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**FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF THE
FEDERAL PARTICIPATION IN THE
MANITOBA BILINGUAL SERVICE CENTRES
PILOT PROJECT**

June 23rd, 2004

Submitted to the:
Department of Canadian Heritage

Canada

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 1999, the Government of Manitoba announced the establishment of six Bilingual Service Centres in the province. This announcement responded in large part to the recommendations of the May 1998 *Chartier Report*, which had assessed the French-language services offered by the Government of Manitoba. At the time of this evaluation, three Bilingual Service Centres were operating, all three with assistance from the federal government.

The Department of Canadian Heritage undertook a formative evaluation of the federal participation in this initiative. The evaluation assesses the adequacy of the initiative's implementation and the likelihood that it will meet its objectives. This report constitutes the final report of that evaluation. This report is based on research conducted by PRA Inc.

Methodology

The evaluation methodology consisted of the following components:

- A review of administrative documents, including the letters of understanding between the federal and Manitoba governments, and budget information.
- A visit to the three Bilingual Service Centres now operating. Interviews were conducted with staff and managers.
- Interviews with a total of 25 respondents (including the interviews conducted during the visit to the Centres). In addition to staff and managers of the Bilingual Service Centres, the list of interviewees includes representatives of the Department of Canadian Heritage, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Health Canada, the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Subcommittee on Official Languages of the Manitoba Federal Council, the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada, the Government of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg.

Description of the Bilingual Service Centres Initiative

Three Bilingual Service Centres were in operation at the time of this evaluation:

- *Bilingual Service Centre - Urban Region (St. Boniface)*

The St. Boniface Bilingual Service Centre was the first to open its doors. It was inaugurated in April 2002 and mainly serves the Winnipeg metropolitan area. The majority of the French-speaking residents of the area can be found in St. Boniface, St. Vital and St. Norbert. The population of Winnipeg is approximately 619,500 of whom close to 4 % have French as their mother tongue.



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– *Bilingual Service Centre - Mountain Region (Notre Dame de Lourdes)*

The Mountain Region Bilingual Service Centre opened in March 2003 and is located in the western region, south of Portage la Prairie. The village of Notre Dame de Lourdes has approximately 620 residents, nearly 90% of whom have French as their mother tongue. The rural municipality of Lorne, which includes the villages of St. Claude and St. Léon, has a population of 2,033 people, 27% of whom have French as their mother tongue.

– *Bilingual Service Centre - Red River Region (St. Pierre Jolys)*

The Red River Bilingual Service Centre was officially opened in October 2002. Located south of Winnipeg, this Region has a number of largely French-speaking communities such as Letellier, St. Malo, Ste. Agathe, St. Adolphe and St. Jean Baptiste. The nearby rural communities of Montcalm and de Salaberry have a total population of 4,627, 45% of whom have French as their mother tongue.

Although the Centres have largely similar structures, they each have characteristics of their own. All three Centres offer services provided by both the federal and the provincial governments. In two Centres (St. Boniface and Notre Dame de Lourdes), services provided by municipal governments are also available. The Chaboillé Community Development Corporation offers services at the St. Pierre Jolys Centre.

Federal participation primarily consists in the provision of information about services offered by various federal departments. This may include referrals for individuals seeking particular services or the provision of application forms, brochures and leaflets. Each of the Bilingual Service Centres is staffed with one federal information specialist. In addition, more specialized services are offered by a number of federal departments. However, the majority of the federal departments and programs that were considered potential participants at the time of the initial announcement of the initiative do not provide services on a systematic basis. Nevertheless, the Centres offer leaflets and brochures on services provided by these federal departments or agencies.

The federal government has invested close to \$3 million over four fiscal years (from 2000-01 to 2003-04) in this initiative. This amount includes the sum of \$300,000 provided annually by the Official Languages Promotion Program (OLP) to the Province of Manitoba and municipal governments, to enable them to participate in the Bilingual Service Centres initiative.



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Findings

Relevance of federal participation in the initiative

Overall, the Bilingual Service Centres initiative meets the objective of promoting both official languages, an important element of the mandate of the Department of Canadian Heritage. This explains, among other things, why the Department, through its Official Languages Promotion Program, has provided financial assistance to the provincial and municipal governments in support of their participation in the initiative.

The evaluation finds, however, that the coordination of the participation of federal departments in the initiative is not such a ready fit with the Department's strategic objectives. To a large degree, the Department found itself being, by default, the one administrative entity capable of receiving federal funds. The Manitoba Federal Council, which was the main co-ordinator of the federal strategy for the Bilingual Service Centres initiative, has no official status allowing it to receive such funding. Although Section 42 of the *Official Languages Act* gives the Department of Canadian Heritage a co-ordinating role for promoting the development of official language communities, the Department, in fact, offers few in-person services to the public and is therefore poorly positioned to influence the management of public service structures by other federal departments.

Moreover, the Department has no operational resources to cover the baseline costs of setting up federal services. Funding came directly from the Treasury Board and covered the cost of federal participation in two Bilingual Service Centres for three years. It was expected that the Department would try and identify a long-term solution to maximize the federal investment but such a solution has yet to be found.

Also, interviews have shown that the relevance of offering bilingual federal services from centres rather than from each department, as well as the value that this approach adds to the development of official language communities, were not clearly demonstrated, at the time of the evaluation.

Finally, it should be noted that federal departments continue to have the obligation to provide a number of bilingual services from their various respective service points. This has a direct impact on the relevance and design of services offered by the federal government through the Bilingual Service Centres.



Design and implementation

The participation of departments and agencies such as Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Western Economic Diversification Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Passport Office and the Canada Revenue Agency is critical for the sustainability of the initiative to offer federal services through Bilingual Service Centres. However, such participation did not materialize as had been expected or hoped, each department having its own service delivery structure adapted to the type of services provided and the target clientele, as well as its own particular strategy for delivering services in both official languages.

These two factors help explain why the Department of Canadian Heritage has had difficulty obtaining sufficient support from other federal departments to provide services through the Bilingual Service Centres. As well, more and more Canadians are communicating with the federal government through the Web and as a result, the number of in-person communications is decreasing.

Interviews have shown that the Department of Canadian Heritage has not been able to develop a co-ordinated approach to providing bilingual services through Bilingual Service Centres. And there is no indication that, in the short-term, federal departments will modify their service delivery strategy and participate in centre activities by providing in-person services through these Centres.

Also, the lack of consensus among federal departments with regard to the mode and extent of their participation in the initiative has had, to a certain degree, a negative impact on the implementation of the federal initiative:

- ▶ *Management*: Because the Department of Canadian Heritage offers only a few in-person services to the public and does not have a mandate or much experience in this area, it has been difficult for the Department to convince other departments to participate in the initiative and offer a variety of in-person services. Nevertheless, this did not deter the Manitoba Federal Council from actively promoting the concept. The provincial and municipal governments have also been encouraged to promote their vision of the Bilingual Service Centres.
- ▶ *Implementation delays*: The inherent complexity of this initiative and the need to co-ordinate various federal and provincial requirements have caused virtually inevitable delays in setting up the Centres. Furthermore, the initiative was not based on a clearly defined planning process or a specific service delivery model. This report raises a number of questions with regard to the planning assumptions that were made about federal departments' participation in this initiative. The model was not defined in detail, let alone pre-tested, and is based on uncertain assumptions. The fact that few in-person federal services are being offered through the Centres would seem to confirm that design problems exist.



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- ▶ *Decision-making authority:* The lack of official status of the Manitoba Federal Council has prevented it from assuming a direct role with respect to decision-making and management of federal financial resources for the initiative. The Department of Canadian Heritage was charged with a co-ordination role because of its experience in the area of official languages and its administrative capacity to manage federal funds, even though the Department does not itself provide many in-person services to the public. This situation has created a certain ambiguity with respect to the structure of the initiative, authority, leadership and accountability relative to federal participation in the initiative.
- ▶ *Measuring expectations:* Partners' expectations (those of the province and municipalities especially) have continued to grow, in part because of federal support for the initiative. In particular, ministers and senior officials have reiterated their support for and commitment to the initiative, despite limited progress in the planning and implementation of federal services through these Centres. The main source of funding, the Service Canada Initiative, was not renewed and an alternative strategy has not been developed.
- ▶ *Objectives, goals and results:* The lack of in-person services offered by federal departments has meant that specific objectives regarding levels of service to be provided and results to be expected were never clearly articulated. In such a context, it is not possible to have precise service plans or performance measurements. Without a firm commitment from the federal government, the development of an evaluation framework and of a performance measurement strategy were, by and large, premature. This is, in part, why there is no RMAF or RBAF for an initiative that has been in operation for two or three years.
- ▶ *Financial commitments:* Leases of up to ten years have been signed by the Province of Manitoba with the community, based on the assumption that a source of financing would eventually be found. These expectations have been sustained, in part, by repeated commitments from senior federal officials. There is a disconnect between the initiative's long-term commitments and the financial resources available.

