

Canadian Parents for French

National Stakeholders' Forum

Ottawa, Ontario

April 21, 2004

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Opening Plenary

Ian Richmond, National President of Canadian Parents for French (CPF), opened the forum by speaking of the consultations and meetings that have taken place across Canada. He commended everyone for the enormous organizational work involved in coordinating and attending these consultations, often on very short notice. “The main question, really, that we’ve all been wrestling with is ‘How do we turn young Canadians on to being bilingual?’”

He told of speaking—in Esperanto—to a young Russian woman who was studying in Sweden (in Swedish) and had met and married a Dutch man with whom she spoke Dutch. She spoke at least four languages and found this quite normal. Canada differs from the European Union but there are a number of francophone communities across the country. “Students today, I find, are very pragmatic,” said Richmond. Their motivation for learning French has changed in the past 25 years from wanting to learn “because Canada is bilingual” to today’s work-oriented perspective that becoming bilingual will give them “an edge in the job market.” Some students said they felt French should not be mandatory because if everyone spoke French that would reduce their advantage.

We must emphasize the less pragmatic, cognitive benefits of bilingualism, Richmond said. Students learning French tend to be better readers in both languages. Bilingual jobs cannot be the only reason; we must also “sell the softer side of bilingualism.” He said he was pleased to see that many of the recommendations from the consultations involved increasing core French elements in schools. It has become the “poor cousin of the immersion program” and students in core French should be learning effectively as well. French immersion has been so successful in this country that students have often got the idea that “if you’re not in French immersion you can’t learn French.” This may be why resources are often lacking for core French programs.

Richmond also remarked on the recommendation for a language requirement for university entrance. In the 1960s, most universities in Canada had a French language requirement, whereas most now do not. Some anglophone universities do not even teach French now. “One of the reasons I joined the national board,” Richmond said, “was that the promotion of French was lacking. What we need is a revolution to shake up the thinking about bilingualism in Canada.” Polls show that 86% of Canadians feel French is important or somewhat important. “That is what I would like to see come out of these consultations, the shaking up. That is the challenge that faces all of us and Canadian Parents for French.”

Jim Shea, moderator for the day’s events, thanked Richmond for his comments. Shea described the mandate given to CPF by the Honourable Pierre Pettigrew, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Official Languages, to proceed with consultations at the provincial and national levels and present a report to the Minister on the findings. Shea then introduced the regional presentations by CPF Executive Directors and Board members from 12 provinces and territories which provided a “snapshot of the pan-Canadian situation.”

Provincial/Territorial Recommendations

Alberta

Laurie Hodge, Executive Director of CPF-Alberta noted that two consultations took place in Alberta with school jurisdictions, trustees, professional development consortium members, and CPF branch and chapter representatives. Teaching capacity (numbers) and competency (quality) were seen as most important elements and a lack thereof as the most significant deterrent to learning. She noted that Alberta would be instituting mandatory second language learning in the 2006/2007 school year. Within this initiative are seven language choices of which one is French. French language learning (FSL) is not without controversy in Alberta. Without strong, supportive policies and well-informed leadership from all levels of government, the intent of the Action Plan will not be realized, nor will the effects be sustainable over the long term. Future job opportunities are not enough motivations for young people to stay in FSL programs in Alberta.

Participants at the consultations made a number of recommendations:

- Increase teacher capacity—train more FSL teachers.
- Establish teacher competencies.
- Make FSL inclusive—it must address the needs of special needs children, including gifted children.
- Mandate exchanges with Quebec, which are seen as highly effective. One consultation participant observed that it costs less to fly to London, England from Edmonton, than it does to fly to Montreal.
- Support efforts to reach pan-Canadian goals for bilingual levels. Much more effort in terms of resources and planning is required, she noted, to reach the national goals.

Northwest Territories

Mary Vane, Interim Acting Branch Executive, said that with half the overall population of the Northwest Territories coming from First Nations, there is some competition for second language training resources between First Nations language programs and French programs within the education system. There are often not enough resources to offer both. The remote location and distance to travel to other locations is a consideration for residents, more so than in many other provinces.

Specific recommendations are as follows:

- Create and provide materials for FSL teachers (participants have asked CPF to spearhead this).
- Create a national database of organizations and resources available.

Ontario

To the question of marketing French training in Ontario, participants in the provincial consultations suggested teaching through popular culture using singers, rappers, or graffiti artists, said Ted Karp, Executive Director of CPF-Ontario. One of the youngest participants said, "Let it be cool." Others stressed the need for language training opportunities for students and a higher profile for FSL teachers. What major program and policy changes would improve French language training across Ontario? Participants agreed the important first step is to get the message out that French is a necessary component of education. An FSL teacher tells her students there is only one country in the world where students can graduate school and succeed in business with only one language—the United States. "We are an enlightened and bilingual country," she said. Officials speaking in Canada of their handicap at the United Nations by being unilingual would be helpful in promoting the importance of learning French as well. "We have dropped a pebble in a quiet pond and it's amazing what effect one little pebble can have."

Participants made a number of recommendations:

- Market FSL education in the popular media viewed by students.
- Make core French subjects available to non-French immersion students.
- Develop a community liaison committee in order to continue the dialogue with all sectors.
- Provide access to learning assistance for French immersion students.
- Fund transportation equitably.

Manitoba

The stakeholders' consultation in Manitoba took place March 24 with representatives from arts, sports, culture, and other sectors present. Catherine Davies, Executive Director of CPF-Manitoba said that notably, there were no representative from the business sector. Arts representatives from various museums and galleries spoke of the difficulty in focusing on bilingualism when recruiting since a large list of recruits may net only one or two who meet all the other required criteria and are bilingual.

