

Government of the Northwest Territories Response

to the Final Report — Special Committee on the Review of the Official Languages Act



September 2003

Introduction

A Message from the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment



Languages are of untold value for individual and cultural identity and social well-being, in maintaining the collective history of the Northwest Territories, and in preserving cultural diversity. Meaningful support for language maintenance and revitalization allows us to establish, practice, and honour our unique cultural identity.

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) acknowledges the tremendous amount of time, effort and care that has gone into the development of “*One Land, Many Voices, The Final Report of the Special Committee on the Review of the Official Languages Act*.” This pivotal Report, which was two years in the making, was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on March 3, 2003. Through it, the Special Committee has recommended significant changes to the *Official Languages Act*, the way that this Act is administered, and the role of the GNWT, the Legislative Assembly and the Languages Commissioner in supporting, promoting and maintaining the official languages of the Northwest Territories.

As the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, I have, by virtue of this portfolio, had the honour and privilege of considering the recommendations contained in the Report of the Special Committee in my capacity as Minister responsible for Official Languages. On behalf of my Cabinet colleagues, I would like to commend the Special Committee and thank them for their efforts culminating in their Report.

The Government of the Northwest Territories understands that at the heart of the Special Committee’s Report lies an abiding respect for the role that languages play in the lives of our citizens and the value that languages contribute to our culture and society. The GNWT shares these view and goals of the Special Committee and is committed to ensuring that the findings of its Report are implemented to the greatest extent possible and in the most expedient timeframe.

I am pleased to present the Response of the Government of the Northwest Territories to the Report of the Special Committee. We have taken the time that a report of this magnitude merits, to review, consider and respond to the Special Committee’s findings.



THE GNWT RESPONSE TO THE NWT OFFICIAL LANGUAGES REPORT

As the Special Committee itself noted, the changes that the Committee has recommended cannot be implemented overnight. Some of the initiatives and actions engendered by their recommendations may take months or years to accomplish.

There are, however, some actions that can be taken during the remaining term of this government, including changes to the *Official Languages Act*. These changes, and other immediate actions, are detailed in this Response. For those findings that cannot be implemented forthwith, this Response should be viewed as a strong recommendation for a course of action that may be undertaken by the 15th Legislative Assembly.

As Minister responsible, I will be making recommendations to the 15th Legislative Assembly and the next Minister responsible for Official Languages to ensure that the voices of the people of the NWT are heard, in whichever language they chose to speak for generations to come.



Recommendations of the Special Committee

To clarify and strengthen official languages legislation and policy:

- A1 *The current version of the OLA be updated to remove repealed sections and correct spelling, terminology, and translation errors.*
- A2 *Dene terms be used in the OLA for North Slavey, South Slavey, Dogrib, and Chipewyan, with the advice and consent of the affected language communities.*
- A3 *North and South Slavey (as such, or using Dene terms) and Inuvialuktun and Inuinnaqtun be listed as separate languages in Section 4 of the OLA, and removed from the Interpretation section, with the consent of the affected language communities.*
- A4 *Michif research be funded with the intent of determining an appropriate designation for this language.*
- A5 *The Preamble be amended to recognize the important role of language communities in preserving and developing their own languages and to acknowledge shared responsibility for language enhancement.*
- A6 *Section 14 of the OLA be clarified and defined through a combination of regulation and policy. Regulations be established for service delivery relating to occupational health and safety, health, and social services. Other services be defined through policy rather than guidelines.*
- A7 *Departments and agencies required to comply with the OLA be listed in regulations, along with provisions for compliance where these services are being provided for other agencies.*
- A8 *The OLA designate a Minister responsible, with the authority to implement the Act and the obligation to submit an annual official languages report to the Legislative Assembly.*
- A9 *An Aboriginal Languages Board be legislated through the OLA to advise the Minister responsible regarding planning, promotion, coordination, and resource allocation. This Board will provide a legislated accountability link between the language communities and the GNWT.*



The terms of reference for this Board — along with its structure, appointment process, consultation functions, and other necessary matters — be established through regulation.

- A10 *Aboriginal Languages Board members be nominated by their respective language communities, recommended by the Minister responsible, and appointed by the Legislative Assembly.*
- A11 *Concurrent with the establishment of the Aboriginal Languages Board, the broad promotional mandate of the Languages Commissioner be reduced through the repeal of the last phrase in Section 20(1) and Section 20(3) of the OLA. The Commissioner's promotional role is transferred to the Minister responsible and the Aboriginal Languages Board. The Commissioner continues to ensure compliance with the strengthened OLA.*
- A12 *Sections 19(2) and 19(3) of the OLA be repealed, allowing the Office of the Languages Commissioner to be independent of the public service. The Legislative Assembly review the Office of the Languages Commissioner to clarify its management systems and administrative support relationships.*
- A13 *A provision be added to the OLA to allow for the appointment of an acting Languages Commissioner between appointments or where the Commissioner is otherwise unable to perform his/her functions.*
- A14 *A provision be added to the OLA requiring the Legislative Assembly to respond to the Commissioner's annual report within 180 days of the tabling of that report.*
- A15 *The OLA provide for recognition of the collective language rights of Aboriginal peoples within their homelands, consistent with current and pending land claims and self-governance agreements.*
- A16 *The OLA [Section 29(1)] be amended to require smaller-scale evaluations every five years, beginning in 2008 (concurrent with the release of the 2006 Census Canada language data), to ensure the provisions and implementation of the OLA and other official language initiatives are effective*



The GNWT Response

The current NWT *Official Languages Act* establishes the Northwest Territories as a multilingual jurisdiction. Introduction of the Act was an important step toward linguistic equality for the traditional languages of the Northwest Territories.

The intent of the *Official Languages Act* is to ensure that services are provided in official languages where warranted. The Act allows flexibility to more specifically identify, either through regulation or policy, what services must be provided in official language(s) other than English and in which locations. The government recognizes that there is room to strengthen, clarify and simplify the current Act. Greater clarity on the requirements to provide official language services will help ensure that both government staff and clients are aware of rights and obligations.

The GNWT will introduce proposed legislative changes to give effect to many of the recommendations contained in the Report of the Special Committee. This Bill will be introduced in the House during the fall 2003 Session.

As recommended by the Special Committee, the proposed legislation will formally designate a Minister Responsible for the Official Languages Act and define the powers and duties of the Minister under the Act.

If passed into law, this Bill will establish an *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board*, comprised of members of each of the Aboriginal language communities, which will have the mandate to maintain, promote and revitalize NWT Aboriginal languages, to ensure that this unique and fundamental component of our NWT culture remains vital and alive. The creation of an *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board* would provide language communities greater input into the programs directly affecting the future of their languages. Language development activities need to be coordinated to benefit more than one language community and to consolidate the development of resources. The Board will advise the Minister on both government and community efforts at language preservation and revitalization.