Likelihood of meeting the objectives

Given the little progress achieved so far as well as the limited and uncertain commitments from many key federal departments to provide in-person services through Bilingual Service Centres, it is not certain that the initiative will be able to meet its initial objectives. The lack of a stable funding source and of an administrative base compound this problem. It is therefore unlikely that the initiative will be able to meet its objectives with regard to federal participation.



Recommendations

Taking into account these findings, we make the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

Considering that the Bilingual Service Centres initiative is consistent with the official languages mandate and strategic objectives of the Department of Canadian Heritage:

It is recommended that the Department of Canadian Heritage continue its participation in this initiative within the framework and according to the terms and conditions of its Official Language Support Programs.

Management Response

Management accepts the recommendation.

The regional office of the Department of Canadian Heritage plans to withdraw from the management of Bilingual Service Centres while continuing to support initiatives of this type, insofar as they fall within the mandate that established the parameters for the promotion of linguistic duality. The Department is currently working with Service Canada to identify the measures necessary for transferring responsibilities or for closing the Centres by the end of the fiscal year.

Recommendation 2

Considering that:

- The Department of Canadian Heritage does not provide in-person services to the public and is poorly positioned to intervene in the management of the public service structures of other federal departments;
- The Department has no operational financial resources to cover the baseline costs associated with setting up federal services; and
- No long-term strategy has been developed to replace funding from the Service Canada Initiative:

It is recommended that the Department of Canadian Heritage initiate discussions with its partners in this initiative to assign responsibility for co-ordinating the initiative to a department or central agency with the necessary resources and the appropriate mandate.



Management Response

Management accepts the recommendation.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS), in cooperation with key departments that provide in-person services, are working on the design of the future Service Canada network, on how to provide services to minority-language communities, and on determining who will be in charge of in-person services. HRSDC is currently setting up a working group of director generals in which Canadian Heritage will actively participate to ensure that key stakeholders will be involved in the development of the options, strategies and potential results of the undertaking. The process of transferring responsibilities from Canadian Heritage to a new organization will be developed and implemented by the end of the fiscal year.

Recommendation 3

Considering that:

- The relevance of this ‘single window’ approach was not established with regard to the provision of federal services under this initiative;
- Each federal department has its own service delivery structure based on the type of services provided and the clientele being served, and that these departments have their own strategies for delivering services in both official languages;
- The current trend with regard to service delivery encourages the use of the telephone, interactive voice systems and client services Web sites.

It is recommended that the Department of Canadian Heritage try and obtain from its partners the development and approval of a management framework which would clearly identify:

- **The needs to be addressed, the objectives to be pursued and the results to be expected, the indicators of performance, and the strategy for monitoring performance;**
- **The nature and level of services to be offered in both official languages by the participating federal departments; and**
- **The congruence between the initiative and the federal government’s policies with respect to modes of service delivery.**

Management Response

Management accepts the recommendation in part.

The region will work with the Official Languages Subcommittee and the HRSDC working committee of director generals to encourage the development of clear objectives,



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results, performance indicators and of a measurement strategy relating to the active offer in both official languages.

However, in the wake of transferring responsibilities and accountability for the Centres, the Department of Canadian Heritage, while it wishes to cooperate, will have to avoid interfering in the new management of the Centres and shall not do more than encourage participating departments to establish service levels. It is the Treasury Board that is responsible for ensuring that departments meet service requirements in the minority language.

The regional office of the Department of Canadian Heritage will continue working with community representatives and with the Official Languages Subcommittee of the Federal Council to make the service requirements of the minority community better known and raise awareness about the community's service needs, the response capabilities of the participating departments, and the measures that the new sponsoring organization need to put in place to ensure that the project continues.

Treasury Board and the new sponsoring organization will also be responsible for determining whether the initiative conforms with federal government service delivery policies.



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1.0 Background

In 1998, the Government of Manitoba mandated the Honourable Justice Richard Chartier to conduct an inquiry into the implementation of the provincial policy on French-language services. An exercise completed in 1997 had confirmed that there were major impediments to the implementation of the policy. At that time, the French Language Services Secretariat had asked a “mystery client” to try and obtain services in French from offices that had been specifically identified as offering such services. It proved difficult for a client who preferred to be served in French to obtain service in French. The report written by the Honourable Justice Chartier¹ contained a series of recommendations to redress the situation. Adopting a strategy of bringing bilingual services closer to communities with high concentrations of Francophones, Justice Chartier promoted the concept of “Community Service Centres” in one of his main recommendations.

In March 1999, the Government of Manitoba announced the creation of six Bilingual Service Centres in the province. At the time of this evaluation, three Bilingual Service Centres were operating, all three with assistance from the federal government.

At the same time as the Government of Manitoba was studying the problems in the delivery of its services in French, the federal government was examining the impact of government transformations on Canada’s linguistic duality. The Treasury Board Secretariat had mandated a working group to explore this question and identify some possible solutions. In its report, the working group concluded that government transformations had resulted in a considerable erosion of the linguistic duality within the federal government. Among the possible avenues to explore for redressing the situation, the working group looked, among other things, at the ‘single window’ model.

At the same time as the Manitoba initiative, the Treasury Board Secretariat of the Government of Canada was given a mandate in 1998 to “*explore options with a view to putting in place an integrated approach to the delivery of federal services, so as to create a new government image, and this within a two-year period.*”² To this end, the Treasury Board Secretariat launched the Service Canada Initiative, to provide citizens with “*single windows for obtaining government services quickly and reliably and in a way that is easily accessible and less costly.*”³ Funding

¹ Chartier, Richard (1998). *Above All, Common Sense: Report and Recommendations on French Language Services Within the Government of Manitoba*. Winnipeg.

² Treasury Board Secretariat (Date unavailable). *Service Canada: Working Paper*, p. 2. [Unofficial English translation]

³ *Ibid*, p. 3.



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for three years was provided, covering fiscal years 1999-00, 2000-01 and 2001-02, to establish Service Canada Access Centres on a pilot project basis.⁴

In the months following the announcement of the Bilingual Service Centres initiative, the Government of Manitoba and the Government of Canada engaged in negotiations with the objective of ensuring federal participation in this provincial initiative for the delivery of bilingual services. In September 2000, the Province of Manitoba asked of the federal government that it make a firm commitment in support of the Bilingual Service Centres initiative. In June 2001, the federal government agreed to provide federal services in the Bilingual Service Centres of St. Boniface and Notre Dame de Lourdes. In addition, the federal government decided in January 2001 to extend its commitment beyond the two existing Centres and provide federal services in the Bilingual Service Centre of St. Pierre Jolys.

In the case of the first two Bilingual Service Centres, the strategy was to ensure a federal presence by setting up Service Canada Access Centres within the new entities. Funds from the Service Canada pilot projects for the 2000-01 financial year were used to make it possible for the first two Access Centres to open. It should be noted that at the time when these two Service Canada Access Centres were being set up, the establishment of the first two corresponding Bilingual Service Centres had not yet been finalized. The delays encountered in establishing the first two Bilingual Service Centres were caused mainly by delays in the renovation and construction of the Centres. As a result, temporary Service Canada Access Centres were opened to be transferred later to the Bilingual Service Centres of St. Boniface and Notre Dame de Lourdes (see Figure 1, below).

Federal efforts were coordinated for the most part by the Official Languages Subcommittee, which reports to the Manitoba Federal Council. The Manitoba Federal Council is not a recognized entity that can, among other things, apply for and receive funds for a project like the Bilingual Service Centres. Consequently, the Department of Canadian Heritage, as the department responsible for promoting linguistic duality and coordinating sections 41 and 42 of the *Official Languages Act*, was given the responsibility of sponsoring the federal participation in the single window pilot project on behalf of the Manitoba Federal Council.

⁴ That network was originally managed by the Treasury Board Secretariat but, as of April 1st, 2002, the responsibility was transferred to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. These Access Centres provided government services in three different ways. They provided personalized assistance; distributed the most frequently requested publications and forms; and offered access to federal government services via the Internet and by telephone. The Department of Canadian Heritage opened six Service Canada Access Centres (Moncton, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton), but on March 31st, 2003, it closed these six centres for financial reasons.

