



Office of the  
Commissioner of  
Official Languages

Commissariat  
aux langues  
officielles

## DISCUSSION FORUM ON THE PERSPECTIVES OF CANADIANS OF DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS ON LINGUISTIC DUALITY

FINAL REPORT

OCTOBER 26, 2007  
TORONTO

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## Summary

The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (OCOL) organized a **Discussion Forum on the Perspectives of Canadians of Diverse Backgrounds on Linguistic Duality** in Toronto on October 26, 2007. This forum brought together some 30 leaders from various ethnocultural groups, representatives of multicultural associations and organizations, and approximately 10 government representatives working with ethnocultural communities. The purpose of this meeting was to gain a better understanding of the issues and perspectives of Canadians of diverse backgrounds in order to develop a strategy to influence government action on cultural diversity and linguistic duality.

The discussion forum program was put together based on the profile and expectations of participants, who discussed their perspectives during two workshops and plenary sessions, focusing on the following themes:

- *Linguistic duality, cultural diversity and the changing Canadian identity*
- *The day-to-day interaction of linguistic duality and cultural diversity*

The forum was opened by the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Co-Chair of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship and former Governor General of Canada. Her speech presented her *vision of cultural diversity and linguistic duality in Canada*. This was followed by an *historical overview of linguistic duality and cultural diversity in the Canadian context*, presented by Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages. Later in the day, Lorena Ortega, a young student and winner of the French for the Future essay contest, spoke about her efforts to learn both official languages and integrate into both cultures. She talked about the satisfaction and benefits she gained from these efforts.

### THEME 1: LINGUISTIC DUALITY, CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE CHANGING CANADIAN IDENTITY

During the first workshop, participants identified some of the **fundamental values** of Canadian society and talked about how they **complemented linguistic duality**.

Then, they analyzed how these values **challenge Canada's linguistic duality**.

### THEME 2: THE DAY-TO-DAY INTERACTION OF LINGUISTIC DUALITY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY: WHAT ARE THE ISSUES AND WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Participants identified many issues in the day-to-day interaction of linguistic duality and cultural diversity.

- There is strong support for bilingualism in ethnocultural communities, but they must mobilize to take appropriate action and express their vision of linguistic duality. Lack of funding and information are limiting their participation and development. They fear losing their heritage languages.
- For Anglophone or allophone immigrants, there is no economic interest in learning French; moreover, second language immersion programs are not sufficiently supported.
- There is a gap between the demand and the offer of services in French; the concept of Francophone must be redefined to provide better access to the public education system in French to minority language communities.

Participants' proposals regarding the **action to be taken** were addressed to the government, the community and the Office of the Commissioner.

- **For the government**, the proposals focused on identifying and implementing new strategies to promote and solidify linguistic duality through increased cooperation between the government and communities.
- **The communities** need to step up to meet the needs of the populations they serve and defend their interests, and get organized to play a more effective role as a government partner in carrying out linguistic duality programs.
- For the **Office of the Commissioner**, proposals focused on promotion and education efforts to reinforce the right to learn and the right to use both official languages across Canada, and access to services in French.

At the end of this discussion day, participants **analyzed and evaluated forum results** using a form they had been given. An analysis of the answers shows a high level of satisfaction among participants, who also made suggestions to the Office of the Commissioner on how to improve the format and content of proposed future consultations in 2008 on the same topic.

## Background

### FORUM OBJECTIVES

The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (OCOL) held a **Discussion Forum on the Perspectives of Canadians of Diverse Backgrounds on Linguistic Duality** in Toronto on October 26, 2007. The event was an important step in providing the Office of the Commissioner with the information it needs to develop a strategy to help integrate cultural diversity and linguistic duality into federal policy.

The discussion forum was also an opportunity for OCOL to listen to accounts of experiences with linguistic duality in ethnocultural communities and to take note of concerns and interests. OCOL was provided with a series of observations, proposals and recommendations that should contribute to its thought process. Finally, this will also help OCOL to consolidate its network of partners working in the area of linguistic duality and cultural diversity.

### METHODOLOGY

In October 2005, OCOL held discussions with a group of experts, thinkers and opinion leaders to reflect on the benefits of better integrating linguistic duality and cultural diversity into the development equation for Canadian society and the country as a whole. At the end of these discussions, a series of recommendations was made to OCOL, which included consulting ethnocultural community representatives on this issue. This forum is an attempt to respond to this recommendation and is the first step in these consultations.

OCOL sent participants a questionnaire to help them prepare for the forum and to get a better idea of their profile and perspectives on linguistic duality, with a view to planning activities on the discussion day. They were also asked to read an *issue paper* to help them prepare for the questions and respond to statements that would likely be made during the forum.

The *Discussion Forum Program* (Appendix 1) was put together based on these components. Participants were asked to share their perspectives on linguistic duality during workshops, plenary sessions and discussion periods that took place during the course of the day. Participants were also divided into four pre-set working groups to ensure consistency. The discussions covered:

1. Linguistic duality, cultural diversity and the changing Canadian identity;
2. The day-to-day interaction of linguistic duality and cultural diversity.

### PARTICIPANT PROFILE

OCOL invited 30 people to participate in the first discussion forum, including committed leaders from the main ethnocultural groups, and representatives from multicultural associations and organizations that provide integration services to new Canadians. OCOL also invited 10 government officials working in cultural diversity and linguistic duality to come hear these representatives' thoughts and to share their own views.

The participant profile, based on an analysis of the results of a questionnaire completed prior to the forum, was presented by Catherine Scott, Acting Director General, Policy and Communications Branch, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. The analysis revealed that as forum participants were from Ontario, they all spoke English: 54% identified themselves as English-French bilingual, and 46% spoke another language. They were of diverse backgrounds; approximately two-thirds (67%) were born outside Canada in the Caribbean, Central and South America, Asia, the Middle East or Africa.

## PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT

The report is presented in three parts.

- The first part is a summary of the forum's opening speech by the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Co-Chair of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship and former Governor General of Canada. This speech presented her vision of linguistic duality and cultural diversity in Canada; it was followed by an historical overview of linguistic duality and cultural diversity in the Canadian context, presented by Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages.
- The second part reports the results of the workshops that focused on the following two themes:
  - *Theme 1: Linguistic duality, cultural diversity and the changing Canadian identity*
  - *Theme 2: The day-to-day interaction of linguistic duality and cultural diversity*
- The third part of the report presents the analysis and evaluation of forum results using an evaluation form completed by participants. It offers suggestions to the Office of the Commissioner on how to improve the format and content of future consultations on the same topic.

## Part 1: Discussion framework

*“LINGUISTIC DUALITY AND THE REALITY OF CANADA’S DIVERSITY ARE TWO THINGS THAT I THINK ARE ESSENTIAL TO HOW WE SEE OURSELVES AS CANADIANS.”*

*THE RIGHT HONOURABLE ADRIENNE CLARKSON, OCTOBER 26, 2007.*

### 1.1 A VISION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND LINGUISTIC DUALITY

In her speech, the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson presented her vision of cultural diversity and linguistic duality in Canada. Her speech described her arrival in Canada, her parents’ role played in her integration into Canadian society, her path to adopting Canadian values and her interest in protecting these values.

Ms. Clarkson pointed out that her life path has largely followed the historical course of recent changes to Canada’s cultural diversity and linguistic duality. For her, language is a factor in social cohesion and identity-building, and facilitates mutual understanding. Speaking the language of the country is a wise choice that many immigrants make in order to integrate into their host society and to make the most of what that society can offer. Since Canada has two official languages, speaking English and French is the best way to integrate into Canadian culture and share the lives of established Canadians.

