

ACTION PLAN 2000 - 2002

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF SECTION 41 OF THE
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

August 28, 2000



Atlantic Canada
Opportunities
Agency

Agence de
promotion économique
du Canada atlantique

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2000-2002 Action Plan

SUMMARY

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Person responsible: ACOA President

Principal Measures Planned

The 2000-2002 Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) Action Plan is based on the model of previous Action Plans. The Agency remains one of the leaders in the field of economic development in the Atlantic Region and will continue to maintain close ties with key economic players throughout the region. The Agency will continue to work closely with Francophone economic development organizations, women and young entrepreneurs. ACOA also gives a high priority to Francophone representation in Canada Business Service Centres (CBSCs), and community-based and regional development organizations.

ACOA actively promotes the implementation of its Action Plans. As a member of the National Committee for Canadian Francophone Human Resources Development and key partner of the various economic organizations in the Atlantic Region, the Agency is proud of its performance in complying with the provisions of Section 41 of the Official Languages Act (OLA).

In 2000-2002, the Agency will continue, in collaboration with the region's Francophone communities, to contribute to the development of economic development strategic plans. In all four Atlantic provinces, the financial assistance provided by ACOA depends largely on the number of applications submitted by minority language communities. In Newfoundland, the Agency will continue to work with the *Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador* and the *Association régionale de la côte ouest (ARCO)* to implement the economic development activities identified in its economic development plan. In Nova Scotia, ACOA will continue its support of the Centre Jodrey at the Université Sainte-Anne and will help the province's *Conseil de développement économique* develop its action plan. In Prince Edward Island, ACOA will follow through on its commitment to work closely with Francophone communities and economic development organizations for the implementation of various components of their strategic plan. In New Brunswick, ACOA will continue to work closely with Francophone economic development organizations and intends to focus on the development of e-commerce sector knowledge and tools.

NOTE: Please refer to Action Plan for other proposed measures.

Kurt Inder
National Coordinator
Telephone: (506) 851-3857

Preamble

ACOA reiterates its commitment to the objectives of Section 41 of the Official Languages Act, which are:

- a) *enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada and supporting and assisting their development; and*
- b) *fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.*

This action plan builds on the success of the plan developed for 1998-2000. Judging by the positive feedback from the Francophone community to our initiatives so far, we believe that the approach taken meets the needs of minority official language stakeholders in economic development matters. Annex A details the activities undertaken by ACOA throughout the Atlantic region during 1999-2000.

The Agency continues to work in partnership with other federal institutions and the Atlantic Region's provincial governments, participates in cost-shared programs and contributes to projects designed to establish and maintain a climate conducive to economic growth.

The Agency's coordination group for the implementation of Section 41 of the OLA functions in a framework of consultation and cooperation. The group consists of a regional coordinator from each regional office and a coordinator from Head Office, who acts as National Coordinator. Some regional offices have been able to set up their own working group in charge of implementing Section 41 within their own individual regions.

ACTION PLAN
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECTION 41
OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Part 1 General Information

1. Identification of institution

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Web site: <http://www.acoa-apeca.gc.ca>

2. Brief description of the institution's mandate

The Agency's mandate is based on Part I of the *Government Organization Act, Atlantic Canada, 1987*, R.S.C., ch. G-5.7, known as the *Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency Act*. The Act confers upon ACOA the mandate "*to increase opportunity for economic development in Atlantic Canada and, more particularly, to enhance the growth of earned incomes and employment opportunities in that region.*"

To meet its mandate, ACOA has the following objective: "*to support and promote new opportunities for economic development in Atlantic Canada, with particular emphasis on small- and medium-sized enterprises, through policy, program and project development and implementation and through advocating the interests of Atlantic Canada in national economic policy, program and project development and implementation.*"

ACOA is the main liaison for federal government programs, services and policies in the area of economic development.

To this end, ACOA has adopted the following strategic priorities:

- < **A) Policy, advocacy and coordination:** ACOA's advocacy effort is advanced through strategic alliances and partnerships via a network of regional offices and field offices, and through its Ottawa office. Cabinet policy support and advice to the Minister and

Secretary of State are carried out through gathering and dissemination of local, regional, provincial and national issue-related information. ACOA's approach includes internally driven research, research carried out by and with external partners, and policy roundtables and seminars.

- < **B) Access to Capital and Information:** Among the greatest barriers to the start-up and expansion of SMEs in Atlantic Canada is insufficient access to capital. Breaking down these barriers is one of ACOA's strategic priorities and the Agency helps with access to capital by, for example, making interest-free, unsecured loans through its Business Development Program (BDP). ACOA works to provide a client-centred business information network through the Canada Business Services Centres (CBSCs) and other business support organizations.

- < **C) Entrepreneurship and Business Skills Development:** ACOA, the principal advocate of entrepreneurship development in Atlantic Canada, has come up with a strategy that is recognized nationally and internationally as a successful model. This model approaches development on a very broad front, with ACOA working to create an environment in which entrepreneurship is widely perceived as a career option and where life-long learning is part of Atlantic Canada's business culture. The strategy focusses on four key areas: Entrepreneurship Education; Business Management Development; Youth Entrepreneurship; and, Skills Research and Advocacy.

- < **D) Innovation:** Development and marketing of new technologies, enhanced technology capability and growth of strategic sectors are the means advocated by ACOA to strengthen the innovation performance of the Atlantic region. To achieve this, ACOA focusses on five "themes": creation of new technology firms; technology skills; strategic sectors; technology diffusion; and, technology development and marketing.

- < **E) Trade, Tourism and Investment**
In order to enhance Atlantic Canada's trade and export skills and strengthen the export performance of the Atlantic region, ACOA has implemented a series of developmental and support activities in four key strategic areas: awareness; skills development; financing and policy; and, advocacy and coordination. Financial support involves the provision of assistance under the Business Development Program (BDP) for international market development, export-related expansions/modernizations, new product development and trade missions/fairs. Assistance for trade development projects is also provided under the Canada/Atlantic Provinces International Business Development Agreement (IBDA).

ACOA takes part in Team Canada missions and the Regional Trade Networks. ACOA-led forums such as the Pan-Atlantic Multilateral Trade Coordinating Committee and the Atlantic Investment Group contribute to the Agency's advocacy and coordination role in influencing national and regional trade policy. The ACOA Tourism Strategy sets out a

vision to develop an industry that is characterized by sustainable, world-class, and authentic travel experiences. The strategy aims to support expanded seasonality, rising productivity and the generation of quality job opportunities for Atlantic Canadians.

- < **F) Community Economic Development (CED)** : The Agency's CED mission is to help communities plan and implement their vision to create long-term, self-sustaining economic activity. ACOA works in partnership with Atlantic Canadian communities and with Community Business Development Corporations (CBDCs), supporting the ongoing counselling and financial services the CBDCs provide to SMEs in rural communities. ACOA's key objectives in CED are to: strengthen coordination and cooperation between Atlantic CED partners; increase the availability of business capital in rural communities; create sustainable jobs in these communities; strengthen the community strategic planning process; and, encourage community ownership and empowerment in CED activities.

