



# Annual Report 1998/1999



Office of the  
Languages Commissioner  
of the NWT

This material is available in another official language of the Northwest Territories where it has been requested in that official language on an ongoing and frequent basis by members of the public.

If you have questions, comments or concerns about language in the Northwest Territories, please contact the Languages Commissioner. You can refer to the various methods of contact featured on the back cover.

As a linguistic ombudsman for the Northwest Territories, the Languages Commissioner, Judi Tutcho, handles complaints and inquiries about the *Official Languages Act of the NWT* or any other Act or Regulations relating to the status or use of the official languages in the NWT.



May 1, 2000



The Honourable Speaker

Legislative Assembly

Yellowknife



Northwest Territories



Honourable Speaker



Pursuant to Section 23 of the *Official Languages Act*, I hereby submit to the Legislative Assembly, for consideration, the Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner of the NWT, covering the fiscal year 1998 - 1999.



Sincerely,



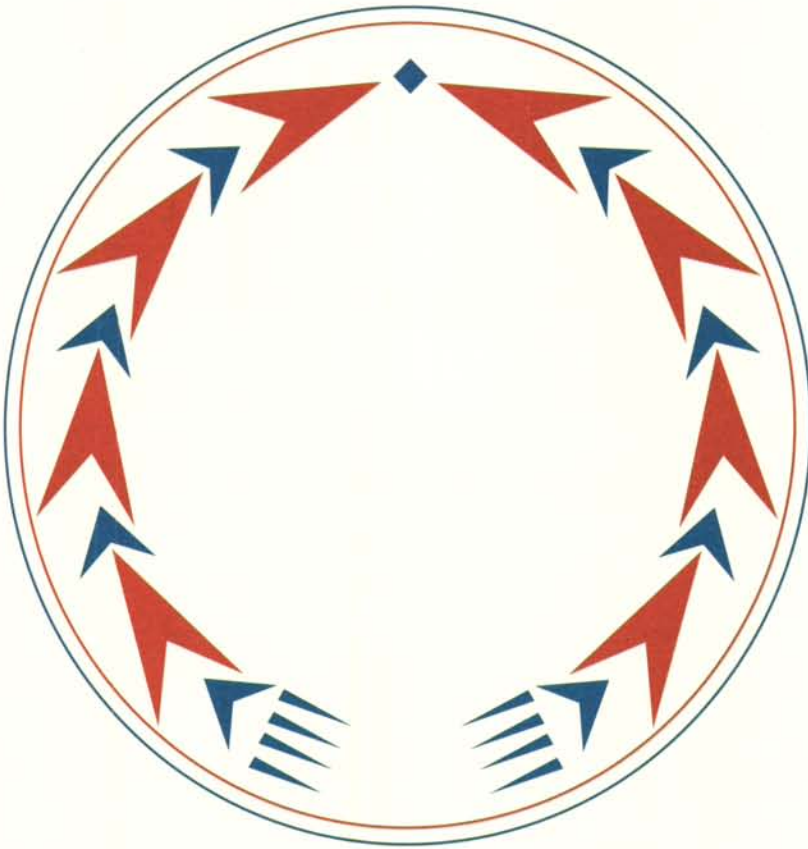
Judi Tutcho



Languages Commissioner  
of the Northwest Territories



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The official logo of the Languages Commissioner's Office symbolizes the eight Official Languages of the Northwest Territories - Chipewyan, Cree, Dogrib, English, French, Gwich'in, Inuktitut (including Inuvialuktun and Inuinnaqtun) and Slavey (including North and South). The arrows focus on the diamond, for just like a diamond, the languages of the north are unique, precious and rare. The points of the arrows reflect the struggle to promote, protect and preserve our cultures through the continuing usage of our languages. The circle is a powerful symbol for the strength and protection of all the language groups working together.

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## **Message from the Languages Commissioner**

This report marks the end of my third year of a four-year term as Languages Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. This past year has been a busy one, with a significant increase in the number of complaints received by my office. The majority of these complaints relate to the French language, as compared with three French language complaints in the 1997 - 1998 fiscal year. Indeed, the number of complaints, inquiries, invitations and initiatives has more than doubled during this year.

I believe and hope this increase denotes a revival of interest in language issues for all people of the North. As the millennium draws to a close, and we embark on a new century, it is imperative that we all begin anew, ensuring the survival of our languages. It is recognized that we live in a global community and there is a need for a common language, but this cannot come at the expense of the essence of who we are and our cultural esteem. To be competitive, we must be strong in our skills and abilities, and to do so, we must be strong in our beliefs, values and cultures.

Our young people must believe they have something to offer and the ability to attain skills to compete within this global economy. We cannot provide them with those skills without instilling in them a belief that they, and their cultures, are respected and valued. Our Elders possess those skills and we must be more diligent in ensuring all of our histories are preserved through language and culture.

How can we accomplish this? By ensuring languages are taught, not only in schools, but at home and in the workplace. For too long, language and culture has been ignored by all of us in our pursuit of the Canadian identity within the global village. What we failed to recognize was that our identity was, and is, made up of many diverse cultures and languages and that is what made us unique. It made us tolerate of others and proud of our own identities. It gave us the ability to be adaptable, to meet challenges in an innovative manner and to be respectful of other and ourselves. We cannot lose that tolerance and respect.

