a support base for those teaching in remote communities. There is a need for networking opportunities to allow teachers to “share strategies and conversations” about what works in their classrooms. “It’s particularly important for new teachers, and even more important for rural schools to do that, but we all benefit.” Participants discussed the establishment of a mentoring program utilizing the knowledge bank of retired teachers.

During discussion of the issue of isolation, the excellent opportunities for teaching French through distance education were mentioned. Opportunities for enhancing the core French program utilizing the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI) were praised by one teacher.

Participants agreed that the class size issue, particularly in the core French pathway, needs to be addressed. “I might have 48 [students] by the end of the week. If you want a recipe for failure, that’s it.”

In their second breakout session, participants said that competing demands on teachers limit their effectiveness in teaching French. Large class sizes were identified as a key impediment to the effectiveness of French language instruction. In addition, they said that teaching has been devalued as a career option for young people: this makes recruitment of high-quality graduates difficult.

Participants discussed the need to establish a strong foundation for French in schools, and recommended that French language instruction become a requirement for graduates of university teaching programs. This would demonstrate the value that society places on promoting the use of the French language.

In the report back to the plenary session, the rapporteur said that the gap between high school FSL competencies and university requirements must be reduced.

There is a need for school boards to do a better job of tracking and encouraging potential FSL teachers while they are studying at universities. More support is also needed for attracting new FSL teachers.

Because of the preponderance of small communities in Newfoundland & Labrador, distance education must be used to a greater extent in order to reach students in more remote areas.

There is a need for more inclusiveness in programming, so that students on different pathways can benefit from French second-language instruction. More information should also be directed at high school students regarding opportunities beyond high school for further FSL studies.

The second group to report on Question 2 emphasized the need for more teacher training: more

FSL training is needed for non-French specialist teachers. Students will see value in FSL if they see that their teachers view it as important. To achieve this, there must be more opportunities for teachers to upgrade their FSL skills. Three months in a French milieu is not sufficient. Monetary bonuses to better encourage educators to upgrade their skills, and to attract FSL teachers, may be necessary.

Pike stressed the importance of establishing better dialogue between the secondary and post-secondary levels. Training is particularly important, she noted. When young people see teachers and the broader community using French, then it is seen as being more real. She said that the suggestion of using bonuses may cause controversy, but pointed out that employers in many other sectors regularly employ bonuses as an incentive for employees to upgrade their skills. It was noted that the notion of bonuses was a group suggestion, and not a recommendation, but that it might reduce teacher shortage problems such as are facing the Labrador school board.

Question 3: Public opinion and community context

What are the dimensions of a community-based campaign to promote FSL instruction and support Canada's Vision for 2013 objectives? What are the first steps, and who should be involved?

Recommendations

- Offer stronger support for parents and families of children in French programs.
- Phase in mandatory core French programs.
- Build linkages with various agencies (e.g. one organization is working with Parks Canada, at its Castle Hill, Placentia historic site, to develop a program that will take into account French education program outcomes and enhance learning opportunities for student visitors).
- Recruit prominent figures as role models for youth.
- Ensure that all school boards have representation from the French culture.
- Target junior high school students and encourage them to take French in later grades and in university. Society must cultivate student interest and get role models into the classroom.
- Find political champions at the provincial level to take this issue to the federal government, and cultivate good advocates.
- Use school career days and multicultural fairs to promote the French language and culture.
- Use the Internet: youth spend a lot of time on the Internet, so provide links to information on summer jobs and to interesting sites that promote French culture.
- Encourage the provincial government to promote French by undertaking initiatives such as erecting bilingual signage along highways and within communities.
- Enhance the twinning of communities in Newfoundland and Labrador with French-speaking communities in Quebec.
- Strengthen CPF, particularly in rural communities.
- Make all government agencies responsible for promoting French.

- Focus programs on “Official Language” education, rather than using the terms FSL and ESL when communicating the importance of French language education. The focus in schools should help teachers encourage students to continue their education in French.
- Localize funding, using district-wide promotion and advertising.

Discussion

The small population of rural Newfoundland & Labrador poses a challenge for encouraging community involvement in French language education. Funding for community-based campaigns is difficult to access, and organizations fear losing money on unsuccessful projects.

One solution is being attempted at the Gros Morne Theatre Festival, said Jennifer Adams of the Artistic Fraud theatre group. The story of singer-songwriter Emile Benoit is being offered, as well as the story of Marguerite de la Rocque, a woman who was stranded on a deserted island off the coast of Newfoundland. Adams said that the works are being offered in both French and English. In the French productions there will be a great deal of repetition in order to assist with comprehension. The plays will also be multi-media productions, which will allow English speaking audiences to enjoy the productions, even if some people do not understand the entire storyline.