In support of ACOA's strategic priorities, the Agency assists its clients through the following programs and services:

- < *Business Development Program (BDP)*: The BDP is designed to assist SMEs to establish, expand or modernize, and to obtain interest-free, unsecured loans.
- < *Consulting Advisory Services (CAS)*: This program provides business clients with immediate access to consulting expertise to pursue business opportunities or solve problems.
- < *Canada Business Service Centres (CBSCs)*: Four CBSCs, one in each of the Atlantic Provinces, provide business-related services and information products to SMEs and aspiring entrepreneurs. Services are provided through a 1-800 telephone service, Internet communications, fax, and walk-in services.
- < *Community Futures Program*: ACOA, through delivery of the Government of Canada's Community Futures Program, supports autonomous, not-for-profit Community Business Development Corporations (CBDCs) to help entrepreneurs in rural areas to access the information, advice and capital required to succeed.
- < *Cooperation Program*: Consisting of comprehensive, federal-provincial, cost-shared agreements, this program provides strategic investment benefiting an industry, a sector, a community, or a province.
- < A new five-year initiative, the *Atlantic Investment Partnership (AIP)*, designed to stimulate stronger economic growth and create good quality jobs, will be delivered by ACOA. It will involve the research community, the private sector, community leaders and the four Atlantic provincial governments. The Atlantic Investment Partnership will make major investments in four major areas: Innovation; Community Economic Development; Trade and Investment; and, Entrepreneurship and Skills Development.
- < The *Interdepartmental Partnership with the Official Language Communities (IPOLC)*: ACOA may enter into a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Canadian

Heritage, who administers the IPOLC, with a view to support activities contributing to the global and durable development of minority official language communities.

3. Officers responsible

HEAD OFFICE

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***Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation is responsible for the delivery of ACOA programs in Cape Breton.**

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4. Period covered by Action Plan

The Action Plan covers the period from April 1, 2000 to March 31, 2002.

Part 2 Identification of Community Needs**5. Means used to identify needs of official-language minority communities at national and regional levels**

To meet the needs of the Francophone communities of Atlantic Canada, ACOA holds regular consultations with Francophone organizations and plays an active role in workshops, meetings and consultation sessions with Francophone economic development groups in the region. ACOA officials are in constant contact with official-language minority community representatives throughout the region and work in close cooperation with them in order to meet their needs. Agency staff in the district offices throughout the Atlantic Region facilitate the communities' participation in programs within their own region. Through its membership in the National Committee for Canadian Francophonie Human Resources Development, ACOA cooperates with other Francophone communities in Canada and other federal departments with an economic mandate.

At the regional level, ACOA works very closely with Francophone economic organizations such as the *Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick*, the *Centre Jodrey* in Nova Scotia, the *Association régionale de la côte ouest* in Newfoundland, the *Société de développement économique de la Baie acadienne* in Prince Edward Island and with regional economic development authorities, commissions and boards, such as the *Regroupements de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE)*, to keep them informed of the vast range of services available to Francophone entrepreneurs. In Newfoundland, the Agency works with the *Association régionale de la côte ouest* on the development and implementation of an economic development plan for the Port-au-Port Peninsula; in New Brunswick, it provided support for the planning studies needed to prepare the *Sommet de la Francophonie*; in Nova Scotia, ACOA is participating in the development of a strategy designed to increase the opportunities for young people to find work in their own communities; and, in Prince Edward Island, it is in regular contact with the Francophone business community.

In addition, ACOA keeps abreast of the communities' needs by maintaining close relations with various stakeholders, such as business leaders, industry associations, business groups, institutions and universities. It is also in regular contact with provincial government leaders and senior officials. Furthermore, the Agency's four regional Vice-Presidents chair the four Atlantic region federal councils, which bring together the senior officials of key federal institutions. As part of its efforts to ensure the transparency of the implementation of Section 41 of the OLA, ACOA has made its activity report for 1998-2000 available to the communities.

6. Principal needs identified at national and regional levels

- < Need to develop and apply strategic regional economic development plans in the Francophone regions of Atlantic Canada;
- < need to access funding for Francophone-owned SMEs and Francophone organizations involved in economic development, particularly in sectors such as aquaculture, tourism, culture and technology;
- < need to develop Francophone SMEs in the Atlantic Region, particularly in the knowledge economy, among young people and women;
- < need to continue increasing Francophone representation in economic development organizations such as Community Business Development Corporations (CBDCs) and Canada Business Service Centres (CBSCs);
- < need to build on the success of existing partnerships with Francophone economic development organizations such as the *Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick*, the *Centre Jodrey* in Nova Scotia and the *Société de développement de la Baie acadienne* in Prince Edward Island and the four *RDÉEs* in the Atlantic Provinces; and
- < need to develop information and communications technologies in the Francophone communities of Atlantic Canada.

Part 3 Action Plan Contents and Timetable

7. a) Measures (national or regional) proposed by the institution to respond to community needs

ACOA will continue to collaborate with key economic players in Atlantic Canada and act as a catalyst for economic development in the region. Through its program delivery as well as its coordination and advocacy role, ACOA will work to promote economic development in Francophone communities. Thus, ACOA will make every effort to work in cooperation with economic partners in the Francophone community to identify and develop projects that fit into Agency programs.

Throughout Atlantic Canada, ACOA will:

- < continue to play an economic development leadership role, particularly in the economic development of minority official language communities;
- < continue to promote greater Francophone representation in community economic development organizations, such as the regional development authorities, the Canada Business Service Centres and general regional development organizations;

- < support Francophone economic activity, particularly with respect to assistance for SMEs in the field of knowledge economy, for young people and women entrepreneurs in the Francophone community, and Francophone organizations involved in economic development;
- < work in cooperation with other federal and provincial departments and agencies and with groups representing Francophone communities to better meet their needs;
- < promote and support human resources training and entrepreneurship development;
- < continue to regularly consult with minority official language groups, particularly in the development of the Agency's Action Plan for the implementation of Section 41 of the OLA;
- < work on the development of new information and communications technologies; and
- < work in close cooperation with the four coordinating groups on economic development and employability (RDÉE) in the Atlantic provinces.

Examples of specific activities on a province-by-province basis to support the above include the following:

- < at Head Office, ACOA will finalize its official languages policy aimed at informing employees of their obligations with respect to the use of advertising media targeting both official language communities;
- < in New Brunswick, ACOA plans to hold e-commerce workshops and trade fairs, in the northern part of the province;
- < in Newfoundland, the Agency will continue to sit on the Francophone Affairs Steering Committee and continue to deliver services to members of the public in the language of their choice;
- C the Nova Scotia office will support the implementation of the *Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse* and assist in the development of its action plan; and
- < in Prince Edward Island, the Agency will continue to work with the *Société de développement de la Baie acadienne* to implement its structure designed to promote the economic development of the Francophone community.

<p>b) Proposed means by which the Agency will inform the official languages minority communities of its programs and services</p>
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In addition to taking full advantage of its internal resources to consult the private sector, the Agency will hold regular consultations with economic development organizations to inform the official language minority communities about its programs.

It is essential for the Agency that the Action Plan be widely distributed so that all economic development players be able to consult it. As with the 1998-2000 version, the 2000-2002 version will be available on ACOA's Internet site.

8. Measures proposed to evaluate success of expected results

The Agency will continue to be responsive to the needs of the community and seek on-going feedback through its network of offices, committees, contacts and partners.

As part of its official consultation process with minority language groups, ACOA will seek feedback regarding its programs and services.

The Agency will work with Canadian Heritage to develop and implement an evaluation framework to measure the intended results of the implementation of Section 41 of the OLA. This exercise will be an integral part of the Agency's accountability accord process and results will be monitored on a regular basis.