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# Office of the Languages Commissioner

## **History - The Past:**

In 1984, the Legislative Assembly passed its first *Official Languages Act*. Modelled on the federal Act, it had two essential purposes: the Act guaranteed equal status for the use of English and French by members of the public using government programs and services, and the Act officially recognizes the Aboriginal languages in use in the Northwest Territories. Then, in 1990, the Assembly made major amendments to the Act to give greater status to northern Aboriginal languages. Recognizing the official status of Aboriginal languages was intended to preserve and promote Aboriginal cultures through protection of their languages.

The 1990 amendments also created the position of Languages Commissioner for the NWT to be appointed by a vote of the Legislative Assembly for a term of four years. The first appointment was made in December of 1991. The Office of the Languages Commissioner was opened in February of 1992. The Languages Commissioner is an independent office and accountable to the Legislative Assembly.

## **Mission Statement - The Present:**

The Office of the Languages Commissioner works to assist in the preservation, promotion and protection of the official languages of the Northwest Territories, and to ensure that the Government of the Northwest Territories departments, boards and agencies comply with the spirit and intent of the *Official Languages Act* as is legislated.

## **Vision - The Future:**

As the Languages Commissioner of the NWT, I aim to commit my knowledge, experience and energy into helping families, homes, communities and governments in their daily lives to develop a deep awareness of the importance of languages and their inherent connection to the heritage and culture of the people of the North.

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## Duties of the Languages Commissioner

Part II, Section 20, of the *Official Languages Act* outlines the main duties of the Languages Commissioner. It states that the Languages Commissioner is required:

- to take all steps within her legal authority to ensure the language rights under this Act is upheld;
- to ensure all government departments, boards and agencies comply with the Act;
- to ensure the territorial government advances Aboriginal languages.

As well, the Languages Commissioner may investigate complaints from the public. She can also act without a public complaint if she believes the Act has not been followed. The Languages Commissioner can make reports and recommendations to the government based on these investigations.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the Languages Commissioner has four main functions:

### **1. Complaints and Inquiries:**

The largest percentage of activity is spent handling the inquiries and investigating the complaints that are received in the office.

### **2. Monitoring:**

The next function concentrates on monitoring the language services and programs of the Government of the Northwest Territories to ensure that they adequately meet the obligations set out in the *Official Languages Act of the NWT*.

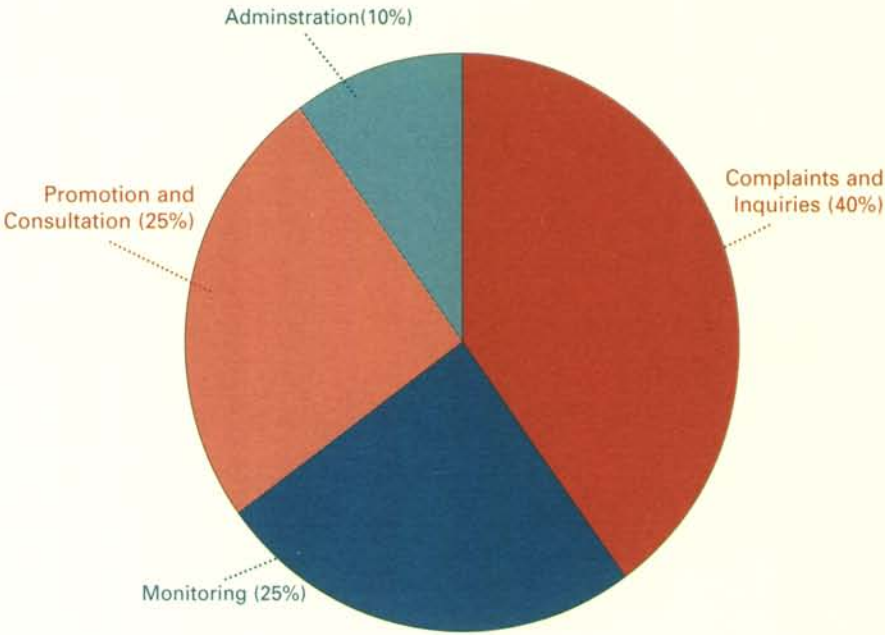
### **3. Promotions and Consultations:**

As well, the Languages Commissioner works avidly to promote the Office of the Languages Commissioner and to consult with the various linguistics communities through participation in many workshops, conferences and meetings that relate to the languages of the North.

### **4. Administration:**

And finally, the remainder of activity is administering the Office of the Languages Commissioner with the support of the Legislative Assembly.

Figure 1 - Languages Commissioner's Duties - Pie Chart



Benoit Boutin, Zita Antonios (Keynote Speaker, Australia), Maria Grazia Vacchina (Italy), Judi Tutcho, Roberta Jamison (Ombudsman, Ontario)

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## Year in Review

Activities the Language Commissioner participated in during 1998-1999.