Participants made a number of specific recommendations:

- Provide more crossover points for students to enter into middle and late immersion, after taking core French for some years.
- Use career and guidance counsellors as motivators to encourage retention in immersion programs.
- Promote bilingualism in the media.
- Provide funds to ensure adequately trained professors, who in turn can teach teachers to teach FSL.
- Establish a government program that would forgive student loans for graduating students willing to take FSL teaching positions in rural areas, as is done for medical students.
- Determine the benefits of mandatory language training.

- Involve industry and the business sector in the promotion of bilingualism.

Quebec

Antonia Papadakou from the CPF National Office said that stakeholders at the Quebec consultation included students from both English and French education systems. Quebec is unique among Canadian provinces and territories, in that French is the first language for the majority of residents. It was noted, however, that there are areas where it is possible for students to spend the day studying French, only to have no opportunity to use it outside the classroom. Participants pointed out that marketing the benefits of bilingualism in Quebec to the English-speaking minority is unnecessary: English-speaking Quebecers recognize the need to learn French as a second language. However, some parents are concerned that learning a second language may have a negative impact on first language learning and are therefore reluctant to enrol their children in early immersion programs. For children of some minority groups and many new Canadians, learning French represents learning a third language.

Papadakou noted that Quebec offers core French from kindergarten through Grade 11 and the student must pass French in order to graduate.

Participants made a number of recommendations:

- Establish FSL programs and options at daycare centres.
- Encourage children to participate in extra-curricular activities in French.
- Provide more opportunities to practice and use French outside the classroom.
- Publicize exchange opportunities.
- Promote intensive French and innovative core French programs.
- Establish support networks for FSL teachers and ensure they have adequate resources.
- Expand existing programs at Quebec universities.
- Open the quotas for FSL teacher-training positions at universities.

Saskatchewan

Funding is an issue for Saskatchewan, noted Christiane Guérette, Executive Director of CPF-Saskatchewan. The provincial government has notified CPF that it will not be able to match federal funding dollars. The francophone population in Saskatchewan it is largely unknown outside the province and many people assume there is no francophone population in Saskatchewan. The First Nations communities also strive for learning programs in their own languages and this competes with FSL for funding. "We are now facing challenges," said Guérette, and these include a small and geographically diverse population.

Participants at the Saskatchewan consultation made a number of recommendations:

- Adjust funding from the current per-pupil basis in order to accommodate small rural populations.

- Develop distance education as an alternative to transporting students.
- Develop late immersion options.
- Provide training for FSL teachers.
- Reinstate the French education program at the University of Saskatchewan, the province's largest university.
- Encourage francophone and FSL schools and communities to collaborate on events in order to share costs and increase cultural awareness.
- Make second-language proficiency a requirement to enter post-secondary institutions.
- Make a second language a requirement to graduate from universities.
- Establish a national campaign to promote FSL education, and a local campaign to make it relevant.
- Establish nationally-recognized language assessment tools.
- Publicize francophone issues on CBC.

An action group has been created to prioritize these strategies.

Newfoundland and Labrador

Larry Vaters, Executive Director of CPF-Newfoundland & Labrador said CPF is encouraged by recent enrolment trends in the province. Intensive core French is quickly emerging as an excellent option to improve FSL proficiency. FSL still faces challenges within the province. FSL must be made "effective and real" as the goal is not to just teach French but to increase French visibility. "We need to look at learning French, not as an end result, but as a vehicle for learning something else," reported Vaters. School boards need to do a better job of tracking students and encourage them to consider teaching French as a career option. Several groups recommended changing FSL and ESL (English as a Second Language) to FLO and ALO for Français Lange Officiel and Anglais Lange Officiel to emphasise that Canada is not a country of second languages but of official languages. As well, many people in the FSL community are suggesting that the issue of teaching units of FSL optional programs will be the largest obstacle to improving access to French immersion programs and achieving the 50% bilingualism goal by 2013. There is a growing opinion in Newfoundland and Labrador that the federal government should start funding teaching units in order to achieve its target.

Participants had a number of suggestions to address these issues:

- Make the time allocation for core French programs consistent from one school to another, to ensure that all students have equal opportunity to learn FSL.
- Consider establishing a federal education system in areas that relate to bilingualism.
- Cap class sizes. Class sizes approaching 40 were noted by one FSL teacher as a "recipe for failure."
- Use distance learning to reach students in remote areas.
- Use French culture to encourage FSL learning.

New Brunswick

As the only officially bilingual province in Canada, New Brunswick receives special benefits and faces special challenges, said Jane Keith, Executive Director, CPF-New Brunswick. Some of the population embrace the bilingualism aspect, while others find it threatening to English language and culture. Some schools and boards decline to promote French immersion programs for fear of being seen as promoting French language training over English learning. No statistics are available for the spending of federal second language learning funds by the school boards. The lack of resources in New Brunswick "is astounding considering it is a bilingual province," said Keith. Some math texts have to be shared among three or four classes, which prevent the students from taking the texts home to do homework. Students not doing well in immersion are sent "back" to the English program and this can cause resentment by the teachers and parents in the English programs. Children need to learn that bilingualism has a fundamental value within the province of New Brunswick.

A number of suggestions flowed from the consultation:

- Establish the full-time position of French language program supervisor to ensure the quality and quantity requirements are met. Substitute teachers are often not qualified to teach FSL classes. The shortage of FSL teachers in New Brunswick has led to a deterioration of quality and quantity of teaching available.
- Involve community leaders to lend a comfort level to parents and raise awareness. Parents in New Brunswick need to be encouraged to support core French and immersion programs in schools. Some of them view immersion programs as taking away resources from the English language programs.
- Establish that the level of French proficiency required by schools is relevant to business needs.
- Encourage French businesses to offer co-op placements to immersion students would allow the students to see the value of their language training and may assist in keeping students in the program through graduation.
- Promote recreational and special interest courses in French. They may be more relevant and enjoyable to the students.