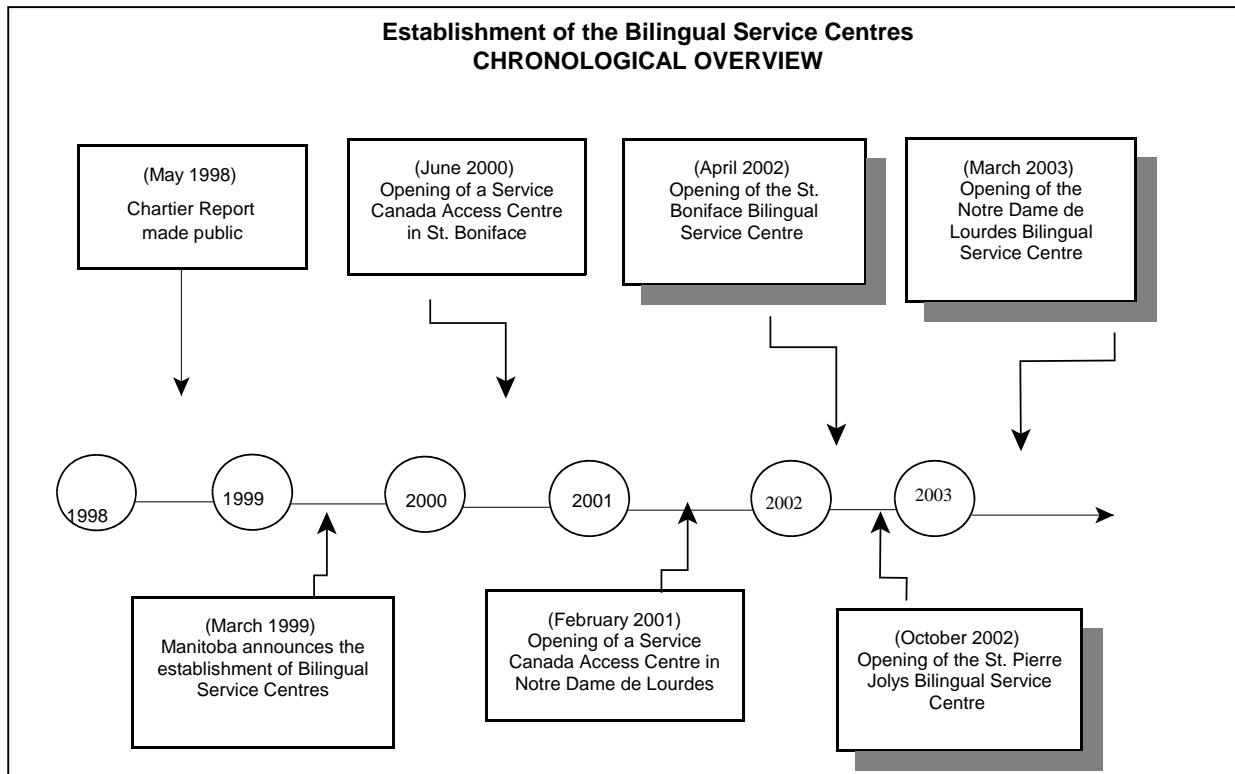


Figure 1

The objectives of the federal participation in the Bilingual Service Centres are as follow:

- offer better services in French and thereby contribute to the development and vitality of the Francophone community in Manitoba;
- offer a Francophone single window for federal services in Manitoba through the Service Canada Initiative;
- ensure integrated delivery, equal access and consistency with respect to French-language services provided by federal departments;
- develop cooperation between federal departments and other orders of government, such as the Province of Manitoba and municipalities;
- make more use of information technologies to improve the efficiency of the service while maintaining a balance with existing personalized services;
- increase the federal government’s presence in and contribution to the development of official-language minority communities by consolidating French-language services, providing access to them and delivering them.



2.0 Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The Department of Canadian Heritage undertook a formative evaluation of the federal participation in this initiative. The evaluation assesses the adequacy of the initiative's implementation and the likelihood that it will meet its objectives. The evaluation covers three fiscal years from 2001-02 to 2003-04. This report is based on research conducted by PRA Inc.

It should be noted that when this evaluation was undertaken, the St. Boniface Centre had been officially open for 11 months and the St. Pierre Jolys Centre for six months, while the Notre Dame de Lourdes Centre was just opening its doors. Also, the level of client traffic in the three Centres was low.

The methodology used for this evaluation included:

- A review of relevant administrative documents, the letters of understanding between the federal and Manitoba governments, and budget information. The Bilingual Service Centres also provided administrative information, including data from their *Call Tracker* system. The work also included a review of the main studies that have been published, including the Chartier and Fontaine reports as well as the reports published by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada.
- A visit to the three Bilingual Service Centres currently operating in Manitoba. Interviews were conducted with staff and managers.
- Interviews with a total of 25 respondents (including the interviews conducted during the visit to the Centres). In addition to staff and managers of the Bilingual Service Centres, the list of interviewees includes representatives of the Department of Canadian Heritage, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Health Canada, the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Subcommittee on Official Languages of the Manitoba Federal Council, the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada, the Government of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg.
- A review of the general strategic considerations concerning services to the public related to the Service Canada and Government On-Line initiatives as well as to the increased use of Internet and of interactive voice systems, which can replace, in part, personalized services offered in person or by telephone.

The evaluation addressed the following issues:

- ▶ Relevance and rationale
- ▶ Design and implementation
- ▶ Structure and services
- ▶ Success
- ▶ Costs and alternative solutions



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Since the Centres had only been operating for a short time when this evaluation was undertaken, issues pertaining to the success of the initiative have been postponed until the summative evaluation. This formative evaluation focuses primarily on the issues of relevance, design and implementation, and the likelihood that the objectives will be achieved.



3.0 Description of the Bilingual Service Centres Initiative

Three Bilingual Service Centres were in operation at the time of this evaluation:

– *Bilingual Service Centre - Urban Region (St. Boniface)*

The St. Boniface Bilingual Service Centre was the first to open its doors. It was inaugurated in April 2002 and mainly serves the Winnipeg metropolitan area. The majority of the French-speaking residents of the area can be found in St. Boniface, St. Vital and St. Norbert. The population of Winnipeg is approximately 619,500 of whom nearly 27,000 (approximately 4%) have French as their mother tongue.

– *Bilingual Service Centre - Mountain Region (Notre Dame de Lourdes)*

The Mountain Region Bilingual Service Centre opened in March 2003 and is located in the western region, south of Portage la Prairie. The village of Notre Dame de Lourdes has approximately 620 residents, nearly 90% of whom have French as their mother tongue. The rural municipality of Lorne, which includes the villages of St. Claude and St. Léon, has a population of 2,033 people, of whom nearly 550 (approximately 27%) have French as their mother tongue.

– *Bilingual Service Centre - Red River Region (St. Pierre Jolys)*

The Red River Bilingual Service Centre was officially opened in October 2002. Located south of Winnipeg, this region has a number of largely French-speaking communities such as Letellier, St. Malo, Ste. Agathe, St. Adolphe and St. Jean Baptiste. The nearby rural communities of Montcalm and de Salaberry have a total population of 4,627 of whom nearly 2,100 (approximately 45%) have French as their mother tongue.

Although the Centres have largely similar structures, they each have characteristics of their own. All three Centres offer services provided by both the federal and the provincial governments. In two Centres (St. Boniface and Notre Dame de Lourdes), services provided by municipal governments are also available. The Chaboillé Community Development Corporation offers services at the St. Pierre Jolys Centre.

Federal participation primarily consists in the provision of information about services offered by various federal departments. This may include referrals for individuals seeking particular services or the provision of application forms, brochures and leaflets. There is one federal information specialist in the Notre Dame de Lourdes Centre and one in the St. Pierre Jolys Centre, and two more in the St. Boniface Centre. The federal coordinator for the three Centres works out of the St. Boniface Centre. These five people are employees of the Department of Canadian Heritage. In addition, a number of federal departments offer more specialized services. Here are a few examples:

- ▶ once a week, a staff member of the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada goes to the Notre Dame de Lourdes Bilingual Service Centre to provide certain in-person services;



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- ▶ the RCMP uses the Notre Dame de Lourdes Centre to enable citizens to meet a bilingual officer;
- ▶ in 2003, the three Bilingual Service Centres were authorized to receive personal income tax returns. In addition, the information specialists (employees of the Department of Canadian Heritage) provided low-income clients with free assistance with their tax returns.

The federal government has invested close to \$3 million over four fiscal years (from 2000-01 to 2003-04) in this initiative (Table 1).