### April 1998

- Attended "Strength from Culture" Symposium in Yellowknife
- Travelled to Winnipeg to attend the National Native Education Conference



Fibbie Tatti, Oscar Kawagley and Pauline Gordon

### May 1998

- Attended the NWT Literacy Council Annual General Meeting

### June 1998

- Attended the Dene National Assembly at the Yellowknife River
- Hosted the Canadian Ombudsman Association Conference



Photo: Office of the Languages Commissioner of the NWT

- Attended the District Education Authority Meeting in Deline

### July 1998

- Attended the Athapaskan Languages Conference in Calgary
- Attended the Summer Institute in Brandon, Manitoba, on education



Photo: Office of the Languages Commissioner of the NWT

### September 1998

- Attended the Education Leadership Symposium in Yellowknife

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## October 1998

- Attended the Colloquium on Aboriginal Languages Learning

## November 1998

- Attended the La Federation Franco-TeNoise Annual General Meeting
- Attended the Deh Cho Language Conference in Fort Providence

## December 1998

- Travelled to Halifax for the 1998 National Ombudsman Investigator's Workshop

## January 1999

- Attended the Book Launch for "A Handbook for Medical Interpreters" at the Stanton Regional Hospital

## March 1999

- Attended Federation Franco-TeNoise Forum in Yellowknife
- Attended the Minister's Forum on Education in Fort Smith
- Travelled to the District Education Meeting for Aboriginal Languages Programming in Aklavik
- Attended Strength from Culture, Leadership Meeting in Yellowknife
- Attended Dene National Leadership Meeting in Yellowknife



Photo: Office of the Languages Commissioner of the NWT



Photo: Office of the Languages Commissioner of the NWT

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## Highlights

### National Ombudsman Conference Yellowknife, June 18 - 19, 1998

The Office of the Languages Commissioner hosted the first-ever National Ombudsman Conference in Yellowknife in June of 1998. Participants from came from as far away as Italy and Australia and from all provinces and territories, from British Columbia to Newfoundland and from the Yukon Territory to Nunavut. Attendance by all of these participants ensured participation that was representative of the geographic and linguistic diversity of Canada and blended international issues, giving all a broad discussion base.

The theme of the conference was "Fairness and Good Governance". A number of guest speakers, who were well versed in their various topics, kept the audience's interest throughout the conference. Topics ranged from the types of services available in the North to traditional Aboriginal methods of dispute resolution. It was interesting to compare these traditional Aboriginal dispute resolution mechanisms to other countries of the world and see the similarities in spite of being half the world apart.

One of the highlights of the week was the creation of the Canadian Ombudsman Association. All of the Ombudsmen and Commissioners in attendance were signatories to the creating documents, and this historic event took place on the Great Slave Lake, while on a tour taken for this specific purpose.



Photo: Office of the Languages Commissioner, NWT

Signing of Document

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## Aboriginal Languages Month in the Northwest Territories, March 1999

The Office of the Languages Commissioner co-hosted the "Great Debate", held at the Legislative Assembly as part of Aboriginal Languages month. Premier Jim Antoine, Justice Minister Stephen Kakfwi, Executive Director of the Native Communications Society Sabet Biscaye and private language consultant Margaret Mackenzie debated whether or not Aboriginal languages should be kept "pure" or if words from other languages should be included to simplify translation.

The debate was conducted in the Aboriginal languages spoken by the debaters and moderated by the Languages Commissioner. A panel of Judges, Lucy Ann Yakeleya, Eleanor Bran, Violet Mackenzie and Evelyn Cook, ensured no words from other languages were used, and "gonged" participants with pleasure whenever English or French words were used. The debate showed that issues can be debated seriously, but can be a great deal of fun as well.

The debate was a very successful event, sponsored by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, the Office of the Languages Commissioner and the NWT Literacy Council and was coordinated by Sue Heron-Herbert.



Photo: Office of the Languages Commissioner of the NWT

## Development of Complaints Procedure and Form

In order to assist the public with formulating complaints and ensuring that the *Official Languages Act* is complied with, the Office of the Languages Commissioner developed a procedures leaflet and a complaints form. The leaflet sets out briefly information about the *Official Languages Act*, the role of the Languages Commissioner, the types of complaints the Languages Commissioner can and cannot investigate, how to make a complaint, when a complaint ought to be brought forward and how an investigation is conducted.

Like other ombudsmen, the Languages Commissioner's office should be viewed as a **last resort** for dispute resolution. Individuals can often resolve disputes and issues more quickly and easily by approaching the appropriate government agency directly, but when this fails, the Office of the Languages Commissioner can begin an investigation and make a determination. While the process is not cumbersome, it can take some time to ensure resolution of a complaint; therefore a person may find that contacting the agency directly can bring immediate results.

A complaints form is attached to the leaflet, setting out what the complaint is about, who has been contacted, what steps have already been taken, how the Act has been violated, the outcome or remedy being sought and if the matter is urgent. This ensures the person making a complaint can provide appropriate information in the first instance, thereby saving time.



Photo: Office of the Languages Commissioner of the NWT

## Staffing and Budget

Our office's budget of \$351,000 is divided into two main categories:

Salaries & Wages @ \$228,000, and

Operations and Maintenance @ \$123,000.

The Chart below outlines the specific allocation, expenditure and variance amounts for the 1998/99 fiscal year.

**Figure II - Office of the Languages Commissioner Statement of Expenditures, 1998 - 1999**

	Allocation	Expenditure	Variance
<b>Salaries and Wages</b>			
Salaries and Wages	\$213,000	\$202,663	\$10,337
Casual Wages	15,000	5,994	9,006
SubTotal	\$228,000	\$206,657	\$19,343
<b>Operations and Maintenance</b>			
Travel and Transportation	\$35,000	\$27,643	\$7,347
Materials and Supplies	15,000	26,512	(11,512)
Purchased Services	15,000	14,765	235
Contract Services	35,000	40,488	5,488
Fees and Payments	20,000	24,749	18,494
Furniture, Equipment	0	4,766	(4,766)
Other Expenses	3,000	11,098	(8,098)
SubTotal	\$123,000	\$152,031	\$27,031
Task as a Whole	\$351,000	\$358,688	(\$7,688)