At the same time, an *Official Languages Board* will also be established in law with a mandate to advise the Minister on issues related to the provisions and administration of the *Official Languages Act* as well as service delivery issues. The Board will be comprised of members from all official languages including Aboriginal languages, French and English.

These two Boards will operate independently within their mandates to ensure that all official languages of the Northwest Territories are represented and that their unique interests can be addressed.



The GNWT agrees that each of the official languages of the Northwest Territories should be listed in the *Official Languages Act* as recommended by the Special Committee. This will help resolve the current confusion over the number of official languages in the Northwest Territories by confirming that there are 11 official languages, rather than 8.

The GNWT agrees that the role of the Languages Commissioner should be more clearly defined. The government proposes that the promotional aspect of this role be transferred to the *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board*, and that the Languages Commissioner retain the responsibility for monitoring compliance with the *Official Languages Act* and reporting to the Legislative Assembly. The Bill that will be brought forward in the fall 2003 Session will amend Sections 20(1) and 20(3) of the *Official Languages Act* to have the role for promoting the advancement of Aboriginal languages placed under the Minister responsible for the *Official Languages Act*.

Repeal of Sections 19(2) and 19(3) of the *Official Languages Act* will place appointments to the Languages Commissioner's office outside the public service, and will clarify the role of the Commissioner vis-à-vis the public service. These amendments will also be included in the amendments to the *Official Languages Act* that will be put before the Legislative Assembly during the life of this government.

The *Official Languages Act* will be amended to include a mandatory evaluation every five years, beginning December 31, 2007.

The GNWT recognizes the need for more formal consultations with Aboriginal language communities regarding programs in support of Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal language education. Presently, the GNWT consults regularly with language coordinators from each Aboriginal language community.

The GNWT commits to exploring options for clarifying services to be provided through a combination of regulation and policy.

The GNWT agrees that Michif should be researched to determine an appropriate designation for the language. Metis people in the Northwest Territories are recognized as Aboriginal people, as evidenced in various GNWT programs (for example, Student Financial Assistance and Metis Health Benefits).

The GNWT will review its current systems and structures for planning, promoting, coordinating and resourcing Aboriginal languages, to determine where and how improvements can be made to each of these key functions.



Our Commitment to Action

- A1 The government is proposing amendments to the *Official Languages Act* (OLA) to be introduced in the fall 2003 session of the Legislative Assembly to remove repealed sections and correct spelling, terminology and translation errors.
- A2 Obtaining the advice and consent of the affected language communities to have the Dene terms for North Slavey, South Slavey, Dogrib and Chipewyan included in the OLA will require sufficient lead time for effective consultation to take place with the affected language communities. The Minister will recommend to his successor that such consultation be conducted in early 2004, in time to begin further amendments to the Act in fall, 2004.
- A3 The separate listing of North Slavey, South Slavey, Inuvialuktun and Inuinnaqtun in Section 4 of the OLA, and their removal from the Interpretation section, will be included with other amendments to the OLA to be introduced by the government in the fall 2003 session of the Legislative Assembly.
- A4 ECE will conduct this research on Michif Language through Aboriginal Language Initiative funding. The focus of the research will be to determine the number of Michif speakers in the NWT before decisions are made regarding the designation of the language.
- A5 The GNWT agrees that the Preamble to the OLA should be amended to recognize the important role of language communities in preserving and developing their own languages. There is significance in acknowledging the shared responsibility for language enhancement. Amendments to the preamble will be included with other amendments to the OLA being introduced by the government in the fall 2003 session of the Legislative Assembly.
- A6 The government will proceed to examine the cost of, and options for, implementing this recommendation. The GNWT will explore options for clarifying more specific services provided through a combination of regulation and policy. Progress will be reported to the Legislative Assembly within twelve months.
- A7 The government will address the issue immediately by updating policy and introducing regulations over time. Developing regulations, including consultation costs, will be considered through the government's business planning process.



- A8 The recommended change to the OLA will be included with amendments to the OLA to be introduced by the government in the fall 2003 session of the Legislative Assembly. The Minister will recommend to his successor that an annual report on Official Languages be tabled in the Legislative Assembly commencing in the 2004-05 fiscal year.
- A9 Consistent with the Special Committee's recommendation, the government proposes to establish in legislation an *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board* and to concurrently establish in legislation an *Official Languages Board*.

The *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board*, comprised of representation from all official Aboriginal language communities, will have a broad mandate to provide the Minister with advice on both government and community efforts to maintain, promote and revitalize Aboriginal languages. The *Official Languages Board*, comprised of representation from all official language communities of the Northwest Territories, will provide the Minister with advice on the provisions and operation of the OLA and on ongoing administration and delivery of services by the Government of the Northwest Territories. Each Board will be able to make recommendations to the Minister within its respective mandate.

It is further proposed that the existing Commissioner's Advisory Board, which reports to the Languages Commissioner and is not established through legislation, be dissolved. Under the new model, the promotional role will be moved to the *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board*. The Office of the Languages Commissioner would continue to have an independent monitoring role and would continue to report to the Legislative Assembly.

- A10 Included in the amendments to the OLA, to be introduced by the government in the Fall 2003 session, the government proposes that the appointment of members to the *Official Languages Board* and the *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board* be made by the Executive Council on the recommendation of the Minister. Nominations would be sought from the respective language communities and the Minister would consult with Members of the Legislative Assembly prior to recommending nominees.
- A11 The GNWT has assessed this recommendation as part of plans to introduce a Bill in the Fall 2003 sitting of the Legislative Assembly. Through the proposed amendments, the sections of the OLA dealing with Aboriginal languages promotional activities will be transferred to the *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board* upon establishment of the Board effective July 1, 2004.
- A12 The government is introducing a bill to amend the OLA in the Fall 2003 session that will make the Office of the Languages Commissioner independent of the public service.



- A13 The government is proposing amendments to the OLA in the Fall 2003 session that will include provisions to appoint an acting Languages Commissioner.
- A14 The government's proposed amendments to the OLA in the Fall 2003 session include provisions to respond to the annual report of the Official Languages Commissioner within 180 days of tabling of the annual report.
- A15 The government is introducing proposed amendments to the OLA in the Fall 2003 session that will included provisions for the recognition of the collective language rights of Aboriginal people within their homelands.
- A16 The government is introducing proposed amendments to the OLA in the Fall 2003 session that will include provisions for smaller scale evaluations every five years beginning in 2008.



