



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

French continues to lose ground in the Armed Forces

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS FEARS CUTS TO FUNDING FOR THE SAINT-JEAN LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Ottawa, Friday, April 13, 2007 -- **Claude Bachand**, MP for Saint-Jean and Bloc Québécois Defence Critic, and **Richard Nadeau**, MP for Gatineau and BQ Critic for Official Languages, are concerned that the adoption of the *Official Languages Program Transformation Model* by the Armed Forces could jeopardize the future of the Saint-Jean language school.

“We already know that the *Official Languages Program Transformation Model* will make it possible for the Canadian Forces to reduce the number of bilingual positions at the officer level, and that a reduction in the number of Francophone units from 62 to 55 units has already been announced. This being the case, it makes logical sense to fear cuts to French-language training; and funding cuts could jeopardize the future of the language school in Saint-Jean,” said **Claude Bachand**.

At a press conference also attended by representatives of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, including Yves Ducharme, Idelta Vieira and Danielle Moffet, Mr. Bachand explained that the language school located in his riding is already operating at below capacity. Its ability to deliver training has been compromised by the fact that its classroom space has been reduced by more than one-third.

“This has been compounded by the fact that the Saint-Jean facility does not have sufficient space to house its students. These two factors give credence to concerns that the Canadian Forces may be planning to cut the funding allocated to French-language instruction, said **Claude Bachand**.

A negative approach as regards Francophones

“Cutting funding to the Saint-Jean language school would definitely have a negative impact for Francophones in the Armed Forces. Over the past 30 years, the Forces have proven that they are incapable of complying with the *Official Languages Act*,” added Mr. **Richard Nadeau**.

The Bloc Québécois critic reiterated that, since its 1977 Annual Report, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages has been condemning the Canadian Forces’ practice of repeated appointing unilingual staff to bilingual positions.

“The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces should be trying to comply with the recommendations issued by the Commissioner of Official Languages in response to the complaint filed by former Bloc Québécois MP Benoit Sauvageau,” said **Richard Nadeau**.

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