

# BULLETIN action

COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES



30<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

Maxwell Yalden

Keith Spicer

Victor C. Goldbloom

D'Iberville Fortier

30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Volume 7, no 1

GROUP OF FIVE

- 1 -

30 YEARS! WHERE HAS THE  
TIME GONE?

- 2 -

AS THE YEAR BEGINS

- 3 -

MEMORIES ...

- 3 -

THE OFFICE OF THE  
COMMISSIONER'S FIVE  
ANTENNAE

- 6 -

BEFORE CROWN AGENTS, DO  
YOU HAVE ANY RIGHTS?

- 7 -

LISTENING TO YOUNG  
CANADIANS

- 8 -

CHATting WITH THE  
COMMISSIONER

- 9 -

## GROUP OF FIVE

Five Commissioners of Official Languages have watched over Canada's official languages program. During their mandates, federal services to Canadians in both official languages have improved, minority language communities across the country have gained control of institutions vital to their development, and more Canadians have become bilingual. On the thirtieth anniversary of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, we salute their many accomplishments.

## 30 YEARS! WHERE HAS THE TIME GONE?

Thirty years is not a long time in the history of a country. Yet noble pages of that history have been written since the creation of the Official Languages Bureau, as the Office of the Commissioner was first called. It was on July 9, 1969, that the Canadian Parliament adopted the Official Languages Act, and that it came into effect on September 7 of that year.

In order to implement the new Act, the legislator introduced a number of measures, including one establishing the position of Commissioner of Official Languages and setting out its duties and powers. On April 1, 1970, Keith Spicer, a young university professor and journalist, became the first Commissioner. He had to create everything almost from scratch. Very early in his term, Keith Spicer set the tone for what was to become a marvellous adventure that still continues. The Official Languages Bureau was born, and an eventful life awaited it!

Those first years were no bed of roses. Just ask Keith Spicer. But over the years, the Office of the Commissioner protected Canadians' language rights. It closely monitored the implementation of the Official Languages Act within federal institutions. The agency experienced both tumultuous

periods and days of glory and success. It worked unflaggingly to promote the development and vitality of the official language communities and to promote the Act and linguistic duality in Canadian society.

Since 1970, the Office of the Commissioner has been first and foremost a team of people who believe firmly in the mission that the Act has conferred on them.

That is what Dyane Adam wanted to highlight at a simple celebration that quickly took on the air of a family reunion. It all took place in Ottawa last November 16 in an atmosphere of warm nostalgia. Keith Spicer and Victor C. Goldbloom were at the party, as were many former employees of the Office of the Commissioner. To everyone's regret, Maxwell Yalden was on a business trip outside the country and D'Iberville Fortier

was ill and could not join the celebration.

INFOACTION is marking the event with a few pages from the family album. These photos, stories and reminiscences will remind you that, over the years, stalwart teams of public servants have supported the commissioners since 1970, and that they believed and still believe that the official languages are an essential part of what makes Canada such a good country to live in.

Hats off to all those who built the Office of the Commissioner!



## AS THE YEAR BEGINS



There is an old saying that hours may pass slowly, but years always pass quickly. Yet the hours of the first year of the new millennium passed quickly ... and here we are already in 2001. Rather than delivering the traditional New Year's message, I would like to share a thought from one of my favourite authors, Paulo Coelho: "There is a universally understood language ... It is the language of enthusiasm, of the things done with love, with passion, to achieve a result that one wants and believes in. When you really want something, the whole universe conspires to help you achieve it." (The Alchemist, 1998, our translation.)

It is that language of the heart that will make the vision of a proud and dynamic Canada a reality. I wish it for you and for our country.

Dyane Adam

## MEMORIES ...

Reminiscences from some employees who have worked for the Office for 20 years or more and some others who worked in the regions.