Source: Legislative Assembly Financial Report

Our office staff consists of the following:  
 Languages Commissioner  
 Researcher  
 Executive Secretary  
 Legal Counsel

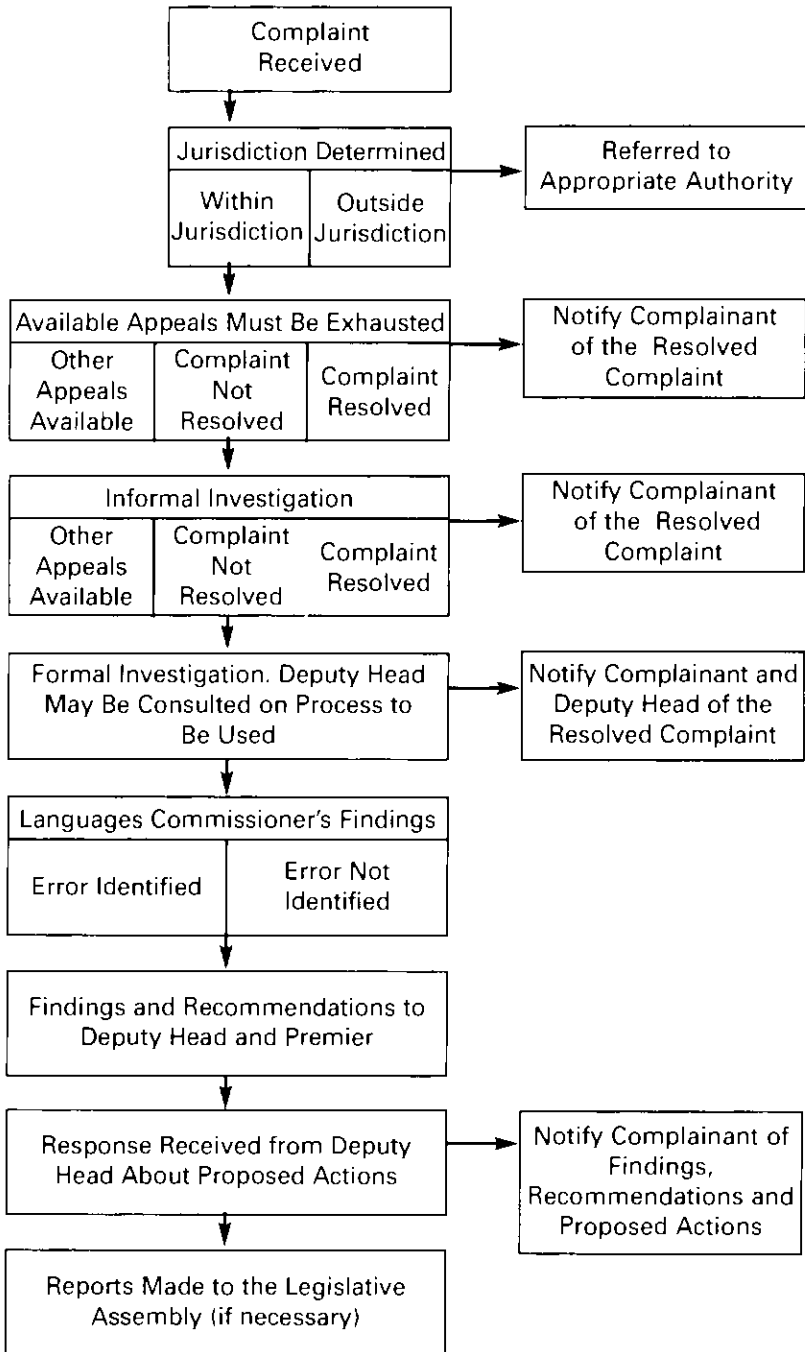


Photo: Office of the Languages Commissioner of the NWT

# Operational Data and Statistics

## Flow Chart of Complaints

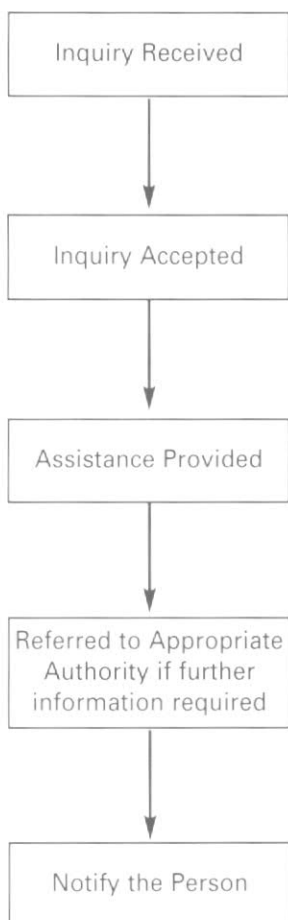
The flow chart illustrates the typical manner by which the Languages Commissioner handles complaints. Exceptions may occur at the discretion and direction of the Languages Commissioner.