By accepting to become Canadian citizens, immigrants endorse the values Canadians have developed over the centuries, without resorting to war or revolution, but with much thought and negotiation. New citizens must know that, once they have adopted this country, they are jointly responsible for any good or bad decisions that are or have been made. Therefore, they should learn about and know the country’s history.

Ms. Clarkson believes that one of Canada’s key values is bilingualism; the choice of two official languages is rooted in the founding of the country itself. Everyone should be able to learn and use both English and French, and established and new citizens should feel comfortable doing so anywhere in Canada.

She encouraged all Canadians to reflect on the country’s history and fundamental values and what each person can do, individually and collectively, to help make Canada a good country in which to live.

### 1.2 AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF LINGUISTIC DUALITY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

In his opening remarks, Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages, commented that Canada’s two previous governor generals are symbols of the country’s cultural diversity and linguistic duality. He then spoke about the major historical milestones in Canada’s move towards linguistic duality and shared his observations and thoughts on the role that cultural diversity can play in building Canada’s future.

#### **(A) Linguistic duality**

1963—Creation of the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* at a historically turbulent time marked by deep misunderstandings between Quebec and the rest of Canada. The work of the Commission helped create a new partnership through which the Government of Canada agreed to operate more effectively in both official languages, and the English-speaking provinces were encouraged to offer more public services in the language of the minority, where numbers warrant. The Commission also recommended that the contribution and heritage of Canada’s other ethnocultural communities should be better recognized.

*“THAT WAS 40 YEARS AGO. TWO QUEBEC REFERENDUMS AND HUNDREDS OF EDITORIALS LATER, A MAJORITY OF CANADIANS IN EACH PROVINCE SUPPORT THE PRINCIPLES OF CANADIAN LINGUISTIC DUALITY, JUST AS THEY RECOGNIZE THE MULTICULTURAL NATURE OF THE COUNTRY THEY BUILT. NATIONAL SUPPORT FOR BILINGUALISM IS NOW AROUND 80% AND A MAJORITY OF CANADIANS CONTINUE TO SUPPORT CURRENT IMMIGRATION LEVELS.”*

1967—Pierre Elliott Trudeau, then Minister of Justice, introduced the two principles that would subsequently guide all government action on language rights: “The right to use and the right to learn” the official language of choice.

1969—Two years after the Royal Commission’s first report, the government enacted the *Official Languages Act*, which established a legal obligation for the government to serve all Canadians in the official language of their choice. The goals of this Act are commendable: minority communities to protect, namely Anglophone communities in Quebec and Francophone communities in the rest of the country, and to ensure that the 4 million unilingual Francophones receive the same quality of service as the 20 million unilingual Anglophones. Official bilingualism is based on the reality of two communities that are fundamentally unilingual. The federal official languages policy, the federal government and the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages act as a bridge between these communities, a bridge that we are still trying to expand.

1982—The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* strengthened equality and language rights. It recognizes the right of official language minority communities to have their children receive primary and secondary school education in the language of the minority.

1988—The *Official Languages Act* was redrafted to bring it in line with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and then amended in November 2005 to strengthen the rights of communities, to legally require the federal government to take positive measures to support and assist the development of official language minority communities and to promote linguistic duality. The last element created a new dynamic in the federal government’s relations with minority communities.

### **(B) Cultural diversity**

Mr. Fraser demonstrated that the Canadian approach to cultural diversity has taken a similar path to that of linguistic duality. In 1971, the Government of Canada developed a multicultural policy within the general framework of linguistic duality. Then in 1988, it adopted the *Multiculturalism Act*. This happened when

the government was amending the *Official Languages Act*, as described above, and working on the *Citizenship Act*. Today, Canada is made up of various cultural identities, but English and French remain its two languages of communication. Bilingualism and multiculturalism policies are based not only on the law, but also on Canadian values.

Mr. Fraser noted that young people today have a broader view of the world and are interested in learning about other cultures and acquiring a command of other languages after having learned the second language. In his view, knowledge of both official languages clearly leads to not only a better understanding of the country, its history and culture, but also greater sensitivity and openness to other cultures. Therefore, bilingualism is not a barrier to multiculturalism; it is a bridge to the world.

Mr. Fraser believes that the cultural diversity of Canadian society is a direct result of the continued growth of the immigrant population in recent decades. It is in part the open-mindedness and spirit of accommodation resulting from the development of Canada’s two main language groups that fostered immigration and diversity in the Canadian population.

“THE FACT THAT THERE ARE TWO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES IN CANADA CONTRIBUTES TO THE EXPRESSION OF DIFFERENCE AND, IN MY OPINION, CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND LINGUISTIC DUALITY ARE TWO GREAT CANADIAN VALUES THAT ARE COMPLEMENTARY.”

Mr. Fraser is convinced that the proportion of immigrants in the Canadian population will increase in the coming years. Canadians are favourable to the growing number of newcomers. Therefore, the government should promote linguistic duality among newcomers, and the Canadian population should change its approach to better reflect cultural diversity.

Mr. Fraser ended his presentation by introducing the themes of the two workshops and their underlying questions. He hoped that some answers would be found by the end of the day.

## Part 2: Workshop results

*“YOU CAN UNDERSTAND A LANGUAGE BY LEARNING IT; BUT TO UNDERSTAND THE CULTURE, YOU MUST LIVE IN THAT LANGUAGE.”*

*THE RIGHT HONOURABLE ADRIENNE CLARKSON, OCTOBER 26, 2007.*

### Workshop 1

*“AS CANADA HAS CHANGED PROFOUNDLY OVER THE LAST 35 YEARS, LINGUISTIC DUALITY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY HAVE BEEN, IN MANY REGARDS, THE REFLECTION AND AGENT OF THE CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED.... THESE CHANGES WILL CONTINUE IN THE COMING DECADE, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE OF THE INCREASE IN INTERNATIONAL IMMIGRATION TO THE COUNTRY.”\* AS SUCH, WE SHOULD WORK TOGETHER TO IDENTIFY THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUES OF TODAY’S CANADIAN SOCIETY.*

*\*OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES, ISSUE PAPER, OCTOBER 2007.*

Linguistic duality, bilingualism	Cultural diversity, multiculturalism
Canada's openness to people from other countries	Inclusion, mutual respect, tolerance, acceptance of others
Democracy, living peacefully, safety	Individual freedoms, such as freedom of expression, religion and movement
Justice for all, applying the rules of law, including equality and equity, gender equality	Access and equity for all, the right to be served in the official language of choice

(2)a Participants believe that these **values are complementary**, in many regards, to linguistic duality, which cannot be separated from cultural diversity; they intersect in many ways.

### 2.1 THEME 1: LINGUISTIC DUALITY, CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE CHANGING CANADIAN IDENTITY

During the first workshop participants were asked to discuss three questions:

- (1) In your opinion, what are the **fundamental values** of today's Canadian society?
- (2)a How do these values **complement Canada's linguistic duality**?
- (2)b How do these values **challenge Canada's linguistic duality**?

#### **Discussion summary:**

(1) **The fundamental values** of today's Canadian society were identified and discussed by the working groups during brainstorming sessions at the beginning of the workshop. The values identified by the majority of, if not all, groups were the following:

- In deciding to adopt **two official languages (English and French)**, Canada opened the door for Canadians to Europe, and then to the world. It offers them the possibility of living in both languages, and from there, accessing two cultures. Bilingualism, with the aim of developing a more harmonious existence between Canada's two founding peoples, is the basis of today's cultural diversity, since it has encouraged Canadians to become interested in different cultures and to communicate with people from different backgrounds. In today's age of increasing globalization, it is a clear comparative advantage for Canadians and for Canada.
- While **bilingualism** was a bridge uniting the two founding peoples, it also **laid the foundation for multiculturalism, and then cultural diversity**. The resulting values of acceptance, tolerance and openness to other cultures became factors that promoted peace across the country. Canada has a role on the international scene as a guardian and promoter of peace. This internationally recognized Canadian value has attracted a large number of immigrants in search of a host country.