Prince Edward Island

Although only a small group attended the PEI consultation, it included the president of the provincial teachers federation, the Director of Public Education, university professors, teachers, French consultants, parents, and students, noted Gail Lecky, Executive Director of CPF-PEI. The first point made was the need for students to value French language learning. Whatever course they are in "they have to be motivated," said Lecky. The teachers have to be dynamic and motivated. Good teachers who have the language skill and pedagogy, as well as a love for the French language transfer that to students. Educators have to acknowledge that language acquisition is necessary to a well-rounded education, and perhaps including conversational French courses and training for those who may not become fully bilingual.

A number of specific recommendations were made:

- Make second-language credits necessary for high school graduation and for entrance to university.
- Provide conversational French courses for those who want to have the ability to converse in French.
- Use a well-known community persona to champion bilingualism.
- Promote the use of bilingual signs, advertisements, announcements, etc.
- Have businesses acknowledge and reward bilingualism in their employees.
- Promote student co-op placements.
- Provide more bilingual television programming and events. Do not segregate the languages.

Nova Scotia

The discussions at the consultation were productive said Rhonda Dean, Executive Director, CPF-Nova Scotia. Participants indicated that they were willing to continue the discussions and develop their ideas further.

Suggestions included the following:

- Promote FSL programs by creating policies for more consistent and visible marketing campaigns that target parents earlier with a common message, implement teacher recruitment campaigns, and celebrate success—of the programs, the students, and the teachers—in the communities.
- Develop support systems by establishing mentorship programs to retain new teachers, and by creating resources for peers, parents, and teachers. Funding and commitment to these programs was viewed as essential to their success.
- Expand FSL programs by offering more choices, improving strategic planning, increasing participation in exchange and educational programs, and by ensuring more flexibility among educational institutions.
- Create a database of bilingual jobs, employers seeking bilingual individuals, and businesses that offer services in both official languages. This will help both the business and education communities and will serve to establish a higher profile for FSL education.
- Develop more partnerships, bilingual internships, and co-op placements to encourage continued French studies.

Yukon

A role model for the rest of the country, the Yukon has a mandatory core French program from Grade 1 through high school graduation, said Sharon Taylor, Vice President of CPF-BC & Yukon. The territorial government supports bilingual education. Professional marketing techniques have increased immersion enrolment at the kindergarten level for one program by

30%—an entire additional class. Language education is supported by the public and business sectors that recognize the benefits of bilingualism, partly in the tourism sector by offering services in both official languages. These and other programs hope to ensure an even higher level of bilingualism in the future.

British Columbia

Melanie Tighe-Lovsin, President, CFP-BC and Yukon observed that this year, BC set its fourth all-time province-wide enrolment record. Late French immersion programs have been added in some communities. CPF has set membership records in BC with over 47 chapters across the province. This year the first-ever intensive core French program will be launched in Surrey. Two weeks ago, federal and provincial governments announced three years of funding for a new university-level program. Recommendations from the consultation focused on the need to ensure that new funding for the Action Plan goes directly to classrooms to assist the efforts of teachers and students. Doubling the number of bilingual graduates will be a challenge to a school system facing declining enrolment due to a declining birth rate. However, CPF-BC & Yukon, endorsed by 27 school districts, has a specific plan to meet those targets. Tighe-Lovsin remarked on Mountain Equipment Co-op's own bilingual focus that has seen it become a fully bilingual company, including developing French terminology for its product line. The increase of bilingual graduates, Tighe-Lovsin commented, will ensure the linguistic duality of Canada endures through the next years.

Participants made one major recommendation: to ensure that new funding for the Action Plan goes directly to the classrooms to benefit teachers and students.

Panel A: The Public School System

Moderator: James Shea, Executive Director, CPF

Carolyn King, President of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT)

Carolyn King thanked CPF for the opportunity to share her voice and that of CASLT and expressed appreciation to Canadian Heritage for its support, which enables the continuation of this work.

She pointed out that CASLT is very involved in communicating, promoting, and supporting second-language acquisition, and in supporting the development of teachers in providing second-language education.

Significant expertise and assistance is provided through professional development workshops and CASLT's Web site. The following are examples of some of the work that CASLT is engaged in: the Intensive Core French Examination Committee, the Proficiency Enhancement Program, student recognition through the use of a graduation certificate, and the development of a high school language portfolio. Ongoing activities include one-day workshops in different communities, such as CASLT Chez-Vous. King pointed out that CASLT has a very active FSL presence in every province and territory, and a corresponding ESL presence in Quebec. She stressed that CASLT has a committed interest in communication issues and is involved in issues related to the status of working environments for teachers of second-language education.

King affirmed that CASLT is looking forward to the future, providing assistance and disseminating research through online technology. For example, identifying best practices, re-orienting the types of courses offered, creating templates of courses, tracking student needs, and hosting student focus groups are all activities that CASLT is actively engaged in. Working collaboratively with partner organizations and provincial second-language associations, CASLT is committed to improving learning situations for FSL, and to helping teachers.

In closing, King invited participants to have a look at CASLT's award-winning Web site as it offers many excellent connections for teachers. The Web site is at www.caslt.org. She expressed her appreciation for being invited to be an enthusiastic part of the CPF consultations.