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## Flow Chart of Inquiries

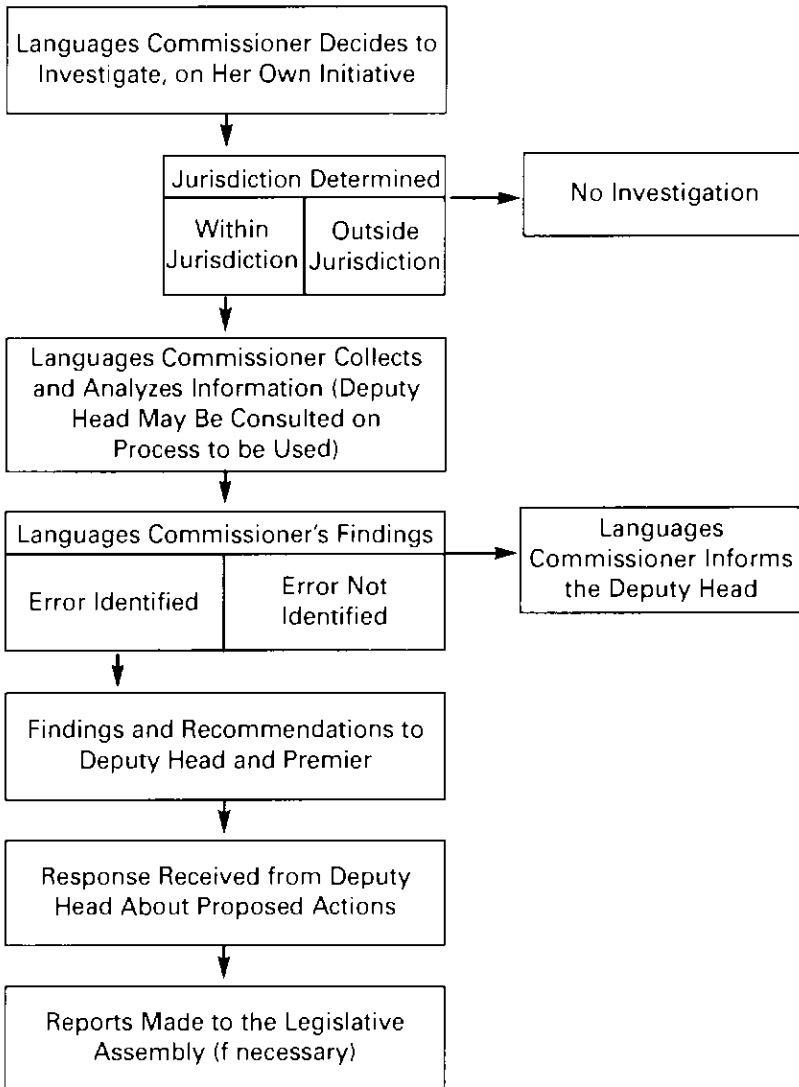
The flow chart illustrates the typical manner by which the Languages Commissioner handles inquiries. Exceptions may occur at the discretion and direction of the Languages Commissioner.



Alestine Ferdinand and Judi Tutcho

## Flow Chart of Languages Commissioner's Initiatives

The flow chart illustrates the typical manner by which the Languages Commissioner handles an investigation that is initiated by her. Exceptions may occur at the discretion and direction of the Languages Commissioner.



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## Statistical Summaries

The Statistical Summaries are presented in the following Charts.

These Statistical Summaries focus on an analysis of the case load, such as:

- Status of Complaints and Inquiries;
- Subject of Inquiries;
- Subject of Complaints;
- Case Load;
- Status of Complaints and Inquiries;
- Status of Inquiries;
- Status of Complaints;
- Departments Involved;
- Cases Referred;
- Origin of Cases;
- Languages Involve (Complaints);
- Languages Involved (Inquiries); and
- Languages Involved (Complaints and Inquiries).

Most of the figures related to the "case load" in 1998 - 1999.

Case load means "all the new cases opened in 1998 - 1999, plus all the cases that were unresolved on March 31, 1998".

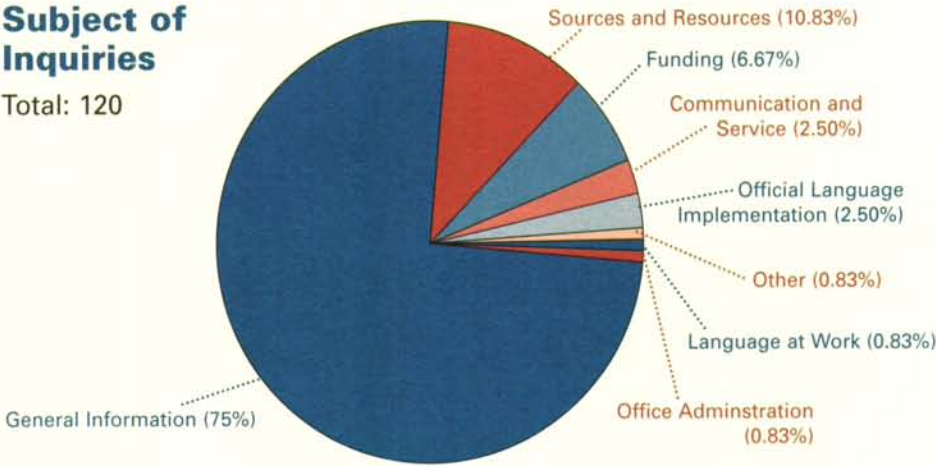
Each time the Office deals with a complaint, guidelines are currently used by the Languages Commissioner in complaints investigation. The procedures were developed taking into consideration the *Official Languages Act*, investigation guidelines used in other jurisdictions and past investigative experience of this office.

**Definitions:**

An **Inquiry** is a simple request for information, usually about official languages of the *Official Languages Act*, or any other Act or regulation relating to the status or use of the official languages. It does not include any suggestion that a person feels that she or he has been unfairly treated.