Table 1: Federal Financial Contribution					
Type of Funding	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	Total
Initial funding to set up two Service Canada Access Centres in St. Boniface and Notre Dame de Lourdes ¹	\$461,500				\$ 461,500
Funding of the federal participation, including the funding for St. Boniface and Notre Dame de Lourdes ²		\$410,000	\$410,000	\$410,000	\$1,230,000
Additional funding for the federal participation in St. Pierre Jolys ³			\$100,000		\$ 100,000
Funding in support of the participation of the provincial and municipal governments ⁴	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$1,200,000
Total:	\$761,500	\$710,000	\$810,000	\$710,000	\$2,991,500
Notes:					
1 The Department of Canadian Heritage received \$461,500 for fiscal year 2000-01 to set up two temporary Service Canada Access Centres in St. Boniface and Notre Dame de Lourdes. This funding came from the Service Canada pilot project fund.					
2 \$410,000 annually from the Treasury Board operational reserve for fiscal years 2001-02 to 2003-04 was allocated to the Department of Canadian Heritage to cover the costs of the federal participation in the Bilingual Service Centres in St. Boniface and Notre Dame de Lourdes, for: wages and benefits, office rental, office supplies and promotional material. It should be noted that the salary of the federal coordinator for the three Centres is covered by the Management Trainee Program of the federal Public Service. In addition, when a department assigns an employee to one of the Centres, the department in question covers the costs of this assignment (wages and other related expenses).					
3 \$100,000 was allocated in March 2001 to the Province of Manitoba to cover expenses related to the federal participation in the St. Pierre Jolys Bilingual Service Centre. This investment enabled the federal government to guarantee the rental of space in a building for the 2002-07 period. According to departmental officials, this amount was collected through Canadian Heritage cash management and contributions from federal partners who are members of the Manitoba Federal Council.					
4 The federal government also provides financial assistance to the Province of Manitoba and to municipalities to support their participation in the Bilingual Service Centres. An annual amount of \$300,000 is thus allocated for this purpose by the Promotion of Official Languages Program.					



4.0 Evaluation Findings

4.1 Relevance of the Federal Participation in the Initiative

The relevance of the federal participation in the Bilingual Service Centres initiative can be analysed from two main standpoints: the promotion of official languages and the delivery of government services through single windows.

▶ *Official Languages*

Most of the people interviewed were of the view that the Bilingual Service Centres project is consistent with the federal government's priorities with respect to the promotion of official languages. According to respondents, the Centres are an important provincial initiative for the promotion of official languages. Indeed, the Department of Canadian Heritage has financially supported the participation of the provincial and municipal governments in this initiative through its Promotion of Official Languages Program (see Table 1). In this regard, a number of the respondents also made reference to the federal government's commitment contained in the *Official Languages Act*.⁵

According to some of the respondents, the federal participation in this initiative also contributes to the federal government's objectives regarding the development of innovative methods for delivering services that meet its linguistic obligations. In this regard, some consider that the Bilingual Service Centres initiative could address concerns about the impact of government transformations on the linguistic duality.

A number of the respondents noted that the federal government's Action Plan for Official Languages recognizes that it is important to innovate in the delivery of government services in both official languages.

▶ *Single Windows*

The establishment of single windows, like the Bilingual Service Centres, is consistent with the more general process of re-modelling the government's service delivery structures. Other initiatives, such as Government On-line, are also intended to change the ways in which citizens and the federal government interact. On the other hand, some of the respondents were of the view that the single window model was inconsistent with the approach adopted by many departments, which is to encourage the use of new technologies in order to handle an ever

⁵ Section 43 of the *Official Languages Act* includes a provision to the effect that "The Minister of Canadian Heritage shall take such measures as that Minister considers appropriate to advance the equality of status and use of English and French in Canadian society and, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, may take measures to (...) encourage and assist provincial governments to support the development of English and French linguistic minority communities generally and, in particular, to offer provincial and municipal services in both English and French..."



widening range of activities. They wondered, therefore, whether the development of these Centres, which allow for the decentralization of the delivery of services, will remain compatible in the middle and long term with the direction taken by these departments, which is to maximize the delivery of services through the Internet, toll-free 1-800 numbers, and mail.

It should be noted that at the time this evaluation was undertaken, the Treasury Board Secretariat was in the process of reviewing the federal government's overall strategy for the delivery of services through new technologies.

4.2 Design and Implementation

► *Implementation and Management Structure*

Many of the respondents noted that the Bilingual Service Centres were an initiative of the Province of Manitoba and that, consequently, its design and implementation were, to a large extent, the responsibility of the province. The federal government was invited to join the initiative and participated directly in the planning and implementation of it through pilot projects of the Service Canada Initiative.

Federal efforts were, to a large extent, co-ordinated by the Official Languages Subcommittee, which reports to the Manitoba Federal Council. The Manitoba Federal Council has no official status allowing it, among other things, to apply for and receive funds for a project like the Bilingual Service Centres. Some respondents noted that it was due to this lack of official status that the Department of Canadian Heritage became, by default, the sponsoring organization for the federal participation in this initiative. Indeed, section 42 of the *Official Languages Act* gives the Department of Canadian Heritage a coordinating role in the implementation of the federal government's commitment to enhance the vitality of the two official languages. It was noted, though, that some agency or department other than Canadian Heritage could also lead such an initiative, especially since it is basically a question of the means by which federal services are delivered.

In day-to-day operations, the partners involved in these Centres remain largely independent of each other. The federal government covers the costs of renting, operating and maintaining the Centres on a prorated basis depending on the number of square feet that it occupies. The federal and provincial governments have each hired a coordinator responsible for managing their respective operations and employees. The interviews revealed that the two coordinators work closely and effectively together, thereby facilitating the management of the Centres.

The partners have decided to adopt the *Call Tracker* software to facilitate the collection of the data required for preparing the activities reports of the three Bilingual Service Centres. This data base enables each Bilingual Service Centre to document its operations and the inquiries it receives by telephone, fax, email or in-person visits. At the time of the evaluation, the federal employees, the provincial information specialists, and the receptionists were all using this software. It is planned that by the end of fiscal year 2003-04, all the partners in the three Centres



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will be using it. The information collected is also centralized (for all the Centres and all the partners), which greatly facilitates the production of activities reports.

Some of the people who were consulted claimed that the name “Bilingual Service Centres / Centres de services bilingues” is confusing. In their view, that name does not clearly signal that these are single windows for government services and may even lead one to think that the services offered by the Centres are translation services.

Figure 2 (below) shows the monthly traffic of *federal* clients (not the clients of all the partners in each centre) between November 2002 and January 2004. It should be noted that the Centre in St. Boniface officially opened in April 2002, while the Centre in St. Pierre Jolys did not officially open until October 2002 and that in Notre Dame de Lourdes until March 2003 (the statistics for the latter Centre include activities that took place while it was still operating informally under the Service Canada banner). It is important to emphasize that awareness-raising activities and community meetings are also organized in the Centres, particularly in the two Centres located in rural areas. These activities enable the Centres to reach many seniors, children, and other members of the communities.

The interviews revealed that the ways in which the Bilingual Service Centres are promoted varied greatly depending on whether it is located in a rural or urban area. Currently, the Centre in St. Boniface is putting the emphasis on advertising the services being offered. In addition to the dissemination of news releases, posters and leaflets providing a general description of the services provided, the Centre has initiated information campaigns on specific topics such as income tax returns, Internet security, Canada celebrations, etc.

In the rural regions, the approach focusses on raising awareness among specific client groups. Bilingual Service Centre representatives visit schools, community organizations, seniors homes, etc. Respondents believe that this approach is particularly appropriate given that the rural centres serve very large geographic areas.