- **Linguistic duality fosters multiculturalism**, as learning another language is a personal and educational endeavour that leads to an understanding of another culture. Once we recognize the difficulty of learning another language, we learn to appreciate bilingualism, stop focusing on immigrants' different accents and recognize their serious efforts to integrate into the country. Linguistic duality fosters respect, **acceptance, empathy** and leads to intercultural dialogue.
- **Multiculturalism is a modern value** that is becoming the new standard, particularly for young people who are more accepting of and promote diversity. They have moved beyond just bilingualism, and are now interested in multilingualism, which is an important social and economic advantage for them in a **changing, increasingly globalized world**.
- Bilingualism is an advantage for allophone immigrants and their children. It encourages them to acquire communication tools that **facilitate their integration and their social and economic mobility, in addition to fostering citizen participation**. Official language learning centres and immersion schools foster this kind of learning. Children master foreign languages much faster than their parents; therefore, they are a target group for learning both official languages.

(2)b **As for linguistic duality**, participants believe that Canada's main challenge is to resolve its internal contradictions. The country, whose rich history foretells positive things for the future, is plagued by friction between the two language groups, but also with immigrants. In particular, **its policies must be brought in line with its fundamental values**, and financial resources and means must be made available across the country to carry out language training programs and ensure accessibility to services in French.

- Canada must **learn from its mistakes**. Some groups were unable to maintain their languages and customs, such as the First Nations. The challenge is to facilitate and negotiate their integration into Canadian society, where the values of mutual understanding, inclusion and acceptance of others, equal opportunity and equity are fundamental.
- **Resistance to change** is another challenge. We resist what newcomers and young people bring us, under the false pretense that we are protecting Canadian values. In fact, these values include understanding, openness to diversity, accommodation and integration of newcomers, freedom of speech and religion, etc.
- There is a **disparity between the aspirations and the reality**. There is talk of facilitating access to the other official language both in terms of learning and use. Yet that is the case in large areas of Canada, particularly as concerns French. There are many barriers to learning a second language for children. There is also a lack of access to immersion programs, for which there is an enormous demand. As for adults, would it be possible to fund second official learning programs?
- The official languages program is **governed by legislation and regulations**, and its application does not necessarily respect the fundamental values of openness, accommodation and justice for all. The bureaucratic culture needs to be changed, particularly in terms of the definition of Francophone and non-Francophone. The eligibility criteria for access to some services in French are sometimes based on mother tongue. Consequently, many fluent French-speaking immigrants whose first language is not French are not allowed to send their children to a public French school.
- The **presence of Francophones** living in a minority context is **dwindling**, as they assimilate into the English-speaking majority because of the difficulties they face living or even being served in French.
- Linguistic duality is also affected by **regional and territorial realities**. While Canada is bilingual, the provinces and territories are not necessarily so, and do not provide their residents, including immigrants, with enough opportunities to become bilingual. Immigrants have to overcome significant hurdles to learn a second language. Nevertheless, second language learning is a question of mobility and accessibility to the economic opportunities that the provinces and territories should be promoting.

- **Preserving heritage languages** is also a challenge for ethnocultural communities. In Canada, immigrants are encouraged to preserve their culture; however, no institutional support is provided to help children learn and continue using their parents' language. Moreover, there seems to have emerged a hierarchy of English, French and then heritage languages. Some children from ethnocultural communities even choose not to speak their heritage language, choosing to use English and/or French instead.

## Workshop 2

*IN ITS 2005–2006 ANNUAL REPORT, THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER ISSUED A RECOMMENDATION TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT THAT THE MINISTER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES INITIATE A DIALOGUE WITH THE VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS IN CANADIAN SOCIETY TO IDENTIFY MEASURES TO TAKE IN ORDER TO FULLY INCORPORATE THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUES OF LINGUISTIC DUALITY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY INTO FEDERAL POLICY.*

*THE SECOND WORKSHOP ASKED PARTICIPANTS TO DISCUSS THEIR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH TWO VALUES AND SUGGEST FUTURE COURSES OF ACTION.*

As an introduction to this workshop, participants heard from Lorena Ortega, a young immigrant, who was an allophone when she arrived in Canada in 2002. However, she was able to seize the opportunities offered by the Canadian system and quickly learned both official languages by integrating into two cultures: Francophone in Quebec and Anglophone in Ontario. She described her perceptions of linguistic duality and cultural diversity based on her own experiences. The winner of the French for the Future award in 2006, today she can communicate in both official languages. She says she looks to the future, calm and happy in the knowledge that she has options, both in terms of education and employment because she is fluent in Canada's two official languages and familiar with the two cultures.

## 2.2 THEME 2: THE DAY-TO-DAY INTERACTION OF LINGUISTIC DUALITY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY: WHAT ARE THE ISSUES AND WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

For the second workshop, participants were kept in the same groups. They were asked to answer the following two questions:

1. In your day-to-day life, does the interaction between cultural diversity and linguistic duality raise any issues for you or your community?
2. What measures can or should be taken to improve the interaction between cultural diversity and linguistic duality?

### **Discussion summary:**

#### *(1) The issues*

Participants stated at the outset that the issues related to the day-to-day interaction of linguistic duality and cultural diversity are in many regards very similar to the challenges identified during Workshop 1:

#### **Ability to mobilize ethnocultural communities**

- There is strong support for linguistic duality in ethnocultural communities, but they do not have the capacity to mobilize themselves to take appropriate action and express their vision of linguistic duality. Participants feel that they need to get organized in order to be recognized as an invaluable contribution to English and French Canadian culture, since they offer new perspectives and new values to be shared. Moreover, they must position themselves in Franco-Ontarian communities and forge strategic alliances to make use of their power (given their significant increase in numbers) to negotiate the availability of adequate public services.

#### **Lack of promotion among and information about ethnocultural communities**

- Lack of information is also an important issue because both the government and community organizations use available information on ethnocultural communities to identify and implement services that meet the specific needs of these

communities. It is difficult to circulate the information and the media outlets that could facilitate this process seem unwilling to relay the information to the communities, particularly Francophone communities. They could better contribute to circulating information on organizations working in the communities and the services they offer to citizens and immigrants. They also play an important role in promoting ethnocultural community success stories. Unfortunately, sensational stories too often steal the spotlight and project a negative view of ethnocultural communities.

### **Funding for multiculturalism**

- The federal government's commitment to funding official language policies demonstrates support for official bilingualism, while funding for multiculturalism has steadily been declining in recent years. In terms of government policy, there is support for linguistic duality, which is seen as a gateway to intercultural acceptance. But the funding and tools are not available to link the interests of bilingualism with those of multiculturalism. Members of ethnic communities would really like to become bilingual, but they also have other priorities such as economic integration and preserving their linguistic heritage. The desire is there but the mechanisms to facilitate the consolidation of these values are ineffective.

### **Why French?**

- For many Anglophone or allophone immigrants, there is no economic interest in learning French. There is no obligation to learn a second language to become a Canadian citizen. This obligation exists only for those who want to work in the public service at a certain level of responsibility or those who settle in official language minority communities. The private sector requires immigrants to speak English. Furthermore, the funds are not available to help immigrants learn French once they have become Canadians.