**Subject of Inquiries**

Total: 120



The chart shows the total number of inquiries made during the 1998-1999 fiscal year. As shown, the bulk of 120 inquiries made to the Office of the Languages Commissioner (75%) related to general information requests.

This signifies there is an awareness by the public that the Office of the Languages Commissioner can provide information on a variety of issues.

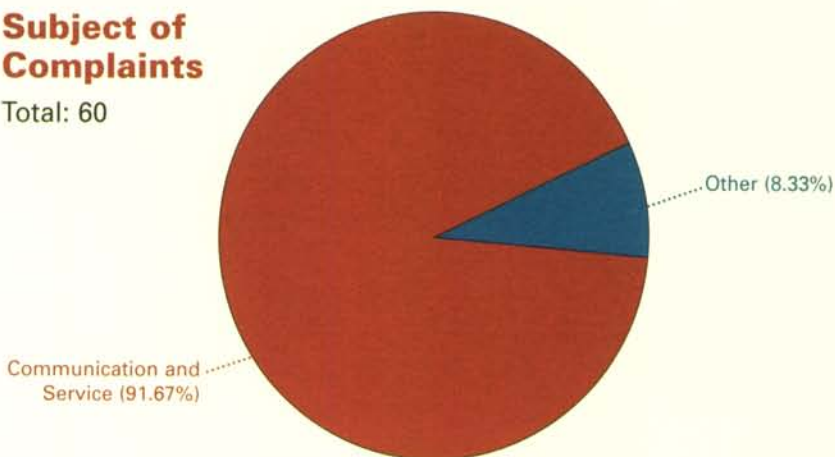
The increase is also a result of the shut down of the Language Bureau in the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Many of the inquiries that would have normally been handled by the Bureau are now being handled by the Office of the Languages Commissioner.

A **Complaint** involves a situation where a person or group feels that their language rights or privileges have been infringed or denied. They may feel that they have been treated unfairly or have been adversely affected by some policy, program action or lack of action.

Most (91%) of the complaints brought forward to the Office of the Languages Commissioner related to communication and service to the public by government departments and agencies.

### Subject of Complaints

Total: 60



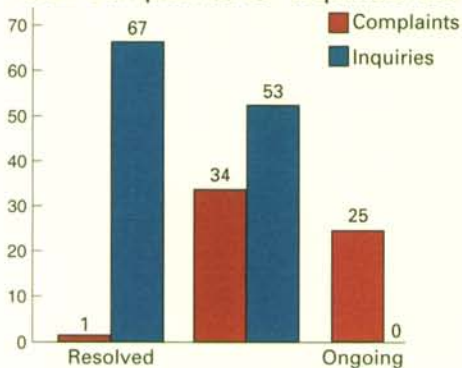
### Status of Complaints and Inquiries:

In the 1997 - 1998 year, all inquiries were resolved, with 67 of the inquiries, or 55.3%, handled within the Office of the Languages Commissioner.

An additional 53 inquiries or 44.17%, were dealt within the Office of the Languages Commissioner but were also referred to appropriate departments for further assistance.

### Status of Complaints & Inquiries

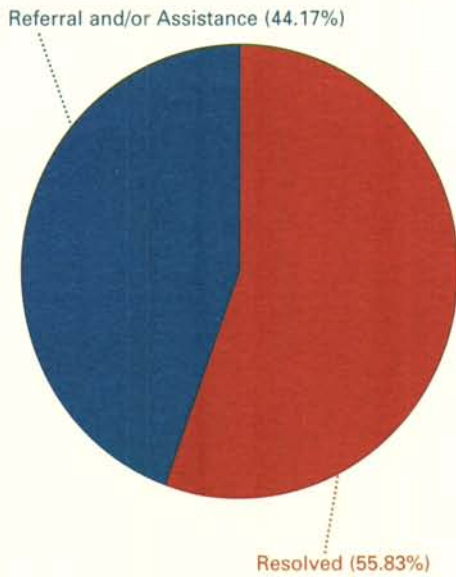
Total: Complaints: 60 Inquiries: 120



Of the 60 complaints received in the Office of the Languages Commissioner, 1 case was dealt with entirely in the Office of the Languages Commissioner. 53 cases or 56.67% of the complaints were accepted and these cases were referred to appropriate departments and agencies for action. These complaints were then considered to be resolved and no further action was required;