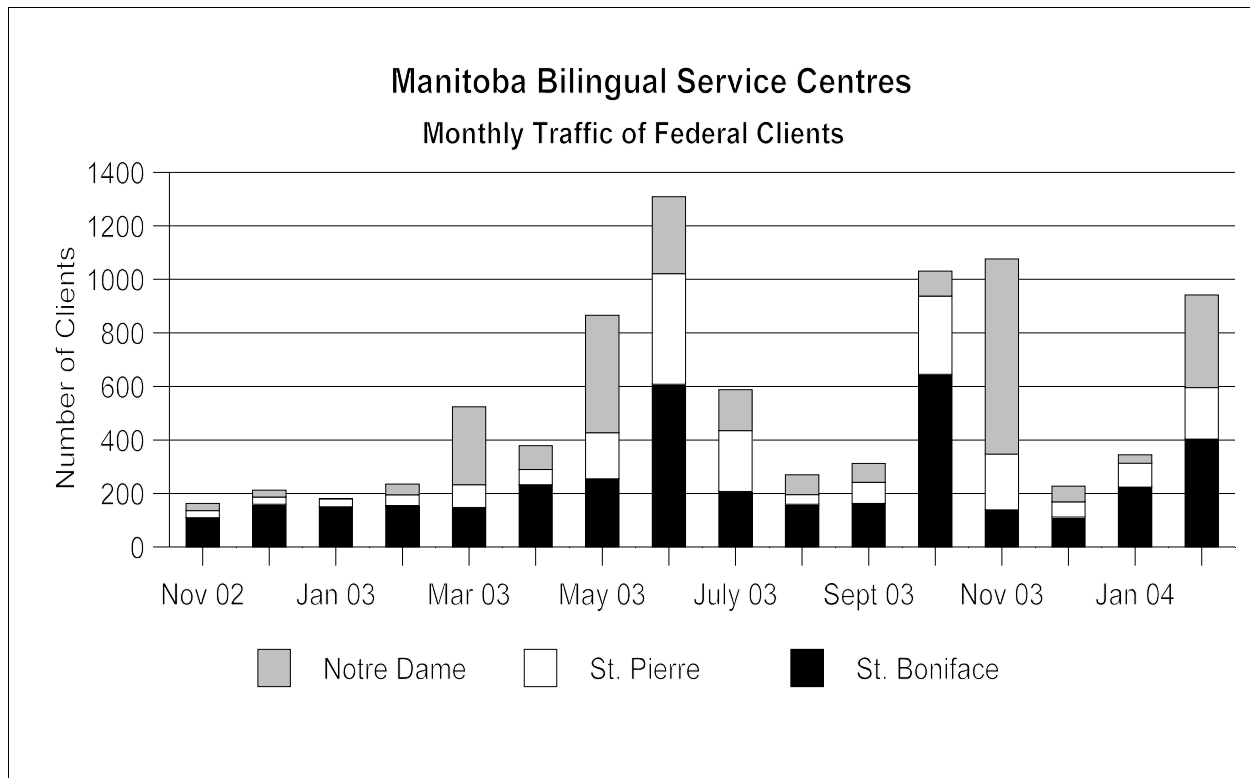


Figure 2

The interviews confirmed that the Bilingual Service Centres only rarely advertise. Indeed, it was reported that the Centres are not listed in the telephone directory, that they rarely engage in publicity activities, and that the departments that provide services through the Centres do not promote them very much. It should be noted that this formative evaluation did not include direct consultations (surveys) with the target populations to assess their knowledge of the Centres.

The people interviewed acknowledged that much remains to be done before the Bilingual Service Centres are well known and the local people (Anglophones and Francophones) are clear on the resources and services offered by these Centres.

The interviews have shed light on a number of weaknesses that have had an impact on the implementation of the initiative.

- A memorandum of understanding was to have been signed between the federal government and the provincial government to define the responsibilities of each partner and determine the main management and operating rules for the Bilingual Service Centres. At the time of this evaluation, the memorandum of understanding had not yet been signed. Only letters of understanding had been exchanged between the two orders of government. The federal government's inability to commit itself financially for more



than three years was said to be one of the reasons for the delay in the signing of the memorandum of understanding.

- A results-based management and accountability framework was to have been developed in the first year of the implementation of the Centres, but it has never been completed. Such a framework would have helped with the development of a clear vision of the objectives to be achieved and of the expected measurable results, as well as facilitated appropriate reporting on the initiative.
 - After the first two Centres opened, the Government of Canada was to have determined what its future participation would be in the other centres. This analysis still has not been undertaken.
- ▶ *Array and Level of Services Offered*

A major question in the eyes of several of the people who were interviewed was the relevance of the services provided in each Centre. This is a matter of determining whether the array and level of services offered meet the needs and expectations of the target clientele. There are basically three levels of services that can be provided through the Bilingual Service Centres:

- *Information:* A centre can provide information about the programs and services offered by a particular order of government. The information takes the form of informational folders or brochures, as well as application forms (applications for passports, social insurance numbers, etc.). The information can be provided on paper or in electronic format using computers made available to the clients of the Centres.
- *Basic transactions:* A centre can make it possible for clients to carry out certain basic transactions that simply require an employee of a centre to have the authority to proceed with the transaction. For instance, clients can pay certain bills or employees receive certain application forms on behalf of a particular department or agency.
- *Full services:* A centre can provide clients with a number of full services, in the same way as could be obtained by going directly to the department or ministry in question. The clients can meet a ministry employee and receive certain of the specialized services that they offer.

The interviews have revealed that the three orders of government currently participating in the Bilingual Service Centres each provide an array and level of services that are quite different. Figure 3 provides a snapshot of the type of services that were offered by each order of government at the time of the evaluation.

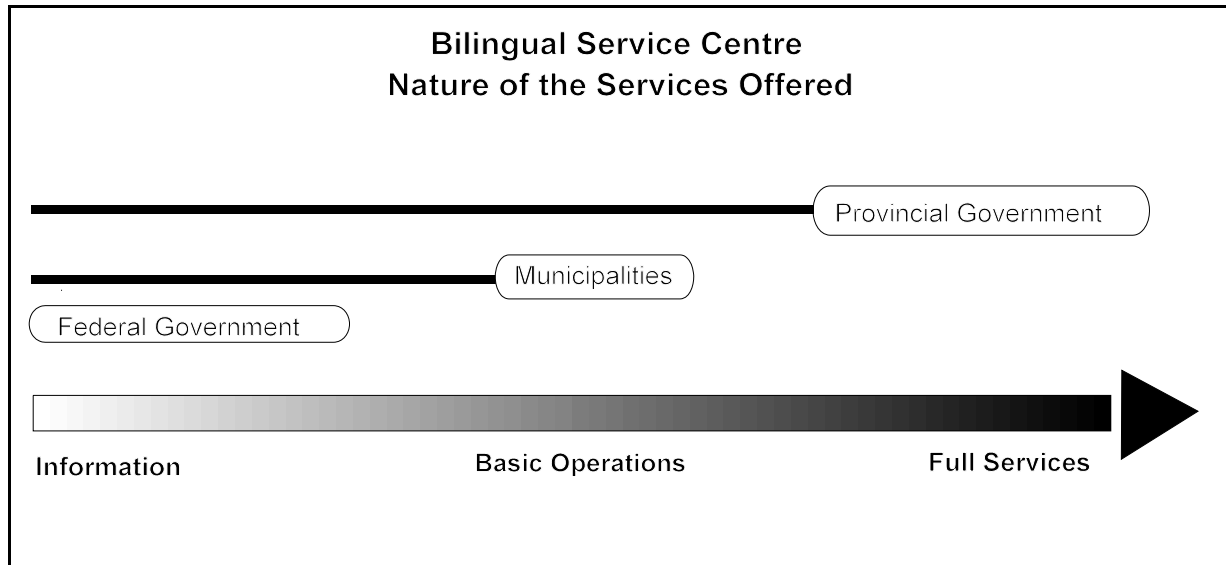


Figure 3

The federal government currently tends to limit its services to providing general information about federal programs and services, although some services are now provided by federal departments such as Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the Canada Revenue Agency. For instance, clients can obtain leaflets and brochures as well as application forms for various federal programs (passports, social insurance numbers, National Child Benefit, Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, Firearms Registry, etc.). In the vast majority of cases, clients cannot return their completed forms to an employee at the centre. Clients must mail the forms themselves or, if necessary, go to an office of the department in question in order to complete the transaction.

It should be noted that most of the federal departments and programs that had been identified as potential participants when the initiative was implemented do not provide basic services at the Centres.⁶ There are several reasons for this, including the following two:

- ▶ First, each department has a service delivery structure that is unique, based on the nature of the services offered and the clients being served. For example, the Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centres offer services that rely on a portfolio of expertise, resources centres and electronic data bases. These centres are located in the downtown area (near

⁶ For further information on the initial planning of the federal participation in the Bilingual Service Centres, see the study by Maria Chaput: Canadian Heritage (1999). *Plan d'affaires des guichets uniques fédéraux pour la livraison des services en français au Manitoba*. Winnipeg.



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the main library and near the offices of Western Economic Diversification Canada), in order to be close to the Winnipeg business district.

Similarly, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has established joint service delivery sites with the provincial ministries responsible for training and social services, and they too are located in downtown Winnipeg. It is difficult to imagine how specialized federal training and assistance programs could be effectively delivered if they were not co-located with the provincial services. It would be difficult to relocate the teams of advisors who work in these sites to Bilingual Service Centres.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) provides certain services from the Bilingual Service Centres, but only a limited array. The RCMP has not yet developed a community police model for the services it provides in rural areas of Manitoba. It should be noted, as well, that the RCMP's services do not extend to Winnipeg, which comes under the Winnipeg Police Service.

