



PRESS RELEASE/MEDIA ADVISORY

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One Common Space - One young Canadian at a time – One Exchange at a Time

OTTAWA, ON – The Society for Educational Exchanges and Visits in Canada (SEVEC) is extremely pleased to learn that the recommendations made by the Commissioner of Official Languages in his 2008-2009 annual report, *Two Official Languages: One Common Space*, released on May 26th are in-line with SEVEC's values: Learning Canada's official languages by means of a first hand cultural exchange encourages mutual respect and understanding between our young people and has a lasting positive impact on young Canadians' lives.

Two Official Languages: One Common Space, is the third annual report submitted by Commissioner Fraser. This year's report is particularly important as it marks the 40th anniversary of the *Official Languages Act*. As the Commissioner states in the report: "This event gives us an opportunity to examine how far we have come and how far we still have to go to achieve the goals of the legislation."

Commissioner Fraser makes the recommendation that more students be given the opportunity to effectively learn the other official language through linguistic exchanges and further be given the opportunity to acquire the language skills they need outside of the education system. The lack of language exchange opportunities in Canada was one of the seven obstacles to bilingualism identified. "We are very pleased with the value that the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages places on exchanges as well as the place they have given to youth to be heard on this important issue. SEVEC President Christine Rapp stated in response to the report. "We are encouraged with the recommendations for action and the strengthened commitment to exchanges at the primary and secondary levels."

SEVEC is also pleased with the recognition and support for the French as a Second Language (FSL) Partner Network. The Commissioner recommends that the Minister of Canadian Heritage coordinate mechanisms to bring together all partners involved in English or French second- language learning in Canada to help intensify efforts to increase the proportions of bilingual Canadians, particularly Anglophones able to speak French.

The FSL Partner Network supports a significant expansion of national, second language home-stay exchanges so that every child studying FSL has the opportunity to participate. The FSL Partner Network consists of the following associations: SEVEC, the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, Canadian Parents for French and French for the Future.

More than 300,000 Canadian youth between the ages of 12-17 have participated in SEVEC youth exchanges, educational trips, and forums over the past 70 years. SEVEC's mission, as a national educational charity, is to create, promote and facilitate enriching educational opportunities for youth within Canada for the development of mutual respect and understanding through programs of exploration in language and culture.

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