Recommendations of the Special Committee

To improve official languages management and accountability:

- B1 *The Minister responsible consider establishing a small Official Languages Secretariat (OLS) by reprofiling existing resources. The OLS would provide a single point of access regarding official languages matters and a focus for accountability within the GNWT. The OLS would report directly to the Minister and would carry out the following management and policy functions:*
- *Liaison with the French and Aboriginal language communities*
 - *Preparation, monitoring, and evaluation of the official languages implementation plan and evaluation framework*
 - *Liaison with the Bureau of Statistics (see B4)*
 - *Negotiation and management of the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement*
 - *Management of contribution agreements with the official language communities*
 - *Operational support for the Aboriginal Languages Board*
 - *Operational and leadership support for the establishment of one-window service centres*
 - *Support for the development of official languages regulations and policies*
 - *Intergovernmental relations regarding languages.*
- B2 *The Minister responsible develop a GNWT-wide official languages implementation plan and evaluation/accountability framework, based on the Treasury Board (2001) model, that calls for the identification, gathering, and ongoing analysis of output and outcome-based data.*
- B3 *The Minister responsible ensure that language communities are fully consulted on the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement action plan and evaluation framework.*
- B4 *The Bureau of Statistics be tasked to gather and analyze data from Census Canada, a modified Labour Force Survey, and current sociolinguistic studies, and incorporate this data into a language report every five years, beginning in 2003 with the release of the 2001 Census Canada language data.*



The GNWT Response

An increased focus on the revitalization of Aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories, the establishment in legislation of an *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board* and an *Official Languages Board*, and a sharpened mandate for the Official Languages Commissioner – all of these changes, combined, support the need to ensure that our management practices and accountability mechanisms remain current and responsive to government's priorities.

The role and functions identified for the proposed Official Languages Secretariat are presently performed by the Language Services Section of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE). The Language Services unit coordinates: GNWT Implementation of the OLA; the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages in the NWT; reporting and accounting on activities and expenditures; as well as liaises with the Language Communities. Work will be initiated to develop a framework for an Official Languages Secretariat including its support role for the *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board* and the *Official Languages Board*. The GNWT will give further consideration to the establishment of an Official Languages Secretariat and will commit to analyzing the costs and benefits and reporting to the next Legislative Assembly.

The GNWT agrees that an Official Languages implementation plan and an accountability framework are important tools to ensure that services are implemented. Work to develop an implementation plan has commenced with GNWT departments, boards and agencies. These services should be reviewed periodically to ensure they meet the needs of the public. An accountability framework for official languages will be developed once the implementation plan is in place.

In 1984, the NWT *Official Languages Act* was passed. The Government of Canada signed a framework agreement to pay 100% of all costs to implement and deliver French language services in the Northwest Territories. Canada also agreed to provide funds for the revitalization, enhancement and development of Aboriginal languages in the NWT. The GNWT wishes to ensure that Canada continues to meet its commitment to support our official languages.

The GNWT recognizes the need for community consultations regarding the action plan and evaluation framework attached to the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages in the NWT. In preparation for upcoming negotiations to renew the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages in the NWT, the GNWT will consult with the French and Aboriginal language communities. As well, the GNWT also commits to consulting with official language communities, on a yearly basis, before updating the action plan at the beginning of each fiscal year.



The GNWT appreciates the need for accurate and reliable statistics on the state of NWT official languages. Experience has shown that Canada Census numbers do not necessarily accurately identify the use of Aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories. The GNWT's Bureau of Statistics will examine current data available on all official languages in the NWT develop plans for incorporating data into a language report every five years and report on any deficiencies identified. The Bureau of Statistics will assess the cost of providing a remedy to these deficiencies and recommend a course of action for the future.

Our Commitment to Action

- B1 The GNWT will initiate work to develop a framework for the creation of an Official Languages Secretariat that will support the proposed Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board and the proposed Official Languages Board.
- B2 The GNWT will analyze the requirements associated with implementation of an evaluation/accountability framework based on Treasury Board guidelines.
- B3 ECE will consult with all language communities in preparation for negotiation of a new Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages. This consultation will include consultation on the action plan and evaluation framework for the Agreement. The current Agreement expires March 31, 2004 and negotiations for a new Agreement are expected to commence in November 2003.
- B4 The Bureau of Statistics will prepare a report on language data for the Northwest Territories. In conjunction with ECE, the Bureau of Statistics will also identify deficiencies in language information and propose solutions including costs in order to remedy the deficiencies.



Recommendations of the Special Committee

To improve official languages management and accountability:

- C1 *The Minister responsible for the OLA ensure that all funding allocated for official languages be used for that purpose.*
- C2 *Funding for official languages initiatives be increased as required to implement the recommendations contained in this report.*
- C3 *The Minister responsible take steps to ensure that the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement is maintained and maximizes federal participation.*
- C4 *The GNWT enter into multi-year, flexible-funding agreements with the language communities to provide more certainty and program stability, with appropriate accountability mechanisms.*
- C5 *The GNWT support language community initiatives to generate other sources of language revenue, including endowment funds and business activities that support language enhancement.*

The GNWT Response

The GNWT believes that the languages and cultures of the people of the NWT are integral to the social fabric and identity of the Northwest Territories. Implementing the Special Committee's recommendations will require additional funding by the GNWT.

Competing government priorities and a multiplicity of programs meeting many differing needs means that funding is often in short supply. Funding for all government programs should be used for those programs for which the funding is allocated. Additionally, where funding is made available, departments, boards, agencies and stakeholder groups must be given the tools and assistance they require to ensure that they take full advantage of available resources,

ECE already has a number of systems in place, and is also making amendments to accountability and reporting requirements that will help to meet the goal of improved management and accountability. The department is currently working on an evaluation of the outcomes of the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages (1999-2004) to determine if the



objectives of the Agreement are being met. As well, ECE requires annual reporting for funding provided to language communities and to GNWT departments, boards and agencies, to ensure that funding is appropriately applied.

The GNWT recognizes the need for official language communities to have some certainty as to funding levels so that they can do long-term planning and program implementation, and more easily retain staff. It is important that continued funding is contingent upon clearly outlined accountability requirements such as financial and results reports. Communities have been encouraged to seek additional sources of funding in order to achieve their goals and the GNWT is assisting them in this regard.

The recommendations of the Special Committee requiring additional funding to implement will be examined in greater detail. Cost/benefit analyses will be conducted, to ensure the ability of government to support recommended initiatives over the longer term, before additional funding is provided. In addition to exploring opportunities for additional funding from alternate sources, the GNWT will encourage the Government of Canada to maintain its commitment to French language services and its support of Aboriginal languages in the NWT.

Official language communities will be consulted on a yearly basis, before updating the action plan at the beginning of each fiscal year. The GNWT will continue to monitor funding usage to ensure it is used for the purpose intended.

