

## B. Repositioning of Direct Support for Official-Language Communities

What can be done to narrow the gap between the needs of official-language minority communities and the dwindling resources of Official Languages Support Programs? This was one of the big questions the Department of Canadian Heritage had to tackle in 1994-95. The challenge was especially daunting because the Department felt it was unacceptable to ignore 25 years of close cooperation and impose some type of procedure on the communities.

Knowing that it could not and should not put an end to its activities, the Department under-



*This process involves repositioning the relationship between Canadian Heritage and official-language communities in a way that reflects the experience we have acquired over the years and the challenges we must now face. It means initiating a new partnership, which preserves past accomplishments and ensures that communities can continue to progress."*

**Department of Canadian Heritage,  
Confidence in the Future, May-June 1994**

took to "reposition" its direct support for official-language communities by working with the communities to come up with new, more effective approaches. The exercise began with the May 1994 release of a discussion paper entitled

*Confidence in the Future: Redefining the Department's Relations with its Client Groups.*

In the discussion paper, the Department of Canadian Heritage stated its desire to put in place new mechanisms for cooperation and funding in a context of declining resources, but without reneging on its constitutional and legislative commitments or neglecting its other areas of intervention (for example, interdepartmental coordination). It explained the reasons for the exercise (the progress made to date, the financial status of the Official Languages Support Programs, the budget context, etc), set

out the principles and objectives of the repositioning and offered the communities a variety of options.

The discussion paper served as the backdrop for a round of consultations with the communities in each province and both territories as well as national Francophone organizations. The consultations, which began on May 27, 1994, in Prince Edward Island and ended on June 23, 1994, in Manitoba, drew large numbers of participants representing a good cross-section of community groups. Among the highlights of the consultations:

- the organizations recognized the urgent need for action in view of the new fiscal reality;
- the communities indicated they were willing to explore a new partnership with the Department of Canadian Heritage;
- the communities said they were prepared to do more to coordinate their efforts and set real priorities in light of available funds;
- there was an expression of strong interest in approaches based on a larger role for the communities in management;
- some communities reported that they had already pooled their resources and others agreed that savings could be made;
- the organizations acknowledged that across-the-board budget cuts would be ineffective and that a better solution would have to be found;
- the communities insisted that all available information be put on the table in order to ensure the transparency of the repositioning exercise;



*By signing the Canada-community agreement, the community indicates that it is accepting to reposition its operations and its financing on a long-term basis."*

**Patricia Courcelles, president of the Société franco-manitobaine, at the signature of the Canada-community agreement, June 27, 1994**

●the participants expressed the view that the exercise was necessary and would probably be beneficial provided the parties could come up with mechanisms that would meet the communities' new development needs.

Rationalizing resources and developing new forms of cooperation eliminate duplication among organizations and prevent energy being spent on projects that are not priorities. Consolidation of long-term community development means, of course, that the communities will have to become less reliant on government funds and develop their ability to fund on their own any projects they wish to undertake.

Once the general framework for the repositioning exercise was presented, the communities and national organizations were asked to work with departmental representatives to set the terms and conditions for new cooperation with the Department of Canadian Heritage. This cooperation was to be in the form of agreements between the Department and all of the organizations in a given community.

The approach calls for the community to take greater control. The agreements make it easier to take into account the different situations faced by official-language minority communities in different regions and provinces. These differences have a determining effect on the approaches needed to foster community development, the type of objectives that are set and the speed with which those objectives can be met.

Greater coordination will enable the community to acquire and present a coherent vision of its needs and come to terms on development priorities. This vision will guide the joint Department-community committee in allocating available funds. The Department of Canadian Heritage can thus be assured that its actions are producing better results.

### **A Canada-community agreement:**

- sets multi-year funding for the entire community in a province or territory;
- outlines the Department's commitments related to community development, federal-provincial cooperation and interdepartmental coordination;
- establishes the mechanisms through which community organizations together set their own priorities and suggest how available funds should be allocated (an agreement therefore encourages rationalized use of funds);
- creates a forum in which the community and the Department can review priorities and discuss the distribution of available funds.

## Developments Related to Repositioning in 1994-95

### NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, NOVA SCOTIA, NEW BRUNSWICK

In eastern Canada, the Francophone community in Newfoundland and Labrador and the Francophone and Acadian communities in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island set up task forces that reviewed the proposed options and then began negotiating Canada-community agreements with the Department of Canadian Heritage.

#### Since March 31, 1995

Canada-community agreements have been signed with the Acadian community in Nova Scotia, represented by the *Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse* (August 24, 1995); the Francophone community in Newfoundland and Labrador, represented by the *Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador* (October 24, 1995); the Acadian community in New Brunswick, represented by the *Forum de concertation des organismes acadiens et francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick* (January 24, 1996); and the Acadian and Francophone community in Prince Edward Island, represented by the *Société Saint-Thomas d'Aquin* (January 24, 1996).