One of my most vivid memories of my time at the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages is meeting with Maxwell Yalden, the second commissioner, when he hired me. "Your territory extends to the Pacific and it is your responsibility to make the greatest possible number of Canadians aware

of the existence of the Official Languages Act and what it means in terms of receiving and providing services. (Our translation) And then he wished me the best of luck!

So how was I going to do it? After studying a map of the vast territory assigned to me, I decided to make maximum use of radio and television to communicate the Office of the Commissioner's message. I had myself invited to every conference and meeting possible. Each time, I urged people to exercise their right to be served in their own language, particularly French, in federal offices. I insisted that they contact our office if they could not get service in their own language. Once I had an officer with me, we could normally settle complaints quickly and simply. It was a time when the bureaucracy was simpler and more effective, perhaps because it was less centralized.

Maurice Gauthier  
First representative of the Commissioner in  
Manitoba and Saskatchewan (1978-1985)

I've been at the Office of the Commissioner nearly 20 years. Why so long? Quite simply, because I believe in what I do; otherwise, I would be somewhere else. Here, I have confidence in what I accomplish. I feel that my work helps make a difference in Canadian society. That is what motivates me every day.

Marc Robert

For almost 20 years, the Office of the Commissioner has given me an opportunity for growth and self-affirmation. And it's given me a chance to work with incredible people. I continue to work at the Office of the Commissioner because it's like a big family.

Sylvie Parent

I've worked at the Office of the Commissioner since 1987. As the Commissioner's representative in Alberta, British Columbia and the three territories, I have had the unique opportunity to work with three commissioners and with many outstanding colleagues, people motivated by profound convictions and values. Thanks to the Official Languages Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Office of the Commissioner has been able to promote the official language communities' development and vitality. We have often acted as the government's conscience in its relations with the minority official language communities and Canadian society.

Nice work if you can get it!

Deni Lorieau

On two occasions, I was asked to become the Commissioner's first representative in Ontario and to open a regional office in Sudbury. I finally agreed to represent Commissioner Maxwell Yalden in the country's most populous province.

My time there gave me a chance to meet many Ontarians, both Francophone and Anglophone, who believed in the value of official languages. Not being from Ontario, I was touched by the welcome I received from Ontarians, be it in Windsor, Thunder Bay, Wawa, Rockland or Mattawa.

Jeanne Renault

What am I doing at the Office of the Commissioner after 20 years ?

What brought me to the Office in 1980 was a strong academic interest in linguistic rights. What has kept me here for over 20 years is the sense of pride I have in helping

to put these rights into practice. We still refer from time to time to working for "a cause." A cause can wear you down if you're fighting a losing battle. That's not the sense I have, obviously.

It's also important to me that the Office of the Commissioner is a small organization, compared with most federal institutions. Generally, we all know each other and, because of that, there has always been a strong sense of working together and a willingness to help that goes beyond one's duties. I was fortunate to join the Office of the Commissioner 20 years ago, and I'm glad to be here still.

David Phillips

As the saying goes, "time flies when you're having fun". Even though I've been working within the federal Official Languages Program for my entire career, I can hardly believe that it has already been 27 1/2 years. When I started with the Public Service Commission in June 1973, my first job was a logical extension of my recently acquired Honours BA in linguistics and languages. As a native of Stratford, Ontario, and as an only partially bilingual Anglophone with the federal government in the 1970s, I was somewhat of a rarity there, and I ended up working in a near-perfect environment to allow me to improve my language skills and become fluent in French. By 1980, with my bilingual skills in hand, I felt I was ready to defend Canadians' language rights by working as a complaints investigator and special studies officer at the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

In 1987, I was the first employee to work in the Office of the Commissioner's newly opened Toronto office, where I was part of the "Sky Team" trying to bring English-speaking

and French-speaking Ontarians to a better understanding of one another. My career of over 20 years at the Office of the Commissioner has given me the opportunity to work with four of Canada's five commissioners. As the months and years flash by, being part of the team of Canada's language ombudsman, attempting to bridge the gaps between Canada's two solitudes, and trying to work as an agent of change in Canadian society remains a challenging and rewarding task!