In responding to the Social Agenda, the GNWT introduced provisions that allow for multi-year funding arrangements. Such multi-year arrangements will be explored for official languages.

The GNWT will continue to encourage communities to diversify their sources of funding. The GNWT will produce and make available to language communities an inventory of territorial, federal and private sector programs that can support work on Aboriginal languages.



Our Commitment to Action

- C1 ECE is working on revisions to its accountability requirements with education boards, giving particular attention to Aboriginal language and culture funding.
- C2 The GNWT will conduct further financial analysis to calculate implementation costs for various recommendations that currently do not have a budget. Given the overall demands on its fiscal resources, the GNWT must closely assess all identified needs for resources including the recommendations put forth by the Special Committee to ensure that support can be sustained over the longer term. The government, in the immediate term, sees the establishment of an *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board* and an *Official Languages Board* as a top priority and is prepared, in the remainder of its term, to commit the fiscal resources required to fund these initiatives forthwith.
- C3 As has been the case with previous agreements, the Minister will make every effort to negotiate the best agreement possible for the NWT, to ensure the GNWT has the capacity to support official languages. The GNWT will consult with the French and Aboriginal language communities in preparation for upcoming negotiations to renew the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages in the NWT.
- C4 The GNWT has put into place the capacity to enter into multi-year flexible funding arrangements. The Minister recommends that multi-year funding arrangements be implemented and, wherever possible, recommends that funding received through the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages be aligned with the multi-year needs of language communities.
- C5 The government, through ECE, will continue to offer support and work with language communities to compile information on other sources of support for languages. A web site will be developed that will include information on funding sources for languages.



Recommendations of the Special Committee To enhance official language service delivery:

- D1 *'Active offer' with respect to occupational health and safety, and health and social services be defined through regulations, and through policy for all other services.*
- D2 *The Minister responsible ensure that all departments and agencies properly implement active offer, with procedures and measures for tracking demand and service delivery.*
- D3 *The GNWT evaluate the bilingual bonus directive, with the intent of prioritizing and increasing the number of bilingual positions for front-line service delivery.*
- D4 *The Minister responsible work with stakeholders to provide communities with cost-effective access to basic translation equipment for government, industry, and public information meetings and gatherings.*
- D5 *The Minister responsible work with the federal government and francophone community to support the establishment of a pilot French language service centre for Yellowknife. This centre would provide one-window access to government services in French and would include a 1-800 line for outlying communities.*
- D6 *The Minister responsible consult with the Aboriginal language communities and the Aboriginal Languages Board regarding the possible establishment of a pilot Aboriginal language service centre.*
- D7 *The Minister responsible evaluate the pilot service centres after two years to determine their viability and make recommendations accordingly.*
- D8 *The Official Languages Secretariat publish an updated public registry of French and Aboriginal language interpreter/translators (I/T).*



The GNWT Response

The “Active offer” to provide services in an official language upon request is presently defined in the *Official Languages Guidelines*. While benefit might be obtained from refining the current definition of an active offer, the greatest benefit would derive from establishing mechanisms to track the demand and the offer of services. Tracking the requests to provide services in official languages is important to help the GNWT determine how to best meet public needs. The GNWT will review its *Official Languages Policy and Guidelines* to clearly state its intent and expectations with respect to “active offer.”

The GNWT has produced a standardized Active Offer on CD-ROM, in the 11 official languages, which has been made available to departments and on the GNWT web site, to ensure that an active offer with standard wording is used across government. This CD-ROM has been circulated to Deputy Ministers and departmental communications staff with a reminder that it should be included in all materials for public distribution. The Minister responsible will continue to make efforts to ensure the appropriate implementation of the active offer and will work with GNWT departments, boards and agencies to develop a mechanism for tracking the demand and delivery of services.

With respect to service delivery, a larger issue faced by the GNWT in the provision of any active offer is the ability to have materials translated into the requested language, accurately and within a reasonable time frame. The availability and cost of service provided by qualified translators must be acknowledged as an impediment to service provision. This is particularly true for specific Aboriginal official languages for which there are only a few noted highly skilled translators whose services are in great demand. Until more NWT residents are speaking and writing in their indigenous languages, the scarcity of skilled translators, particularly for written materials will remain. Conversely, only when more written materials are made available in Aboriginal languages, to support the daily use and vitality of these languages, can the availability of indigenous languages speakers and writers be expected to increase. This is the conundrum we face with respect to the production and delivery of materials in Aboriginal languages.

The bilingual bonus is a negotiated benefit agreed to by the GNWT and the Union of Northern Workers. A similar benefit was also negotiated with the NWT Teachers’ Association. The Minister responsible for Official Languages will consult with the Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board and with all other Ministers to initiate and plan an evaluation of the bilingual bonus. The review will examine the cost of the benefit, its administrative guidelines, and its application. It will also look at ways to increase the number of front-line employees who receive the benefit and can provide services to the public in French.



The GNWT recognizes the need for communities to have access to interpreting equipment in order to meet their needs. Also associated with the access to equipment is the very necessary requirement to have the equipment properly maintained, housed and shipped. The GNWT commits to conducting a financial analysis with current information for provision of these services.

Many Canadian jurisdictions are currently exploring and implementing the single-window approach to service delivery. The federal government is leading initiatives such as the Canada-NWT Service Centre, in which the GNWT is participating, to provide services to the public from a single point of delivery. A single-window service centre would make it easier for government to meet the needs of its citizens in their official language of choice. Discussions on this issue have already taken place between the GNWT and the Francophone community, and between the GNWT and the Government of Canada.

The GNWT agrees that pilot projects, if implemented, must be evaluated after two years to determine their viability and effectiveness.

The GNWT is prepared to consider the delivery of language services through a single-window approach, consistent with our commitment to explore this service model in other areas. The Minister will recommend that the following activities be undertaken in preparation to implement this approach:

The GNWT will:

- Participate with the federal government in a study to determine which services could be delivered in such a centre;
- Review the study, perform a cost/benefit analysis, determine how best to implement such a centre and consult the community on where it should be located;
- Consult with Aboriginal language communities to determine their service needs and with GNWT departments to determine what services could be delivered from such a centre;
- Perform a cost/benefit analysis of this recommendation to determine if such a centre can be implemented for Aboriginal languages. Consideration will also be given on where such a centre, or centres, should be located; and
- Develop a framework for the evaluation of the pilot projects and conduct an evaluation before deciding on the future of the centres.