René-Étienne Bellavance, Board Member, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers

René-Étienne Bellavance explained that the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers/Association Canadienne des professeurs d'immersion (CAIT/ACPI) is an organization focused on helping teachers through the provision of resources for their classrooms. CAIT/ACPI has a Board of Directors of ten individuals, all volunteers. The organization approached the

Department of Canadian Heritage for funding for an executive director. Last fall, CAIT/ACPI developed its new three-year strategic plan. This plan will be available on the Web site in a few weeks.

Bellavance pointed out that CAIT's Web site is one of its key tools for providing information and support to teachers (<http://acpi.scedu.umontreal.ca/>). In addition, CAIT/ACPI hosts an annual conference that is attended by approximately 1000 people from various educational institutions. This year, the conference is being held in Montreal on November 19–20. CAIT/ACPI's Summer Institute activities will take place in Charlottetown in July 2004. Information on both of these events is available on the Web site.

CAIT/ACPI publishes research articles through its Journal de l'IMMERSION Journal. Bellavance also pointed out that, in partnership with the Consortium of Universities, criteria was developed to determine levels of linguistic and cultural proficiency for post-secondary teachers. CAIT/ACPI has also developed an award in association with the Consortium. It is a national award to be bestowed on a student in a faculty of education program who presents the best lesson in FSL. As well, CAIT/ACPI is preparing a multi-media presentation to be used by universities.

In closing, Bellavance expressed his enthusiasm and interest, on behalf of CAIT/ACPI, in contributing to achieving the goal of doubling the number of high school graduates who are functionally bilingual by the year 2013. CAIT/ACPI supports the CPF consultation and the media blitz. Bellavance said he would welcome the opportunity to be a part of the development of the marketing plan.

Mary Reeves, Canadian Parents for French, National Board of Directors

Mary Reeves described some of the information she discovered while researching the history of bilingualism in Saskatchewan. At one point, the popularity of French immersion was such that 30% of students were participating. Recently, however, enrolment has dropped to between 13 and 15%.

Reeves identified a number of issues that have contributed to the reduction in enrolment. She pointed out that political events in Quebec significantly influenced support for French immersion programs. Changing economic realities, and fewer committed senior administrators were also factors. In addition, Reeves said that emerging multiple student needs in the kindergarten to Grade 8 levels have contributed to competition for resources. Special needs students, child poverty, new course diversity, and the situation of trades and technology people heading into retirement have all been factors that have taken energy from senior administrators, and have contributed to a significant increase in their workload.

On the positive side, Reeves pointed out that there have been tremendous improvements in the curriculum. A much better program, of higher quality, is evident. There are better-trained new teachers, with improved methodologies. They are seeing the positive results academically, and graduates are very positive about their experience. Reeves acknowledged that the availability of

wonderful online resources would make a difference for teachers, parents, and students.

Reeves stressed the need for committed senior level administrators in school divisions, and committed school administrators. In the past, there were resources for professional development opportunities so that administrators would be able to attend CAIT and CASLT conferences. Such resources are no longer available.

Reeves recommended that resources be allocated to provide opportunities for senior administrators and school board members to learn about the benefits of second language acquisition. She stressed that the Canadian Ministers of Education need to show leadership in this area, to ensure that it becomes a priority, much as poverty issues became a priority. Further, she recommended that school boards give incentives to teachers (incentives such as building professional learning communities), and offer bonuses for innovative projects. She pointed out that teachers are working very hard with fewer resources, and they need to be recognized and celebrated for their accomplishments.

In closing, Reeves spoke about the importance of collaborative efforts and partnerships. She encouraged focus on ownership for the process at the bottom, with parents, teachers, and students. She stressed that the success of this national goal requires ownership at both the bottom *and* the top.

Bruce Waldie, Prairie Regional Director, Canadian Association of School Administrators

Bruce Waldie prefaced his remarks by explaining that, as the Canadian Association of School Administrators does not currently have an official position on the topic, his remarks would represent his personal opinions only. He organized his remarks around the six questions from the CPF Provincial and Territorial French Second-Language Education Stakeholder Consultations.

In order to market bilingual education to students at all levels and to making it a genuine experience, Waldie stated that the most important factor is to ensure the quality of the course. Particularly in high school, the success of courses is dependant on the teachers, and what is happening in the school. He felt that it was also important to stress the oral component of French language acquisition.

Regarding the prospects for attracting and training the next generation of competent and enthusiastic FSL instructors, Waldie said that if the programs that are being offered are valued, and made highly visible, and if classrooms and adequate resources are provided to teachers, then the chances are good that instructors will be retained. He stressed that success can be achieved if there is a strong belief in the value of French language acquisition. Senior administrators, in particular, have to believe in the value of acquiring French as a second language.

Waldie noted the importance of de-politicizing the learning of French. He pointed out that in the west, opponents of French tend to have a political agenda. He stressed the need to reorder that

thinking, to focus on the value of language acquisition to the individual student. He suggested focusing on the benefits related to cognitive acquisition, the beauty of the language, and the economic benefits. He stated that Canada's vision needs to become a world vision, recognizing that French is spoken in many countries. Waldie stated that it is both a moral responsibility and good for business to equip the nation with the capacity to work in both languages.

Regarding program and policy changes, Waldie suggested that there be a focus on the need for basic French. He stressed the importance of revising the program in order to make changes to the voices of opposition. Regarding collaboration between business and education, Waldie suggested that business could help by publicly recognizing the positive benefits of French language acquisition, and by providing students with opportunities for work experiences in French.

In answer to the last question about scope for ongoing collaboration among the arts, culture, and sport sectors and the FSL education community, Waldie emphatically agreed that there were opportunities. He pointed out that language *is* culture, that it is more than learning to speak words. Learning a language is about learning to understand another culture and a different worldview, and those things can be expressed through poetry, painting, and music. Learning French through the arts opens the mind of the learner to the soul of the language.