### **Education in French**

- There is a need for better access to the public education system in French. Section 23 of the Charter is seen as being too limiting in its definition of a Francophone. Consequently, it drastically and unfairly limits access to education in French for many children.

### **Teaching French as a second language**

- Programs that promote French as a second language, such as immersion programs, are not sufficiently supported. For example, only 6% of students in English-language schools in Ontario are enrolled in such programs. There seem to be major gaps between the offer and the demand for immersion programs in Ontario.

### **Fragility of French**

- The low availability of services in French is a major issue. In Ontario, government services to the public are not always available in French.
- Some participants raised the fact that French is almost non-existent in Toronto as an integration tool for newcomers. Francophones integrate into the English-speaking community where services are more widely available and better distributed across the region. Community organizations working with Francophone immigrants indicate that the unavailability of services in French that exist in English creates uneasiness towards the individuals making the request, as they must be referred to the service in English. Since we already know that French is vulnerable in Ontario, it is truly disappointing to have to refer clients to services in English.
- Furthermore, where French services do exist, too often they are of poor quality. Thus, many Canadians who believe that services in French are not as good as those offered in English do not request these services. All levels of government should review their service delivery systems and ensure that the linguistic profiles of their clients are considered.
- The methods used to evaluate the number of Francophones in Canada do not take into consideration the fact that, for many immigrants, especially from French-speaking Africa, French is not their "mother tongue." They are counted as Anglophones or allophones, and this has a negative effect on the visibility of Francophone communities in Toronto. Therefore, this creates a lack of opportunities and limitations to living in French.

## Changes in government priorities

- Government priorities change over the years, as do the funding programs that are required for their implementation. The citizens and communities that mobilized to ensure success have seen their efforts wasted because of a lack of means owing to the fact that the government has not provided any financial support. Participants believe, however, that with consistent citizen commitment, they can ensure that nationally recognized and protected priorities (such as linguistic duality and cultural diversity) continue to be funded by the government.

### (2) Action to be taken

Participants' proposals regarding the action to be taken were divided as follows: those addressed to the government, the community and OCOL.

## For the government

- Support **leadership development in ethnocultural communities** and identify and implement new strategies to support linguistic duality through increased cooperation between the government and communities.
- Encourage the **Ontario Ministry of Education** to take new Canadians more into account. Also promote the recognition and funding of French schools in order to meet the needs of the Francophone population that is growing and that would benefit from becoming more visible and ensuring greater advocacy.
- In partnership with government organizations, encourage the creation of a **national umbrella agency** that would coordinate the actions of ethnocultural communities and organizations to promote linguistic duality.
- Ensure that linguistic duality is encouraged and promoted not only by the **federal government but also by provincial, territorial and municipal governments.**

- Encourage the **federal government and organizations** acting on its behalf to enhance linguistic duality promotion programs in order to take linguistic duality into account when developing policies and programs and to increase the visibility of linguistic duality across the country.
- Enhance programs promoting Canadian history.
- Provide **adequate funding for programs** on linguistic duality, the promotion of French and the availability of services in French across Ontario.
- Continue to encourage bilingualism and take **positive action** to reward both the acquisition and use of both official languages in the public service and in public service delivery.
- Make it one of the responsibilities of **Canadian ambassadors and immigration officers** abroad to promote bilingualism as a fundamental Canadian value.
- Ensure **stronger application of legislation and regulations** to require organizations such as government service centres to comply with the *Official Languages Act*.
- Allocate funding to create more second language learning opportunities for Canadians from different backgrounds.

## For the communities

- Community organizations and government institutions can do more to develop **community commitment and leadership** with regard to linguistic duality in ethnocultural communities. This would help established Canadians to fully contribute to building a bilingual society and facilitating the integration of newcomers.

- Ethnocultural communities need to commit themselves to meeting the needs of the citizens they serve, and defending their interests. They also need to get organized to provide advice on and direct government action, and to play an effective role as a **government partner** in carrying out linguistic duality programs.
- They must **enhance their institutional capacities** and organize themselves in order to raise awareness and make suggestions and serve as a credible partner in the implementation of language training programs and the economic and social integration of their members.
- Participants believe that community organizations are closer to citizens and can reach them more effectively in delivering components of government programs. Many people live in isolation, especially women. Therefore, a way must be found to bring them out of their isolation to provide language training. This could be done through the **public schools** located in the communities.

#### For OCOL

- **Increase its role in promoting linguistic duality;** the issue is not only about learning a language but also becoming familiar with a culture. To that end, Canada's Francophone community must be made accessible to all Canadians so they can become familiar with it. This means celebrating the Francophonie not just in places where French has a strong presence, but also across the country.
- **Encourage the Ministry of Education to adapt the curriculum and language teaching** to the changing Canadian society.
- **Encourage the government to develop target programs** to facilitate second language learning in ethnocultural communities. Encourage the identification and implementation of tailored approaches to facilitate learning and arguments to convince certain communities to invest in French acquisition.
- Encourage the government to **monitor statistical practices** to ensure that Francophones who have settled in Canada are properly counted.
- Monitor the offer of government services in French across Canada and encourage the government to promote **French-language service centres**.
- **Strengthen its education role** and focus on groups such as youth and newcomers, who are likely to advance bilingualism in Canada in the future. To that end, **new cooperative strategies need to be developed with the community agencies** that are closest to residents and that can reach less accessible and available groups, such as women.
- **Conduct social marketing** to promote the beauty and richness of being able to speak both official languages and offer everyone the opportunity to live in the language of their choice, regardless of where they live in Canada. For example, highlight successes and publicize linguistic duality success stories in ethnocultural communities, such as the example of Ms. Ortega.
- **Encourage use of the media and new technologies.** They are powerful tools and a cost-effective way to learn languages and become familiar with different cultures.
- **Educate and inform residents and raise their awareness.** The idea is to create a culture of official languages learning in communities, while not excluding other languages.

## Part 3: Analysis and evaluation of forum results

*"I BENEFITED FROM ALL THE ASPECTS OF THE FORUM... THEY WERE COMPLEMENTARY..."*

*"THE PRESENTATIONS WERE EXCELLENT AND DISCUSSIONS WERE VERY USEFUL."*

*DISCUSSION FORUM PARTICIPANTS, OCTOBER 26, TORONTO.*

At the end of the forum discussions, participants were given evaluation forms to assess their level of satisfaction and get their comments, which will help OCOL improve future forums it plans to hold on the same topic. An analysis of the 26 completed forms shows that the forum was a success in several regards.

### OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS

Participants indicated that the discussion forum had achieved its objectives and met their expectations. They appreciated this discussion forum on important issues affecting Canada today. They said that this opportunity to meet and share their knowledge and experiences was positive. They hope that forum results and suggestions will be taken into consideration by the appropriate authorities. However, some did express some scepticism about how these results would be used.

### METHODS USED

Overall, the methods used to achieve the expected outcomes were deemed to be very appropriate; discussions were effective and produced very tangible results.

*"METHODS USED ARE VERY EFFECTIVE. PARTICIPATION OF ALL GROUP MEMBERS HIGHLIGHTED THE COMPLEXITY OF THE ISSUES."*

Participants appreciated the pre-forum questionnaire and the issue paper, which helped them to better prepare for the discussions. Forum facilitation was rated as excellent.

It was mentioned that, although they were relevant, more specific questions would have helped participants go deeper into discussions during the workshops. Some said that they could not develop their ideas further because of complexity of the questions and the allocated time. Some participants gave an "average" rating to the variety and effectiveness of the techniques used.