### QUEBEC

The Anglophone community in Quebec is also negotiating a Canada-community agreement with the federal government. The community is being represented in the negotiations by the Quebec Community Groups Network, which comprises 13 English-Quebec organizations.

#### Since March 31, 1995

A Canada-community agreement has been signed with the Anglophone community in Quebec, represented by the Quebec Community Groups Network, on November 19, 1995.

### ONTARIO

Created in June 1994, the *Coalition pour le développement et l'épanouissement de la communauté franco-ontarienne et des minorités raciales francophones de l'Ontario* is an alliance of 55 organizations representing today's Franco-Ontarian community. The *Coalition* and the Department have begun discussions aimed at signing a Canada-community agreement.

**Since March 31,1995**

Discussions are continuing, particularly among the organizations, in order to come up with a structure that would serve to represent community interests in the agreement. A study commissioned by the *Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario* will be carried out to clarify the issues.

**MANITOBA**



*Signature of the Canada-community agreement with Manitoba's Francophone community.*

The *Framework Agreement for Supporting and Assisting the Development and Enhancing the Vitality of Manitoba's French-Speaking Community* was signed on June 27, 1994, with the *Société franco-manitobaine*. In the fall of 1994, the Franco-Manitoban community started looking for ways to optimize the resources allocated under the agreement, reviewing the division of roles among organizations and examining coordination practices. The results of the study, released in December 1994 in the report *Un tournant qu'il ne faut surtout pas rater...*, served as a base in reviewing community structures, establishing a community profile and setting specific development priorities.

**Since March 31,1995**

The community has reviewed the mechanism for managing the agreement in order to include more community representatives in the process of setting priorities. The Franco-Manitoban community has adopted a rigorous framework for review in order to determine how financial resources should be allocated to organizations in light of the established priorities.

**SASKATCHEWAN**

A pioneer in the field, the Francophone community in Saskatchewan now has its second Canada-community agreement. In 1994-95, the organizations reviewed and simplified their coordination and planning framework.

**Since March 31,1995**

A third Canada-community agreement has been signed with the Fransaskois community, represented by the *Association culturelle franco-canadienne de la Saskatchewan*, on April 26, 1996.

## ALBERTA

The *Framework Agreement for Supporting and Assisting the Development and Enhancing the Vitality of Alberta's French-Speaking Community* was signed on September 17, 1994, with the *Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta*. A joint committee was set up in the province to manage the agreement, make recommendations to the Minister of Canadian Heritage on core and project funding and determine whether the objectives of the agreement were being met.

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

The *Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique*, mandated to put together a community coordination project and a comprehensive development plan for the period from 1995 to 2000, conducted extensive consultations with Francophones in the province with a view to negotiating a Canada-community agreement.

### Since March 31, 1995

A Canada-community agreement has been signed with the Francophone community in British Columbia, represented by the *Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique*, on March 22, 1996.

## YUKON

The repositioning exercise got under way in the Yukon in November 1994. The 1995-2000 development plan for the Francophone community in the Yukon served as a base in negotiating the Canada-community agreement.

### Since March 31, 1995

A Canada-community agreement has been signed with the Francophone community in the Yukon, represented by the *Association franco-yukonnaise*, on March 29, 1996.

## NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

In anticipation of the signing of the Canada-Northwest Territories agreement, the text of which was drawn up in 1994-95, a policy on managing the funds provided under the agreement was drafted and approved by the *Fédération franco-ténoise* at a special meeting in February 1995.

**Since March 31,1995**

A Canada-community agreement has been signed with the Francophone community in the Northwest Territories, represented by the *Fédération franco-ténoise*, on November 4, 1995.

## **NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

In June 1994, national Francophone organizations appointed six of their representatives to the joint committee set up to negotiate the Canada-national organizations agreement. Two consultation meetings on the coordination mechanism were held: one in December 1994, the other in April 1995. A survey of 18 national Francophone organizations was conducted in March 1995 in anticipation of the April meeting. The results from the questionnaire helped bring about the consensus needed to negotiate an agreement.

**Since March 31,1995**

A Canada-community agreement has been signed with national Francophone organizations on February 9, 1996.

Adopting a new approach to coordinating their efforts, setting priorities and managing available resources gives official-language minority communities and the Department of Canadian Heritage another tool they can use to narrow the gap between their respective expectations and resources. Of course, the success of the exercise depends to a large degree on the spirit of cooperation that the parties have displayed for the past quarter-century.