9. Financial and other resources dedicated to completion of the Action Plan

In addition to the measures set out in its Action Plan, ACOA will continue making both its financial and human resources program available to the Francophone communities. Expenditures are dependent upon the level of activity generated by the communities themselves and, in collaboration with ACOA, on the projects submitted to the Agency by local entrepreneurs.

Part 4 Communications Plan

10. Measures proposed by the Agency to publicize the Action Plan and report on achievements inside and outside of the Agency

As set out in its 1998-2000 Action Plan, ACOA will continue to widely distribute its Action Plan to Francophone organizations with an interest in economic development. In addition, the Action Plan will be made available to all Agency employees and will be on the Agency's Internet site.

Through its regular communications strategy, ACOA will continue to inform client groups from both official language communities about its programs, policies and regulations relating to economic development in Atlantic Canada. A proactive approach will be used to furnish information, undertake promotion and invite participation in economic development by clients of the minority official language groups and regions.

One of ACOA's priorities will be to pursue the development of its extensive network of contacts and partnerships.

Part 5 Signatures

Michael Horgan
President

Date

Kurt Inder
National Coordinator

Date

ANNEX A

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES for 1999-2000

Section 41 - Official Languages Act

ACOA Head Office and Regional Offices

<i>1)</i>	<i>Pan-Atlantic</i>	<i>A-1</i>
<i>2)</i>	<i>Nova Scotia</i>	<i>A-2</i>
<i>3)</i>	<i>New Brunswick</i>	<i>A-3</i>
<i>4)</i>	<i>Newfoundland and Labrador</i>	<i>A-4</i>
<i>5)</i>	<i>Prince Edward Island</i>	<i>A-5</i>

**Pan-Atlantic
Report on Activities for 1999-2000**

ACOA Head Office undertook numerous activities in 1999-2000 related to the implementation of Section 41 of the *Official Languages Act*. Here are a few examples:

- < For ACOA and a large number of other government and private sector institutions, the highlight of 1999 in terms of La Francophonie was, without a doubt, the *Sommet de la Francophonie* held in Moncton in September. The Summit brought together 52 heads of state and governments of countries sharing French as a common language. ACOA joined with the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs (DIA) of New Brunswick, under a memorandum of agreement, to maximize the potential economic spin-offs of the Summit.
- < ACOA, with DIA, initiated the establishment of a coordination committee comprising representatives of federal institutions and the governments of the three Maritime provinces. The committee's mandate was to assist in the coordination, support and promotion of the various activities to be held before, during and after the Summit.
- < ACOA used the opportunity provided by the Summit to highlight the advantages of doing business in Atlantic Canada and to strengthen ties and partnerships between businesses, associations, universities and governments in Atlantic Canada and those of the countries of La Francophonie.
- < ACOA, in partnership with the Province of New Brunswick, contributed financially to four studies related to the holding of the Summit. These studies, in the fields of communications, cultural strategy, peripheral events and sponsorship coordination, were designed to better define and increase the economic development opportunities related to the Summit, and identified four main areas of activity: youth; culture; the economy; and, the community sector.
- < ACOA took on the coordination work in the economic sector and its participation in organizing events related to the Summit in this sector was in direct keeping with its mandate, that of enhancing economic development opportunities in Atlantic Canada, particularly the growth of earned income and job creation in the region.
- < Although most of the Summit activities were held in New Brunswick, ACOA committed itself to ensuring that businesses from the four Atlantic Provinces could benefit from the economic spin-offs. A wide range of public and private sector organizations sponsored and organized the majority of Summit-related events.
- < In all, ACOA invested about \$1.7 million, i.e., 25% of the total cost of approximately \$6.6 million, into twenty peripheral events mainly related to the economic sector.
- < Several events of an economic nature held in association with the Summit were largely

assisted by ACOA.

- < The 3rd Forum of Francophone Business People of Canada, organized by the *Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick* and held in Bathurst, attracted 264 participants, including Francophone entrepreneurs from every province and territory. Thirty-four agreements were signed during the event.
- < A Youth Business Forum was held in conjunction with the Forum of Francophone Business People.
- < Another Summit-related activity was the 7th Francophone Business Forum, held in Bathurst, which brought together some 330 Francophone economic decision-makers, investors and entrepreneurs, and over 20 speakers of 22 different nationalities. The Forum provided an opportunity to create ties and develop new business relationships and led to the signing of an agreement between the New Brunswick Community College in Bathurst and the *Institut supérieur de technologie industrielle* of Dakar and the establishment of a dedicated Atlantic Francophone Business Forum.
- < The *Conférence Acadie-Sherbrooke 1999*, held in Moncton and co-sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO), was the scene of fruitful discussions on health matters in the Francophone world. Over 530 participants from 23 countries of La Francophonie attended, and more than 230 scientific presentations were given.
- < Some 343 people attended the international Rendez-vous BioAtlantech conference held in Fredericton, where 57 speakers from 12 different countries dealt with genomics and functional property (biotechnology) developments in the fields of agriculture, aquaculture and forestry. The event, sponsored by BioAtlantech Inc., gave Atlantic Canadian entrepreneurs an opportunity to display their skills in these fields to entrepreneurs, scientists and investors from Francophone countries and to discuss common needs with them.
- < Franco Com 99, an international trade fair held in Dieppe, featured eight leading sectors in Atlantic Canada (high technology, agri-food, the environment, fisheries and aquaculture, oceanography, professional services, construction, and distance training). It was an opportunity for local business people to showcase their products and services and to promote partnerships and trade. Over 225 delegates from the Atlantic Region and foreign countries attended and 17 Atlantic Canadian companies and organizations signed letters of agreement for partnerships with companies and organizations from various countries of La Francophonie.
- < The International Conference on Sustainable Development sponsored by the Government of Nova Scotia and held in Halifax, allowed Atlantic Canada stakeholders to demonstrate their sustainable development know-how to 200 participants from 20 different countries.

- < Two hundred and seventy-one participants from 11 different countries took part in the International Conference on the Development of Smart Communities, held in Summerside and organized by the Institute of Island Studies of the University of Prince Edward Island, in collaboration with the *Société nationale de l'Acadie* and the Government of Prince Edward Island.
- < The Technological Showcase, a virtual exhibition enabling delegates to learn more about Canada, its government and services through some 60 multi-media projects and federal, provincial and international Internet sites, was set up inside the Place du Sommet, a meeting place for delegates.
- < With the help of a financial contribution from the federal government, a new airport ramp and taxiways were constructed at the Moncton Airport. This provided space for the aircraft of the delegations from states and governments taking part in the Summit, and will also serve the population of Greater Moncton and the province of New Brunswick for years to come.
- < In 1999, ACOA participated, as one of nine federal representatives, in the regular activities of the National Committee for Canadian Francophonie Human Resources Development.
- < ACOA continues to work on the implementation of the Memorandum of Agreement, signed with the Canadian Francophone Community, acknowledging the mechanism for mutual cooperation to govern activities aimed at enhancing the vitality and supporting the development of French-language linguistic minority communities in Canada.
- < Again in 1999, ACOA was the main sponsor of the television series *Temps d'affaires*, profiling the activities of Atlantic Canadian entrepreneurs and their associates which is broadcast on Canadian and international television networks.
- < As part of its research into entrepreneurship development, ACOA launched a series of research discussion groups on how young people perceive entrepreneurship, so as to identify the differences in perceptions between Francophones and Anglophones. The results will be used to fine tune communications and promotional efforts with the two language communities.
- < ACOA ensured the participation of Francophone speakers in the plenary sessions and workshops at the Spirit of Entrepreneurship 2000 conference held in Halifax, N.S. in May 2000.
- < The Agency again worked, in 1999, with the *Assemblée des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada* on a mentorship project in which retired persons shared their work experiences with young Francophones interested in entrepreneurship.