Janette Hamilton

Over the past 25 years, I have seen the Office of the Commissioner become one of the most important institutions in Canada. I am privileged to have been able to work here in both official languages, but thanks to the Act, I could choose to work in my mother tongue.

Claire Trépanier

As a native of Russell, Ontario, where Francophones are a minority, recognition of the status of the two official languages is a fundamental value for me. Although I was a little young to appreciate the impact of the adoption of the first Official Languages Act in 1969, I have made up for it since by helping to promote the principles of linguistic duality in my community and at the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, where I have held a number of positions. Since I started in 1976, I have been pleased to observe a growing mutual respect between the members of the two language communities, not just in my hometown but across the country.

Diane Côté

As a member of a minority community who lived in Alberta for a few years before joining the Office of the Commissioner, I saw my job as an opportunity to make a modest contribution to better relations between the heirs of these two great European cultures. While helping to implement the Official Languages Act in Western and Northern Canada, I also had an opportunity to get to know communities that were prepared to be fully part of the Canadian social fabric and to play a tangible role in making language rights a reality.

Those few years in Alberta left me with some unforgettable memories, unbreakable friendships and a greater appreciation of the challenges and opportunities that our official language communities face.

Gérard Finn  
First representative of the Commissioner of  
Official Languages in Alberta

I began my career in the federal public service at the Office of the Commissioner; I have been here over 21 years now. Why so long at the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages? Primarily because it is a small organization ... a family! I feel at home there, because everyone knows each other so well. I feel as if everyone contributes to everyone else's success and, because the people here are so committed and charming, it is a very satisfying place to work.

Louise Dubé

What makes me tick ?

A very large spring located just below the spleen – I wind it up every Sunday night, and it keeps me going until Friday at noon. I'm looking for a bigger spring to see me right through to the end of Saturday...

What is an English-speaking Calgarian doing working for the Commissioner of Official Languages? I fell in love with the French language during a high school exchange program, when I spent two weeks in Donnacona learning the language from a family as large and noisy as my own.

When I was offered a job at the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages in 1981, I moved to Ottawa from Vancouver to accept it. Since then, my work has taken me all over Canada and introduced me to all kinds of people from a serial murderer to Mounties to MPs. (On the whole, I prefer the Mounties.) My last project was a special study of official languages in high performance sport, during which I met athletes, coaches, and sports administrators and visited national sport centres – including, to my delight, the one in Calgary.

My ideal is for everyone to enjoy the linguistic and cultural diversity that makes this country great.

Mary Lee Bragg

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with four of the five Commissioners of Official Languages over the past 19 years. The time I have spent in the Investigations Branch of the Office, first as an investigator and then as a manager of investigations, has been a highlight of my career in the public service. Not only have I been able to assist Canadians in obtaining federal government services in their preferred official language but, on a more personal level, I have been given a golden opportunity to improve my own ability in French. For this I am very grateful.

David Snook

## **THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER'S FIVE ANTENNAE**

The term “antenna” comes from Keith Spicer, the first Commissioner of Official Languages. That’s what he called the first regional Office of the Commissioner when, in early 1977, he decided to set up an office in the Atlantic provinces, in Moncton. Robert Pichette was the Commissioner’s very first regional representative.

The first regional office, like those that would follow, had a mandate to establish and maintain close relations with the official language communities and federal public servants in the region in order to inform them and raise awareness of the rights and obligations established in the Official Languages Act. The regional office was also to maintain close links with the region’s linguistic majority.

In 1978, Maxwell Yalden recruited a deputy minister in the government of Manitoba, Maurice Gauthier, to set up a second “regional antenna” in Winnipeg, this time for the Western provinces. These first two offices proved very important, on the one hand, in providing a presence for the Office of the Commissioner outside Ottawa and thus serving the public better, and, on the other, in representing regional needs and accomplishments at the national office.

