

Speaking Notes

for

**The Honourable Mauril Bélanger
Deputy Leader of the Government
in the House of Commons
and Member of Parliament (Ottawa–Vanier)**

on behalf of

**The Honourable Hélène Chalifour Scherrer
Minister of Canadian Heritage**

**National French Second Language
Stakeholders' Forum**

**Ottawa, Ontario
April 21, 2004**

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Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.
Merci beaucoup.

I am very pleased to be here today for these national French second-language stakeholder consultations.

Je vous transmets les meilleurs voeux de ma collègue et amie, l'honorable Hélène Chalifour Scherrer, ministre du Patrimoine canadien.

Nous tous réunis ici aujourd'hui sommes fermement engagés à favoriser l'essor du français et de l'anglais dans la société canadienne.

Nous savons tous que la maîtrise de nos deux

langues officielles représente un atout formidable pour nos enfants qui sont les architectes du Canada de demain.

Knowledge of both official languages enables us to appreciate more fully the richness and variety that Canada has to offer. When we have the means by which we can get to know each other better, our country grows and becomes ever more cohesive.

As well, we know that in this world of instant communications and disappearing borders, the ability of our citizens to communicate in more than one language is a tremendous economic advantage – both to them as individuals and to our country as a whole.

Perhaps most important is the personal enrichment that comes with learning, not only the words of a second language, but also the culture and values that underlie that language.

Knowledge of a second official language opens doors to every corner of Canada, to other Canadians, and to the world. Perhaps most important of all, it opens doors within our own hearts and minds.

Certainly, the Government of Canada recognizes that official languages are an important asset for the future of our country.

And, as you know, in its Action Plan for Official Languages, the Government has set an ambitious goal: to double by 2013 the number of young Canadians who have knowledge of their second official language.

This is an ambitious goal, but it is also an achievable one – if all of us work together.

In bringing together representatives of governments and school boards, national educational and professional associations and researchers, this national forum is an important step in maintaining the momentum that began with the release of the Action Plan in March 2003, and grew even stronger with the symposium, Vision and Challenges for the 21st Century, in March 2004.

All the recommendations that have been developed in cross-country consultations over the past few weeks are now assembled in one spot for fine-tuning.

And the national strategies developed here will be important to the Department of Canadian Heritage as it carries out its key role in implementing the education-related aspects of the Action Plan, and as it moves forward to renew agreements with the provinces and territories related to education.

As the Government of Canada begins negotiations on these agreements, there are several factors we need to keep in mind.

By involving the widest range of partners possible, we want to maximize the funds available for second-language education.

It is therefore important to identify shared priorities with the provinces and territories and to develop innovative approaches to achieve the Action Plan's goals.

These goals should be articulated around:

- improving French and English core programs
- re-invigorating immersion programs
- better recruiting and training of teachers

- expanding post-secondary opportunities, and
- fostering research in second-language education.

On behalf of Minister Chalifour Scherrer and the Government of Canada, I would like to thank the Canadian Parents for French for the role you have played in the organization of these consultations.

And we also appreciate very much the *ongoing* work of Canadian Parents for French in fostering and promoting the learning of French across the country.

Le ministère du Patrimoine canadien est fier d'appuyer l'organisme Canadian Parents for French.

La contribution d'organismes comme le vôtre, qui travaillent d'arrache-pied pour renforcer l'un des fondements de notre société, est essentielle si nous voulons atteindre les objectifs ambitieux que nous nous sommes fixés dans le cadre de notre nouveau plan d'action.

Comme l'indique le discours du Trône :

« La dualité linguistique est au coeur de l'identité du pays. Elle nous caractérise aux yeux du monde. Elle nous y ouvre des portes.

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The Government of Canada appreciates the efforts and participation of *everyone* here today.

I wish you all a productive meeting and look forward to the recommendations that will come out of today's national consultations.

Merci.

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