Our Commitment to Action

- D1 The GNWT departments will examine incremental costs associated with developing regulations and policies on active offer. Future decisions on regulation and policy development will be undertaken by the GNWT.
- D2 It is relatively easy to track offers of service, however, the real challenge for government is to track demand. The GNWT will conduct further analysis to determine effective means of tracking demand for services as they relate to active offer to determine how well they are responding to the demand and to identify means of improving response capacity.
- D3 The GNWT will conduct analysis to determine the financial impacts of this recommendation including implications for collective bargaining agreements.
- D4 The GNWT will conduct financial analysis to address not only the cost of equipment, but also the maintenance, warehousing, shipping and receiving costs associated with managing that equipment. The GNWT will cost this recommendation and review its past experience with respect to requirements for translation equipment.
- D5 Some exploratory discussions have taken place with the federal government and the Francophone community. The GNWT will conduct an analysis of services, along with related financial analysis, to determine the benefits of the service centre.
- D6 The GNWT will conduct a service needs analysis and related financial analysis.
- D7 An evaluation should be completed on the pilot service centres as recommended by the Special Committee.
- D8 ECE currently publishes a list of interpreters/translators and distributes the list to departments, boards and agencies. There are some ongoing costs to keep the information current and accessible. This information will be made available to the public on the official languages web site that will be developed.



Recommendations of the Special Committee

To build human resource capacity in the official languages:

- E 1 *The Minister responsible work with the Aboriginal language communities to expand the development of regional and/or territorial certification standards for interpreter/translators and provide I/T training in regions. The initial focus be on health, social services, justice, and other regional priorities. Training is tied to forecasted employment and business opportunities arising from increased official languages service delivery.*
- E 2 *The Minister of ECE consolidate and increase the regional delivery of Aboriginal language instructor training according to standards set jointly by the language communities and ECE. Training is tied to forecasted employment opportunities arising from a strengthening of Aboriginal language provisions in the Education Act (1995).*
- E 3 *The Minister of ECE develop an Aboriginal second-language curriculum for adults and promote and support language training for GNWT employees, parents, and other interested adults.*
- E 4 *The Minister responsible and the Minister of ECE meet with Aurora College, Aboriginal language communities, and cultural institutes to review the development and delivery of I/T, language instructor, and adult language training, to improve cost-effectiveness and the overall success rate.*
- E 5 *Aurora College and other public agencies providing language training submit an annual report of their activities to the Minister responsible and the Aboriginal Languages Board.*



The GNWT Response

When the Language Bureau was privatized in 1997, the ECE began publishing a listing of Aboriginal interpreters/translators working in the NWT, which is distributed to all GNWT departments, boards and agencies. This listing is available to the public and other agencies upon request.

Since 1997, ECE has worked with industry representatives, language communities and users to develop a certification process. It is planned that certification will be recognized under the *Apprenticeship, Trade and Occupational Certification Act*. ECE has developed professional standards for the occupation and a certification process. A more formal register of interpreters/translators will be developed once a certification process for Aboriginal language interpreters and translators is implemented.

To ensure the greatest acceptance by users and communities, the language standards were developed by the Aboriginal language communities themselves. Because of the demands placed on limited human resources in those communities, this has been a slow process. The Akaitcho Territory Government has undertaken a pilot project to develop language testing materials that will ensure that community language standards are satisfied. The results of this project will be shared with other language communities for their development of similar testing materials.

Training for interpreters/translators was consolidated at Aurora College in the mid-1990s. The College started with a one-year certificate program that soon expanded to a two-year diploma. The program offered language courses, interpreting and translation methods, medical and legal interpreting, and a code of ethics. Student enrollment steadily declined to the point that the College could no longer offer the course. Still, there is a need for such training and the Minister responsible will work with Aurora College and with the language communities to determine how this can best be accomplished.

The GNWT recognizes the needs expressed by Aboriginal language communities and language instructors for more training and more graduates. A collaborative approach among educators, trainers, communities and employers will be required to ensure there is a solid link and match between training and employment.



Our Commitment to Action

- E1 The GNWT will continue to update and distribute its interpreter/translator listing and will develop a formal register of certified interpreters and translators once a recognized certification process has been implemented. The GNWT will continue work with the Akaitcho Territory Government to ensure the completion of the pilot project in 2003, and with other language communities to ensure testing materials are developed for all official Aboriginal languages of the NWT. The certification process should include annual testing for the industry. The GNWT will also examine models for providing training in the regions.
- E2 The GNWT will work with Aurora College and education bodies to conduct a financial analysis regarding the expansion of regional training delivery.
- E3 The GNWT will assess training needs and funding requirements to proceed with language training for employees. ECE, through the Dene Cultural Institute, is currently working on the development of an adult Aboriginal Language as a Second Language curriculum.
- E4 Aurora College is currently reviewing the Aboriginal Language and Culture Instructor Program, with involvement by ECE. The Minister responsible will ensure Aurora College and language communities consult on how best to offer such a course. ECE is working on the development of language programming for adults through Aurora College and the Dene Cultural Institute. The department will coordinate meetings of the parties involved in these projects to ensure there is information sharing and coordination to the greatest extent possible. Interpreter/Translator courses are necessary and the Minister responsible will work with Aurora College and language communities to determine how best to accomplish this.
- E5 The GNWT supports accountability to the public. Mandatory annual reporting will help to increase awareness of government activities and lead to increased coordination. However, since Aurora College would not have a reporting relationship to the proposed *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board* nor the proposed *Official Languages Board* the report from the College and other public agencies will be submitted to the Minister. The Minister will share that report with the Boards.



Recommendations of the Special Committee

To support research and development for official languages:

- F1 *The Minister responsible work closely with the Aboriginal language communities, the respective cultural institutes, and Elders' Councils to identify terminology needs, fund terminology development, and establish regionally-endorsed terminology approval processes.*
- F2 *The Minister responsible work closely with the Aboriginal language communities and cultural institutes to establish a coordinated cataloguing and distribution process for Aboriginal language resource materials.*
- F3 *The Oral Traditions (now Cultural Projects) and Geographic Place Names programs be evaluated and considered for increased funding.*

The GNWT Response

Following consultations with Aboriginal language communities, Aboriginal language services of ECE's Language Bureau were privatized in July 1997. Funding from ECE programs and from the Language Bureau was then transferred to Aboriginal language communities for the implementation of their Strategic Language Plans. These plans include terminology development.

The GNWT has recognized the need for a comprehensive inventory of available Aboriginal language resources. An inventory of materials published by Teaching and Learning Centres is being prepared. This will later be expanded to include further related materials. This reference will be shared with all interested parties and will be included on the GNWT web site.

The GNWT will work with publishers of Aboriginal language resources to ensure their materials are added to the inventory.

The GNWT agrees that periodic evaluations of programs are valuable in ensuring that programs meet the evolving needs of northerners. Review of program mandates, objectives, goals and resources help to ensure that programs remain relevant.



