



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Ottawa, February 28, 2013

The Honourable James Moore, PC, MP
Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière, 12th Floor
15 Eddy Street
Gatineau, Québec
K1A 0M5

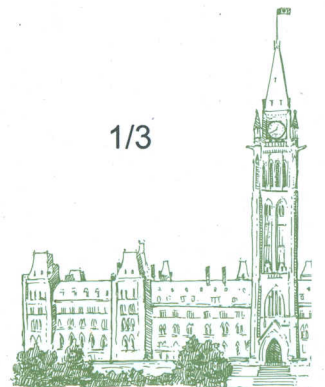
Dear Minister:

The *Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008–2013: Acting for the Future* will be expiring on March 31, 2013. As the Official Opposition's Critic and Deputy Critic for Official Languages, we are writing to reiterate our concerns as well as our suggestions for making the next official languages initiative a more effective tool in advancing the *equality of status* of both official languages in Canada.

First, given the needs facing official language communities, it is essential that financing for the *Roadmap* be renewed and that this financing be indexed to reflect the cost of living increases. Any reduction in funding would constitute a definite step backwards and would be detrimental to the communities that depend on this financial support.

Moreover, it is imperative that you clarify the nature of any future horizontal initiative and whether it actually constitutes an additional one-time investment, as your government has often indicated. By having the *Roadmap* include funding to allow the Treasury Board Secretariat to meet its obligations under the *Official Languages Act*, your government created confusion between the *Roadmap* and OLA obligations. As a result, a considerable number of administrators of federal institutions seem to have downgraded their interpretation of their linguistic obligations, particularly those pertaining to Part VII of the OLA.

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A major initiative such as the *Roadmap* requires a sound degree of interdepartmental cooperation. In accordance with your pro-decentralization approach, however, Canadian Heritage was given a very limited role in relation to the participating institutions. We urge you to rectify this situation by ensuring that your department has a veritable coordination role in the next initiative, as required under the OLA, and oversight role. Among other things, this would include ensuring complete transparency with regard to funds spent by each federal institution under the *Roadmap* and making certain that this information is readily available to the public.

On another note, it has become apparent that various levels of government are relying more and more on the community sector to ensure the delivery of services to the public in both official languages. In this context, it is doubly important that the next initiative provide more support to community agencies and networks to ensure that they have the necessary resources and capacities to deliver these services.

Data from the most recent Census reveal the fragile state of the French language in Canada. To ensure the continued vitality and development of French-speaking communities outside of Quebec, and to make it possible to live and work in French in each Canadian province and territory, we are requesting that particular attention be paid to the following issues: education (especially in the light of increasing exogamy), early childhood development, immigration, support for the delivery of municipal and provincial services in French, and economic development. By the same token, it is important not to neglect sectors in which a great deal of success has already been achieved, such as arts and culture and the legal system.

Some communities have been particularly affected by the Employment Insurance reforms brought forward by your government, reforms the NDP has vigorously opposed. These will further exacerbate the rural-to-urban exodus and will have a considerable impact on local rural economies and could also threaten the continued existence of some of the initiatives that have received support under the *Roadmap*. For example, *Le Pays de la Sagouine* and the *Commission du tourisme acadien du Canada atlantique* both received funding from ACOA under the *Roadmap*. However, the tourism sector is directly affected by the government's reforms.

As you know, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages conducted a lengthy study of the *Roadmap*. Within the context of that study, representatives of Quebec's Anglophone communities explained how many of the *Roadmap* programs had not been designed to meet the needs of Anglophone minority communities. We hope that these communities' concerns have been heard and that the government will take the necessary steps to better address their needs within the framework of its next initiative.

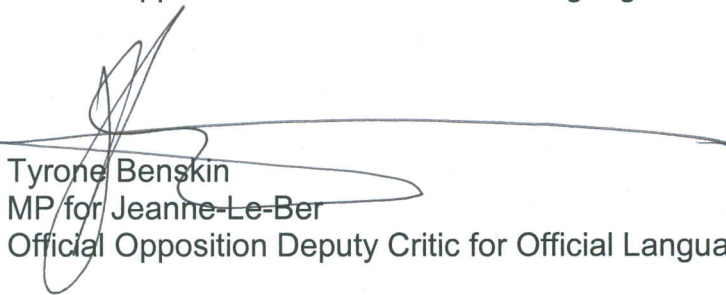
Last, it is unfortunate that your government waited until there were complaints filed with the Commissioner of Official Languages before agreeing to hold consultations on the next initiative, even though such consultations are a statutory requirement under the OLA. We hope that the next initiative will bring the knowledge and expertise of community agencies, researchers and other key stakeholders to bear in order to optimize the balance between needs and investment.

We offer you our full cooperation as the Official Opposition in the promotion of Canada's two official languages and in advancing the *equality of status* of English and French in Canadian society. It is precisely in this spirit that the NDP has tabled bills C-208 and C-419, dealing with language skills of judges appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada and of agents of Parliament, respectively. We hope that in this same spirit, we can rely on your support for our initiatives.

Yours sincerely,



Yvon Godin
MP for Acadie-Bathurst
Official Opposition Critic for Official Languages



Tyrone Benskin
MP for Jeanne-Le-Ber
Official Opposition Deputy Critic for Official Languages