A final example has to do with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, which offers its services at its offices in Brandon and Winnipeg and out of the offices of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration in Brandon, Morden, Dauphin, Beausejour and Winnipeg. The services provided include advice on technical matters and support programs that could hardly be delivered by people without the necessary technical knowledge.

- ▶ Second, the offices of the various federal departments each have their own strategy for delivering services in both official languages. Technically, Manitobans are entitled to be served in the official language of their choice in offices whose services are covered by the *Official Languages Act*. This evaluation did not include an investigation of whether the services are indeed offered in both official languages, but this is certainly the objective of the federal departments that we consulted.

The provincial government, for its part, provides information about its programs in the Bilingual Service Centres. The following provincial ministries provide information out of the Centres:

- ▶ Advanced Education and Training
- ▶ Conservation
- ▶ Culture, Heritage and Tourism
- ▶ Family Services and Housing
- ▶ Finance
- ▶ Industry, Trade and Mines
- ▶ Labour and Immigration

As in the case of the federal government, there is a provincial information specialist in each Bilingual Service Centre.



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The Government of Manitoba also offers certain full services. In particular, representatives of the Ministry of Family Services and Housing work out of the Centres. The Ministry responsible for the integration of new residents intends to provide funding for integration services for Francophone newcomers out of the Centre in St. Boniface. Also, it should be noted that job search services are provided directly from the Centres (Community Employment and Resource Centre).

The City of Winnipeg focusses on basic transactions than can be completed on location, in the Bilingual Service Centres. These basic transactions include the payment of municipal bills and of traffic tickets as well as the purchase of bus tickets and of certain municipal permits.

Other services are provided out of the Notre Dame de Lourdes Centre, including those of the Lourdeon Community Development Corporation, the *Réseau communautaire*, and the Village of Notre Dame de Lourdes. At the St. Pierre Jolys Centre, the Chaboillé Community Development Corporation provides a variety of services in support of the social and economic development of the Region, including:

- ▶ Agricultural consulting services
- ▶ Directory of business people
- ▶ The promotion of tourism

In addition, the sustainability of the Bilingual Service Centres will be largely determined by the relevance of the services that citizens will be able to find there. If citizens feel that the array and level of services is sufficient and there is good quality bilingualism, they can logically be expected to use the Centres. If, however, the array of services is inadequate and clients are constantly re-directed to other administrative offices in order to obtain complete services, even for basic transactions, interest in the Centres can be expected to level off, regardless of how bilingual their services are.

4.3 Likelihood of Meeting the Objectives

This section focuses in particular on the likelihood that the federal government will achieve its objectives for this initiative. This evaluation is formative in nature and therefore not intended to provide a definitive judgement on the success of the federal participation in the Bilingual Service Centres. Since the three Centres were only recently established, it would not be realistic or appropriate to draw any final conclusions on the achievement of the objectives.

- ▶ ***Better access to programs and services***

As a result of the sheer number and complexity of government programs and services, it can be difficult for citizens to find their way and the right door to knock on when they need assistance. The objective of the Bilingual Service Centres is to alleviate this situation, to the extent possible. Rather than assuming that citizens will be able to find the services or programs that they need,



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the Bilingual Service Centres are expected to identify the program or service that best meets the specific needs of particular clients.

The primary objective of the federal and provincial information specialists in each Centre is to steer clients toward the most appropriate program or service.

The various orders of government should therefore have the capacity to provide information on the programs and services that they offer to citizens. According to the respondents, however, this objective is only partially achieved, especially insofar as the federal government is concerned. They wish that the federal government would expand the array and level of the services that it provides so that a larger number of basic transactions can be completed on site.

The interviews revealed that the fact that the federal government does not offer personalized services was a problem that, in the long run, could jeopardize the achievement of the objective. According to many respondents, the clients of the Bilingual Service Centres would like to be able to complete certain transactions on site, including transactions with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (applications related to employment insurance programs), Social Development Canada (Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, and social insurance numbers), the Passport Office, and the Canada Revenue Agency.

The interviews highlighted the impediments, both technological and administrative, to the delivery of such government services through the Bilingual Service Centres. Several people said that the government's mounting concern with terrorism had led to a tightening of the controls around a number of programs. While acknowledging this specific situation, other people emphasized the importance for the federal government to provide a minimal number of on-site services, in addition to information about its programs and services.

By providing basically only information about federal services, the Bilingual Service Centres almost always force clients to turn to the offices of each particular department or agency.

Expanding the array and level of services provided by the Centres should logically result in better access to fully bilingual services from many departments and agencies. The risk of having only a limited number of services available is that the Centres could become just a "bilingual detour" in a larger process, the linguistic quality of which remaining inconsistent and unequal.

► *Increased Quality of Bilingualism*

The quality of bilingualism in the delivery of government services was at the heart of the Charter Report and of the establishment of the Bilingual Service Centres. The interviews have shown that there are still problems today in all orders of government with active offer and the actual delivery of services in the two official languages. Although the severity of the problems does vary among departments and ministries as well as orders of government, all the people who were interviewed recognized that they exist.



The site visits and interviews conducted for this evaluation confirmed that the level of bilingualism at the three Bilingual Service Centres is very high. The objective of improving the quality of the bilingualism in the services offered through the Centres has been very largely achieved and strategies have been implemented to maintain quality bilingualism in the future. For example, all the employees whom we met were bilingual and the services were actively offered in both official languages. In addition, the language of work is French, as recommended in the Chartier Report.

► *Collaboration between federal departments and other orders of government*

Structures have been put in place to manage this partnership on many different levels. There are two joint committees that operate in parallel with the Manitoba Federal Council and its Official Languages Sub-committee:

Steering Committee: The Steering Committee enables everyone involved in the Bilingual Service Centres to co-ordinate their efforts, discuss the general direction of the initiative and deal, if necessary, with any question or concern brought to its attention.

Coordinating committees: Each Bilingual Service Centre must have a coordinating committee of the partners specific to that centre. The coordinating committee is in charge of managing operational-type questions that relate to the set-up and operations of the Centres. However, at the time of the evaluation, these committees were not yet operational.

The provincial government plays a lead role insofar as the sharing of responsibilities is concerned. Interviews have shown that the various partners in the Centres have adopted procedures for the systematic exchange of information:

- The federal and provincial coordinators of the Centres work closely together on a daily basis.
- At each Centre, the federal and provincial information specialists also work closely together. Among other things, this helps them steer clients to appropriate services. These specialists also make joint presentations on their services to community groups.
- Staff meetings are arranged for all to improve their knowledge of the programs provided by the various partners.

Those involved feel that this sharing of information and increased knowledge of the various services provided by everyone will make it possible to have a real ‘single window’ covering several orders of government. There is agreement that the daily management of the Centres is efficient and that the partners have the tools they need to report on their activities.



4.4 Alternative Solutions and Costs

The interviews did not make it possible to identify alternative models that would achieve the same results insofar as the quality of the bilingualism is concerned. However, alternatives do exist with respect to the delivery of federal services by means of new technologies (1-800 and on-line services) and it is expected that by 2005, it will be possible to access all federal services by means of new technologies. This could explain, at least in part, why some departments hesitate to join wholeheartedly in the Bilingual Service Centres and to offer services directly through them.

Some of the people interviewed are of the view that if the federal government is to provide only information about its programs and services, alternatives such as 1-800 numbers or Internet-based services might well be more efficient. Setting up Bilingual Service Centres only really makes sense if some full services are provided there.

It should be pointed out that this formative evaluation did not include a cost/benefit analysis. The fact that the Bilingual Service Centres in St. Pierre Jolys and Notre Dame de Lourdes have opened only recently made it impossible to undertake such a broad analysis. Nevertheless, there does not seem to exist sufficient analysis of the possible costs of delivering federal services to a very small number of clients. Given current client traffic, the initiative could be deemed to be costly. According to a recent report, the average cost of transactions with the federal government is \$37 in person, \$19 by mail, \$10 by telephone, and less than 30¢ via Internet.⁷

One of the alternatives available to the federal government is to improve its capacity to offer bilingual services from the current service points of various federal departments. To this end, these federal departments would have to assess their current capacity to offer services in both official languages. A distinction must be made in this regard between front-line services, where employees can identify the services needed and steer clients to the right place, and services requiring greater technical knowledge. Offering bilingual services requiring advanced technical knowledge in areas such as taxation or agri-food will inevitably require more resources.