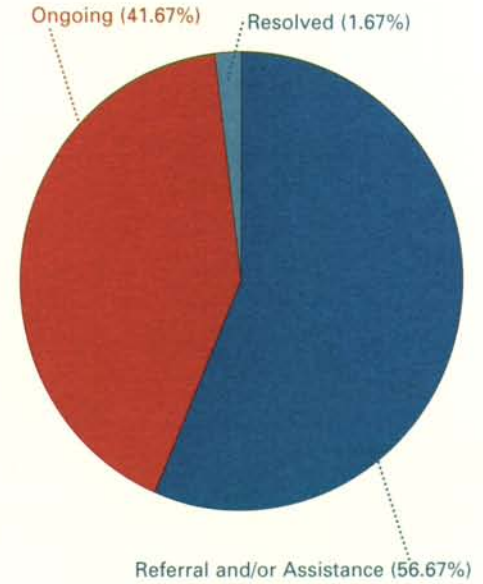
## Status of Inquiries

Total: 120



## Status of Complaints

Total: 60

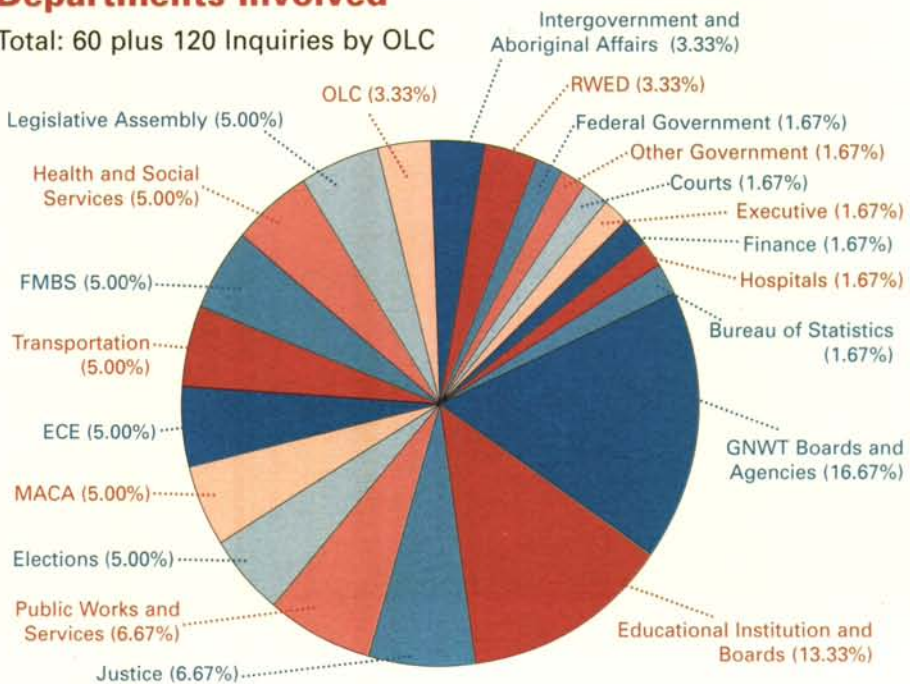


25 complaints, or 41.67% remained unresolved at the end of the fiscal year.

The following chart shows, within governments, departments and agencies, where assistance was provided in the resolution of complaints and assistance in inquiries.

## Departments Involved

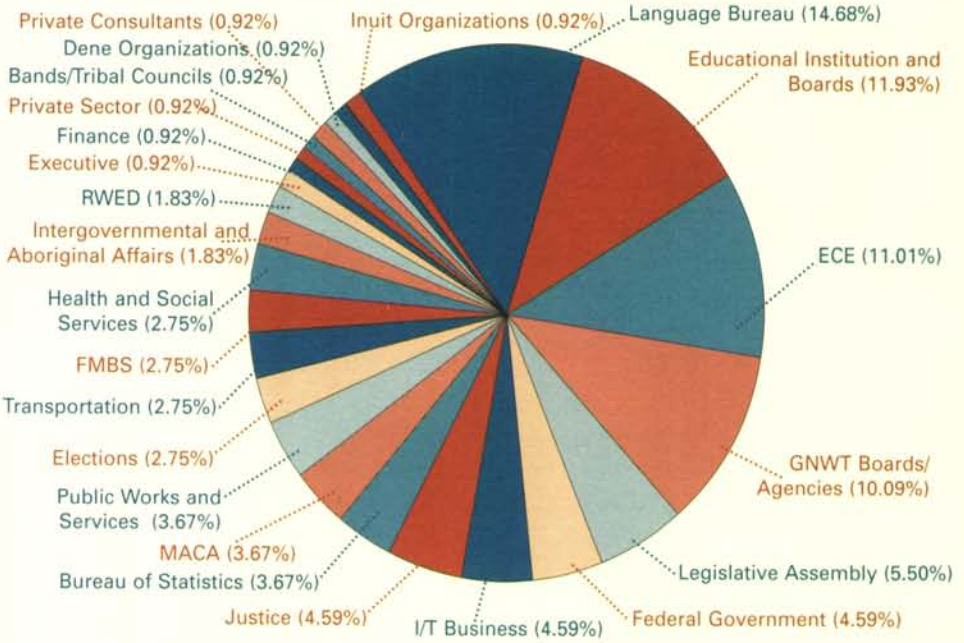
Total: 60 plus 120 Inquiries by OLC



Some cases were referred to other organizations outside of government for further assistance in inquiries. This chart shows which organizations were involved, and it should be noted that referrals to outside agencies only relate to inquiries.

## Cases Referred

Inquiries and Complaints: Total 109

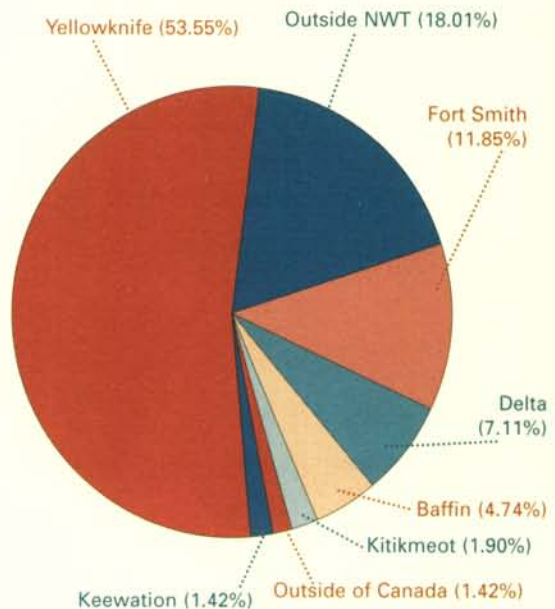


## Source of Initiation:

Most complaints, inquiries and invitations were received from outside of government (70.14%), while 19.91% were from employees, showing the public's awareness of the role of the Languages Commissioner. Most of the case load by non-employees represented inquiries (75%) and about 25% were complaints. This is contrasted by employee inquiries representing 98% of their case load and 2% were complaints.