In 1981, Mr. Yalden opened three more regional offices. Joan Gavan was the first representative at the Quebec office, in Montreal. Jeanne Renault opened the first Ontario regional office, in Sudbury, while Gérard Finn opened the Edmonton office to provide greater representation in Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon.

In 1987, D'Iberville Fortier moved the Ontario regional office to Toronto because of the large number of federal regional offices in the Queen City. Monique Cousineau opened that office.

The Office of the Commissioner is proud of these “five regional antennae,” which have given it a presence across Canada since 1977.



Jeanne Renault  
Atlantic Region



Gérard Gagnon  
Manitoba and Saskatchewan  
Region



Eva Ludvig  
Quebec Region



Deni Lorieau  
Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories  
and Yukon Region



Karsten Kaemling  
Ontario Region

## BEFORE CROWN AGENTS, DO YOU HAVE ANY RIGHTS?

You certainly do! Language rights, at least. For a number of years, plaintiffs and jurists' associations have been telling the Office of the Commissioner about the difficulties some people have in exercising their language rights before federal tribunals.

Commissioner Adam saw the need to conduct a study regarding the Department of Justice's official language obligations. The

Study of the Official Language Obligations of Federal Crown Agents in the Province of New Brunswick, made public on December 12, deals more specifically with the Department of Justice's obligations when it chooses to call on lawyers from private firms to act as official Crown agents, both in civil and criminal cases.

The study did not, of course, review the situation in every court in Canada. Although it was limited to reviewing the situation in New Brunswick, however it still has a national impact. It examined the effectiveness of the administrative procedure currently used by the Department of Justice, which is the same everywhere in the country. The study was intended to ensure that Crown agents fully respect the linguistic obligations applicable to the administration of justice. When the Department gives a lawyer in private practice a mandate to represent it, it must take its linguistic obligations into account.

In addition to the consultations carried out in the preparation of this study, there was a review of documents prepared by the Department of Justice regarding the Terms and Conditions of Appointment of Crown Agents and the attendant Guidelines. The Commissioner came to the conclusion that certain changes had to be made to help Crown agents to respect their linguistic obligations. After identifying four major problems, she made recommendations regarding them.

We encourage you to check out the study by visiting the OCOL Internet site at [www.ocol-clo.gc.ca](http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca) or by calling us at 1 877 996-6368. If you ever find yourself in a federal court in a criminal or civil matter, it is essential that you know your language rights.

## LISTENING TO YOUNG CANADIANS

As part of the youth consultation already under way, Dyane Adam met with delegates to the Parlement franco-canadien du Nord et de l'Ouest, held in Winnipeg last November 9 and 10. During this meeting, the exchanges and discussions were primarily about the values that are fundamental to young people and the specific expectations and needs of young Canadians in linguistic minority communities.



### THE REPORTERS OF TOMORROW? WHO KNOWS?

They are 11, 15 or 17. They are students in Francophone high schools across Canada. Perhaps someday one or more of them will become famous reporters. Why? Because in 2001 they will take part in the YOUNG REPORTER (RADIO) CONTEST.

#### YOUNG REPORTER (RADIO) CONTEST.

The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages is participating once again in this, the ninth edition of the Prix de la francophonie of the Association canadienne de langue française for the YOUNG REPORTER (RADIO) CONTEST.

The young participants in the contest must send in a draft report on the theme "People and things that increase the influence of French", as well as an audio cassette on which they briefly introduce themselves. The winning reports will be broadcast on the stations of the Alliance des radios communautaires during the Semaine nationale de la francophonie, from March 11 to 25, 2001.

There are four regional prizes of \$300 scholarships, and Dyane Adam, Commissioner of Official Languages, will present a \$700 scholarship to the national winner.



## CHATting WITH THE COMMISSIONER

The 30th anniversary of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages was a time for both joyful reunions and contemplation. INFOACTION took the opportunity to talk with Commissioner Dyane Adam.