Another alternative would be to offer more services in a passive or 'one-way' mode, such as brochures, leaflets, access to data banks such as the Job Bank, etc. Provincial and municipal employees could then refer clients to the various service points of federal departments.

⁷ Canada (2003). *Government of Canada; Service Vision for Canadians*. Ottawa, p. 5.



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5.0 Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the evaluation issues listed in Section 2. A formative evaluation of an initiative that is still very much in the implementation stage has a number of limitations. For instance, this evaluation focusses on issues relating to the relevance, design and implementation of the initiative, as well as on the likelihood that the objectives can be achieved. The initiative has not been in place long enough for a definitive judgement to be made about its results and impact.

5.1 Relevance of the Federal Participation in the Initiative

Overall, the Bilingual Service Centres initiative meets the objective of promoting both official languages, an important element of the mandate of the Department of Canadian Heritage. This explains, among other things, why the Department, through its Official Languages Promotion Program, has provided financial assistance to the provincial and municipal governments in support of their participation in the initiative.

The evaluation has shown, however, that the coordination of the participation of federal departments in the initiative is not such a ready fit with the Department's strategic objectives. To a large degree, the Department found itself being, by default, the one administrative entity capable of receiving federal funds. The Manitoba Federal Council, which was the main co-ordinator of the federal strategy for the Bilingual Service Centres initiative, has no official status allowing it to receive such funding. Although Section 42 of the *Official Languages Act* gives the Department of Canadian Heritage a co-ordinating role for promoting the development of official language communities, the Department, in fact, offers few in-person services to the public and is therefore poorly positioned to influence the management of public service structures by other federal departments.

As indicated in the program documentation, the Department had no operational resources to cover the baseline costs of setting up federal services. The grants and contributions available to Canadian Heritage were not designed to cover such costs. The plan was for the funding to come directly from the Treasury Board for three years to cover the cost of the federal participation in two Bilingual Service Centres. Program documentation suggest that the Department would try and find a long-term solution, in cooperation with Service Canada, to maximize the federal government's investment in this project. At the time of the evaluation, however, such a solution had yet to be found. Using funds of the Department of Canadian Heritage to support the federal participation in the Bilingual Service Centres remains, for its part, a solution that is quite impractical.

The Bilingual Service Centres initiative seeks to achieve a certain number of results. At the time of the evaluation, the relevance of offering bilingual federal services through these Centres rather than from each Department, as well as the value that this approach adds to the development of official language communities, were not clearly demonstrated.



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The objective of making greater use of information technologies while maintaining a balance with existing personalized services is, to a certain extent, inconsistent with the practices aimed at encouraging the use of the telephone, interactive voice systems and client service Web sites, in both the public and private sectors. The initiative did not have a specific plan for achieving this relatively complex objective. Simply put, the current trend is toward greater use of electronic services involving little interaction with employees.

Finally, it should be noted that federal departments must still offer certain bilingual services from their respective service points. While the Bilingual Service Centres and the federal service points have largely complementary roles, there is however little information on the actual level of the bilingual services provided by the federal government in Manitoba. It would appear that this information has not been collected and that the federal government has not clearly established how the Bilingual Service Centres could align themselves with the bilingual services provided by each department or play a complementary role. The rationale for establishing Bilingual Service Centres was to offer better service in French. The fact that the federal government continues to have the obligation to provide a number of bilingual services from its various service points is an important element of the context in which the Bilingual Service Centres must operate. This has a direct impact on the relevance and design of services offered by the federal government through these Centres.

5.2 Design and Implementation

One of the expectations mentioned in the program documentation was that federal departments would work together to identify the services to be provided through the Bilingual Service Centres. The participation of departments and agencies such as Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Western Economic Diversification Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Passport Office and the Canada Revenue Agency is critical for the sustainability of the initiative to offer federal services through Bilingual Service Centres. However, such participation did not materialize as had been expected or hoped, each department having their own service delivery structure adapted to the type of services provided and the target clientele, as well as their own particular strategy for delivering services in both official languages. In addition, the tightened security measures taken by the various departments pursuant to the events of September 11 were somewhat detrimental to the in-person delivery of federal services through this initiative.

These two factors help explain why the Department of Canadian Heritage has had difficulty obtaining sufficient support from other federal departments to provide services through the Bilingual Service Centres. However, in addition to the question of the alignment of this initiative with existing services, it is important to consider more generally the role of person-to-person services in a single window structure such as the Bilingual Service Centres. A recent report of the Auditor General of Canada observed that:



“...the government will continue to provide these services by traditional means such as the telephone, mail, and personal contact. Although Canadians experiment more and more with the Internet, a significant number of people continue to use traditional methods to contact government departments and agencies.”⁸

This report noted a major increase in the use of the Internet for communicating with the federal government (from 22% to 34%), while personal contacts declined by 10%.

In light of these considerations regarding the service delivery model and given that departments are each required to provide certain bilingual services from their respective offices, it should not come as a surprise that the Department of Canadian Heritage has not been able to develop a co-ordinated approach to providing bilingual services through Bilingual Service Centres. And there is no indication that, in the short-term, federal departments will modify their service delivery strategy and participate in centre activities by providing in-person services through these Centres.

The lack of consensus among federal departments with regard to the mode and extent of their participation in the initiative has also, to a certain degree, had a negative impact on the implementation of the federal initiative:

- ▶ *Management:* Because the Department of Canadian Heritage offers only a few in-person services to the public and does not have a mandate or much experience in this area, it has been difficult for the Department to convince other departments to participate in the initiative and offer a variety of in-person services. Nevertheless, this did not deter the Manitoba Federal Council from actively promoting the concept. It is worth noting in this regard that provincial and municipal services are generally easier to deliver than federal services using a delivery structure such as the Bilingual Service Centres (the payment of provincial and municipal tax bills, for instance).
- ▶ *Implementation delays:* The inherent complexity of this initiative and the need to co-ordinate various federal and provincial requirements have caused virtually inevitable delays in setting up the Centres. Furthermore, the initiative was not based on a clearly defined planning process or a specific service delivery model. This report raises a number of questions with regard to the planning assumptions that were made about federal departments' participation in this initiative. The model was not defined in detail, let alone pre-tested, and is based on uncertain assumptions. The fact that few in-person federal services are being offered through the Centres would seem to confirm that design problems exist.
- ▶ *Decision-making authority:* The lack of official status of the Manitoba Federal Council has prevented it from assuming a direct role with respect to decision-making and

⁸ Office of the Auditor General of Canada (November 2003). *Information Technology*, available at: <http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/domino/reports.nsf/html/20031101ce.html> par. 1.13.



management of federal financial resources for the initiative. The Department of Canadian Heritage was charged with a co-ordination role because of its experience in the area of official languages and its administrative capacity to manage federal funds, even though the Department does not itself provide many in-person services to the public. This situation has created a certain ambiguity with respect to the structure of the initiative, authority, leadership and accountability relative to federal participation in the initiative.

- ▶ *Measuring expectations:* Partners' expectations (those of the province and municipalities especially) have continued to grow, in part because of federal support for the initiative. In particular, ministers and senior officials have reiterated their support for and commitment to the initiative, despite limited progress in the planning and implementation of federal services through these Centres. The main source of funding, the Service Canada Initiative, was not renewed and an alternative strategy has not been developed.
- ▶ *Objectives, goals and results:* The lack of in-person services offered by federal departments has meant that specific objectives regarding levels of service to be provided and results to be expected were never clearly articulated. In such a context, it is not possible to have precise service plans or performance measurements. Without a firm commitment from the federal government, the development of an evaluation framework and of a performance measurement strategy were, by and large, premature. This is, in part, why there is still no RMAF or RBAF⁹ for an initiative that has been in operation now for two or three years. The performance data are therefore limited to the information in the *Call Tracker* system. Figure 2 shows, in this regard, that the number of clients served by the federal government per month varies considerably, from 200 to 1 300 approximately.
- ▶ *Financial commitments:* Leases of up to ten years have been signed by the Province of Manitoba with the community, based on the assumption that a source of financing would eventually be found. These expectations have been sustained, in part, by repeated commitments from senior federal officials. There is a disconnect between the initiative's long-term commitments and the financial resources available.

5.3 Likelihood of Meeting the Objectives

Given the little progress achieved so far as well as the limited and uncertain commitments from many key federal departments to provide in-person services through Bilingual Service Centres, it is not certain that the initiative will be able to meet its initial objectives. The lack of a stable funding source and of an administrative base compound this problem. It is therefore unlikely that the initiative will be able to meet its objectives with regard to federal participation.