Our Commitment to Action

- F1 The Minister will recommend to his successor that ECE undertake a financial analysis with budget requirements and options for how the GNWT could further support terminology development and approval capacity of the Aboriginal language communities. The proposed *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board* should be charged with the responsibility for consulting with the language communities to determine how best to coordinate terminology development needs. ECE can contribute to this process by conducting an evaluation of existing programs and a financial analysis of required funding based on recommendations from the Board.

- F2 The proposed *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board* should be charged with the responsibility for consulting with the language communities to determine how best to coordinate a cataloguing and distribution process for Aboriginal language resources. ECE can contribute to this process by identifying what funds are needed to proceed, based on recommendations from the Board.

- F3 The GNWT will conduct an analysis of resources required to evaluate the Cultural Projects and Geographic Place Names programs. Any evaluation to be conducted will include a need to identify recommendations for the two programs.



Recommendations of the Special Committee

To increase and improve Aboriginal language education:

- G1 *The Minister of ECE issue a Ministerial Directive requiring education authorities to use Aboriginal language funding for the purposes intended. This Directive is a necessary first step in improving Aboriginal language programming in the schools.*
- G2 *The Minister of ECE clarify interpretation and strengthen implementation of Section 73.3 of the Education Act (1995), which directs education authorities to provide Aboriginal language instruction.*
- G3 *The Minister of ECE issue a Ministerial Directive regarding the minimum number of instructional hours for Aboriginal languages. This Directive strengthens the provisions of Section 73.3 of the Education Act (1995). Minimum hours of instruction would subsequently be addressed through regulations, consistent with other subject areas.*
- G4 *The Minister of ECE amend the Education Act (1995) to rebalance the authority of the Minister and education authorities with respect to Aboriginal language programming to improve accountability.*
- G5 *The Minister of ECE oversee the development of a comprehensive Aboriginal language arts curriculum in consultation and cooperation with the language communities and education authorities.*
- G6 *The Minister of ECE oversee the development of early childhood immersion programming in consultation and cooperation with language communities and education authorities.*
- G7 *The Minister of ECE work closely with the Aboriginal language communities, College, and other agencies to actively recruit, train, and certify Aboriginal language instructors and teachers. This task would include a review of pay scales and training/recruitment incentives.*
- G8 *The Minister of ECE prepare a strategic plan for Aboriginal languages in education, early childhood through grade 12, including the introduction of Aboriginal language instruction in core subject areas. This plan would include partnerships with language communities and the need to link language development in the school and at home.*



- G9 *The Minister of ECE amend the Education Act (1995) to grant Aboriginal parents the right to petition for Aboriginal immersion schooling, beginning at the primary level, within their language homelands and where numbers warrant.*
- G10 *The Minister of ECE work with the education authorities to increase the role and capacity of TLCs (Teaching and Learning Centres) to develop resource materials and to enhance partnerships with language communities.*
- G11 *The Minister of ECE submit an annual report on the status of curriculum development and Aboriginal language education to the Legislative Assembly and the Aboriginal Languages Board.*

The GNWT Response

The Special Committee has recommended that the Minister issue one or more Ministerial Directives proposed to achieve specific ends. The issuance of such Ministerial Directives will help to improve accountability of expenditures without resulting in increased costs to the GNWT.

Divisional Education Councils (DECs) and District Education Authorities (DEAs) have been granted a certain degree of authority and autonomy in the management of the education system to allow for local flexibility and accountability to the residents they represent. DECs and DEAs have the authority to reallocate contributions as they see necessary. However, the GNWT recognizes the importance of Aboriginal Language instruction and activities in schools, and agrees that an exception to the usual method of funding should be made in this case. Section 117(1)(u) of the *Education Act* requires DECs and DEAs to follow the directions of the Minister. It is under the authority of this section of the Act that a Ministerial Directive may be issued.

DEAs also have the authority to determine which official language, in addition to English, will be taught in their district. Section 73(3) of the *Education Act* requires an official language other than English to be taught as part of the education program, where English is the language of instruction. While this means that French or an Aboriginal language must be taught as part of the education program, the Act does not specify that an Aboriginal language must be taught. The DEA can choose which official language will be taught in its district in addition to English. The Minister does not intend to take any action that will curtail or impinge on the autonomy of DEAs to make this decision.



There are no provisions in regulations for the number of minutes of instruction that must be taught in each subject. This is normally addressed by Directive or Guideline. Guidelines state the number of hours of instruction for the second Official Language. For Aboriginal languages, the required number of hours of instruction will be specified by a Ministerial Directive. Monitoring by ECE of the activities carried out with Aboriginal language and cultural funding will be ongoing, to ensure compliance with the Directive.

Currently, there are no existing curricula for teaching Aboriginal languages. The GNWT recognizes this is a much-needed resource. The development of curricula has substantial financial implications. The GNWT is committed to ensuring that a curriculum framework for instruction of Aboriginal languages (as second languages) will be developed. The framework will be used for all Aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories. The Minister of ECE will submit a report on the status of curriculum development and Aboriginal language education to the Legislative Assembly on an annual basis.

The GNWT will continue its work on the development of a generic Aboriginal second languages curriculum. This generic second language curriculum will continue to be developed in such a fashion that it is adaptable for each Aboriginal language.

The GNWT recognizes the importance of language development at the early childhood level. ECE is providing funding to early childhood programs such as language nests, to enhance and support the use of Aboriginal languages. The funding for these initiatives has come from the Early Childhood Development Action Plan. The GNWT is examining options to continue support for the language nests through its business planning process.

Involving speakers of the language in the care and education of children during early childhood is a programming approach used successfully by Aboriginal peoples elsewhere. Research of immersion programs in Aboriginal Language Arts at the Kindergarten to Grade 3 level in other jurisdictions will take place, to find models to adapt to the NWT. The GNWT will continue to explore options to enhance and support the use of Aboriginal languages in early childhood programs; collect baseline information on the number of Early Childhood workers who are speakers of an Aboriginal language; and develop and implement programs or supports created to increase the number of Early Childhood workers speaking an Aboriginal language.

The GNWT recognizes that the availability of well-trained Aboriginal language instructors is critical to the development of an effective Aboriginal language program in schools. The shortage of fluent speakers in many of the Aboriginal languages makes recruitment a challenge, as does the increasing availability of other well-paid choices of employment. A further challenge for Aurora College in providing courses for Aboriginal language instructors is the small numbers in any single language group interested in taking the course at a given time.



The provision of the education program in an Aboriginal language is allowable now under the *Education Act*. Under section 71(4) of the *Education Act*, a District Education Authority may choose an Aboriginal language as the language of instruction (for all subjects) in the District where: there is significant demand for the language; there are a sufficient number of teachers fluent in the language; and there are sufficient and suitable school program materials available in the language. Unfortunately, the biggest impediment to DEAs exercising this option is the availability of certified teachers fluent in the language, and the availability of school program materials in the language.