- < ACOA sits on the youth sectoral table of the National Committee for Canadian Francophonie Human Resources Development and has used this opportunity to work with youth groups throughout the Atlantic region.
- < In its written material on creating one's own job by starting a small business, ACOA ensures that the examples given also reflect the Francophone model, as well as ensuring that publications are prepared and made available to the public in both official languages and are distributed in French-language educational institutions in Atlantic Canada.
- < With respect to policy development at Head Office, the Agency ensures that Francophones are included in studies and research and that publications are available in both official languages at the ACOA library and on its Internet and Intranet sites.
- < ACOA took part in an interdepartmental forum on research into the language communities, coordinated by Canadian Heritage, and was able to express its research needs with regard to the skills required by the knowledge-based economy.
- < The research agreement signed between ACOA and the Canadian Institute for Research on Regional Development led to preliminary research on three topics: community economic development; value-added marine products; and bio-pharmaceuticals. Francophone communities in the region were consulted during the research and the data gathered from the latter will be included in the reports.
- < ACOA funded a feasibility study into the establishment of an Acadian non-governmental organization aimed at informing, training and bringing together stakeholders in the areas of cooperation and international development, and fostering awareness therein, and at facilitating access to related projects and funding programs;
- < In conjunction with the *Sommet de la francophonie*, ACOA conducted a feasibility study and had a business plan done towards the creation of an Atlantic component of the Francophone Business Forum, for the benefit of the Francophone and Acadian business community of the Atlantic Region.
- < Sixteen entrepreneurs from Atlantic Canada took part in the *Mondial des Amériques*, a national networking event held in Ottawa in November 1999, meeting with two hundred other Francophone entrepreneurs from North and South America.
- < ACOA supported the establishment of a consortium of Atlantic Canadian Francophone and Acadian organizations working to develop a strategic plan for the development of export markets for cultural and artistic entrepreneurs.
- < ACOA took part in the sectoral round table on rural development of the National Committee for Canadian Francophonie Human Resources Development and produced a

- < three-year strategic plan in collaboration with the other round table members.
- < ACOA provided support for the Société nationale de l'Acadie's study on tourism products. The study considered the opportunities and potential areas of collaboration for the development of Acadian tourism products.
- < ACOA is also a member of the round table on tourism of the National Committee for Canadian Francophonie Human Resources Development.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS (2000-2002)

- < ACOA will continue to play an active role on the National Committee for Canadian Francophonie Human Resources Development in terms of national coordination as well as on the sectoral round tables on the knowledge economy, rural development, the integration of young people into economic development, and tourism.
- < The Agency will work in close cooperation with the four economic development and employability groups (RDÉEs) in the Atlantic provinces.
- < In collaboration with other federal and provincial economic institutions, ACOA will continue to work, plan and coordinate activities aimed at promoting regional economic development.
- < ACOA intends to continue taking the Francophone reality into account in its research and economic development policy making in the Atlantic Region.
- < In the year 2000, ACOA will strive to organize and conduct theme camps on entrepreneurship for high school students. A number of these camps will target young Francophones.
- < In terms of trade and investments, ACOA will remain responsive to Francophone entrepreneurs in the region and will make every attempt to include a Francophone dimension in the planning of international trade initiatives.
- < ACOA will continue its efforts to assist the consortium of Atlantic Canadian Francophone and Acadian organizations with the development of a strategic plan for the development of export markets for cultural and artistic products;
- < In an effort to continue its youth entrepreneurship initiatives, such as the *Cap sur l'entrepreneuriat* teaching guide, ACOA is looking at other ways of reaching the student population through extra-curricular activities such as entrepreneurship camps;
- < In the year 2000, ACOA plans to continue its research into the perceptions of

- entrepreneurship held by young people 15 to 29 years old. ACOA will identify a very detailed segmentation of young Francophones and Anglophones for its research.
- < It is possible that the mentorship program, in partnership with the *Assemblée des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada*, will continue in 2000-2001.

 - < For the year 2000, ACOA is examining the possibility of adopting other promotional means to complement the *Temps d'affaires* television series, in an attempt to reach a younger target audience (15 to 29 years old). The preferred option would be to produce television vignettes on young entrepreneurs.

 - < Based on the Atlantic Canada Acadian Tourism Strategy, finalized in 1998, the *Commission touristique acadienne du Canada atlantique* is striving to develop, refine and package the Acadian tourism product and to promote it in strategically relevant markets.

**Nova Scotia Office and
Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation
Report on Activities for 1999-2000**

CONTEXT

According to the 1996 census, the number of persons with French as their first official language in Nova Scotia totals 34,090, accounting for 3.8% of the population. In mainland Nova Scotia, the number comes to 27,035, or 3.6% of the total population of this part of the province; the largest concentrations of Francophones are found in the counties of Halifax (9,295), Digby (6,930) and Yarmouth (6,200). Together, these three counties account for 83% of the Francophone population of mainland Nova Scotia.

There are approximately 7,045 Francophones on Cape Breton Island, most of them living in rural communities on Isle Madame and in northern Inverness county. They represent approximately 4.5% of the Island's population.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

ACOA's activities with the Francophone population of Nova Scotia are carried out in cooperation with:

- < the general business and trade sectors;
- < educational institutions, namely the *Université Sainte-Anne*, the *Centre Jodrey* and the *Collège de l'Acadie*; and
- < umbrella organizations such as the *Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse*, the *Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse* (FANE), the *Société nationale de l'Acadie* and the *Chambre de commerce*.

A central element of ACOA's interactions with the Francophone communities is the delivery of bilingual services and the expertise of its staff at its Halifax, Sydney (in partnership with Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, hereafter ECBC) and Yarmouth offices, who assist in the planning and implementation of economic development strategies in the Francophone regions of the province. ACOA also supports and uses the Community Development Network for the delivery of its programs and projects. This network is made up of the Regional Development Authorities (RDAs) that coordinate economic development at the local level, and the Community Business Development Centres (CBDCs) that offer loan and consulting services to SMEs. These

agencies operate throughout the province of Nova Scotia.

Although problems persist in the economies of the Francophone regions, some progress has been noted. Overall, two-thirds of Francophones in the province live in rural areas, many of them in the areas hardest hit by the decline in the fishing industry. The Acadian community of Isle Madame, in Cape Breton, was devastated by the collapse of groundfish stocks in the early 1990s, but has become an example of economic development success, thanks to strong local leadership, the determination of the community, and joint action by government partners. The Acadian communities in the southwestern part of the province were also affected by the collapse of groundfish stocks and have also been able, with the help of local RDAs and other economic development players, to set up various projects aimed at diversifying their economy; such as the manufacturing of new non-fishery related products in shipbuilding facilities and initiatives that take advantage of opportunities in a growing tourism sector.

Overview of Activities by Strategic Priorities of the Agency

1. Policy, Advocacy and Coordination

The province's Francophones have set up a number of organizations, networks and institutions that foster community development. ACOA Nova Scotia contributes to these community initiatives in various ways. The activities undertaken during the last year include:

- < meetings between Francophone organization representatives and ACOA Nova Scotia to discuss economic development initiatives;
- < meetings, on average more than once a month, between ACOA Nova Scotia and various community and business sector representatives; and,
- < representation by ACOA Nova Scotia on the Nova Scotia steering committee taking part in preparations for the *Sommet de la Francophonie*, held in Moncton in 1999. ACOA contributed \$18,000 to the organization of the conference on sustainable development held in Halifax in September 1999.