Joseph Dicks, Professor and Associate Dean in the Faculty of Education, University of New Brunswick

Joseph Dicks began his presentation by expressing his appreciation to CPF. Dicks pointed out that there are vital links between the public school perspective and the post-secondary perspective, and that it is important to bridge them. He explained that he was going to focus on three points in the national report.

The first point that Dicks made related to the benefits of a bilingual education. His research shows that the number one reason that parents put their children into bilingual programs is to increase their chances of getting a job. He pointed out that it is important to have a wider scope and to talk about the other advantages as well.

The second point Dicks addressed related to the issue of attracting and training FSL instructors. He pointed out that too few second language teachers are graduating from faculties of education. For example, UNB receives many applicants, but a significant number of them simply do not meet the linguistic competency requirements. Their French second language abilities are still not at the level required to teach the language. He recommended that students be provided with realistic information about the level of competency requirements, and that bursaries be provided to support interested students with opportunities for learning exchanges with other countries and other learning opportunities.

Dicks' third and final point dealt with program and policy issues. Two issues, immersion in secondary schools and alternative programs, are important. He said that it was essential to do something to revitalize French at the secondary level. For example, a course has been introduced

in the Yukon that blends French language acquisition with culture and music. Students need a boost to keep their interest once they get to secondary school. Dicks said there is enormous potential for alternative programming. Dicks pointed out that the intensive French programs are showing real promise. He was impressed with the language development that has occurred in a short time.

Dicks concluded his presentation by affirming that promoting a bilingual education, attracting teachers, and revitalizing the programs will result in excellent programming in the schools.

Doug Hart, Institutional Researcher, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Doug Hart noted that he would provide reflections on the vision document from a research perspective. He pointed out that several strategies that require facts are areas of research that are not particularly well funded. As well, there is a broad range of issues identified in the document, and it will be important to prioritize them.

Issues that have plenty of literature and expertise are teacher training and student learning. Topics such as curriculum enrichment in remote communities, how to retain teachers, teacher burnout, and mentor programs are all issues on university agendas. Other issues under discussion and debate include testing and outcomes, and how to marry outcomes and efficiency with love of language.

Hart noted that some things in the document would be more difficult to follow up, such as FSL and the economy, motivation of students, and economic needs, since not a lot is known about those areas.

In 2001, for the first time, the long-form census included a question about the language of work. Although information from the census will enable further discussion about language and work, more in-depth knowledge is needed about what the French language needs and competencies are of employers and businesses. He suggested that much could be learned from the experience of the literacy sector in its effort to gain support from the business community for literacy issues and cautioned that business people cannot be told what to do. The literacy people have learned how to talk so business will listen, and how to build ties that can be quite enduring.

In closing, Hart said that the notion of how to motivate people is very blurry. Both de-politicizing *and* social responsibility have been talked about. He asked if FSL instruction could be extracted from the national context and efforts could be focused pragmatically on participants in the program. He suggested the need to be more coherent about exactly whom the audience is and whether pushing down ownership to schools and individual students as a local and micro approach would be the focus. Consideration needs to be given as to whether a focus on large programs may be misdirected or even damaging.

Luncheon Speaker

The Honourable Mauril Bélanger, P.C., M.P., Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Mauril Bélanger was introduced as a leader in bilingualism and a “champion of linguistic duality.” He told participants that the first time he heard of CPF was when he was working for the Honourable Jean-Luc Pépin, a supporter of the organization. Knowledge of both official languages, Bélanger said, enables us to enjoy more fully the cultural richness our country has to offer.

In a time of “instant communication and disappearing borders,” the ability of our citizens to communicate in more than one language provides a “tremendous economic advantage” to the individual and the country as a whole. Canada is developing a pluralistic society with pluralism of language, of culture, of interests. “It is not an easy way” to create a country but “somehow we’re managing to pull it all together” without anyone losing his or her heritage or forgetting his or her origins. He noted that this is one of the few countries in the world where the people themselves feel there is an added value to diversity, noting that “it’s a phenomenon around the world.”

In its Action Plan for Official Languages, the federal government has set an ambitious goal: to double by 2013 the number of young Canadians with knowledge of their second official language. In bringing together representatives of governments and school boards, national educational and professional associations, and researchers, this National Forum provides an important step in the momentum toward the achievement of the Action Plan. All the recommendations developed in cross-country consultations in the past weeks are brought together here.

Bélanger said that the national strategies developed here today will be important to the Department of Canadian Heritage in its key role in implementing the education-related aspects of the Action Plan. In negotiating agreements on education with the provinces and territories, the government will be looking to involve the widest range of partners possible to maximize the funds available for second language education. Bélanger said the goals of the Action Plan should be articulated to improve French and English core programs, support better recruitment and training of teachers, promote post-secondary opportunities, and foster research in second language education.

He offered thanks, on behalf of the Government of Canada, to CPF for its role in organizing these consultations and its continued work in “fostering and promoting the learning of French across the country.” Saying he looks forward to seeing the recommendations that result from the discussions here today, Bélanger opened the floor to questions.

Questions and Comments

A participant from Western Canada, who is part of a francophone family in Winnipeg, asked why Radio Canada focuses mostly on Quebec events and activities, which sends the message to francophone communities in other provinces that they are invisible—that they do not exist. As a father, he sees his family watching English television because the French stations are “not as relevant” to a Manitoba family.

Bélanger responded that this is not a new issue. Radio Canada is a separate entity and the government may not, and should not, dictate what its content should be. He noted that the CRTC obliges the station to provide programming in the official language (French). There are other French language stations in Ontario and Manitoba. The management at Radio Canada is now “well aware of the problem” and “hopefully some solutions will follow.”