*"WE NEED A VARIETY OF TECHNIQUES TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION AND GIVE EVERYONE ENOUGH TIME TO SHARE IDEAS."*

*"THE FACILITATORS DID AN EXCELLENT JOB IN THE BREAKOUT ROOM AT KEEPING THE DISCUSSION ON TRACK."*

**The number and profile of participants were considered to be appropriate.** Dividing participants into small discussion groups ahead of time was appreciated. However, some participants questioned why the same groups were kept for both workshops, while others thought this was the most efficient method for the workshops.

Several participants suggested that invitations should be extended to representatives of other ethnocultural groups, chambers of commerce, professional associations and educational institutions facing the challenges of linguistic duality. They also suggested

inviting observers from Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Foreign Affairs Canada, members of the legal system and the police, in addition to making an effort to target young people or individuals who can share their experiences with linguistic duality and cultural diversity. A comment was made to the effect that there were too many government representatives.

**All forum aspects were assessed as being beneficial,** particularly discussions on the changes occurring in society. The forum gave a number of participants the opportunity to share and develop their viewpoints and learn from other people's experiences. A number of participants also mentioned the relevance and the high quality of the presentations by the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson and Mr. Fraser, and appreciated Ms. Ortega's talk.

**Material and logistical aspects:** An analysis of the evaluation forms showed a very high level of satisfaction with the forum's materials and logistics. Those related to how the activities were carried out, the quality of the facilities and the visual tools received a high rating.

In terms of improvements to be made for future forums, several recommendations were made:

- Set a time limit for individual statements to encourage participants to be direct and concise.
- Rearrange the groups in the second workshop, to give participants the opportunity to discuss with many different people. However, according to other participants, this could affect group dynamics.
- Clarify questions to prevent repetition during workshop discussions.
- Extend invitations to other players in government, the private sector and civil society, particularly ethnocultural communities.

## OTHER COMMENTS

Thank you for the opportunity to participate. Good job!

Such discussions are very important and bring us together.

Excellent input by the Commissioner and his staff. Staff had a helpful attitude.

Hold the forum on the weekend to ensure greater participation by the communities.

More analysis and time should be devoted to this discussion.

I hope that the Government of Canada and eventually private corporations will adopt linguistic duality and will encourage Canadians of any ages to adopt bilingualism.



## Conclusion

The discussion forum on the perspectives of Canadians of various backgrounds on linguistic duality helped the Office of the Commissioner compile information on the concerns, challenges and issues faced by ethnocultural communities in Ontario.

The relevant presentations at the start of the forum set the tone for the quality of the discussions that took place throughout the day. Participants were generous and open in sharing the information they had.

Plenary sessions provided an opportunity for participants to report on their discussions, which focused in the morning on **identifying the values and challenges** that Canadian society faces today. The afternoon workshop was an opportunity to debate the **day-to-day issues raised by linguistic duality**. At the end of both workshops, participants identified a series of mechanisms and recommended corrective action and measures to promote linguistic duality, which were addressed to the government, their own communities and organizations and the Office of the Commissioner to improve the interaction between cultural diversity and linguistic duality.

Forum participants were committed stakeholders and were invited because of their involvement in ethnocultural communities. Based on their personal experiences and their relevant professional experience, they provided the Office of the Commissioner with **information that will be useful in developing a future strategy** on linguistic duality and cultural diversity in order to influence government action in this area. The Office of the Commissioner will report on the work of the forum in its 2007–2008 annual report.

OCOL intends to **continue reflecting** on this important national issue, and to conduct similar consultations next year in another multicultural city in Canada.



## Appendix 1: Discussion forum program

Time	Activity	Details
8:00	Registration and breakfast	Location: High Park Ballroom
8:30	Opening remarks and roundtable	Facilitator: Dominique Dennerly
9:00	Opening address by the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson	The Co-Chair of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship and former governor general of Canada will describe her vision of linguistic duality and cultural diversity in Canada. Her speech will be followed by a question period.
10:00	Health break	
10:15	Understanding the context	<p>Historical overview of linguistic duality and cultural diversity in the Canadian context (Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages)</p> <p>Presentation of the results of the pre-forum questionnaire and introduction to the topics of discussion (Catherine Scott, Acting Director General, Policy and Communications)</p> <p>Question period (Dominique Dennerly)</p>
11:00	<b>Workshop 1:</b> Linguistic Duality, Cultural Diversity and the Evolving Canadian Identity	Participants will be divided into four groups to discuss their perceptions of the fundamental values of Canadian identity and linguistic duality.
12:00	Lunch	
1:00	Plenary session on Workshop 1	Each group will present the main conclusions reached during the morning's workshop discussions. (High Park Ballroom)
1:30	Linguistic duality and cultural diversity from a young person's perspective	Presentation by Lorena Ortega, finalist in the French for the Future essay contest.
1:45	<b>Workshop 2:</b> The Interaction Between Linguistic Duality and Cultural Diversity in Everyday Life: What Are the Issues and What Needs to Be Done?	Participants will return to their groups to discuss their personal experiences and courses of action for the future.
3:00	Health break	
3:30	Plenary session on Workshop 2	Each group will present the main conclusions reached during the afternoon's workshop discussions. (High Park Ballroom)
4:00	Next steps	<p>Presentation of the next steps to be taken (Catherine Scott, Acting Director General, Policy and Communications)</p> <p>Question period (Dominique Dennerly)</p>
4:15	Closing remarks	Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages
4:30	End of discussion forum	

## Appendix 2: List of participants and workshop groups

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION	GROUP 1 ROOM SUMMERHILL	GROUP 2 ROOM ROSEDALE	GROUP 3 ROOM HIGH PARK A	GROUP 4 ROOM HIGH PARK B
<b>PRESIDENT (OCOL)</b>	<b>Renald Dussault</b> Assistant Commissioner, Compliance Assurance Branch	<b>Catherine Scott</b> Acting Director General, Policy and Communications Branch	<b>Pascal Arseneau</b> Commissioner's Representative, Ontario Region	<b>Dominique Dennerly</b> Consultant
<b>NOTE-TAKER / (OCOL)</b>	<b>Sarah Boily</b> Team Leader, Policy Analysis	<b>Mike McGuire</b> Policy Analyst	<b>Marie-Louise Perron</b> Chief of Staff	<b>Karsten Kaemling</b> Liaison Officer
<b>ETHNOCULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS</b>	<b>Anna Chiappa</b> Canadian Ethnocultural Council	<b>Noor Alaboosi</b> Canadian Arab Federation	<b>Marcaria Romero</b> Canadian Hispanic Congress	<b>Victor Wong</b> Chinese Canadian National Council
<b>MULTICULTURAL COUNCILS</b>			<b>Susan Toth</b> Halton Multicultural Council	<b>Zenaida Odense</b> Sudbury Multicultural Folk Arts Association
<b>SETTLEMENT AND SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS FOR NEW CANADIANS</b>	<b>Reza Shahbazi</b> Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance	<b>Morteza Jafarpour</b> Settlement and Integration Services Organization Hamilton	<b>Maryse Birmingham</b> Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization	<b>Uzma Shakir</b> South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario

*List of participants and workshop groups (cont.)*

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION	GROUP 1 ROOM SUMMERHILL	GROUP 2 ROOM ROSEDALE	GROUP 3 ROOM HIGH PARK A	GROUP 4 ROOM HIGH PARK B
MEDIA	<b>Madeline Ziniak</b> Canadian Ethnic Media Association			<b>Nalini Stewart</b> OMNI TV
OTHER	<b>Curtis Barlow</b> Institute for Canadian Citizenship	<b>Vincent Conville</b> Ontario Trillium Foundation	<b>Dr. Oluremi Ogundimu</b> Sudbury Multicultural Association	<b>Saloni Negi</b> National Council of Visible Minorities in the Federal Public Service
	<b>Art Hagopian</b> The Canadian Foundation for Cross- Cultural Dialogue	<b>Ellen Cole</b> Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre	<b>Michelle Sokovnin</b> Canadian Parents for French	
RESEARCHERS	<b>Monica Heller</b> University of Toronto, Centre de recherche en éducation franco- ontarienne			<b>Callie Mady</b> Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
FRANCOPHONE REPRESENTATIVES	<b>Maxim Jean-Louis</b> Contact Nord	<b>Léonie Tchatat</b> La Passerelle	<b>Jacqueline Jean-Baptiste</b> Collège français	<b>Séverin Ndéma-Moussa</b> Union provinciale des minorités raciales et ethnoculturelles francophones de l'Ontario
		<b>Mohammed Brihmi</b> EMB Consulting	<b>St-Phare Désir</b> Réseau de l'Est, réseau pour l'établissement des nouveaux immigrants en Ontario	

*List of participants and workshop groups (cont.)*

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION	GROUP 1 ROOM SUMMERHILL	GROUP 2 ROOM ROSEDALE	GROUP 3 ROOM HIGH PARK A	GROUP 4 ROOM HIGH PARK B
OBSERVERS	<p><b>Kelli Phythian</b> Government of Ontario, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration</p>	<p><b>Suzanne Skinner</b> Government of Ontario, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration</p>	<p><b>Jean Kunz</b> Policy Research Initiative</p>	<p><b>Hubert Lussier</b> Department of Canadian Heritage</p>
	<p><b>Hélène Cormier</b> Department of Canadian Heritage</p>	<p><b>Louise Sauvé-Dubois</b> Department of Canadian Heritage</p>	<p><b>Mary Farrell</b> Department of Canadian Heritage</p>	<p><b>Darlyn Mentor</b> Government of Canada, Department of Citizenship and Immigration</p>
	<p><b>Joanna Campion</b> French for the Future</p>	<p><b>Betty Gormeley</b> Canadian Parents for French—Ontario</p> <p><b>Adrienne Clarkson</b></p>	<p><b>Ceta Ramkhalawansingh</b> City of Toronto, City Manager’s Office</p> <p><b>Anne Kothawala</b> French for the Future</p>	<p><b>André Fournier</b> Bureau du Québec à Toronto</p> <p><b>Lorena Ortega</b> Student</p>

### Appendix 3: Opening address, the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson

It's with a great deal of pleasure that I accepted the invitation to join you this morning for this discussion forum. The theme that you have chosen is one that greatly interests me. I think that it is at the heart of Canadian life. Linguistic duality and the reality of Canada's diversity are two things that I find stimulating not only from an intellectual point of view, but also because they are essential to how we see ourselves as Canadians.

We are a country with a unique history. And as John Ralston Saul always says, we are not a new country. We are a centuries-old country with institutions that are rooted in even older countries like Great Britain. Our Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a direct descendent of the Magna Carta of the 13th century. We are a parliamentary democracy. We enjoy freedom of expression. We use both common law and civil law thanks to our country's two founding nations. It is for these reasons that it is always interesting to reflect on who we are and who we are going to be.

I have to say right from the start that I came to this country as a refugee. I like to touch on my own personal story in these types of meetings because my family came to Canada at a time when there was no immigration from Oriental countries. In fact, it was actively discouraged.

We came to Canada in 1942. Those of you who know your history of Canada will recall that in 1940 our country refused to take in Jews who were desperate to leave Europe. We admitted 4,000 Jews. The United States at the same time took in 240,000; Mexico and Columbia took in 40,000; Argentina and Brazil took in 40,000; Great Britain took in 85,000; and little, white, comfortable Canada admitted a mere 4,000. Why? Because of fundamental attitudes that were simply givens. People didn't question them.

It was into this kind of society that our little family, with its four suitcases, one apiece, came as refugees in 1942, after the fall of Hong Kong. We came on a Red Cross boat, as part of a Red Cross exchange of civilians. It took us two months to get from Hong Kong to New York because we had to stop at various places like Mozambique, Rio de Janeiro, etc., to pick up other people who were being moved around. It is the real story of a ship of fools. But we did get to Ottawa, and when we arrived, we had no papers... we had nothing.

We were simply taken into the community. I often think about that when I visit community organizations that exist to welcome not only refugees, but also immigrants in general. I feel that it is very important that I tell my story because it is also a story about the evolution of this country.

When I was five years old, I was supposed to start kindergarten. Since my parents were from Hong Kong, they didn't have to face the language barrier of not speaking English. They spoke English extremely well. My father was born in Australia as an overseas Chinese, and my mother's family was part of a huge diaspora of Chinese—I have relatives, distant relatives, in places like Peru, Indonesia and Guyana because that is where my great-great-grandparents went as Chinese coolies. They then made their way and eventually owned businesses in these countries. They settled in the Caribbean as well. They are some of the Chinese people that you see in such places, when you happen to come upon one, lone Chinese restaurant.

And so we came to Canada, and at least we had English going for us. We had been part of a little pink dot on the map that signified we were part of the British Empire and we travelled to a large pink dot, which was Canada. As I say this, I distinctly remember how British this place was when we arrived. And yet, the one thing that wasn't British was the place where we lived, which was in Lowertown, in Ottawa. It was Francophone. That is where we were welcomed as individuals and personally by other families. The people who welcomed us, the Marcottes, the Rivières, were French-speaking families. They actually helped my mother a great deal. We only spoke English and they spoke French and English. That was enough of a bridge.

My father found a little job with the federal government in the Department of Trade and Commerce because he knew about trade and commerce, having worked in Hong Kong for the Canadian Trade Commission. He felt that he would like to find work if it was possible. He knew a few people and eventually he did get a job there in the Oils and Fats Department. (Actually on the day I became Governor General, my father said to me "You know, all this is a result of the Oils and Fats Department." My father above all else was an extremely funny man.)

When he began his job, he looked around and he saw almost all the other people at his level, all the clerks, were Francophones... and they were bilingual. They spoke French among themselves and they spoke English to him, but he saw that they were working for the government and that they were bilingual.

The Institut Jeanne d'Arc was practically next door to where we lived, so my father said to me, "Would you like to learn French?" Nothing could have been more thrilling to me because I remembered our friends, Aline and Tina, speaking French in our kitchen when they were teaching my mother how to cook. (My mother didn't know how to cook when we came to Canada because she had always had servants. She had no idea how to use a frying pan, how to use a gas stove, or any of those things. She didn't know really how to go shopping in large stores and all of this was handled by having our friends in the neighbourhood go shopping with her. So we enjoyed the warm feeling that we had friends and that they were going to lend a hand.)

My father said, "You should learn French, we should all learn French," but he and my mother didn't have the time. They were working and busy, so I was the one who was going to learn French. So I went off to the Institut Jeanne d'Arc. I don't remember exactly what happened there. I only remember what the nun looked like with her great dark wimple and I remember the crucifix on the wall...

Afterwards, as we walked home along Sussex Street—it wasn't so grand an avenue at that time—my parents said, "It's not going to work out. You're not going to be able to go to school there." I was very upset because I had quite a mind of my own, even at the age of five, and I asked, "Why?" They answered, "Because we're not Catholics." At that time, of course, if you wanted to be educated entirely in French, which was what my parents wanted for me, you had to be Catholic, and I was not. We were not Catholics... and that was that.