2. Trade, Investment and Tourism

The Francophone community in Nova Scotia is found mainly in rural areas. Tourism is considered a key economic development sector not only in the province, but worldwide; it is also a sector in which rural communities have an advantage, not to mention the fact that attractions of a cultural and ecological nature are part of the dominant trend in tourism today. The Francophones of Nova Scotia have a strong cultural identity and live in one of the most scenic parts of the province. They are ideally positioned to take advantage of the growth of the tourism sector. To facilitate this development, ACOA Nova Scotia has worked in cooperation with

community partners on the following activities:

- < support for four projects under the International Years of Music program. This is an initiative funded under the Cooperation Program;
- < through the South West Shore Development Authority, assistance for the development of the Acadian Village project in Pubnico, and the publication of a French version of the provincial tourism guide *Doers and Dreamers Guide*;
- < assistance, under the Business Development Program, with the production of the *Institut de développement communautaire* tourism promotion brochure for the Acadian regions;
- < benefits for the Acadian regions and groups from the province-wide implementation of Trans-Canada Trail development projects;
- < a \$900,000 grant by ACOA Nova Scotia under the Cooperation Program for restoration work at the Grand-Pré National Historic Site;
- < continued funding by ACOA and provincial governments for the development of a marketing strategy for the Acadian regions of Atlantic Canada;
- < a \$11,000 contribution for the development of a web page to promote cultural tourism and ecotourism in the Acadian region of Argyle; and,
- < ACOA Nova Scotia participation in May 1999 in the consultation sessions on tourism organized for the Acadian community.

3. Innovation and Technology

ACOA Nova Scotia has set up a central innovation and technology project, the Information Economy Initiative (IEI), which has been ongoing for three years. This \$73 million project is designed to develop the province's technological infrastructure, connect Nova Scotians to the Internet and provide all the regions with the basic technological tools that will enable them to profit from a technology-based economy.

Under the Initiative, Université Sainte-Anne will be connected to the provincial high-speed network so as to link to other universities. The school component of the project has enabled the 17 schools of the provincial Acadian school board to connect to the Internet, and they have been consulted about the installation of new computer equipment.

The community access component of the Information Economy Initiative has led to the

installation of Community Access Programs (CAP) in numerous communities in the province. There are currently ten officially Francophone CAPs, with other sites in or near Acadian communities.

4. Entrepreneurship and Skills Development

One of the main tools used by ACOA Nova Scotia to promote the progress of Acadian communities in the fields of entrepreneurship and skills development is the core financial assistance it provides to the *Centre Jodrey* at the Université Sainte-Anne, one of five University Business Development Service Centres supported by the Agency in the province. The *Centre Jodrey* is particularly active in the Francophone communities of Digby and Yarmouth counties. Discussions are under way about the possibility of extending the centre's activities to Cape Breton.

In the financial year beginning in September 1999, ACOA extended Centre funding for another three years, a total investment of \$352,000.

Entrepreneurship development sessions were organized in the Francophone schools of southwestern Nova Scotia as part of activities available during the March break.

Three loans have been granted under the Business Development Program to Francophone entrepreneurs in southwestern Nova Scotia.

5. Community Economic Development

Given that the majority of the province's Francophone population is found in rural areas, ACOA Nova Scotia participates in a wide range of activities designed to meet the economic development needs of this population.

One of the main activities favoured by ACOA Nova Scotia to facilitate the economic development of rural areas is the creation of a network of Community Business Development Corporations (CBDCs) across the province. A few of the measures taken by these corporations in recent years to assist Francophone communities include:

- < monitoring the number of Francophones on the boards of directors of CBDCs in Francophone areas to ensure a fair and equitable representation. Francophone participation on boards is always representative of the Francophone population in the three CBDCs serving predominantly Francophone regions. The Digby CBDC continues to offer services in the Clare area under an agreement with the *Centre Jodrey*;

- < soliciting feedback from board members to ensure that Francophones are equitably represented on boards and promoting the involvement of other partners in development matters in the Francophone community; and,
- < being responsive to the needs of Francophone communities, as evidenced not only by the make-up of the boards of directors, but also by the collateral required, and the various partnerships established with ACOA field staff, the provincial government and the *Centre Jodrey*.

ACOA Nova Scotia also meets the economic development needs of rural areas by providing core funding to Regional Development Authorities (RDAs). Results during the last year include:

- < French language service delivery by bilingual staff in the Strait-Highlands, South West Shore, and Western Annapolis Valley areas;
- < the establishment of a partnership between the South West Shore Development Authority and the *Centre Jodrey* for service delivery in the Clare region;
- < habitat restoration work in the Meteghan River undertaken in collaboration with the Clare High School;
- < the establishment of a partnership between the RDA, Université Sainte-Anne, the *Collège de l'Acadie* and the Acadian school board to establish the need for a fisheries school in the Clare region;
- < the hiring of a bilingual communications officer assigned to develop a series of promotional articles on the services provided by RDAs;
- < the sponsorship of a study by the South West Shore Development Authority on the establishment of the *Conseil de développement économique acadien* and the preparation of an activity plan for the Pointe à Rocco chapel;
- < collaboration between the South West Shore Development Authority and the *Collège de l'Acadie* regarding training for employment in call centres in the region;
- < responsibility for Acadian cultural development matters assigned to one of its bilingual officers by the South West Shore Development Authority;
- < the organization of activities in both official languages by RDAs in the Strait-Highlands and Acadian Shore regions; and,
- < continuing support for the Saint-Bernard music festival.

Thanks to the sound relations and partnerships between the *Centre Jodrey* and the local staff of the Nova Scotia Department of Economic Development and ACOA, financial assistance continues to be offered to Francophone communities and marketing initiatives have been broadened to better inform the Francophone community about available assistance.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS (2000-2002)

In its 2000-2002 Action Plan, ACOA Nova Scotia will continue to strengthen its partnerships with the province's Francophone organizations and associations. It will create new partnerships and reinforce existing partnerships through the recently established *Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse*. In addition to the activities set out in the Action Plan, ACOA Nova Scotia will continue to work on the implementation of the Canadian Fisheries Adjustment and Restructuring Program (CFAR) in the communities eligible for the program. ACOA will focus on the following initiatives:

- < taking measures to ensure that local economic development partners (RDAs and CBDCs) meet the needs of the Francophone communities they are serving;
- < participating in the development of a strategy aimed at increasing the chances of young Acadians finding jobs in their communities;
- < participating in the work of the official languages sub-committee of the Federal Council;
- < consulting the boards of directors of CBDCs for their opinions and identifying how to best serve the Acadian and Francophone communities;
- < monitoring the level of assistance offered to businesses by CBDCs in Francophone areas;
- < making efforts to establish viable projects and commercial partnerships with Francophone entrepreneurs and economic development organizations;
- < continuing to ensure that Francophone communities take advantage of the activities and programs implemented under the Cooperation Program;
- < ensuring that Acadian and Francophone clients have access to information services and products in both official languages;
- < supporting initiatives to develop a spirit of entrepreneurship among young Acadians, both in and out of school, and, in particular, promote the adaptation of the entrepreneurship courses given in schools to reflect the Acadian culture, and assess the effectiveness of other programs to develop entrepreneurship talents;