Other group members suggested that government funding should be applied towards building French-language infrastructure, rather than focusing on cultural exchanges.

Programming in the schools should be directed towards junior high school students, participants said, because the decision to continue with French is made at the Grade 9 level. They also suggested that the government of Newfoundland & Labrador use arts programming to get students interested in continuing with French language education.

Some participants suggested that “Franco-Festivals” be held early in the school year.

In their second breakout session, participants spoke of the need for a federally funded pan-Canadian teacher–student exchange program.

The group also recognized a need for support for parents and families of children entering French language programs.

Once again, participants referred to the need for “promotion, promotion, promotion.” They recommended that a promotional campaign should not just focus on the need for bilingualism in a business context, but should also endorse the idea of having a second language as a basic literacy skill.

This led to a discussion of whether FSL should be a required course. There was general agreement that there should be no difference in basic course requirements, be they science, math, or French—they should be mandatory. Why isn’t French a required course? “It’s societal value,” one participant offered. Another participant suggested that some general courses should be

available in French, as they are in other subjects, for students who may have difficulty in passing the regular courses in those subjects.

The group returned to the idea of a campaign to create a “public value” for bilingualism. One participant suggested that an effective campaign might demonstrate the business case for bilingualism in two important sectors of Newfoundland’s economy—tourism and offshore oil. Another suggested partnering with business stakeholders to promote French within particular sectors.

In its report back to the plenary session, participants who answered this question had several observations. The rapporteur noted that cultural enrichment is a good way of promoting French language in communities. The group discussed strengthening the network for improving French language instruction beyond the education system. Cultural organizations and the CPF promote the French language, but more coordination is needed among programs. In particular, groups should build closer liaisons and work together towards the common goal of making French a living language. Considerable local talent is available within the larger community.

Instead of only preaching to students about government job opportunities available to those who learn French, emphasis should be placed on improving the appreciation of French culture and enhancing general appreciation of the language.

She noted also that promotion of French culture, language, and history can happen in English, not just in French. Participants added several comments:

- The discussions are focused on students and teachers, but education is really a community responsibility.
- The CRTC should use its powers to require second language programming, which could focus on cultural content.
- Most people don’t see the relevance of the French language.

Question 4: Institutional support and accessibility

What major program and policy changes would enhance FSL instruction across Canada? What are the first, most practical steps that can be taken to build a more effective, more accessible system, and who should be involved?

Recommendations

- Promote the benefits of learning FSL as a literacy objective.
- Provide professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance programs and instruction.
- Develop high-school-level courses, such as conversational French, that respond to the needs of students.
- Increase availability of ICF across the province.

- Revise junior and senior high school core French to reflect improved programming in elementary grades.
- Make core French a graduation requirement in Grade 9.
- Use distance education in remote/rural areas to improve retention rates/availability of FSL.
- Re-address time allocation in the core French program, and clarify objectives.

Discussion

The group discussed the need for French language programming to be available as early as possible in the education system and spoke of the disparity between districts: some schools are unable to offer FSL in primary grades. Several speakers suggested that a future goal should be to offer the bilingual experience in the preschool/daycare setting.

Participants discussed the benefits, including increased student fluency and confidence, of intensive learning periods as support for core French programming. One core French teacher spoke positively about an intensive extra-curricular learning experience: “I had the opportunity to go with students to St. Pierre.... The meeting of all the kids together and the ease with which they could converse—it blew me away!”

Participants discussed an approach to the promotion French language education. “Our society separates French from literacy. We need to take a literacy approach to teaching French.” She mentioned that some parents are concerned that learning in French will hinder their child’s progress in English. “It’s a legitimate concern that has to be addressed.”

The group agreed that in promoting a bilingual culture to a larger public, there is a definite role for public broadcasting.

The group agreed that there has to a national proficiency standard for FSL teachers.

To enhance the quality of FSL instruction, the group discussed the need for teacher support, including techniques, resources, methodology, and an emphasis on mentorship.

One participant spoke to the need for incentives and motivation for students to complete their French programs. She gave the example of the high school certificate being explored by CASLT, which will recognize course completion and student achievement.

