

Ottawa, Canada – February 20, 2014

His Worship, The Mayor of the City of Ottawa

Mr. Jim Watson

110, Laurier Avenue, West

OTTAWA (Ontario)

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Subject : Ottawa : An “officially bilingual” Canadian Capital for all Canadians !

Dear Jim,

1. As Mayor of Ottawa, the Capital of all Canadians, your Francophone and Anglophone friends, who loved you and supported you, also counted on you to support their essential needs and interests.
2. As your friends and supporters, we expected and still expect a powerful and inclusive new vision and a strong political and community leadership from you.
3. We are currently sailing through difficult waters in Canada — as Québec current government continues to feel left out of our federation and is seeking aggressively to separate from the country and as the Harper government works continuously and increasingly to create a chasm between English and French Canada – many of your Francophone, Anglophone, bilingual and Francophile friends in the Nation’s Capital and throughout Canada are feeling somewhat disenfranchised and are looking for a new vision for the future of our city and our country and a strong leadership from you and your colleagues to lead them out of the current situation which has a negative impact on all Canadians.

4. More than 155 countries have an Embassy and/or a consular presence in Ottawa. Some 75 of them are francophone or bilingual countries. They are somewhat dismayed that Canada, although it has two official languages, still has a unilingual English National Capital. It does not say much for our national image and fairness.

5. Ottawa has :

- an officially bilingual federal government and an officially bilingual federal Public Service representing approximately 50% of the overall workforce in Ottawa;
- a bilingual University of Ottawa of national and international standing;
- a well-established national bilingual broadcast network, CBC-SRC;
- a thriving French-language community college , La Cité, as well as a successful English community College, Algonquin;
- a complete local catholic and public, English and French primary and secondary school system;
- a 75 years old local provincial professional association – AEFO - with its Head Office in Ottawa for 10,000 active and 30,000 passive (retired) Ontario francophone primary and secondary school teachers;
- a French-language Montfort Hospital with a full support system and a number of English and bilingual hospitals; a strong French and/or bilingual business community with its own Regroupement des gens d'affaires (RGA) representing over 700 member companies,
- a local 100 years old French daily Newspaper, Le Droit, and an English daily newspaper The Ottawa Citizen, plus numerous weekly tabloids;
- a number of local and national networks of French and English Radio stations;
- a local and national presence of English and French banks with billions in assets;
- a local and national network of French language Caisses Populaires Desjardins with billions in assets;
- a rich and diversified network of local, provincial, national and international francophone associations – AFO, ACFO, FAFO, ACELF, REFO, RDÉE, ANIM, FUTURALIA, RGA, Chambres de Commerce, etc. – which could put their full energy behind the City of Ottawa to ensure its

- success, its growth and its prosperity and a greater harmony amongst its people;
- a bilingual National Capital Commission overseeing the development of Canada's Capital;
 - an Ottawa tourism industry which, if established and promoted as a bilingual destination, could attract millions of domestic and foreign tourists and could reap the multi-billion dollars benefits which would be derived from a pool of more than 250 million francophone domestic and international potential travellers;
 - a local population of more than 30 % Francophones, 30 % multicultural and 40 % English (excluding our neighbours on the Québec side);
 - The City of Ottawa, the seat of the Capital of Canada, more than qualifies for an "official bilingualism" status.
6. Since 1969 and the unanimous adoption of Canada's Official Languages Act by the Parliament of Canada, many publicly funded Commissions and numerous community requests in favour of an "official bilingualism status" for the City of Ottawa have been left unanswered or unsatisfied, with the result that 45 years later Ottawa is still "officially unilingual English", notwithstanding its current level of limited bilingualism" with regard to some services, which, sadly, often leave much to be desired. Many Francophones and Francophiles are beginning to ask themselves if they are facing political negligence, systemic opposition, racism or anti-francophone resentment on the part of our local Ottawa municipal government representatives. What do you think?
7. We are now in 2014. Soon we will be celebrating the 150th year of the birth of Canada as a country. Can we see this as the dawn of a new era where Ottawa, the National Capital of Canada – which currently officially reflects only the English Nation in Canada – can truly become the Capital **of all Canadians** by recognizing legally and publicly Ottawa's new "Official Bilingualism Status" as the bilingual Capital of Canada and by including its francophone partner since 1760 and the 400 years of history in Canada, and by allowing its French speaking language minority to officially be part of the Capital of Canada.

8. The Capital of a country must truly reflect the nature, the composition and the soul and heart of the country –10 million Francophones and Francophiles feel totally left out. Can you blame them? How would you feel if Ottawa was the National Capital of French Canada and English Canada was totally left out of the equation.
9. I am fully aware that you do not have the Council votes presently to obtain an agreement from a majority of municipal councillors. However, it is the privilege and duty of a strong and fair leader to convince his partners in governance to do the right thing for Ottawa and Canada, particularly when it is the right thing to do for the country and its people. Offering “hit-and-miss” French language services which can be increased, decreased or eliminated at each municipal election will not do, as you know.
10. **On December 11, 1999 and on March 22, 2000 you supported Official Bilingualism for the City of Ottawa (see attached articles). I applauded your vision and your courage then. Today I am wondering what made you change your mind on such an important question for the unity of Canada?**
11. The way you treat Canada’s official language minority will reflect on how Canadians treat all other minorities in Ottawa and throughout Canada. You will be judged on how you treat Canada’s francophone founding people. As a friend, I hope you will be on the right side of history.
12. The decision is yours, however, I am convinced that Canada will never be united until the Anglophone majority shows publicly its acceptance and recognition of Canada’s founding official Francophone minority. The ball is in your court. History will judge you accordingly.

I believe and sincerely hope that our new Prime Minister for Ontario, the Right Honorable Kathleen Wynne, would be supportive of any recommendation from you and your government towards “Official Bilingualism” for Ottawa, our country’s symbol, guiding light and model.

Best Wishes for Happiness, Health, Success and Prosperity for you and yours in the New Year 2014 !

Sincerely,

Jacques

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