- < ensuring that the content of the Young Entrepreneurs ConneXion program is adapted to the needs of young Acadians and Francophones;
- < providing assistance and guidance to future entrepreneurs and established entrepreneurs through the *Centre Jodrey* University Business Development Service Centre;
- < contributing to the development of innovative projects that will help Acadian and Francophone businesses, new and established, make better use of information and communications technologies, and support the implementation of projects of this nature;
- < taking measures to promote the development and marketing of Acadian tourism products, and enhance the profile of such products;
- < helping Acadian and Francophone communities fully benefit from the economic development opportunities provided by the events and anniversaries to come - World Acadian Congress in 2004, anniversary of Champlain's voyage to Nova Scotia, etc;
- < maintaining relations with Tourism Atlantic to promote Acadian and Francophone initiatives in the province and see to their coordination;
- < supporting the establishment of the *Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CDÉNE)* and contributing to the preparation of its economic development action plan;
- < increasing activities in the areas served by the RDAs, especially the Francophone areas; and,
- < encouraging the RDAs representing the Argyle and Clare areas to develop distinct action plans for these regions based on their strategic development plans.

**New Brunswick Office
Report on Activities for 1999-2000**

CONTEXT

According to Statistics Canada's 1996 census, the number of persons with French as their first official language totals 241,040 in New Brunswick, accounting for 33.2% of the province's total population. Over 90% of the French-speaking population lives in the urban and rural areas of the northern and eastern parts of the province. They are concentrated in the counties of Madawaska, Restigouche, Gloucester, Northumberland, Kent and Westmorland, although they live in significant numbers in many other areas of the province such as Fredericton and Saint John.

The importance and vitality of both official languages in New Brunswick is a well-established reality. Historical facts in support of such an affirmation include:

- < in 1969, the *Official Languages Act* of New Brunswick declared English and French as the official languages of the province in the Legislative Assembly, in its courts, in education and in the provision of government services;
- < in 1973, the New Brunswick Department of Education recognized linguistic duality;
- < since 1981, New Brunswick has had two parallel and homogeneous school systems;
- < in 1982, the principles of the *Official Languages Act* and other important components of the language policy were enshrined in the Constitution through the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*;
- < in 1994, the governments of Canada and New Brunswick passed a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the equality of New Brunswick's English and French-speaking communities; and,
- < in 1994, the Department of Canadian Heritage introduced new measures in its strategy for implementing the provisions of the *Official Languages Act*: consultations with the official language minority communities; development of annual action plans and accountability reporting by key federal departments.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

In New Brunswick, ACOA offers all of its services in both official languages to all clients and delivers the services in the official language chosen by the client once the offer has been made. The Agency provides services primarily to the business and economic development sectors and to the regional development sector. ACOA New Brunswick has incorporated a continuous improvement strategy for all of its divisions with regard to the use of the French language, whether it is spoken, written or presented. This includes public information, staffing, language training and development and in-house quality standards.

ACOA New Brunswick's relations with the Francophone community are built on the prompt, professional delivery of services in French.

ACOA New Brunswick's various divisions work with all areas of economic development and assist regional agencies with the planning and implementation of development strategies for the Francophone regions of the province, such as those related to the Canada/New Brunswick Business Service Centres, the regional economic development commissions and the CBDCs.

In 1999-2000, the ACOA New Brunswick office was involved in the following projects and activities in the province's Francophone communities, presented by strategic priorities:

1. Policy, Advocacy and Coordination

In 1999-2000, a year marked by the *Sommet de la Francophonie* in Moncton, the ACOA New Brunswick office provided financial support for initiatives related to the event and also loaned human resources for the Summit itself. The provincial office positioned itself to maximize opportunities for economic development arising out of such a large-scale event. The *Sommet de la Francophonie* also provided networking opportunities for the province's Francophone entrepreneurs; several of them negotiated agreements with other Francophone countries.

The following events received Agency support, some in partnership with the Province of New Brunswick:

- < Four planning studies done on Summit reception and promotional services. The studies dealt with communications, cultural and parallel events and sponsorships;
- < The organization of the "*Village de la Francophonie*", an international meeting place where guests from throughout La Francophonie could meet Acadian and Francophone artists, cultural groups and community organizations;
- < Financial support to enable the Maliseet First Nation of Madawaska (the only French-

- speaking Aboriginal nation in New Brunswick) to take part in the *Village de la Francophonie* so as to promote the Aboriginal culture; and,
- < ACOA New Brunswick funded and collaborated on the holding of several conferences: the Francophone Business Forum; the *Conférence sur les études supérieures en matière de technologie et de développement professionnel*; and, Initiative 99 (virtual Francophone university).

In 1999-2000, ACOA New Brunswick continued to provide funding for cultural associations, with the aim of capitalizing on the economic spin-offs generated by the activities of Francophone artists. This was done by:

- < ACOA New Brunswick continued to support the *Association acadienne des artistes professionnels*, enabling it to promote the artistic community and its products; and,
- < ACOA New Brunswick provided funding for *Contact Acadie*, an event produced as part of FrancoFête designed to draw the attention of international entertainment promoters, thus facilitating the export of Francophone performers.

To contribute to the rural development of Francophone communities, ACOA New Brunswick supported the following initiatives:

- < active consideration of issues relating to the economic problems of the Acadian Peninsula, in partnership with the Province of New Brunswick. ACOA New Brunswick is a member of the Acadian Peninsula Task Force and dedicated the full-time efforts of a Development Officer assigned to work directly with stakeholders in that region. Thanks to the help provided by the Business Development Program and the Regional Economic Development Agreement (REDA), the communities received the much-needed assistance; and,
- < ACOA New Brunswick provided support for the *Salon de la forêt*, an annual event held in Northwestern New Brunswick bringing together producers, manufacturers and the public to highlight the importance of the forestry industry in Northwestern New Brunswick.

2. Trade, Access to Capital and Tourism

Trade

ACOA New Brunswick has undertaken specific trade initiatives. In partnership with the Regional Economic Development Commissions, the New Brunswick office led two intensive training sessions (six days) on trade targeting Francophone SMEs in Tracadie-Sheila and Grand Falls, and a two-day trade awareness session in Bathurst.

ACOA New Brunswick also started up an Export Partnership Program with Université de

Moncton students. Francophone students get an opportunity to work with local businesses, identify a marketing strategy, and at the end of the university semester, carry out a trade mission in the target market.

ACOA New Brunswick also provided personalized consultations for Francophone businesses with the assistance of experts in international trade.

Access to capital

Access to capital is a key element of an SME's success. ACOA New Brunswick's use of the Business Development Program has contributed to the development of numerous projects submitted by Francophone clients. Another funding vehicle administered by CBDCs, the Young Entrepreneurs ConneXion Seed Capital and Counselling Program, targets young clients. The support provided to Francophone entrepreneurs assists in the creation of jobs in their own communities.

The Province of New Brunswick and ACOA New Brunswick also contributed to major improvements to the Moncton Airport, increasing the capacity of facilities to receive aircraft and visitors during the *Sommet de la Francophonie*.

A new industry, shellfish farming, has developed in the last ten years on the east coast of New Brunswick, where the majority of the population is Francophone. ACOA New Brunswick provided funding to the new Professional Shellfish Growers Association of New Brunswick for industry marketing and the development of a business plan. This industry is considered strategic to the economic development of these Francophone communities.