**Q** Where was Dyane Adam 30 years ago?

**A** At Casselman High School, in eastern Ontario. I was in Grade 13. I really enjoyed school, but that didn't stop me from being active in a number of extracurricular activities.

---

**Q** Such as?

**A** President of the Student Council, which, unbeknownst to me, was preparing me for many tasks in later life. Socially, I was involved in a number of youth movements, such as Jeunesse rurale catholique. Social and cultural activities were at the top of the list. It was the era of the coffee house.

---

**Q** And discotheques?

**A** Of course! I always went to the traditional discotheque on Friday evening, especially since my boyfriend, who later became my life partner, was the popular DJ. We loved the Beatles and other English-language groups, but everything took place in French.

---

**Q** At 17, were you aware of the importance of the two official languages?

**A** I must admit that I wasn't. The world I lived in was predominantly Francophone. The few Anglophones I hung around with were bilingual. We lived in harmony in Casselman. All the classes at school were in French, except English, so we were bilingual. Living in Ontario, we had to be.

---

**Q** When did you become aware of the linguistic situation of the minority communities?

**A** As soon as I got to the University of Ottawa. Never before in my life had I felt like a "minority." All of a sudden, I realized I was, and it was sort of a cultural shock.

---

**Q** Weren't your courses offered in French?

**A** Yes, most of the courses in the Faculty of Arts were offered in both languages. However, my friend registered in sciences didn't have the same choice; the courses there were offered only in English. So I learned second-hand what bilingualism meant.

---

**Q** Did it bowl you over?

**A** I wasn't bowled over; but I was faced with what I then perceived to be a "confrontational" situation. At the age of 20, I realized that there was a real linguistic debate going on in Canada, and that I was part of it.

**Q** What was your attitude?

**A** Very positive as regards to bilingualism, which I quickly realized was essential to a successful career in Ontario. However, I always remained committed to French. I wrote my master's thesis in English and my doctoral thesis in French.

---

**Q** How would you have reacted if someone had told you that you would be the Commissioner of Official Languages some day?

**A** I would probably have wanted to know more. I didn't know the position existed or how important it was. As a student, I was much more concerned with my immediate needs; I was concentrating on doing well in my studies and carving out a place for myself in university life.

---

**Q** And your future? Had you made any choices?

**A** I knew very well that I would choose a service profession. I was very interested in helping people. I wanted to find a career that would deal with emotions and psychology, which is what I did.

---

**Q** Thirty years after the adoption of the Official Languages Act, you find yourself in Ottawa as the fifth commissioner. Why did you decide to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary?

**A** First of all, let's make it clear that it isn't the adoption of the Act that we're celebrating, but the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Office of the Commissioner as such.

An institution that was a forerunner in the field of Canadians' language rights deserves to be celebrated. I wanted to honour my predecessors and their teams who built the Office of the Commissioner. They were pioneers. They should be remembered.

---

**Q** So 30 years ago, the creation of the Office of the Commissioner was a real innovation?

**A** That's right. It was unquestionably an innovation, not just in Canada but in the Western world. Creating an ombudsman position to protect language rights was in itself a recognition that these rights are an inextricable element of human rights. Canada was in the forefront in proclaiming human rights in general and language rights in particular. Don't forget that the ombudsman concept was not as generally accepted around the world 30 years ago.

---

**Q** Is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration supposed to highlight the Office of the Commissioner's role as ombudsman?

**A** Not just that. In fact, the three components of the Office of the Commissioner's role form a unity. We are celebrating an institution that, for 30 years, has had three main roles: as ombudsman protecting language rights, as monitor of the application of the Official Languages Act within the federal government, and as advocate for the Act within Canadian society.

**Q** As broad a role as that?

**A** One of the most important roles, and one that the Office of the Commissioner has played since the beginning, is to “educate” Canadian society. This whole question of official languages was new, and it was reassuring for some and unsettling for others. It was not just the public that needed to be informed, so did the federal administration. The Office of the Commissioner worked hard to promote language rights of which most citizens were unaware. It had to define these rights in clear and comprehensive terms and act when they were not respected.

