

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)

**Summary of Activities - 1996-1997 - for the Implementation of
Section 41 - Official Languages Act:**

- Pan-Atlantic**
- New Brunswick**
- Nova Scotia and Enterprise Cape Breton**
- Newfoundland**
- Prince Edward Island**

ACOA continues to work with key economic players in the region and plays a front-line role in economic development activities in the communities throughout the region. This includes support to Francophone economic activity particularly with Francophone SMEs, young and women entrepreneurs, and organizations involved in economic development.

The Agency's activities for the implementation of the OLA's Section 41 in the 1996-97 fiscal year, are listed below.

The 1996-97 activities reflect ACOA's commitment to work with minority-language communities in their economic development efforts throughout Atlantic Canada.

The Commissioner of Official Languages has acknowledged ACOA's work by naming it on the Merit List 1996 for the development of the minority-language communities both on a Pan-Atlantic level and, particularly, in New Brunswick.

Pan-Atlantic 1996-97

In the Atlantic Region as a whole, ACOA contributed to the following activities and projects:

- Funding of/and participation at the first Forum of Francophone Business People and Elected Municipal Officials in Canada in St-Georges de Beauce, in Quebec, and at the regional forum in St-André, Madawaska. The purpose of these forums was to establish business networks, exchange information and create partnerships between the French-speaking business people of Canada.
- Funding to complete the French version of the accreditation program for small business counsellors offered by the Institute of Small Business Counsellors Inc. The program should be offered in French in early May 1997.
- Workshop held and French reference materials prepared for the Community Business Development Corporations to enable them to advise young clients on the Connexion program offering seed capital to young entrepreneurs.
- Funding for the production by the *Conseil Économique du N.-B.* of a third series of 20 episodes of the television program “*Temps d’Affaires*” on Francophone entrepreneurs in the Atlantic Provinces. This series is broadcasted throughout the region on *Radio-Canada*, RDI (the news network), and TV 5.
- Funding for the development of French-language teaching materials on entrepreneurship for Grade 4-5-6 students in Francophone schools in the Atlantic Provinces. In addition, material from the “*Coup de main*” collection for kindergarten to Grade 3 students was distributed in Francophone schools in 1996.
- Financial support to the launch by the “Atlantic Colleges Committee for Entrepreneurial Development” of a project to produce French and English teaching materials on entrepreneurship in Atlantic Provinces community colleges.
- The *Conseil Économique du N.-B.*'s study on “Acadian Entrepreneurship: its Origins, its Growth; its Future” was completed in 1996-97. It identified the weaknesses and challenges faced by Francophone entrepreneurs in the Atlantic Region.

- Presentation by the *Université de Moncton* of the results of the Projet Entrepreneurship Project-2 (PEP2) research project. The purpose of the study was to compare two cohorts of French-speaking and English-speaking high-school graduates in the Atlantic Provinces with regard to their experiences and their attitudes towards entrepreneurship.

- Funding to launch a study by the “Cape Breton Association of Women’s World Finance” on Francophone and Anglophone business women in the Atlantic Provinces with the aim of establishing a data base and a statistical profile of the latter.

- Coordination and facilitation of access by the Canada Business Service Centres (CBSC) to French-language reference materials for Francophone entrepreneurs, such as: “*Pour préparer l’avenir, le répertoire d’outils en entrepreneurship*”.

- Participation in day-long consultation sessions with official language minority communities held in:

- New Brunswick (December 3, 1996 in Dieppe)
- Nova Scotia (November 26, 1996 at the *Collège de l’Acadie*, Tusket; November 28, 1996 at the Community College, Port Hawkesbury)
- Prince Edward Island (November 13 and 14, 1996 in Summerside)
- Newfoundland (January 16, 1997, Labrador City; February 6 and 7, 1997, Mainland; February 17 and 18, 1997, St. John’s).
- National (January 16 and 17, 1997, Hull, Quebec).