Tourism

Funding was provided for the restoration of buildings at the Acadian Historical Village in Caraquet.

ACOA New Brunswick provided funding for the implementation of initiatives to complement existing tourism infrastructures in Kent County. With the aim of creating an image that represented the local heritage, ACOA provided funding to the Kent Region Tourism Association to develop a typical local cuisine.

ACOA New Brunswick approved financial assistance, in partnership with the Province of New Brunswick, to cover the costs associated with the development of a tourist cottage project in the Tracadie-Sheila area.

3. Innovation and Technology

Innovation and technology and the knowledge-based economy sector continue to be of strategic importance and are considered the source of the “jobs of the future”. ACOA is aware of the need to help Francophone communities increase their knowledge in this field and acquire new tools to become more competitive. To do this:

- < funding was provided to Concept +, a research centre located at the Université de Moncton which serves SMEs, especially those operated by Francophones;
- < ACOA New Brunswick funded a study aimed at finding ways of improving the technology used in the smoked herring industry. Over twenty companies in the Cap-Pelé area operate in this industry; and,
- < ACOA New Brunswick, in partnership with the Université de Moncton and the Beauséjour Hospital Corporation, continues to support the *Institut de recherche médicale Beauséjour*'s efforts to set up a bio-medical research facility, the first Francophone medical research centre outside Quebec.

4. Entrepreneurship and Skills Development

ACOA New Brunswick has provided support for two entrepreneurship projects:

- < financial assistance has been provided to enable students from the Administration Faculty of the Université de Moncton to attend the *Jeux du commerce*, an event bringing together students from Canadian Francophone universities to evaluate their business skills; and,
- < the Agency also helped Francophone post-secondary students attend the annual Entrepreneurship competition.

ACOA New Brunswick continues to support the activities of the *Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick* aimed at stimulating and supporting economic development and creating networks among the province's French-language communities. As a promoter of Acadian businesses, the *Conseil* also organizes training sessions, conferences and networking activities.

Among the initiatives undertaken by the *Conseil économique* in 1999-2000, one that is worthy of mention is the mentorship project. Launched as a pilot project in the Acadian Peninsula, the mentorship project is designed to match new businesses and experienced entrepreneurs. The program will later be extended to other Francophone areas of the province.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS (2000-2002)

New Brunswick's Francophone community constitutes a major part of ACOA's clientele in this province. Determined to support the Francophone community and deliver services in French, ACOA New Brunswick will continue to offer all its services to the public in both official languages.

ACOA New Brunswick recently appointed a bilingual account manager in the Fundy region, a mainly Anglophone area, and over the next year, this employee will work closely with the Francophone business community to promote certain projects and activities. ACOA New Brunswick believes that staffing this position with a bilingual employee enables it to better meet the needs of Francophones in the area involved.

In light of the emergence of new technologies, ACOA New Brunswick realized the importance of preparing the province's firms to face future challenges. During the next year, a number of workshops will be offered on e-commerce in the northeastern and northwestern parts of the province. In addition, ACOA New Brunswick organized a Small Business Conference and Info-fair in Tracadie-Sheila that included workshops in the fields of information technology, innovation and e-commerce.

ACOA New Brunswick will continue to support organizations that facilitate the development of Francophone communities; namely, the Université de Moncton, Concept + and the *Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick*.

The Agency will continue to count on the invaluable support of the Canada Business Services Centre, located in Fredericton, which has a mandate to provide information services and products to small- and medium-sized businesses and to the province's entrepreneurs. Services are delivered in both official languages in all four Atlantic provinces.

**Newfoundland Office
Report on Activities for 1999-2000**

CONTEXT

According to Statistics Canada data from the 1996 census, 2,275 inhabitants of Newfoundland and Labrador declare French as their mother tongue. They are primarily concentrated in three areas: the City of St. John's; the Labrador City area; and, the Port-au-Port Peninsula (Mainland, Black Duck Brook and Cape St. George). Though there are numerous other French-speaking inhabitants throughout the province, their language preferences are not counted due to the nature of the census. The census counts only mother tongue designation through self-identification.

ACOA activities involving the province's Francophone community include partnerships with the following groups:

- < the *Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador* (FFTNL);
- < the *Association régionale de la côte ouest* (ARCO);
- < the Francophone Affairs Steering Committee (FASC), representing the provincial and federal governments and the province's Francophone community;
- < *Francojeunes de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador*;
- < *Le Gaboteur*, the provincial Francophone newspaper;
- < the *Regroupement de développement économique et d'employabilité* (RDÉE);
- < the *Association francophone de St- John's* and; in general,
- < the province's Francophone businesses and community groups.

The linguistic capacity of the Corner Brook district office and the Newfoundland and Labrador Business Services Centre is an important component of the interaction between ACOA and the Francophone community. Although these offices are not required, under the *Official Languages Act*, to deliver services in French, they offer information and economic development planning services to Francophone individuals and groups seeking the Agency's assistance.

ACOA also supports the French-language service delivery mechanisms administered by the community, such as CBDCs, which provide help to SMEs with financing plans and counselling, and the REDCs, which help develop the communities' local economic development plans and strategies for the provincial economic zones.

The future poses a challenge for all rural communities. This applies especially to Francophone communities where the rural isolation, scattered population and lack of business infrastructures hinder the economic development efforts of entrepreneurs and community groups.

Even though the Francophone population is scattered throughout the province, the *Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador* (FFTNL) nonetheless plays an important advocacy role in the community and has developed solid partnerships both within and outside the province.

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES BY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OF THE AGENCY

The ACOA Newfoundland and Labrador office works to support ACOA's strategic service delivery priorities by responding to enquiries, and providing in-person counselling and program support.

1. Policy, Advocacy and Coordination

Newfoundland and Labrador Francophones work in their communities and in cooperation with the different levels of government to establish good working relations with a view to stimulating economic development. ACOA participates in the activities and initiatives of organizations with the same goal. Its participation takes the form of:

- < participation in the activities of the Francophone Affairs Steering Committee (FASC);
- < collaboration with the *Société nationale de l'Acadie* (SNA) to promote initiatives in Newfoundland and Labrador;
- < participation in the ARCO Resources Development Committee to assist in the development and implementation of the CED plan for the Francophone communities of the Port-au-Port Peninsula; and,
- < collaboration with the FFTNL to determine the thrust of and ensure the assessment of initiatives submitted to the RDÉE.

2. Trade, Investment and Tourism

The Francophone communities on the Port-au-Port Peninsula are isolated and rural communities, with a history of dependence on the fishery. Within the area, the traditional way of life and cultural events are considered strengths. The road around the area is called The French Ancestors Route, in recognition of the importance of the French heritage to the region and the scenic highway is considered to be one of the most spectacular in the province.

The Zone 09, Festival Coast Tourism Association and ARCO strategic plans recognize the need to develop tourism products, and the infrastructure required to support this sector. Given the importance these organizations attribute to this issue, ACOA helped them develop and implement initiatives such as the following:

- < development of a proposal by ARCO and Zone 09 for the establishment of scenic roadside rest areas along the Port-au-Port Peninsula highway;
- < the development of a proposal by the Festival Coast Tourism Association to carry out marketing activities in the St. George's Bay area, in which the French Ancestors Route is featured;
- < the development and implementation of a plan for a tourist route based on the French heritage of the Avalon Peninsula; and,
- < the development of a proposal submitted by the FFTNL to carry out specifically Francophone activities during Soirée '99.