Another participant asked about the educational jurisdictions at the local school board level and provincial level. The participant wondered how to ensure that the message about increasing the number of bilingual graduates is being heard at all levels, from the province or territory to the individual families.

From a federal perspective, Bélanger spoke of the jurisdictional issues saying that, without treading on provincial boundaries, the federal government is instituting organizations that will then put pressure on the provincial entities. The post-secondary jurisdiction is shared between the provincial and federal governments, although the majority of funding for post-secondary institutions “comes from the Canadian taxpayer through the government of Canada.” In terms of working around the various jurisdictional issues, he said, “you get a lot more done with honey than with vinegar.” If you can encourage the building of networks, “not entice but encourage it,” then “if we can weave this fabric and remove some of this isolation, we’ll all be better off for it,” said Bélanger. “Don’t get discouraged, I think there’s more hope now than there has ever been.” The younger generation has acknowledged that this is the way to go. “In 25 years this may not be an issue any more,” he concluded.

Bélanger thanked the group for “what you are doing for the country.” CPF is “one of these groups that reflects what I love about my country.”

In thanking Bélanger, Trudy Comeau invited Bélanger to attend the Congrès Mondiale in Nova Scotia this coming summer.

Panel B: Post-Secondary Perspective.

Kenneth McRoberts, Principal, Glendon College, York University

Kenneth McRoberts commented that although much has been completed, there are clearly some challenges to what has been accomplished. He said he was surprised to hear in the morning session of the need to promote and defend immersion programs at the same time that the federal government is making bilingualism a requirement and calling for a doubling in the number of bilingual graduates.

There are quantitative and qualitative challenges to doubling the number of bilingual graduates at a time when immersion enrolment is dropping or levelling off, and to making bilingualism relevant and meaningful. These, he said, are not distinct but are in reality intertwined. "Post-secondary institutions are critical to taking bilingualism to this next level and making it a cultural experience," McRoberts said, noting that his comments are restricted to universities and that others would later speak about the situation at colleges. The bilingual requirement for university entry and graduation is beneficial and McRoberts said he would like to see it reinstated across Canada. This could create issues with enrolment however, and may not be a realistic expectation given the current university environment.

The possibility of accessing an immersion opportunity at the university level by being among students who are francophone may present its own challenges and opportunities. McRoberts told of exchange programs that exist between some universities, York among them. He suggested that examining why bilingualism is important for certain careers may lead to fully bilingual educational programs. Journalism, for example, is offered in English or French, but not in a bilingual format.

Looking at the recommendations, and in particular the emphasis on exchange programs, made him "wonder how much can be achieved through marketing." The stereotype is that the students in bilingual programs are achievers who are preparing themselves for life. He suggested that using French as a language of study and being immersed in the culture and the milieu of French studies may reinforce motivation for students at the elementary and secondary levels and may improve the retention levels for such programs at the post-secondary level as well.

Richard Julien, Associate Professor, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, and CPF National Board Member

Richard Julien began by saying that York University's Glendon College provides an example that all universities can follow. He spoke briefly of his formative years in Nova Scotia and his first introduction to the immersion style of learning French as a second language.

In terms of bilingualism as a benefit in business, he noted that the lure of the 160-million-strong

francophone population worldwide who need products, never fails to motivate those looking at the marketing perspective.

Beginning in the 1990s, the French language program at the University of Saskatchewan “haemorrhaged” until it was finally “shipped off to another institution,” said Julien. At the largest university in a province that offers immersion and core French programs, training for teaching French as a second language “does not exist.” All teacher training is provided in English with the explanation that “we are discussing complex concepts.” Julien said the president of the University of Saskatchewan promised at a conference to install a committee to address the issue, but that committee does not exist yet. He commented that the previous day’s newspapers had said, “We will be in the red if we don’t cut a number of other programs.”

Julien related the story of a university student who wanted to do his teaching internship at an immersion school but could not because there was no French supervisor. Julien’s offer to act as the supervisor for the student drew attention to the confusion about what is allowed, and raised jurisdictional questions that ended in the student being denied his request.

The system could be improved, he said, if it was generously lubricated with Federal funding. Collaboration is necessary with all stakeholders, and working with Aboriginal groups on programs to enable them to learn their own languages is needed as well. With all these steps, Julien emphasised, “federal government funding is key since the university is so preoccupied with avoiding red ink.”

Suzanne Drouin, Sectoral Liaison Unit, Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC)

Suzanne Drouin emphasised the importance of not forgetting the college system amid the frequent references to universities, “even if that means putting pressure on the system” to address needs.

Citing the examples of Algonquin College and La Cité Collégiale in Ottawa, she spoke about the importance of the work done by the community to lobby the college and the creation of the new system to address bilingualism needs. Community colleges, by definition, “are there to serve the needs of the community” and it is up to the community to communicate to the college system what its specific needs are and to push for them to be met. As a member of the ACCC in the Sectoral Liaison Unit, Drouin meets with members of the arts and culture sectors (among others) to learn what the college system can do to address their needs. Alternatively, she noted, the internal community within colleges involves students, programming, and faculty but the move to institute new programs starts with increased student numbers.

Partnerships, she also noted, are “the key to making things happen.” At the University College of Cape Breton (UCCB), where she was the Executive Vice President, connections with other colleges were key to getting new programs in place. UCCB staff worked with the University of New Brunswick at Bathurst to offer an exchange program that would allow students, after

completing a two-year college program, to enter the degree program at UNB. “We can’t sit back and say ‘give us more money and the students will come’ because that’s not true,” she said. There need to be some innovative and interesting new ways to attract students to post-secondary institutions. Numerous inter-institutional agreements among colleges and between colleges and universities show the transferability of credits from one post-secondary institution to another. Students want this transferability and it provides greater perceived value to the educational institution.