5.4 Summary, Recommendations, and Management Response

⁹ An RMAF is a Results-Based Management and Accountability Framework and an RBAF is a Risk-Based Audit Framework.



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The interviews have confirmed the importance of being able to offer services that meet the needs of the French-speaking community in Manitoba. The general direction recommended in the Chartier Report has been accepted by the federal government, the provincial government and the municipalities. At the same time, however, new ideas on how government services can be delivered, especially via the Internet, were paving the way for the delivery of services at considerably lower cost than traditional delivery models. The establishment of single windows provides an interesting opportunity to regroup government services under one roof, especially services provided by different orders of government. However, the Bilingual Service Centres have, so far, not been able to convince a significant number of federal departments to use them to deliver in-person services. The current model does not appear to offer much by way of federal services, and it still does not have a secure funding base. The most logical next steps would seem to be a needs study, a service plan and a cost/benefit analysis.

Recommendations

Taking into account the findings outlined above, we make the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

Considering that the Bilingual Service Centres initiative is consistent with the official languages mandate and strategic objectives of the Department of Canadian Heritage:

It is recommended that the Department of Canadian Heritage continue its participation in this initiative within the framework and according to the terms and conditions of its Official Language Support Programs.

Management Response

Management accepts the recommendation.

The regional office of the Department of Canadian Heritage plans to withdraw from the management of Bilingual Service Centres while continuing to support initiatives of this type, insofar as they fall within the mandate that established the parameters for the promotion of linguistic duality. The Department is currently working with Service Canada to identify the measures necessary for transferring responsibilities or for closing the Centres by the end of the fiscal year.



Recommendation 2

Considering that:

- The Department of Canadian Heritage does not provide in-person services to the public and is poorly positioned to intervene in the management of the public service structures of other federal departments;
- The Department has no operational financial resources to cover the baseline costs associated with setting up federal services; and
- No long-term strategy has been developed to replace funding from the Service Canada Initiative:

It is recommended that the Department of Canadian Heritage initiate discussions with its partners in this initiative to assign responsibility for co-ordinating the initiative to a department or central agency with the necessary resources and the appropriate mandate.

Management Response

Management accepts the recommendation.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS), in cooperation with key departments that provide in-person services, are working on the design of the future Service Canada network, on how to provide services to minority-language communities, and on determining who will be in charge of in-person services. HRSDC is currently setting up a working group of director generals in which Canadian Heritage will actively participate to ensure that key stakeholders will be involved in the development of the options, strategies and potential results of the undertaking. The process of transferring responsibilities from Canadian Heritage to a new organization will be developed and implemented by the end of the fiscal year.

Recommendation 3

Considering that:

- The relevance of this 'single window' approach was not established with regard to the provision of federal services under this initiative;
- Each federal department has its own service delivery structure based on the type of services provided and the clientele being served, and that these departments have their own strategies for delivering services in both official languages;
- The current trend with regard to service delivery encourages the use of the telephone, interactive voice systems and client services Web sites.



It is recommended that the Department of Canadian Heritage try and obtain from its partners the development and approval of a management framework which would clearly identify:

- **The needs to be addressed, the objectives to be pursued and the results to be expected, the indicators of performance, and the strategy for monitoring performance;**
- **The nature and level of services to be offered in both official languages by the participating federal departments; and**
- **The congruence between the initiative and the federal government's policies with respect to modes of service delivery.**

Management Response

Management accepts the recommendation in part.

The region will work with the Official Languages Subcommittee and the HRSDC working committee of director generals to encourage the development of clear objectives, results, performance indicators and of a measurement strategy relating to the active offer in both official languages.

However, in the wake of transferring responsibilities and accountability for the Centres, the Department of Canadian Heritage, while it wishes to cooperate, will have to avoid interfering in the new management of the Centres and shall not do more than encourage participating departments to establish service levels. It is the Treasury Board that is responsible for ensuring that departments meet service requirements in the minority language.

The regional office of the Department of Canadian Heritage will continue working with community representatives and with the Official Languages Subcommittee of the Federal Council to make the service requirements of the minority community better known and raise awareness about the community's service needs, the response capabilities of the participating departments, and the measures that the new sponsoring organization need to put in place to ensure that the project continues.

Treasury Board and the new sponsoring organization will also be responsible for determining whether the initiative conforms with federal government service delivery policies.



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APPENDIX

PROFILE OF BILINGUAL SERVICE CENTRES



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Bilingual Service Centre – Urban Region (St. Boniface)	
Location	Centre La Vérendrye, St. Boniface
Official Opening	April 2002
Area Served	Winnipeg metropolitan area
Government of Manitoba	<p>The following ministries provide information and/or certain services at the Urban Region Centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Conservation (fisheries, wildlife, parks, forestry, etc.) ▸ Culture, Heritage and Tourism ▸ Finance ▸ Industry, Trade and Mines ▸ Justice ▸ Family Services and Housing (this Ministry provides personalized services at the Centre) ▸ Transportation and Government Services ▸ Labour and Immigration (this Ministry plans to fund some integration services for Francophone newcomers out of the Centre) ▸ General Information (an information specialist provides assistance and referral services) ▸ The provincial coordinator of the Bilingual Service Centres works out of this Centre.
Government of Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ The federal government provides information about a variety of federal programs, including brochures, forms, and leaflets. An information specialist and a client services representative are on site to provide assistance and referral services. The federal coordinator of the Bilingual Service Centres works out of this Centre. These are employees of the Department of Canadian Heritage. ▸ The Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre has an information counter in this Bilingual Service Centre, where a business consultant can be found.
City of Winnipeg	<p>The following transactions can be completed at the Centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Water bill payments ▸ Property tax payments ▸ Parking ticket payments ▸ Payment for ambulance services ▸ Purchases of bus passes and tickets ▸ Purchases of dog licences ▸ Purchases of residential street parking permits <p>The City also provides general information on bus schedules, building permits, garbage and refuse, etc.</p>



Bilingual Service Centre – Mountain Region (Notre Dame de Lourdes)	
Location	Notre Dame de Lourdes
Official Opening	March 2003
Area Served	Rural Municipality of Lorne and area
Government of Manitoba	<p>The following ministries provide information and/or certain services at the Mountain Region Centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Advanced Education and Training ▸ Conservation ▸ Culture, Heritage and Tourism ▸ Family Services and Housing ▸ Finance ▸ Industry, Trade and Mines ▸ Labour and Immigration
Government of Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ The federal government provides information about a variety of federal programs, including brochures, forms, and leaflets. An information specialist, who is a Department of Canadian Heritage employee, is on site to provide assistance and referral services. ▸ The Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre has an information counter at the Bilingual Service Centre. ▸ The Departments of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Social Development Canada provide certain services at the Centre one day a week. ▸ The RCMP can take statements at the Centre.
Village of Notre Dame de Lourdes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Municipal cashier ▸ General information (building permits, firefighters, etc.) ▸ Père Champagne Library ▸ <i>Musée des Pionniers et des Chanoinesses</i> ▸ Lorne recreational area
Lourdéon Community Development Corporation	<p>This Development Corporation provides various services in support of the social and economic development of the Region, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Business plans, marketing strategies ▸ Advice for young entrepreneurs ▸ Promotion of the Region ▸ Regional community consultations
<i>Réseau communautaire</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Promotion of the French language and culture ▸ Promotion of the community in the media ▸ Source of regional information ▸ Help with identifying funding sources ▸ Liaison with other Francophone communities



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Bilingual Service Centre – Red River Region (St. Pierre Jolys)	
Location	St. Pierre Jolys
Official Opening	October 2002
Area Served	De Salaberry and Montcalm rural municipalities
Government of Manitoba	<p>The following ministries provide information and/or certain services at the Red River Region Centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▸ Advanced Education and Training (occupational training services are provided on site)▸ Community Employment and Resource Centre (job search services are available on site)▸ Conservation (fisheries, wildlife, parks, forestry, etc.)▸ Culture, Heritage and Tourism▸ Finance▸ Industry, Trade and Mines▸ Winnipeg's Children and Families Services (support, conciliation and foster care services are provided on site)▸ Transportation and Government Services▸ Labour and Immigration▸ General Information (an information specialist provides assistance and referral services)
Government of Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▸ The federal government provides information about a variety of federal programs, including brochures, forms and leaflets. An information specialist, who is a Department of Canadian Heritage employee, is on site to provide assistance and referral services.▸ The Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre has an information counter at the Bilingual Service Centre
Chaboillé Community Development Corporation	<p>This Development Corporation provides various services in support of the social and economic development of the Region, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▸ Agricultural consultation services▸ Directory of business people▸ Promotion of tourism