The GNWT will focus on strategies to increase the number of certified teachers fluent in Aboriginal languages, and the availability of school program materials in Aboriginal languages. The GNWT agrees it is important to be accountable for progress in Aboriginal language education.

The GNWT agrees a long-term strategic plan for Aboriginal languages in education, early childhood through grade 12, is necessary to support and develop Aboriginal language programs. In consultation with language communities and education authorities, ECE will develop a process for a strategic plan for Aboriginal languages in education, early childhood through grade 12.

The GNWT agrees the Teaching and Learning Centres are an important resource in the development of Aboriginal language materials for education, and that partnerships with the language communities should be enhanced. The Minister of ECE will work closely with Aboriginal language communities, the College, and education authorities, to develop strategies to increase the language fluency of prospective students for the Aboriginal Language and Cultural Instructor Program. The GNWT will also explore incentives for students engaged in increasing their fluency in their Aboriginal language.

The GNWT will encourage regular, joint planning with the Teaching and Learning Centres and language community groups. A database of Aboriginal language and culture resources developed by the TLCs will be developed and implemented, to increase access and sharing of resources. The GNWT will explore options to provide TLC support for each of the official Aboriginal languages.



Our Commitment to Action

G1 The Minister of ECE will issue a Directive that will address increased accountability in expenditure of Aboriginal language funding, and in instructional time for Aboriginal languages.

The Directive will:

- State the number of hours of instruction per year to be taught in an Aboriginal language, where the Aboriginal language is chosen as the second official language taught;
- Require the number of minutes of instruction to be consistent with the minutes required in other subject areas;
- Identify the criteria for funded activities;
- Require education authorities to use Aboriginal language and cultural funding for Aboriginal language activities, and Aboriginal cultural activities that include a significant language component;
- Identify required reporting; and
- Ensure funds allocated for language activities are only spent for that purpose.

ECE has initiated action to develop a Directive that supports this recommendation. Divisional Education Councils and District Education Authorities have been notified that the Directive is being drafted.

G2 The GNWT will emphasize with its District Education Authorities that they have the authority to offer Aboriginal second language instruction, if they so choose, based on the wishes of their community. When a DEA chooses to offer Aboriginal second language instruction, the above-noted Directive will clarify expectations with respect to how that instruction is offered.

G3 There are no provisions in the regulations for the number of minutes required in any subject. Since minimum hours of instruction are not addressed through regulations for any subject area, regulations will not be developed for minimum hours of instruction for Aboriginal languages. Instead, the GNWT will develop and issue the above-mentioned Directive regarding the minimum number of instructional hours for Aboriginal second language instruction where being provided.

G4 The GNWT will address the intent of this recommendation through the above-mentioned Directive and amended accountability requirements.



- G5 The GNWT will continue its work on the development of a generic Aboriginal second language curriculum. The generic Aboriginal second language curriculum will continue to be developed such that it is adaptable for each Aboriginal language.
- G6 ECE is currently supporting language nests in existing child-care operations. Funding provided through the *Early Childhood Development Action Plan* concludes on March 31, 2004. As language nests require substantial support, this recommendation will be considered through the business planning process.
- G7 The GNWT will conduct an analysis of recruitment, training and certification costs for Aboriginal language instructors and teachers. The GNWT is committed to reviewing pay scales and training and recruitment incentives.
- G8 ECE will conduct a financial analysis for implementation of a strategic plan to accomplish this proposal.
- G9 The *Education Act* (Section 71 (4)) already allows for a local District Education Authority to choose an Aboriginal language as the language of instruction (for all subjects) in the district. Therefore, it is not necessary to amend the *Education Act* at this time.
- G10 ECE will undertake further financial analysis of resource development and production costs for the Teaching and Learning Centres.
- G11 The status of curriculum development will be reported to the Legislative Assembly by the Minister responsible on an annual basis. The proposed *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board* will report to the Minister. Therefore, the annual report will be developed in consultation with the Board, rather than being submitted to the Board as recommended.



Recommendations of the Special Committee To promote official languages:

- H1 *The Minister responsible develop an Aboriginal language social-marketing plan in consultation with the language communities, to be implemented jointly by the Minister and the language communities. The Aboriginal Languages Board, once established, would play a lead role in on-going language promotion activities.*
- H2 *The Minister responsible provide support to the French language community to develop and implement a social-marketing plan.*
- H3 *Community leaders and other prominent role models take responsibility for using their traditional languages wherever possible.*
- H4 *The Minister responsible and language communities encourage the federal Government, industry, and other agencies to use and profile the Aboriginal and French languages, particularly in regions and areas where the languages are commonly used.*
- H5 *The Minister responsible increase funding for promotional activities targeting youth.*
- H6 *The GNWT promote and offer cross-cultural and language training for staff as an orientation and professional development activity.*

The GNWT Response

Promotion of languages is fundamental to preserving, enhancing and sustaining the health of the Aboriginal languages and for the provision of services in French. Through the language communities, the GNWT can support the development of promotional activities and tools that encourage community leaders and other prominent role models to use their Aboriginal languages. Such promotional activities can also be targeted specifically to youth. The GNWT can encourage the federal government, industry and other agencies to use Aboriginal and French languages as much as possible, particularly in those geographic areas where the languages are commonly used.



The GNWT sees the mandate and role of the *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board* to be in the forefront of language promotion activities and fully endorses the recommendations of the Special Committee in this regard. The Special Committee has recommended that the development and support of social marketing plans begin in 2004-05. Therefore, this recommendation will be included for consideration in the *2004-05 Business Plan*.

The government's initiatives and support for language promotion will only be successful if there is a concurrent commitment by language speakers and community leaders to use and encourage the use of their traditional languages where possible. The government has made a point of stressing that individuals, families and communities share an equal responsibility with government for their social well-being and the preservation of Aboriginal languages

Work to support Aboriginal language courses for children and adults began during 2002, with funding obtained for the Aboriginal Language Acquisition Initiative. The GNWT recognizes the need for adult language courses so that they may model language use and learning for children. Funding is provided for community efforts to teach adults their language.

The GNWT agrees that there is a need to coordinate all language education activities, to ensure the greatest cost-efficiency, effectiveness of teaching methods, and success rate. The government also agrees that training agencies must report on their Aboriginal language training activities. This information can be included in the Annual Report on Official Languages required by the proposed revisions to the *Official Languages Act*. Aurora College, educators, Aboriginal language communities and cultural institutes will be consulted to determine how best to deliver language courses at all levels.