She also suggested surveys and databases of programs across the country as another way to provide an important source of information.

Miles Turnbull, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI)

Miles Turnbull directs a new pre-service program in French second language teaching with special focus on teaching French immersion.

He expressed concern about the use of census data in tracking the success of bilingualism programs. He said that it is not certain that a self-assessed “working knowledge” of both official languages will provide accurate data on the success of bilingual training.

While he acknowledged that promotion can be effective, he recommended studying the promotion of other programs of the federal government to determine the actual effectiveness of such promotional efforts before a large amount of money is spent on such activities.

Turnbull said he will recommend regional and national task forces to examine “what can be done at the post-secondary” level and said he is saddened to hear leaders in the field speak of hoping for changes to post-secondary entrance requirements to include bilingualism as a “lost cause.”

Post-secondary institutions have an impact on the opinions of the public. If requirements for entry include second language ability, that would send a strong message to the country, more so than government or secondary schools instituting mandatory bilingual programs. Studies are needed to determine which is the more realistic approach and which is more effective. Some university and colleges have instituted such entrance and exit requirements. He said, “Let’s study how they’ve addressed this issue and how it has worked out for them.”

“Seems to me we need the student voice again here,” he said, adding that previous programs that were successful in some respect were not always viable in terms of enrolment. Immersion graduates, Turnbull among them, often enter post-secondary institutions knowing they are not truly bilingual and want to study French courses. Instead, they are offered more French grammar training—the same content they have been offered since elementary school—and many become bored.

More training is needed to allow immersion and core French graduates to pursue training to be

French language teachers. There are not enough candidates “from a linguistic proficiency point of view.” Support is needed before they are out doing their practice teaching and “a thousand dollars here and there just doesn’t cut it.” There is a need to clearly define what is needed to be a qualified immersion teacher or a qualified core French teacher. “We need to do this on a national level, to establish national requirements,” he said. We will write about it, and others will buy in later. Teacher educators need to be involved in terms of course development and professional development activities.

Questions and Comments

Questions were invited for both the morning and afternoon panels. A participant asked about French immersion programs at the elementary and secondary levels. Currently, she said, it seems immersion is offered to students in the advanced (i.e., university bound) stream, but what about offering immersion to students in the general and other streams?

A member from the morning panel addressed this question and said the issue often hits upon the challenges some general stream students experience with basic English proficiency—it brings up the notion that introducing a second language may exacerbate that situation. Another morning panellist spoke of the use of creativity in placing trades and fine arts co-op students to provide for this type of immersion. Another said that this should be worth consideration and suggested going to the students to find what is needed and wanted.

Another participant spoke of the tendency toward discouraging general arts and trades students from taking French because without it they will enjoy greater flexibility in their course selections. She said that that perhaps “we are trying to do too much at once.”

Certainly, another participant said, immersion is important and will continue to be important, but the majority of students are in core French, not immersion. Improving core French programs may prepare students for late immersion and provide a good basis in French language and culture. Motivating programs are needed—programs that are interesting for the students and meet their needs. In addition, qualified teachers are needed, “not just someone who speaks French” in the classroom.

The moderator, Jim Shea, thanked all panel members on behalf of CPF and presented each one with a framed poster from the “I’m staying in French” campaign.

The National Perspective

James Shea presented a summary of the recommendations from the reports of the National *Visions and Challenges* Symposium, and the CPF Provincial/Territorial FSL Stakeholder Consultation. A consistent theme throughout the two reports was the need to promote the social, cultural, and professional benefits of bilingualism. In order to do that effectively, coordination of

the efforts of FSL education stakeholders, the business community, and the arts, culture, and sports communities will be required. A community-based campaign to promote, enhance, and support FSL education is a necessary prerequisite to achieving the goals of the federal Action Plan.

Shea outlined many of the recommended actions that would comprise the necessary concerted community effort. Suggested ways of targeting students were promoting the practical career benefits of bilingualism via job fairs, hosting school visits from bilingual professionals, promoting opportunities for bilingual career development, and engaging business sponsorship of bilingual activities and programmes. Other means of engaging students for FSL included targeting students by promoting extracurricular French arts, sports and cultural experiences; bringing bilingual arts and sports role models into schools; organizing collaborative school and community French cultural activities; and, promoting bilingual and French TV and radio programming.

Other aspects of the concerted community effort include targeting parents by providing reliable, factual information about student achievement in FSL education programmes; providing meaningful cultural exchanges; enhancing FSL education in rural and remote communities through distance technology; encouraging business, cultural, and political leaders to share bilingual success stories; and recruiting champions of linguistic duality.

Shea pointed out that stakeholders also agreed that increased enrolment and retention in FSL programmes are dependent upon enhancing FSL education. A number of strategies were identified to achieve that goal:

- Increase accessibility by offering a greater number and wider variety of entry points to quality FSL programmes at the elementary and secondary levels.
- Expand FSL options at the secondary level.
- Mandate core French education and exploring more intensive core French programming options.
- Introduce FSL admission and/or exit requirements in post-secondary institutions.
- Increase the number and variety of opportunities to continue studies at the post-secondary level, including career-oriented community college and trades programmes.
- Institute high school French language competency standards that could be used for post-secondary education and employment applications.

Shea indicated that attracting, training, and retaining quality FSL teachers were pressing issues identified in all provinces and territories. Strategies for addressing those needs include the following:

- Target potential FSL teachers when they are considering career options at the high school and post-secondary levels.
- Encourage enrolment in FSL teacher education programmes by offering scholarships and fast-tracking individuals for teaching positions.
- Ensure that FSL teachers have the necessary FSL pedagogical skills, French language competence and knowledge of subject areas by developing national competency standards.
- Retain more FSL teachers by providing professional development and support, increase salaries, and improve working conditions for core French teachers.