When we got home and sat down—and after I apparently had a fit and was crying—Daddy said to me "Don't worry. If they won't let you learn French here in this country, you will go to Paris and you will learn French there and then you will come back here and speak it." And in fact, that is what happened, but it wasn't necessarily what could have happened. By the time I was 19 or 20, I could have learned French by going to Quebec, but the seeds of a dream had been sown and I'm very glad that they germinated.

I went to France after I graduated from university because I thought it was very interesting to go to the heart of French civilization. Indeed, after having lived in a former British colony, my going to the heart of Frenchness was very, very useful. It immediately taught me the differences in mentalities. I began learning about these differences immediately, at my first lecture at the Sorbonne.

I did a three-year diploma course on teaching French at the École supérieure de préparation et de perfectionnement des professeurs de français à l'étranger. All the students came from the "little green dot" countries. Everybody was from one of the green dots except me. I was half-pink because of Canada and half-green, because of Quebec. I was accepted because Quebec was part of what was then—before it was called that—the Francophonie. I got into the course by cheating a little, smiling a lot and being able to read and write French.

The very first day, the professor said to us, "You are here at the centre of the world. You are here at the centre of Western civilization. France is the natural inheritor of Greece and Rome, and it is the flame of the West that you are all going to take back with you to your little countries like Canada, Vietnam, Cambodia or Madagascar. You have the opportunity, Malagasies of Madagascar, to take the flame there." So our flames were lit and we were supposed to go forth and illuminate the world. Of course, our diplomas said that we could teach French in foreign countries, but that we would never be able to teach French in France. They didn't actually say that, but we knew that that is what it meant.

Through this experience, I quickly learned about a different approach or attitude towards a language and that has always helped me. In fact, along with John van Burek, I recently translated a play by Molière, which is being performed right now. It is *Le malade imaginaire*, which we called *Dying to Be Sick*. It was a wonderful, wonderful time for me because it brought back to me distant memories, memories about learning the language and understanding, say, the velocity of French when it is used by a genius like Molière. As you all know, French has 30 or 40 percent less vocabulary than English. As a result, you have this rapidity of expression, and just to experience that again was terrific.

Speaking of linguistic duality, I'm very glad that this play is being performed in English in Toronto, so that people can gain an idea of what Molière could be like in English, without the feeling that the play has been anglicized. In fact, the French ambassador paid it the best compliment when he said, "When I watched this play, I thought Molière had written in English." That shows how languages can work together. It is what I would hope we would aim for in our daily lives, as Canadians. People should not insist on the word-for-word translation of things or settle for a mathematical equivalence of language. Our country can be a leader in terms of experiencing and fully understanding what language means to people.

Very soon after coming back, I learned that, in Canada as in France, the French language means something different to Francophones than the English language does to Anglophones. The French language is an expression of culture and of soul. It serves as a kind of intellectual understanding of things. It is not just a method of communication that enables one to buy groceries or purchase a ticket. I think that in the back of the minds of people who really are Francophones lies a belief that the French language is their common heritage, that it is something that totally expresses their soul. I have always thought that this sense of heritage is something we must try to understand in dealing with linguistic duality and with interprovincial relations in our country.

I really believe that our duality is a legacy that we could turn into something very special in Canada. We could see it not as an issue about the right to speak a language, or to speak a language correctly in grammatical terms, but as a way of letting that particular spirit or soul of the language infuse us.

Now, I'm fundamentally an Anglophone and English is really my mother tongue because I came to Canada when I was two and half and I had very little knowledge of Chinese. My parents made that decision, and it was a relatively difficult one. I understand this now when I look back on it. It wasn't difficult for my father, as he didn't speak much Chinese until he visited China for the first time in 1926, when he was about 19. But it was a difficult choice for my mother, because Chinese was her mother tongue. She had loved learning the Chinese classics at school and that of course was something that we were never going to share.

My parents made the tough decision that English would be spoken in their new Canadian home and that it would be spoken well. Despite what you read, I think many other immigrants also made that kind of decision, especially the immigrants we knew and grew up with, the immigrants who came after the war. (I didn't know any immigrants when I was five, six, seven and eight. I didn't meet many until after displaced persons began coming to Canada in 1946 or 1947.)

In our situation, English was our vehicle, our way of entering the mainstream of Canadian life and my parents were very, very determined that their children should speak English perfectly. My parents were extremely welcoming to all our friends. They were very curious about them and they enjoyed them. However, they criticized the diction and language of the friends that I brought home who weren't native Canadians, who didn't speak English well. They would remark on it over the supper table. My father would say, "Beverly drops her g's," or, "Do you see how she said that sentence; it didn't make any sense the way she said it."

Later when I made my career in television, people would ask me whether I had taken elocution lessons. I never did. I never took drama lessons, I never took anything like that, but my father made my brother and me pronounce everything correctly and do it over and over again if it wasn't right. As a result, I think we both spoke pretty good English. I was always very conscious of the fact that language was something that you spoke. I suppose that I am also talking about the drive of immigrants, personified by my parents, to ensure that their children could have access to everything their new country had to offer, if they assumed its identity. And I think they were not alone in making that type of choice.

About the time I went into high school, my father said to me, "You know, if you just make that little bit of extra effort, you can do better because you are really very aware of the fact that you are learning something new and that you want to do it well. Nothing has been presented to us on a platter. Nothing has been taken for granted."

I think about that often when I meet new Canadians or landed immigrants. I sense that same attitude in them, although they may express it in a different way. They may say "I want Billy to go to Harvard." This may sound like a bald kind of statement without much meaning or relationship to education, but I know what



they mean. They mean they want their children to go as far as they can go. The sky is the limit. In a way, I think our linguistic duality has something to do with this type of attitude.

As Governor General, I visited French immersion schools across this country. When I looked across the gym at classes ranging from kindergarten to Grade 6, I didn't know what country I was in because of the diversity of the kids. I thought to myself, "This is terrific." Everybody here is going to speak English and French. It will still be a while before we, as Canadians, totally absorb these two languages and there will always be only a small percentage of people who will be totally at ease in both. However, when 30% or 35% of Canadians fully understand what French and what English really are, the rest will too. Bilingualism is like yeast; it will gradually leaven Canadian society. That is where I hope our bilingualism will go.

I never worry about whether we are doing the wrong thing if we promote French as a second language, even though some people really want their children to learn Urdu or Italian or Portuguese. Some of you may recall that at one point there was a movement in Toronto to have heritage languages taught in school. Although I was just an observer and was not asked for my point of view, I was not in favour of the teaching of heritage languages in schools unless English and French were taught as compulsory subjects. I believe that, as a country, English and French are our core languages.

English and French are key features of our history and, as I always said to new Canadians being sworn in at citizenship ceremonies, citizenship is not a buffet table. You can't choose the pineapple, the cream chicken and the turkey while skipping the veggies. With citizenship, you take everything. Our country was built with a great deal of thought. It was formed with more thought than many countries because, thank God, we didn't have to go through a revolution or warfare to create it. We did it almost as a kind of intellectual exercise, putting it together step by step and piece by piece. It evolved from what was formally quite a racist country in the 40s to the kind of nation it became in the 70s. We quickly developed an acceptance of people from other lands. We took almost for granted the enormous leap we made within

a generation and a half. If you look at the situation of many other countries in the world, you realize that they did not evolve as rapidly as we did in this regard and today they don't know quite what to do to set things right.

