

greeted French and Acadian settlers when they arrived here in the spring of 1720. Not only had these individuals left their home country, friends and sometimes families, they had to establish an entirely new colony from scratch. They had to sustain themselves however they could, brave the elements, and endure hardships we will never fully be able understand.

While certainly not an easy way of life it had been a peaceful way of life. To have it all taken away from them - in what amounted to a power struggle between two far away countries - was a definitely cruel twist of fate.

Today, in commemorating the deportation of Island Acadians we pay tribute to the Acadian people, to their lasting and ever-present contribution to our great province.

We also recognize hardships suffered not just with the deportation, but in other instances, such as in 1877 when most French books were pulled from Acadian schools, and the fact that the right to education in French wasn't recognized until 1980.

But we've come a long way since then. In fact, last fall I was invited to speak at the Annual General Meeting of La Société éducative, the French community college based in Wellington. That evening I had the opportunity to meet with community representatives and to hear the testimony of one of the college's students who spoke of her learning experience.

To all those present - some of whom have long been involved in the area of education - it was apparent just how far we'd come.

The evening also highlighted how access to post-secondary education in French is vital to the development and enhancement of the Acadian and Francophone community and how it can be a powerful asset in building our province's human capital. I'll talk a little bit more about that later on in my notes.

The United Nations have declared 2008 to be the International Year of Languages. It has done so in order to bring attention to the essential role languages play in identity, preserving cultural heritage, and building knowledge societies.

In Canada, official language communities from coast-to-coast-to-coast contribute to our country's social fabric and economic

prosperity. Let us celebrate our linguistic diversity and continue to promote learning and using Canada's official languages in the public and private domains.

Madame la Présidente, au cours des trente dernières années, le gouvernement provincial a fait d'importants progrès dans sa relation avec la communauté acadienne et francophone, en matière de promotion des langues officielles et dans la prestation de services en français.

Madam Speaker, during the past thirty years, the provincial government has made great strides in its relations with the Acadian and Francophone community regarding the promotion of official languages and the delivery of French language services .

Aussi, notre province continue de se démarquer par son leadership en matière de connaissance des langues officielles.

Also, our province continues to be known for its leadership in terms of its knowledge of official languages.

Alors que le taux de bilinguisme pour l'ensemble du Canada est légèrement à la baisse, le taux de bilinguisme à l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard continue d'augmenter.

While the bilingualism rate throughout Canada is slightly diminishing, the bilingualism rate in Prince Edward Island continues to increase.

Cela s'explique par l'amélioration de l'accès à l'éducation en français langue première mais également par la popularité des programmes d'immersion française.

This can be explained by improved access to French, first language instruction as well as by the popularity of French immersion programs.

Madame la présidente, mon gouvernement reconnaît que l'appui à la communauté acadienne et francophone doit s'exprimer par des mesures tangibles.

Madam Speaker, my government recognizes that the support provided to the Acadian and Francophone community must be expressed by concrete measures.

C'est pourquoi nous avons pris un engagement concret envers le développement à long terme de la communauté acadienne et francophone. D'ailleurs, la ministre responsable et son

équipe travaillent activement sur ce dossier depuis quelques mois déjà.

This is why we have made a concrete commitment to the long term development of the Acadian and Francophone community. In fact, the Minister responsible and her team *have been actively working on this issue for the past few months already.*

L'an dernier, nous avons célébré le 30^e anniversaire du Comité consultatif des communautés acadiennes et le 20^e anniversaire de la Politique sur les services en français.

Last year, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Acadian Communities Advisory Committee and the 20th anniversary of the French Services Policy.

Et dans deux ans à peine Madame la Présidente, nous allons célébrer le 10^e anniversaire de la Loi sur les services en français.

And in barely two years, Madam Speaker, we will be celebrating the 10th anniversary of the French Language Services Act.

Dans ce contexte, mon gouvernement a annoncé dans le discours du Trône qu'il allait élaborer - au cours de son mandat actuel - un horaire de promulgation intégrale de la Loi sur les services en français.

In this context, my government announced in the Throne Speech that it will develop - during the course of its present mandate - a schedule for the complete enactment of the French Language Services Act.

D'ailleurs, nous allons présenter dès ce printemps des modifications à la Loi. Ces modifications représentent une étape nécessaire avant la promulgation d'articles ou de sections supplémentaires - ce que nous souhaitons faire au cours de notre mandat actuel, en plus de l'horaire.

In fact, as of this spring, we will be presenting amendments to the act. These amendments represent a step required before the enactment of additional sections or parts which we want to do during our present mandate in addition to the schedule.

Madame la Présidente, nous reconnaissons qu'il existe une certaine impatience à ce sujet au sein de la communauté acadienne et francophone.