Shea concluded his remarks by reaffirming the unanimous commitment of stakeholders to continue the momentum of the consultations through collaborative efforts designed to implement the recommendations. FSL stakeholders, he said, were united in their support of the government goal of doubling the number of high school graduates who can speak both official languages by 2013.

He expressed his appreciation to all who had worked so hard to advance the goals, and he thanked the panel members who had shared their expertise and thoughtful commentaries.

Guest Speaker: Dyane Adam, Commissioner of Official Languages

Trudy Comeau introduced Dyane Adam to the forum participants. Adam holds a Master's Degree and a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Ottawa. Her career led her to work in Quebec and Ontario, where she combined private practice in clinical psychology with university teaching and research. In 1988, she became Professor and Assistant Vice President, French Programs and Services, at Laurentian University in Sudbury. In 1994, she was appointed Principal of Glendon College of York University in Toronto.

Over the years, Adam's commitment to the community has been significant for both its quality and its scope. Her community activities in the areas of health, education, and the status of women have been motivated by the objectives of social justice and equity, and the recognition of the rights of the French-speaking minority.

In the field of education, Adam has chaired the Advisory Committee on Francophone Affairs of the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, a committee responsible for advising the ministry on all issues concerning post-secondary instruction in French. She has played an important role in various national and international organizations in the field of higher education, such as the Consortium des universités de la Francophonie de l'Ontario, the Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education, and the Conseil d'orientation de l'Université virtuelle francophone of the Agence universitaire de la francophonie. She has also chaired the Regroupement des universités de la francophonie hors Québec and its subcommittee on the development of French-language instructional materials.

Adam has also been involved in major initiatives in the field of health, including the Centre de santé médico-social francophone de Toronto and the Sudbury-Manitoulin Self-Help Group Development Network, of which she was president until 1993. A researcher and lecturer, she has taken part in some 100 colloquiums and conferences at the provincial, national and international levels. Adam is the author of many professional and scientific publications.

In recognition of all her achievements, Adam has been awarded honorary doctorates by McGill University, the University of Ottawa, and the University of Moncton. On August 1, 1999, Dyane Adam became the fifth Commissioner of Official Languages. Adam is the first woman and first francophone from outside Quebec to fill this position.

Dyane Adam began by saying that the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages played roles of both an organizer and a facilitator of the National Stakeholders Symposium. The Office's objective was to support key players, to encourage them to work together to develop common strategies, and to design a road map for all to follow.

Adam said that she had made a promise to herself that as Commissioner she would *make a difference*. She felt that it was important that the government had responded with a commitment to a renewal plan. Organizing the Symposium was a way to move the plan forward and ensure that the objective of renewal would not be forgotten nor left behind.

Adam pointed out that in order to make it successful, all players must be committed to coordinating and harmonizing their efforts. To that end, representatives were invited to participate, to identify concrete actions related to their sectors, and to develop a strong common effort with a view to pooling resources and commitments.

Adam expressed her pleasure at seeing how successful everyone had been in moving the agenda forward so quickly, in a month's time. She reflected on how administration at the federal level could learn a lot from this situation, and congratulated everyone for spreading the spirit of the Symposium to all parts of the country.

Regarding solutions, Adam suggested that students need to be encouraged to value language skills, to develop them further, and to see that employment opportunities can be increased with language skill acquisition. She pointed out that there is a need for a bilingual workforce in federal institutions and said that it is better to hire graduates that have been trained *before* they enter the institutions, not after. She stressed that it was important to see the goals of the Action Plan succeed.

Adam noted that Symposium participants identified four main areas for action:

- Promoting bilingualism
- Establishing structures to encourage and facilitate the acquisition of language skills
- Improving and expanding education programs
- Coordinating the actions of the players involved

Adam expressed her appreciation to CPF for its commitment to sustain the momentum that had been developed. She said that the Office of the Commissioner could be counted on to help. Education stakeholders have a fundamental role to manage education programs and the provision of language training to young people. Ensuring that the most appropriate teaching methods and course materials are used will attract students.

The education network could be used to forge links with various sectors where bilingualism is perceived positively, or where there may be less access to second language education because of geographical remoteness or lack of resources. She said that education was the key sector that understands bilingualism. Now with *French for the Future*, education stakeholders have the tools to obtain support from the business, arts, and culture sectors. The cultural institutions within the federal family are trying to determine how to become more accessible to the school systems and

how to support school systems in pursuing their French language acquisition commitments.

Adam encouraged everyone to continue being a catalyst—to network in his or her own constituency. Mobilization has had a good beginning. The Office of the Commissioner will continue to monitor developments to ensure that the federal government delivers as promised, and will continue to champion for linguistic duality.

Adam thanked and congratulated everyone for his or her part in creating leverage and establishing cooperation amongst sectors. She stressed that while this is a ten-year project, her Office will be closely monitoring the gains made over the next five years.

Closing Remarks

Ian Richmond, President, Canadian Parents for French

Ian Richmond expressed his thanks to Dyane Adam by saying that she was an irresistible force—that she *is* bilingualism in Canada. He said that it was very fitting that Adam was the last speaker because without her, the Symposium would not have taken place.

Richmond brought the day to a close by reiterating the need to shake up the thinking in Canada with regard to bilingualism. He encouraged everyone to carry the torch forward and voiced his gratitude to all the speakers for their excellent presentations and to the National Office staff for their success in putting together such a well-organized event.