---

**Q** So along with other federal organizations, the Office of the Commissioner was doing pioneering work and helping to build this country?

**A** That’s right. We have come a long way since April 1, 1970. The Office has made a distinguished contribution to ensuring that our national identity is based on Canadians’ language rights. On this 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I wanted to pay homage to the four commissioners who came before me and to their teams who made the agency what it is. I wanted to underline the noteworthy contribution of the federal institutions working to implement the Official Languages Act.

---

**Q** The Office of the Commissioner is not just in Ottawa. Do the five regional offices that represent you in the major regions of Canada also have an important role to play?

**A** A role that should not be overlooked. The regional offices support all the Office of the Commissioner’s activities. Our deliberations and decisions don’t take place in a vacuum. Not everything happens in the National Capital Region. Take just one example: if I appear before a parliamentary committee, policy makers or certain departments, I must represent the country’s different realities. Our research and our studies must have local and regional input, and it is the regional offices that help ensure that every region of the country is fairly represented. The teams at our five regional offices keep the Office of the Commissioner firmly anchored in the Canadian reality. They are an essential part of the institution’s dynamic. The regional offices also give us a presence all across Canada.

---

**Q** Since the beginning, young Canadians have appeared to be a priority in the Office of the Commissioner’s programs. Is that still the case?

**A** More than ever, especially since the Canadian youth of 2001 are the first generation of children of the Official Languages Act. The young people of today have had the advantage of growing up with bilingualism in action; their attitude to the official languages is completely different from that of the young people and adults of the 60s and 70s. My team and I undertook a nationwide consultation to solicit their ideas, opinions and suggestions about the content of the youth programs. I want to listen to them.

**Q** So you want to hear what they have to say before undertaking major projects?

**A** I have to be open to what young people have to say, because they are the architects of tomorrow's society. They are the ones who will implement the decisions that we make today. They are the ones who will change Canadian society. As Commissioner of Official Languages, I want to understand how young people plan to contribute to this country's progress. This youth consultation process, which will take place over the course of the year, should illuminate our future youth-oriented activities. So I am undertaking this consultation with a lot of enthusiasm and hope.

**Q** In 30 years, these now-adult young people will be celebrating the Office of the Commissioner's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. How will they sum up your mandate, what will they think of it?

**A** I hope that these young people who have become our leaders will remember that Dyane Adam did everything she could to create a groundswell favourable to Canadian linguistic duality and the vitality of the official languages communities.

**Q** And what are your hopes for the Office of the Commissioner of 2030?

**A** That it will remain what it is today, a valiant team that is dedicated to the task and believes in the importance of its mandate: working to continue building our country. This is how the Commissioner can be an effective and dynamic agent of change.

## MISSION STATEMENT

As an agent of change and ombudsman's office, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages has the mission of taking all measures intended to ensure the achievement of the three main objectives of the Official Languages Act, namely:

- the equality of English and French in Parliament, within the government of Canada, the federal administration and institutions subject to the Act;
- the preservation and development of official language communities in Canada;
- the equality of English and French in Canadian society.



Chief Editor: Lyne Ducharme  
 Writer: Monique Cousineau  
 English Text Editing: Colin Morton  
 French Text Editing: Henriette Levasseur  
 Layout: David Roach and Thérèse Boyer

Canada Building  
 344 Slater Street  
 3rd Floor  
 Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T8

Tel. : (613) 996-6368  
 Toll Free : 1 877 996-6368  
 Fax: (613) 943-2255  
 ISSN 1203-0996

E-mail: [message@ocol-clo.gc.ca](mailto:message@ocol-clo.gc.ca)  
 Web site: [www.ocol-clo.gc.ca](http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca)



*Think recycling!*  
 Printed in Canada on recycled paper.