New Brunswick 1996-1997

The ACOA New Brunswick office was involved in the following projects and activities with the province's Francophones:

- The organization of a first Francophone forum on new information technologies in French. This forum, held in Shippagan, provided a unique opportunity to inform the Francophone business, scientific, academic and cultural communities about the opportunities and challenges posed by information technologies. It gave the Francophone business community a better insight into its role in the development of this sector, with particular focus on investing in, creating, marketing and using French-language contents, services and products.
- Participation in the establishment of a Centre of Excellence in Computer Sciences at the Bathurst Community College (NBCC). This centre will promote the use and transfer of technology to small and medium-sized businesses in New Brunswick. Although it will also serve Anglophone businesses in New Brunswick, its main clientele will be New Brunswick Francophone businesses. One of the centre's principal goals will be to improve access to new world markets. The project was funded under the Canada/New Brunswick Agreement on Regional Economic Development.
- The organization of seven introductory sessions to international trade in various centres in New Brunswick, of which three were in French (Bathurst, Edmundston and Cocagne). Of the 56 firms that attended the sessions, 45% or 26 firms attended the French-language sessions. The results were highly positive.
- The Agency also took part in a day-long consultation session with official language minority communities. This event was held on December 3, 1996 in Dieppe.

- In terms of infrastructure...

- Under the heading of strategic projects in the first phase of the program, a project was approved for the creation of a local network linking five educational institutions in the Shippagan area so as to facilitate their Internet access.
- Another project involved linking all the provincial schools (including Francophone schools) to "SchoolNet" and the Internet.

Business development ...

- ACOA New Brunswick contributed to several projects developed by Francophone clients under the Business Development Program. They included the funding of a scientific park located on the campus of the Université de Moncton, the only French-language university in New Brunswick. One of the aims of the Scientific Park is to contribute to the province's economic development by fostering research and development on one hand, and greater interaction between university scientists and private industry on the other. The park will also provide new training and employment opportunities for *Université de Moncton* students, in addition to creating a solid partnership with southeastern New Brunswick industry.

- Various programs...

- Young Entrepreneur Programs

An entrepreneurship training program for young people was set up in 1996 with ACOA's support. The program targets post-secondary students and those who have completed high school and have expressed an interest in starting up a small business. Eight of the twelve Regional Economic Development Commissions (REDC) sponsored the program for Francophone students in their area, while the other four REDC's sponsored the English-language program.

- Step Up Program

A training and twinning program in the Edmundston area for Francophone women entrepreneurs who have reached the business expansion phase received support from ACOA.

- Business Ideas to Opportunities

A French-language training session in Bathurst for potential entrepreneurs interested in going into business and who are looking for start-up strategies was supported by ACOA.

Nova Scotia and Cape Breton 1996-1997

In Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, ACOA offers its services mainly to the business community and the economic sector. Here are a few examples:

- the business sector as a whole and the commercial sector;
- teaching institutions, i.e. *Université Sainte-Anne*, the *Centre Jodrey* and the *Collège de l'Acadie*;
- umbrella organizations like the *Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE)*, the *Société nationale de l'Acadie*, the Chamber of Commerce, etc.

ACOA's relations with the Francophone community is built on the delivery of bilingual services and the know-how of its staff in the Yarmouth, Halifax and Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation offices, who assist in the planning and implementation of economic development strategies in the Francophone regions of the province. The Agency also supports and makes use of the community development network to offer its various programs and projects. This is a network set up through the Regional Development Authorities (RDA) recently created in the province and the Community Business Development Centres (CBDC) located throughout the province, some of them in the Francophone regions.

ACOA activities:

ACOA continues to work with its clients to promote the province's economic growth, and takes part in a wide range of activities too numerous to mention in this short summary. It should be noted, however, that the capacity of ACOA Nova Scotia offices and its associated organizations to meet the needs of Francophone entrepreneurs has increased considerably during recent years. This document explains some of the major economic development activities undertaken by ACOA in 1996-97 in the Francophone communities of mainland Nova Scotia and provides an overview of its future orientations.

In economic development:

ACOA Nova Scotia continues to work proactively with Francophones to consider economic development opportunities and to find programs and activities likely to contribute to the development and growth of their communities. Here are a few of this year's activities:

- Multi-year financing for the operation of the *Centre Jodrey* at *Université Sainte-Anne*, which promotes the development and growth of Francophone small businesses;
- Funding of a study into human resources in the Acadian cultural sector to determine the possibility of developing an Acadian handicrafts sector;
- In cooperation with the *Centre Jodrey*, support for the development of an action plan for Acadian Entrepreneurship Development in South Western Nova Scotia for implementation in 1997-98;
- Regular consultations with organizations like the *FANE* to discuss economic development projects;
- Participation in forums, workshops and meetings on tourism development, cultural industries, historic sites and improvements to the educational system.
- The Agency took part in the day-long consultations with official language minority communities held on November 26 and 28, 1996, in Tusket and Port Hawkesbury respectively.