3. Innovation

Through ARCO, the Francophone community accessed funds for the establishment of a Community Access Program (CAP) site at the *Centre scolaire de la Grand'Terre*. Recognizing the importance of this initiative and its potential for the distribution of information in the community, ACOA supported a proposal submitted by ARCO to extend the initiative so as to include the Community Centre, thus linking the school CAP Internet access site to the community centre.

4. Entrepreneurship and Skills Development

Through the following activities, ACOA Newfoundland and Labrador continues to support the efforts of the FFTNL and ARCO to stimulate and support economic development and entrepreneurship in their communities:

- < The Agency supported a proposal submitted by ARCO to set up an entrepreneurship resources centre at the *Centre communautaire de la Grand'Terre*;
- < ACOA supported a proposal submitted by the FFTNL to prepare a directory of French-language services in Newfoundland and Labrador called *L'Indispensable*;
- < ACOA supported the revision of ARCO's community economic development plan to include a requirement for measurable results and compliance with Zone 09 and FFTNL plans;
- < ACOA provided information services in both official languages at the Newfoundland and Labrador BSCs and, the Agency office in Corner Brook; and,
- < ACOA also backed a proposal by *Le Gaboteur* for marketing activities to promote the Francophone newspaper and enhance its viability.

5. Access to Capital and Information

As in the other Atlantic provinces, the majority of Francophones in Newfoundland live in rural areas. ACOA Newfoundland and Labrador uses the following means to coordinate the economic development program in the province by providing access to information and to capital in all communities:

- < service and information delivery in both official languages by the Business Service Centre and network of satellite offices located in the CBDCs throughout the province to all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador;
- < the granting of operating funds to the regional economic development commissions for the development and implementation of economic strategic plans for the economic zones, including all communities in the province;
- < continuing support for the network of Community Business Development Corporations (CBDC) to ensure access to capital for the province's present and potential entrepreneurs; and,
- < the provision of information and advice to ARCO regarding the development and implementation of the CED plan for the Francophone communities of the Port-au-Port Peninsula.

6. Community Economic Development

ACOA's relations with the Francophone community of Newfoundland and Labrador primarily centre around the economic development of the communities. For this reason, ACOA participates in the various committees and boards set up by ARCO, the FFTNL and the RDÉE, where CED policy and orientations are set. ACOA also supports CED through:

- < support for the development of proposals to be submitted to the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) for the Francophone communities of the Port-au-Port Peninsula;
- < support for the preparation of proposals to be submitted to the RDÉEs; and,
- < support for the preparation of proposals to be submitted to CFAR-EDC with respect to the Port-au-Port Peninsula.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS (2000-2002)

Bolstered by the achievements and partnerships obtained in recent years, ACOA Newfoundland and Labrador will continue to work with Francophone, federal and provincial stakeholders and to play a leading role in economic development activities.

Since Agency funding programs are triggered by the applications submitted, the level of funding granted to Francophone groups and entrepreneurs depends on the efforts made by the Francophone community groups and the activities they propose. To meet the needs identified by the Francophone community, ACOA will make every effort to provide assistance through its program activities, and its coordination and advocacy role and the staffing of in-house positions. Some of the initiatives planned by ACOA Newfoundland and Labrador are:

- < continuing to collaborate with other federal and provincial agencies and with groups representing the minority official language communities with a view to meeting the needs of Francophones in the region. At the provincial level, the Agency will achieve this through its active participation in the Francophone Affairs Steering Committee (FASC);
- < playing an advocacy role with respect to the Francophone clientele and coordinating the work under its economic development leadership mandate, particularly in regard to the economic development of minority official language communities;
- < distributing the Agency's 2000-2002 Action Plan to all the Francophone community groups and economic development partnership organizations in the province;

- < the ACOA Official Languages Coordinator will meet with the Executive Director of the FFTNL to review the initiatives identified in the 2000-2002 Action Plan and determine to what extent the plan fits in with the Fédération's comprehensive plan;
- < continuing to collaborate with ARCO to review the CED plan relating to the Francophone communities of the Port-au-Port Peninsula;
- < accepting and assessing proposals from Francophone clients for profit and for non-profit projects;
- < helping ARCO and the FFTNL identify appropriate funding programs for their CED initiatives;
- < continuing to provide information services in the language of the client's choice at the Newfoundland and Labrador BSC and Corner Brook offices;
- < continuing to use the active offer of service posters in both official languages to identify Agency staff capable of providing such services in ACOA offices in St. John's and Corner Brook and the province's Business Services Centre;
- < continuing to maintain and add to the library of information in both official languages at the province's Business Services Centre;
- < continuing to promote entrepreneurship in the Francophone communities by providing support for workshops during Small Business Week and activities sponsored by the Francophone community; and,
- < regularly contacting development officers and directors of Francophone groups to maintain good working relations with a view to fostering entrepreneurship and economic development in Francophone communities.

**Prince Edward Island Office
Report on Activities for 1999-2000**

CONTEXT

According to data from the Statistics Canada 1996 census, the number of people in Prince Edward Island who report French as their mother tongue totals 5,335, which is 4.5% of the province's total population. The French-speaking population is mainly concentrated in the Évangéline region, but also in West Prince, Summerside-Miscouche, Rustico and Charlottetown.

The assimilation rate on P.E.I. is very high, especially in regions where there are no French-language schools or community-school centres. The illiteracy rate is also very high. The only regions with schools that primarily teach in French are Charlottetown and Évangéline, with a French-language school to open soon in Summerside.

The economy of these regions is mainly based on tourism and primary sector activities such as fishing, agriculture, and forestry, except in the Charlottetown area and, to a lesser extent, Summerside, where a fair number of Acadians and other Francophones work in the federal and provincial Public Service. Consequently, the economy of the Francophone regions is characterized by strong seasonal fluctuations, the unemployment rate is higher and the average income lower than the provincial average.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

During the 1999-2000 fiscal year, the PEI office undertook a range of activities in support of Section 41. Some of the highlights are:

- < working with the *Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin* to help carry out its economic development projects;
- < provision of regular weekly services to the Évangéline Business Service Centre;
- < operational funding for the *Société de développement de la Baie acadienne*;
- < continued participation in the Prince Edward Island Federal Council Official Languages Sub-Committee;

- < participation in a project evaluation sub-committee under a tripartite Francophone economic development agreement signed between ACOA, HRDC and the Province of Prince Edward Island;
- < maintaining close collaborative relations with stakeholders in the development and promotion of Acadian culture and language;
- < collaboration with an international research committee on the development of profiles for product and services with potential for export by the Francophone and Acadian communities;
- < maintaining the Agency's visibility in the Acadian community;
- < maintaining regular contact with the Francophone clientele and economic development stakeholders in the Island's Francophone and Acadian community; and,
- < participation in a seminar on Smart Communities and Small Business Week in October 1999.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS (2000-2002)

The ACOA Prince Edward Island office makes the following commitments:

- < to work with the *Société St-Thomas d'Aquin* to help carry out its economic development projects;
- < to collaborate closely with the signatories of the tripartite agreement to undertake projects that will foster Francophone community development;
- < to continue to work with the *Corporation de développement de la Baie Acadienne* to support businesses and private sector initiatives that will contribute to the area's prosperity; and,
- < to collaborate with the Prince Edward Island RDÉE on the assessment of economic development projects to be submitted to the National Committee for Canadian Francophonie Human Resources Development.