New Canadians must themselves realize that once they have become citizens, they have been adopted into a country. They are now members of a family and that family shares a history, which includes crazy old Aunt Agnes in the attic and all the other things that we have done that we are ashamed of. We, new citizens as well as established Canadians, are therefore just as responsible for the abuses that happened to aboriginal children in residential schools, for the deportation of the Japanese-Canadians and the confiscation of their property in World War II and for other ugly situations.

You can't say "This all happened before I came here, therefore I'm not really responsible." What you can say is "It happened before I came here, and I would like to know more about it; I would like to be able to help. I want to see how we can resolve these kinds of situations." It is very, very important that we all do that.

I'm hoping that through our linguistic duality, we give ourselves a kind of identity that is bilingual and is therefore a window that opens onto the world. Learning French takes you into a new and different reality. I think many new citizens see it in this way. They also see that learning languages is a very good thing—we know that from statistics. They are no doubt well aware that knowing other languages gives them greater access to the world. Our statistics tell us that as children progress through school, some 60% of them take up a third language by the time they reach Grade 10. So that means that their minds are irrigated with language. Since all language is communication, if these children start learning German or Chinese or Spanish in Grade 10, that's all for the good. I find the whole idea of using Canada's bilingualism as a building block to become trilingual or multilingual fascinating.

I think about this when I see my five-year-old granddaughter, who has just started French immersion kindergarten at Jackman Public School. Her doting grandparents and parents are always hovering over her saying "Bonjour" and "How are things going?" Of course, she doesn't know what all the fuss is about because in immersion, she is learning French as she would a mother tongue. She doesn't even make that



connection. She doesn't translate. People who try to learn a language later in life have to translate words. Her brain is making these wonderful electrical jumps all the time and it is fascinating to see that process at work.

I believe that it is very important for us as a country to cherish the way in which we live our lives and I count our use of English and French high among our blessings. This is something that is available to all Canadians and, of course, I'm particularly concerned that it should also be fully accessible to new Canadians. I believe that we need to make our country as comfortable to live in for everyone as it is for the people in this room. We also must do this for new Canadians. Through our Institute for Canadian Citizenship, I have been reflecting on what that means in practical terms.

People talk a lot about Canadian values. You no doubt know about the debate that is going on right now in Quebec with the Bouchard-Taylor Commission. People are asking what it is all about or wondering whether things have gone too far. There is talk about people wearing veils, about people carrying kirpans, etc. As I have watched these debates unfold, my reaction has been to think that most Canadian values are not things that are normally expressed in terms of bureaucratic structures, etc. Of course, we certainly want everybody to subscribe to the values that I talked about earlier, such as having a parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and equality. We want that for everyone. But beyond that, there are not a great many things that are critical to us as Canadians. But there are a few.

One of the most important is our bilingualism because it makes us a different kind of nation. English and French were not just chosen out of the air; they have their roots in the very foundation of the country, in what I call the original deal that came together in 1848 and then in 1867.

In that original deal in 1848, Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine was, with Robert Baldwin, the father of responsible government, and they were aided by the very prescient Lord Elgin, who was Governor General at the time. They defeated the Château Clique in Quebec and the Family Compact in Canada and made a democracy out of a very poor country, *a very poor country*. It didn't have riches. That was not what we were founded on. LaFontaine, in an address to his

electors in Terrebonne in 1849, made a wonderful promise. He said, "You know, we have something very good now, but we will have it even better in the future because we will welcome the nations of the world to take their place in our country and they and their children will be like us. They will be the future." This man, who was a Quebec *gentilhomme*, understood and had a vision. He knew that we were going to be a nation of newcomers and that the fundamental deal between the English and the French was going to be part of what we would become.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier said the same thing in 1905 when he said, "We will welcome all the nations of the world." This was when Alberta and Saskatchewan joined Confederation, and he also said, "We will have a country in which all of us will never forget where we came from. We will always treasure that, but we will take our place in the present and our children will take their place in the future and everyone will become Canadians."

These foresighted political people led the way for us and set the pace. Indeed, we have been very fortunate in having for the most part very intelligent leaders in this country. But there is more to it than that; it is more than a question of structures. In our Institute, we are trying to define the things that people feel will help them be Canadians. We don't know exactly what these things are, but if as a group of Canadians who have always lived here, we sit down together, can we think of what makes us feel wonderful? For example, we read Canadian books and we go to concerts. There are orchestras all across the country and there are musical groups of different kinds. There are Canadian plays that are being put on. There are Canadian films; there are museums and art galleries. All of these features help define us.

Well, I want new Canadians to have access to these features. They are the things that help us understand who we are. One of the main activities of our Institute is to develop enhanced citizenship ceremonies with the help of volunteer committees. One project involves giving vouchers to immigrants participating in such ceremonies. They would receive vouchers or one-year passes for a combination of cultural activities (a museum, a concert, a symphony, etc.). Included in the package would be a pamphlet or an illustrated booklet explaining, for example, that you can attend a symphony concert dressed as you would to go to work.

It would explain that if it is a symphony, the concert usually has four or five parts and that these usually have titles in Italian because the language of music traditionally is Italian.

I always have in mind people from Somalia or from Sri Lanka who have never had the opportunity of attending such an event. I want to allay their fears. I want to make them feel that they can participate in the things that we have worked very hard to make work in our country... and we have worked very hard indeed to make all our cultural events work. It is important to reach out to that 1% of the population that joins us every year as new Canadians. That is a large number. We want to make sure that when these new citizens go to a museum or to an art gallery, there is some kind of a guide, either a person or printed information, that tells them that they are welcome.

The other area I want to work on very, very much is nature, our relationship to nature. I think it is important and that this theme cuts across all our dualities. For many of us, one of our deepest national values is our relationship with Canada's wilderness, our expectation that we can share it by having a cottage, going canoeing or going camping, etc.

It is very important that we build this sense of belonging among new Canadians, so that they too feel that they can participate and gain a similar sense that nature belongs to them. If we do not promote this, who in the future is going to be a member of a nature conservancy? Who is going to join Ducks Unlimited? People have to start caring about nature at a young age. Who is going to buy the kayaks, the canoes, the motorboats, the fishing rods and all of the things we use in the great outdoors? We have to think of that. We have to make sure that our national parks are welcoming and helpful to people who, because of their background, have no idea of how to approach Canada's wilderness.

In conclusion, linguistic duality, as far as I'm concerned, is one of the fundamental values that make us special. It gives us an additional parameter in dealing with each other and with the world. I am sure you remember that old joke we used to tell 30 years ago, which is: when bilingualism and biculturalism was first introduced, a Saskatchewan farmer said, "Well, I'm never going to do that. The language Jesus Christ wrote in the Bible is good enough for me."

That kind of reaction is now over and done with and we are moving on to another, more significant stage of what bilingualism means to us. We now accept that we are a culturally diverse country in terms of ethnicity and religions, and by and large we are fairly comfortable with that.

I think that when we hear very negative remarks today, they are the expression of a terrible fear of the unknown. This fear, which should never be ignored, is not about real problems. If you look, for example, at Hérouxville, the little town that passed a kind of code of behaviour for immigrants, the things that the people put into their code were their own worst nightmares: women should not be disfigured, veils should not be worn, certain animals should not be slaughtered for certain rites, etc. This is like being afraid of the dark at the top of the stairs or the bogeyman in the basement. A little bit of light can chase all that darkness away.

Like Baldwin and LaFontaine, I believe that the Canada of tomorrow will be better "because we will welcome the nations of the world to take their place in our country and they and their children will be like us. They will be the future." My Canada is a country that accepts and welcomes change while preserving its identity and its fundamental values.

I hope that these few comments will help stimulate discussion and I'm very glad to have been invited to talk to you.

