

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am pleased to inform you of the completion of the detailed report of the *Official Languages Research Issues* symposium held in Ottawa on January 10 and 11, 2008. This report provides highlights of the plenary sessions, sectional workshops and guest presentations. I invite you to consult the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities (CIRLM) Web site at <http://www.icrml.ca/>, where you will find all available presentations, including the final report

This symposium results from a partnership between Canadian Heritage (several components), Statistics Canada, Health Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, Industry Canada and the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities. A steering committee, composed of a representative from each of these institutions, handled the symposium's organization.

In addition to the symposium, other significant official languages research events marked 2007-2008, particularly the January 2008 publication of the report entitled *The Role of Canadian Federal Research Funding Agencies in the Promotion of Official Languages* by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, and the December 2007 publication of Statistics Canada's document entitled *Survey on the Vitality of Official-Language Minorities*, as well as the announcement of 2006 Census language data.

In addition to providing a networking opportunity, the symposium enabled an objective review of the current state of official languages research in Canada, as well as helping to determine courses of action to improve the relevance of official languages research. One of the longer-term effects sought is to increase the use of research in drawing up public policy and community development.

The symposium was a tremendous success, as confirmed by the positive evaluations completed by half of some 165 participants. The key to this success is mostly due to the presence of a wide range of researchers and people interested in research from government agencies, universities and community organizations.

The symposium was distinctive, since it meant discussing needs and practices for official languages research, instead of presenting research results.

The symposium led to certain major findings, including these two:

- the state of research varies greatly in different community activity sectors – research is very advanced in the education field, well-initiated in the health field, and growing in the areas of economic development and immigration;

- it would be important to establish tripartite partnerships ensuring participation of the governments, universities and communities in official languages research.

The symposium's steering committee held its last meeting on February 26, 2008. Members reviewed and validated the symposium report, and proposed six follow-up lines of action. Some come under all official-language stakeholders, whereas others come solely under the federal government. These are the lines of action:

1. Foster synergy among Canada-wide research networks for official languages.

The symposium showed that it was necessary to better coordinate the various forms of official languages research done in the different sectors and fields and in the regions. A type of network of networks should include participation of the governments, universities and official-language minorities. Such a network would foster tripartite dialogue and the establishment of priorities, as well as the pooling of research practices. It would also promote the diversity of issues related to Anglophone and Francophone communities on the one hand, and consider the first language and second language dimension on the other hand.

2. Ensure the support or creation of thematic or sectional research tables.

The symposium emphasized the necessity to support sectional or thematic research tables or to form them as needed, particularly in the suggested areas during workshops and plenary sessions. These sectional or thematic tables would make it easier to define major objectives, to determine barriers and challenges, and to design creative solutions in the areas of health, economy, immigration, education and culture. The tables could also support the organization of more targeted events by considering the interests and needs of each area covered in the symposium.

3. Ensure the development of human and financial resources to support official languages research.

Steady funding would be required to complete the research, to develop research capabilities and to support research infrastructures.

4. Ensure the development of research dissemination and popularization tools.

The symposium showed that much research has limited outreach; either it is not disseminated or not popularized. It would be necessary to make efforts to disseminate results to increase research accessibility, both for the general population and for community organizations and government agencies. It would also be necessary to adopt a common language to increase the use and relevance of research in developing public policies.

5. Increase awareness among federal agencies about research support provided and get their commitment.

The federal government holds an influential position for the official languages. Federal agencies should be more aware of the research support they can provide by implementing section 41 of the *Official Languages Act*.

6. Give a new boost to the federal government's Coordinating Committee on Official Languages Research.

The steering committee is proposing the establishment of a mechanism responsible for implementing an official languages research action plan within the federal administration. Such a mechanism should support the establishment of federal government priorities for official languages research, support the use of research in the process for developing the federal administration's public policies, contribute to ironing out difficulties in completing and disseminating research, and report annually on official languages research within the federal administration by publishing a performance statement.

Agencies, organizations and stakeholders may get ideas from the symposium's report to establish their action plan.

Concerning the federal administration, the Coordinating Committee on Official Languages Research will report on symposium follow-ups to the chair of the Committee of Deputy Ministers on Official Languages (CDMOL) and to this committee.

Lastly, I would like to thank the participants for their contribution, as well as everyone who ensured the symposium's success, particularly the steering committee members.

Jérôme Moisan
Person-in-Charge of the Steering Committee
2008 Symposium
Canadian Heritage