ACOA works together with its clientele:

ACOA continues to work with its clients to create viable business opportunities. The account managers and development officers in Yarmouth, Halifax and at the ECBC in Cape Breton help entrepreneurs and business people in the Francophone regions discover, evaluate and take advantage of viable commercial opportunities. Here are some of the most noteworthy initiatives involving Francophones:

- On-going consultations with some of the main economic development organizations to study and implement economic development strategies;
- Funding for the construction of an Acadian historical village in Pubnico;
- Funding for major entrepreneurship programs (*Institut de développement communautaire*, *Centre Jodrey*), in tourism (waterfront development by the Belliveau Cove development commission, Grand Pré redevelopment study and tuna fishery museum);
- Continuation of partnerships with major organizations like the *Centre Jodrey*, the *Collège de l'Acadie*, the *FANE*, etc.;
- Steps taken further to a study completed in 1995 on the possibility of exporting a project (funding provided under the Business Development Program);

- Development of a teleconference centre in cooperation with the *Collège de l'Acadie*;
- Support for new businesses in the tourism and culture sector in Cheticamp and Petit de Grat (dance festival and *Production Picasse*)
- Development of a vacation package, in collaboration with the *FANE* and a private firm, to promote the Acadian regions of the province.
- Visits to Francophone regions by the staff of the Canada Business Services Centre in Nova Scotia, who gave information sessions as part of their mandate to promote the centre's services throughout the province.

Regional Development Authorities (RDA):

The network of Regional Development Authorities was recently established by the Province of Nova Scotia through the merger of the numerous local development commissions. There are 14 independent Regional Development agencies. ACOA, in partnership with the province and the municipalities, provides five-year operational funding for these organizations. In Francophone regions, where four of these RDAs are located, ACOA encourages the authorities to be representative of the population they serve and to be sensitive to its needs. To meet these requirements, the RDAs employ Francophone or bilingual staff. In three of the RDAs, the number of Francophones on the board of directors is proportional to the region's Francophone population. The RDAs will soon adopt a mechanism that will enable them to obtain information on their activities in both official languages. Lastly, in cooperation with the province, ways are being found to improve the services offered by the RDAs to Francophone clients.

Community Business Development Centres (CBDC):

Since it was given responsibility for these organizations in 1995, ACOA has encouraged the community business development centres to promote the full participation of Francophone communities in each region. The results:

- An increase in the number of Francophone members on boards of directors;
- An increased capacity to serve a Francophone clientele;
- The adoption of monitoring measures such as quarterly workshops and regular board of director meetings to discuss services in the Francophone regions.

Newfoundland 1996-1997

The Francophone Affairs Steering Committee: Canada and the Francophone Community working together

In Newfoundland, Federal departments and the Francophone Community realize that working together goes a long way towards opening communication lines. The Francophone Affairs Steering Committee (FASC) is made up of Francophone Community representatives and Official Languages Act (OLA) representatives from several Federal Government departments. The Province has also become involved through its Translation Services Unit. The mandate of the FASC is to coordinate governmental support for key initiatives of the Francophone community and to promote the effective implementation of the Official Languages Act in Newfoundland and Labrador. Participation is not limited to existing members. It is generally felt that more members will mean more cooperation and better dissemination of information.

L'Association Régionale de la Côte Ouest (ARCO) and ACOA: Working Together towards a common goal

Every community needs a primary contact point, a place easily identified as where to go to get information. Such a centre was created by the Francophone Community on the Port au Port Peninsula (ARCO) through the establishment of the *Centre Scolaire et Communautaire de Sainte- Anne* in La Grande Terre. This state of the art facility houses a French school, a number of community services and ARCO.

ACOA realized the importance of this facility and the dedication of the people associated with it when they funded an economic development plan for the Francophone communities of the Peninsula. Upon completion of the plan, the Agency was again called upon to assist ARCO with funding for an Economic Development Officer. She was to be stationed at the Centre to assist the community with promotion and implementation of the plan, as well as coordination of efforts among the three communities.

