

I. Introduction

41-42 Initiative

In fiscal year 1995-96, significant progress was made in various areas that have an impact on the official-language minority communities. Again this year, the federal government's

 *As Canadians, we must view bilingualism as an investment, because language is the fuel of information. Clearly, we must create products and services that meet our particular needs in both languages - needs that reflect the Canadian experience and strengthen our identity."*

(Excerpt from an article by Dr. Victor Goldbloom, Commissioner of Official Languages, in *Focus*, the executive management magazine for the federal public service)

initiative to implement sections 41 and 42 of the *Official Languages Act* and provide a concerted approach to promote the participation of all federal institutions in the development in these communities was front and centre on the official languages agenda of the Department of Canadian Heritage. The first series of action plans was submitted by twenty-six designated federal institutions, proposing

measures to inform the communities of federal services available to them or offering financial or technical support for priority projects. Details are provided in Section II under the heading "Interdepartmental Coordination: Concrete Results". Accomplishments resulting from the 1995-96 action plans submitted by the designated federal institutions as well as the second series of annual or multi-year actions plans submitted by these institutions are contained in the *Supplement to the Annual Report*.

Promotional Activities

The Department has been very active promoting Canada's linguistic duality across the country and abroad. Activities such as the establishment of an official languages site on the World Wide Web, the publication of documents such as *Francophones in Canada: a*

Community of Interests in the *New Canadian Perspectives* series, and active participation in international spelling contests and language exchanges all demonstrate the federal government's commitment to communicating the benefits of living in a bilingual country. A more detailed description of these promotional activities nationally as well as in the regions is presented in Section III under "Key Issues".

The Web

The Department's Official Languages Support Programs Branch has joined the electronic age by creating its own home page on the World Wide Web, thereby providing access to descriptions of all official languages programs, fact sheets on minority communities, information on official-language bursary and monitor programs, and even making it possible for users to download the Branch's publications. The minority communities themselves have become wired to the Internet to provide their members with better accessibility to information and to improve communication among themselves. More is provided on this topic under "Information Highway" in Section III ("Key Issues").

Regional News

An overview of key activities involving federal-provincial/territorial cooperation for both education and official-language services is presented in Section IV under the heading "On the Regional Scene". Also included in this section are events which had a significant impact on the development of the official-language minority communities across the country.

As for discussions on topics of national scope, such as second-language instruction programs and the activities of national Francophone associations, details are provided under the heading "On the National Scene" in Section IV.

School Management and Canada-Community Agreements

Although emphasis in this year's report has been placed on the 41-42 initiative and on the promotion of linguistic duality, school management is considered to be a key area for the Department. Considerable progress has been made in every province and territory in matters relating to school management and minority- and second-language education. Equally important are the Canada-community agreements which were signed with most provinces and the two territories during 1995-96 to establish a renewed cooperation framework with the minority communities to make more efficient use of federal resources. An update on the Department's relationship with the communities is presented under the heading "New

Partnership with the Communities in Section III ("Key Issues"), while more specific information on school management and the signature of Canada-community agreements is provided in Section IV ("On the Regional Scene") along with other highlights from the regions.

A list of the Department's publications and promotional material and tables showing federal contributions in such areas as education and services in the official languages for each of the provinces and territories appear in the Appendixes. We have again included windows of information summarizing significant events that have taken place since March 31, 1996, but which do not fall within the time period covered by the report. In this way, we are able to provide the reader with the most up-to-date facts on the topics dealt with.