In their second breakout session, participants discussed the need to offer students additional FSL programming to build skills, increase confidence, and help build positive attitudes. One retired teacher said that many senior high students have the fundamentals “but do not have the security of the language” to converse readily. Another suggested that this is because students do not hear it spoken enough. It was suggested that immersion programs give students the added confidence to speak the second language.

This led to a discussion of the challenge of offering FSL in remote or rural locations, and the lack of available teaching candidates. “There’s a dilemma ... do you put someone in who has

one university credit and will struggle with it, or do you say no, we won't offer the program at all?"

"The key to accessibility for remote communities is distance education," responded one participant. "I think you can turn more kids on to French if there's that element of technology ... it's the novelty."

Another participant identified Grade 6 as a crucial year in terms of whether students continue in the core French program. Discussion continued around putting resources and support (such as a monitor) into the junior high grades—"that's where we lose them"—to help ensure higher retention rates in high school core French. This led to a discussion of the need to have French courses as a graduation requirement.

The group discussed the need for less ambiguity in the core French program. "Children need to see the progress they're making," asserted one participant. "They need signposts along the way," said another.

Several participants questioned the ability of teachers to accomplish more without additional contact time. Another challenge recognized was the lack of a time allocation standard for French instruction within the provincial school system. "It varies between schools within the same district ... and within schools."

In the report back to the plenary, the rapporteur said that his group talked about level of success of core French, and said intensive core French should be available more generally throughout the province. It needs to be revised for the junior high and high school levels.

It was noted that core French programming is currently being evaluated by the provincial government. This group recommended that core French be made a graduation requirement for students in Grade 9. In addition, government should mandate a two-credit course in core French as a necessity for high school graduation.

Locally developed courses should be used. There should be a role for distance education in improving the potential and availability of FSL in rural and remote areas.

FSL programming needs to be less ambiguous, he said, and the group emphasized the importance of reviewing and improving program objectives. Time allocation in core French education programs also need to be addressed.

The second group to report said that intermediate education program is currently under evaluation. One of the findings is that boys are dropping out of FSL at a higher rate than girls. Courses must be developed at the high school level that respond better to the needs of students: for example, conversational French could be taught, rather than emphasizing grammar in core French programs.

Incentives should be offered to students, such as issuing certificates that would recognize student achievement in high school core French. Eventually, the certification program could be enhanced

to include a proficiency scale. Businesses and universities could be asked to support such a certification program.

It is currently mandatory that students study French between Grades 4 and 9. Graduation should include a requirement that students successfully complete core French programs.

In order to improve the French language skills of teachers, the group suggested enhancing linkages with Memorial University. The group noted that professional development opportunities are being restricted by a lack of substitute teacher time available to schools.

Business

Question 5

Is there scope for ongoing collaboration between the business and education sectors to increase the proportion of high school graduates with a working knowledge of both official languages? If so, based on the initial list of strategies developed at the National Symposium, what are the most promising opportunities for early action?

Recommendations

- Make visible bilingual success stories, testimonials, etc.
- Support organizations (businesses, schools, etc.) to enable employees to “experience” French.
- Make funding available for teachers to access FSL training (on-site courses, etc.).
- Encourage business to highlight the need for bilingualism.
- Offer recognition awards and scholarships to students who excel in French.
- Build a provincial and national database of students and their skills, which employers could access. This would motivate students to learn French.
- Accentuate the fact that people with superior language skills are better communicators and that this therefore enhances their employability.
- Promote success stories using role models from the wider community.
- Provide government funding, but involve business people in planning and promotion.
- Have business people go into schools and discuss how French helped them in their careers.
- Provide more opportunities to students, such as the Quebec bursary program.
- Encourage businesses to train their own employees in French language skills.
- Target parents: Business people should speak with young parents about the importance of their children learning French.

Discussion

Scholarships were suggested as a key incentive for promoting second language learning. Group members also emphasized the value of demonstrating to students the importance of French

language education in obtaining high-quality employment in the business sector. Employers should play a central role in this area: it is important for business people to visit classrooms and discuss, at a practical level, how French would help students in their careers. Currently, there is a gap in perception among teenage students about the importance of French.

Participants also agreed that core French should not be isolated to French language classes. Instead, there should be greater opportunities for students to learn the language in mathematics and science courses.

This group endorsed business programs designed to enable employees to experience French by visiting a French-speaking country, or going through immersion period. “The spin is not to learn French, but to increase French visibility,” said one participant. Another participant spoke of the possibility of virtual exchanges, using technology to pair a school in Newfoundland with one in France or Quebec.