Implementation of the plan is on schedule, and the Economic Development Officer and the ACOA West Coast representative meet on a regular basis to discuss the development of initiatives identified in the plan.

In addition to its annual contributions to the operations of ARCO, ACOA often contributes toward the costs of initiatives held by ARCO tied to economic development in the region. The Agency was also a prominent partner in the Canada/Community Consultations held in early 1997.

Community Economic Development: All the right players

Implementing a plan to develop a community takes a lot of work. For this reason ARCO and ACOA developed the concept for a Resource Committee to provide assistance and guidance in the implementation of the Development Plan. The committee is chaired by ARCO, and agenda items and background work is carried out by ARCO and ACOA. The committee is made up of all federal, provincial and community funding agencies on the Port au Port Peninsula that have a stake in the development plan. As well, representatives of the Zone 09 Development Board and the College of the North Atlantic are members. The committee meets on a regular basis to provide guidance on initiatives pursued and to discuss general programming issues pertinent to ARCO.

Entrepreneurship: Starting in the school

As is often the case in communities where the traditional source of employment has been tied to a resource-based sector, the number of people coming forward to develop new ventures outside the fishery is not overwhelming. Though the resource is in a decline, the entrepreneurial spirit is not strong enough to take hold.

For this reason, ACOA began working with ARCO and Franco-Jeunes in La Grande Terre to address the needs of the next generation. Information is made available for the Francophone youths who may be interested in starting their own businesses either during a summer season or more permanently.

ARCO and the Agency organized a Youth Ventures (YV) presentation for a group of potential young entrepreneurs. The event was a success, having three new entrepreneurs start summer ventures, through YV counselling. ACOA also assisted ARCO with the establishment of a small resource centre by supplying french language entrepreneurial videos, information packages on entrepreneurship and profiles of young entrepreneurs. The videos and other information were viewed during Small Business Week.

Future directions: We have just started!

It is generally accepted that gains in community economic development cannot happen overnight. AT ACOA Newfoundland, we realize that working to help communities help themselves is as important as providing project-specific financial assistance. We will continue to assist the Francophone community with the issues pertaining to coordination of their economic development efforts. Further more, we will continue to liaise with other Government departments to promote the interests of the Francophone community as they pertain to economic development.

To assure access in language of choice, ACOA will continue to offer program services in both official languages through the bilingual Development Officer stationed at the Corner Brook Office.

Prince Edward Island 1996-97

ACOA Prince Edward Island continued several activities and implemented others in the Francophone and Acadian communities of the Island. They include:

La Société de développement de la Baie Acadienne Inc.

ACOA has always worked closely with the *Société de développement* and with its forerunner, *La Commission Industrielle de la Baie Acadienne Inc.* The Agency provides operational funds to this development corporation to enable it to carry out its mandate of helping small businesses and young entrepreneurs. The *Société* is also involved in the economic development efforts of the *Évangeline* region.

In addition to operating funds, ACOA provides financial assistance to the corporation and its clients for specific projects. For example, the Agency provided funding to hire a Francophone consultant to assist with the economic development of the *Évangeline* Region. In addition, it provided financial assistance for the planned construction of a tourist and commercial boardwalk.

L'Association touristique Évangeline limitée

ACOA provided the necessary funding to hire a consultant to redefine the tourism development plan for the Abrams-Village Agricultural Exhibition.

In December 1996, the Agency provided funding for the hiring of a consultant to conduct a feasibility study of a tourism project known as "*cinescénie*".

ACOA recently authorized financial assistance to the Association for the hiring of a marketing coordinator for the Acadian Summer Holiday Festival.

Le Conseil acadien de Rustico Inc.

The Agency provided financial assistance to the *Conseil acadien de Rustico* for the hiring of a cultural promoter, who prepared a marketing plan to make "*Rendez-vous Rustico*" known outside the Island.

La Société Saint-Thomas d'Aquin limitée

The Agency helped the *Société* hire a consultant to prepare a development strategy so as to help the Acadians and Francophones close the gap with the Island's Anglophone population.

The Canada Business Services Centre

The Centre visits the Francophone regions and offers information sessions in French. The CBSC also ensures that all its services are available in both official languages. The CBSC will also be opening an office in the *Société de développement de la Baie Acadienne Inc.*'s complex to make it visible to the Francophone and Acadian community.