

Speaking Points for Catherine MacLeod

- Good morning, Bonjour
- On behalf of Health Canada, I am pleased to have this opportunity to be here this morning and to participate in the formal opening of this important 2009 Colloquium with all of you.
- I would also like to commend the many organizations that have joined together to make this event a reality. These include, among others, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Official Languages Secretariat at Canadian Heritage, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, Health Canada's Science Policy Directorate and Applied Research and Analysis Directorate, and the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities who graciously posted our information on their website. I know as well that many of you have given freely of your time in working on the organizing committees and in preparing research that will benefit us all over the next two days.
- Your support and participation in this first Health Canada Science Colloquium on the health of official language minority communities has been exceptional. Bringing together some 120 academics, decision makers, policy makers, research scientists, and community representatives from across Canada clearly demonstrates a joint commitment to have better evidence-based information on the health of Official Language Minority Communities.
- This Colloquium follows from the Symposium on Official Languages Research Issues, which was held in Ottawa in January 2008 and organized by the Official Languages Secretariat at Canadian Heritage in partnership with Health Canada and other Federal Government departments.
- I know that you are interested in hearing about our strategic focus, future plans and funding prospects for the health of Official Language Minority Communities. I would like to take a few minutes this morning to address these points.

- Health Canada has worked with federal and community partners to assist official language communities to become major contributors to Canadian society and in addressing the health barriers posed by limited access to health services in one's official language of choice.
- In 1999, Health Canada had the foresight to develop its foundation for engaging and responding to the health concerns of official language minority communities with:
 - R the creation of the Official Language Community Development Bureau;
 - R the launch of two key studies by Sarah Bowen and by the Fédération des communautés francophones; and
 - R the creation of two consultative committees who were to present strategies for action in addressing health barriers for official language minority communities.
- Following on this foundation, in 2003 Health Canada undertook a five-year funding strategy which combined initiatives to improve access to health services with research and information-generating tools funded through community-based organizations.
- In 2008, the Federal Government renewed its commitment to promote services and support for official language minority communities through the Roadmap for Linguistic Duality. Through this initiative, Health Canada will distribute more than \$170 million over five years to continue to address the needs identified by the official language minority communities, namely: Health Networking - which brings together health stakeholders; Training and Retention of Health Professionals - which ensures more health professionals are available to serve official language minority communities; and, Projects for official language minority communities - which promotes better integration and improved access to health services. Projects will be developed at the community level and will focus on vulnerable populations such as children, youth and seniors.
- While the Roadmap initiative is targeted to improving access to health services, I must stress that there is no specific funding envelope for research activities. That being said, the design of Health Canada's

program recognizes the need for performance information to support the measurement of our programs and policies.

- Our plan is therefore to build the evidence base upon which to measure program effectiveness by working with community partners to generate information on gaps in health, on measures of health access for linguistic minority communities, and on tools for assessing progress over time. The program recognizes as well that in order to promote training in universities, we need to promote the research upon which to measure and improve the targeting of our training initiatives.
- Health Canada will continue to work with its long-term community partners to implement these initiatives. These partners are the Société Santé en français, the Consortium national de formation en santé, the Community Health and Social Services Network and McGill University.
- I am very pleased to note that our community partners are well represented here today and that they will be presenting and discussing some of their achievements tomorrow.
- I would also like to highlight the presence of the Commissioner of Official Languages who accepted to be a keynote speaker during today's lunch time. His presence demonstrates the value he has placed on the role of research in promoting access to services for official language minority communities across Canada.
- As you prepare for your 2 days of deliberations, I encourage all of you to engage in the discussion and to strengthen this burgeoning research capacity for improving the health of Canada's official language minority communities. I also encourage you to engage us at Health Canada in ensuring that our research generates programs that are responsive and relevant to the needs of official language minority communities and all Canadians.
- Thank you, Merci