The GNWT recognizes that cross-cultural and language training for its staff will provide for greater capacity to meet its obligations under the *Official Languages Act*. The GNWT will commit to analyzing the cost of this recommendation.



Our Commitment to Action

- H1 The GNWT will consider the development of an Aboriginal languages social marketing plan through the business planning process.
- H2 The GNWT will consider the development of a French language social marketing plan through the business planning process.
- H3 Under advice from the *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board*, the GNWT will identify ways to promote the use of languages by community leaders and other prominent role models.
- H4 The government will implement this proposal through the development of a promotional campaign working in conjunction with the proposed *Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board*.
- H5 The GNWT will consider increased funding for promotional activities targeted at youth through the business planning process.
- H6 The GNWT will undertake an analysis of cross-cultural and language training needs for its staff and related costs.



Recommendations of the Special Committee

To increase the use of official languages in media and technology:

- I1 *The GNWT expand its support for, and utilization of, Aboriginal and French language media, along with support for other communication initiatives, including the use of the internet, digital technology, and emerging media technologies.*
- I2 *The Minister of ECE and other agencies support media and technology training for Aboriginal language speakers through scholarships and other initiatives.*
- I3 *The Minister responsible ensure current Aboriginal language fonts are available to GNWT staff and encourage their use. The use of these fonts becomes more important as Aboriginal organizations and communities increasingly adopt traditional place names incorporating specialized fonts.*
- I4 *The Minister responsible assist Aboriginal language communities to incorporate Aboriginal language fonts on specialized software applications (such as GIS programs) and address other technical issues, as needed, to support the use of Aboriginal languages in a wide range of technical applications.*

The GNWT Response

The GNWT recognizes the important role that new technology is playing in the lives of people in the north. In the past year, ECE has been working closely with Teaching and Learning Centres (TLCs) on resource development activities using new technologies. An electronic database of Aboriginal language resources is being developed so language communities can have easy access to resources and materials and will be able to modify materials for use in their own language. The Department is also working on developing an Aboriginal languages web site, in consultation with the language communities.

The GNWT will continue to work with the Aboriginal language communities and with TLCs to provide increased capacity and utilization of new media and technologies to support their languages. The GNWT will work with the Francophone community to identify means of supporting the French language through media and new technologies.



The GNWT Student Financial Assistance Program supports students enrolled in postsecondary studies, including areas such as media and technology studies. Support for programs or courses, which are not postsecondary in nature, is also available through the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements in place between the federal government and Aboriginal organizations. The GNWT will work with the Aboriginal language communities, as well as with other agencies and the federal government, to identify supports and incentives for students to enroll in media and technology studies.

ECE will ensure that current Aboriginal language fonts are made available to GNWT staff, and will assist the Aboriginal language communities to incorporate the fonts on specialized software applications. There will, however, be a need for the language communities to use a standardized font; otherwise, due to nuances in the fonts, different Dene fonts may make it difficult to translate documents from one Dene language to another. Utilization of a standard font will also mean that the operating systems of computers may need to be standardized to handle the standard font.

Our Commitment to Action

- I1 The GNWT will consider expanded support for, and utilization of Aboriginal and French language media, through the business planning process.
- I2 The GNWT will consider support for media and technology training for Aboriginal language speakers through the business planning process.
- I3 The GNWT will consult with the Aboriginal language communities to determine if there can be agreement to use a standardized Dene font for software applications. The GNWT will commit to working with the language communities to overcome the present technical difficulties with fonts. Once this issue has been resolved, ECE will ensure the standardized font is circulated to all GNWT employees and will encourage its use.
- I4 The GNWT commits to working with language communities to resolve issues regarding standardized Dene fonts and will examine further technical issues to support the use of these fonts in specialized software programs and technical applications.



Recommendations of the Special Committee

To ensure that the recommendations and implementation/costing schedule proposed in the report are advanced:

- J1 *The Premier appoint a Minister responsible for the OLA within 60 days of the acceptance of this report by the Legislative Assembly.*
- J2 *The Government introduce the proposed Bill to Amend the Official Languages Act during the term of the current Assembly.*
- J3 *The Minister responsible report to the Legislative Assembly within one year of the acceptance of this report. This report will address:*
- *The status and progress of the implementation of the recommendations;*
 - *The status of the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement;*
 - *Business plans and budgetary provisions for 2004-2005 and beyond.*

The GNWT Response

The current NWT *Official Languages Act* establishes the Northwest Territories as a multilingual jurisdiction. Introduction of the Act was an important step toward linguistic equality for the traditional languages of the NWT. The GNWT recognizes, nonetheless, that there is room to strengthen, clarify, and simplify the current Act.

A Bill to Amend the *Official Languages Act*, which will give effect to many of the recommendation contained in the report of the Special Committee, will be introduced in the fall 2003 Session of the Legislative Assembly.

The GNWT will propose amendments to the *Official Languages Act* to formally designate a Minister responsible for the *Official Languages Act* and to define the powers and duties of the Minister under the Act. The GNWT will review the Official Languages Policy to determine how best to identify the Minister responsible for the *Official Languages Act*, as well as the Minister's authorities and responsibilities.



The Minister responsible for the *Official Languages Act* will establish an interdepartmental working group to provide input into the implementation of recommendations approved for implementation by the Government of the Northwest Territories. The Minister responsible for the *Official Languages Act* will consult with the Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board to see how official languages will be clearly identified in all business plans.

The GNWT acknowledges the time, effort and expense that went into the production of the Report of the Special Committee and agrees that there is a need to inform Members of the Legislative Assembly and the public on the progress made in implementing the Special Committee recommendations, and on the status of the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages in the NWT. Business plans should clearly reflect the importance attached to official languages by the GNWT. Departments, boards and agencies will be asked to identify their plans for implementation of the recommendations and to provide a report on the status of their official languages activities. The current Minister cannot obligate his successor to table this report, but he will strongly recommend this course of action.

Our Commitment to Action

- J1 The NWT *Interpretation Act* provides that where a Minister is not named in an Act, the ‘Minister’ is understood to be the “Member of the Executive Council...who is responsible for the enactment or its subject-matter or the department to which its context refers.” It is on this basis that the Premier confirmed in the Legislative Assembly on June 11, 2003, that the Minister of ECE is responsible for the OLA. A Bill to amend the *Official Languages Act* will formally designate a Minister responsible for the Official Languages Act and define the powers and duties of the Minister under the Act.
- J2 The proposed Bill will be introduced in the fall 2003 session.
- J3 The Minister will make recommendation to his successor that this information be reported, as recommended, to the 15th Legislative Assembly. The Minister will instruct ECE to prepare a progress report that the next Executive Council may, as its discretion, consider tabling in the 15th Legislative Assembly.