There was also discussion of allocating federal funds to ensure sufficient numbers of teachers for bilingual programs. This led to a debate about whether there should be direct access and control at a federal level of monies for specific bilingual programs (such as efforts to help teachers to meet national benchmarks), and how that might have an impact on the provincial education jurisdiction.

There was discussion of how to shift federal government priorities and gain access to funding for bilingual education. One participant suggested that the role of business could be in “shifting priorities.” Participants said that the government responds to the business agenda, particularly when it comes to growing the economy. “Maybe the role we should advocate for is someone who can access funding,” suggested one participant.

Discussion also touched on the need to dispel myths within the larger community that “money is lavished on French education programs,” at the expense of basics including brick and mortar maintenance.

The group resumed discussion of promoting the concept of the French “experience” (that French is more than a course to be passed—it is a culture to be experienced). It’s not just about “becoming functionally bilingual at the end ... It’s a change in attitudes that in the long haul is going to change the reality of how we look at second language,” said one participant.

Student experiences, such as the Concours d’Art Oratoire, were praised by one student participant, as well as others in the working group. “You don’t realize how good it is unless you are the one that gets to do it,” she said about getting the chance to go on to the provincials and the national debate. “Then you realize, wow, French can take me somewhere!” Another participant spoke of how the local CPF designed a Concours Junior, for Grades 7 and 8, to encourage that enthusiasm. It was agreed that one role of the business community in such events as the Concours is in sponsorship.

In the report back to plenary, the rapporteur said that there is already a compelling economic basis for bilingualism. However, students must be able to see the benefits of learning French, in terms of employment in business opportunities.

Arts, Culture, and Sports

Question 6

Is there scope for ongoing collaboration between the arts, culture, and sport sector and the FSL education community to increase the proportion of high school graduates with a working knowledge of both official languages? If so, based on the initial list of strategies developed at the National Symposium, what are the most promising opportunities for early action?

Recommendations

- Promote collaboration among arts, cultural, and sports groups.
- Make French language television and radio programming more widely available during the daytime hours.
- Encourage parental support.
- Build a mobile museum of French culture that would travel to smaller communities.
- Encourage French-speaking immigrants to settle in Newfoundland & Labrador.
- Celebrate the new French language school under construction in St. John's.
- Invite local authors, musicians, and artists who use French themes into schools.
- Have libraries promote French by starting a French Book of the Month program. This could be extended into selecting a French Personality of the Month.
- Use French films with subtitles rather than bringing in English films with translations. This helps to demonstrate that French culture exists.
- Demonstrate that French is a living language by promoting its use by artists, musicians, and others in the cultural sector. When children see French used at Signal Hill National Historic Park they are amazed, and it convinces many of them to study French in school.
- Use French role models in order to convince students to choose French. These role models should come into schools and speak to all students, not just to French immersion or core French students.

Discussion

Role models play a major role in encouraging students to enroll in French at school, said participants. Cross-disciplinary teaching of French at the high school level would be beneficial, and would end the isolation of French instruction in schools.

Group members said that the labels of ESL and FSL should be replaced with the terms FLO/ALO "Français Langue Officielle/Anglais Langue Officielle."

Students need to perceive bilingualism as a life skill, participants said, and educators need to demonstrate how useful French is outside the classroom.

Joseph Enguehard, Director of the Francoforum in St. Pierre, said he has experienced difficulties encouraging students to attend the Francoforum, which is held during the summer months. There is competition from Quebec and other locations to attract students in French language education programs.

Some participants pointed out that grammar instruction in core French programs does not attract students.

Participants commented that French has been ghettoized as an academic discipline, rather than becoming part of a living community. Cultural experiences involving French must be conducted outside the classroom, they said.

Group members said that French instruction should be promoted as a “two-for-one deal,” where students can learn the language while also learning other skills.

Conclusions/Closing

Pike thanked the high school and university students who participated in the consultation session. She also thanked CPF for facilitating the sessions. Pike noted that Canada is one of just a few developed countries where a federal education system does not exist. The result of this is that in order for the Action Plan initiative to succeed, the “umbrella” has to be very broad.

Vaters said that CPF appreciates the involvement of stakeholder representatives who participated in the consultation session. He noted that many new groups and individuals attended the sessions, and said that this was extremely encouraging. He also thanked Air Labrador, which presented four free travel coupons to the CPF during the lunch hour—one of which was given (in a draw) to one of the students who participated in the consultation. Vaters also thanked the Privy Council Office and the Department of Canadian Heritage.