

SPEAKING NOTES IN SUPPORT OF MODERNIZING THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

DATE & LOCATION

**Saint-Hyacinthe, Québec, March 4,
2020**

SUBJECT

**Speaking notes for Laurent Tétrault
on behalf of Ivan Normandeau in
support of the Association of
Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities
(AMBM)’s resolution on
modernizing the *Official Languages
Act*, delivered before the Federation
of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)’s
Standing Committee on Municipal
Finance & Intergovernmental
Arrangements**

SPEAKING NOTES

Madam Chair Jeffery,

I would like to speak to the resolution on modernizing the *Official Languages Act* on behalf of my colleague Ivan Normandeau, Deputy Reeve of the Rural Municipality of La Broquerie, in Manitoba, and President of the AMBM.

He could not be with us this week, here in Saint-Hyacinthe, for the FCM’s Board of Directors Meeting.

As sponsor of the resolution, the AMBM represents bilingual municipal leadership in the Manitoba context.

Moreover, the AMBM embodies an order of local government that promotes the equal status and use of English and French in Canadian society and enhances the vitality and development of official language minority communities.

As the political and strategic voice of Manitoba municipalities that have adopted by-laws for the delivery of municipal services in French, the AMBM relies on the added value of French to foster the development, vitality and sustainability of its members and their Francophone and bilingual communities.

I would like to focus on two key points related to the resolution in question.

Firstly, that this resolution is an opportunity to deepen the municipal-federal partnership.

We know that when we work together, we build better communities and we deliver results.

Secondly, that this resolution ties in with the FCM’s past policy in the area of official languages.

I will briefly elaborate.

Over the past, the federal government has recognized and affirmed the critical role of Canadian municipalities in the promotion of Canada’s official languages.

In 1967, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism stated that the future of Canada’s official languages would critically depend on a strong partnership with the order of government closest to Canadians.

In 1988, the Official Languages Act went as far as to make Canadian municipalities full partners in the promotion of our official languages.

After three generations, little to none has been accomplished or implemented to support Canadian municipalities for this purpose.



But we have an opportunity to change that today.

By marking the 50th anniversary of the *Official Languages Act* last year, the federal government has committed to initiating a review to modernize the Act and to ensure its relevance to Canadian society, including for Canadian municipalities. In fact, this work has already begun.

The resolution before us calls on the federal government to reaffirm, strengthen, and implement a meaningful and direct municipal-federal partnership through a modernized *Official Languages Act* for the development and provision of municipal services in both official languages across the country.

The resolution also calls on the FCM to explore the possibility of establishing an official languages funding, resource and training program for interested Canadian municipalities to support and promote the vitality of official language minority communities.

These measures will have a direct and positive impact on those municipalities that intervene or wish to better intervene in the active offer of municipal services in both official languages.

Lastly, FCM has shown leadership in the area of official languages in the past.

To the point, at its 1984 annual conference, the FCM formally affirmed its commitment to promote Canada’s official languages by establishing a taskforce in order to determine the steps to be taken to achieve this goal.

In 1990, the FCM published a document entitled “At Your Service...In Both Official Languages: A Guide to Municipal Service Delivery in English and French” to provide practical information to interested municipalities on what they can do to offer their services in both English and French.

With this in mind, we have an opportunity to build on past achievements and continue to move forward.

A modernized *Official Languages Act* that takes greater account of the role of Canadian municipalities makes great sense for the development and vitality of our Francophone and bilingual communities.

One of the necessary conditions for this development and vitality is the possibility of having access to municipal services in both official languages in order to create an environment that allows the members of our communities to flourish and live fully.

I therefore invite you to vote in favour of the FCM’s staff recommendation that the resolution be adopted as Category A, Concurrence.

Thank you.

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