## Origin of Cases

By Region: Total 211



A majority of inquiries and complaints, whether from within government or from the public, originated in Yellowknife. This may be a result of easy accessibility to the Office of the Languages Commissioner, or it may just reflect population distribution in relation to total cases received. Very few cases originated in the eastern Northwest Territories, representing only 8.6% of total cases.

**Case Load:**

A total of 211 cases were reported in the 1998/1999 fiscal year. Of these, the majority related to inquiries (56.87%) and complaints (28.44%).

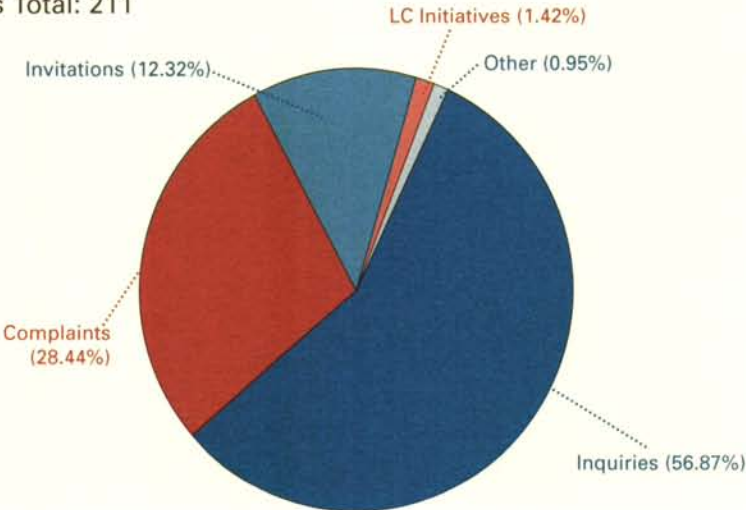
In the 1998/1999 year, of the total case load, 12.32% were invitations to the Languages Commissioner to attend meetings, make presentations and to make media appearances. This represents a significant increase over previous years. 1.42% of the cases were initiatives by the Languages Commissioner, including a review of policies within government.

The 1998 - 1999 year represented the second most active year since the 1995/1996 fiscal year. It should be noted in the 1995-1996 fiscal year, there were a high number of ongoing cases that were subsequently closed.

The 1996/1997 year showed a significant decrease from the previous year, a reduction of almost 50% in the number of cases, although without the high number of ongoing cases brought into the

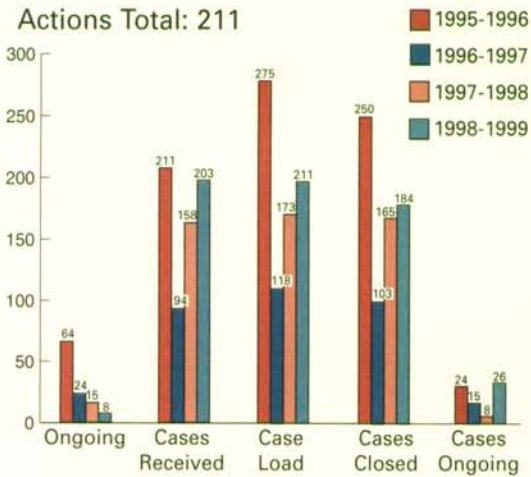
**Case Load**

Actions Total: 211



## Total Case Load by Year

Actions Total: 211



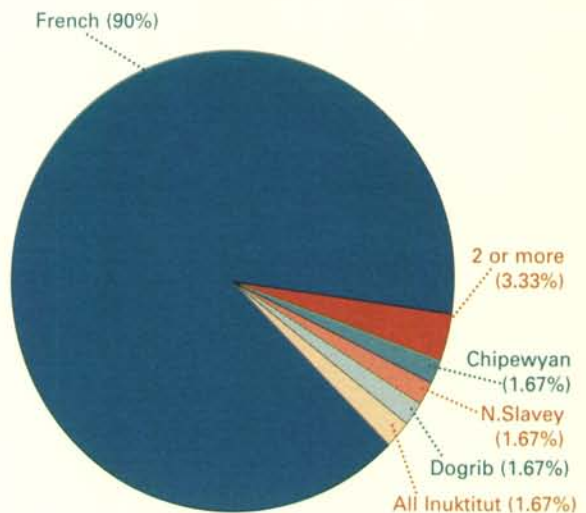
1995/1996 year, the cases load would have only decreased by about 25%. In 1997/1998 year, there was an increase of about 50% in the caseload, and again in 1998/1999 there was another increase of about 50 cases over the previous year, or about 25% over the previous year.

## Languages Involved In Complaints:

The majority of complaints involved the French language (90%). The remaining 10% involved Chipewyan (1.67%), North Slavey (1.67%), Dogrib (1.67%), Inuktitut (1.67%) and 3.3% involved two or more languages. Whether the low number of complaints relating to Aboriginal languages is because

### Languages Involved

In Complaints: Total 60



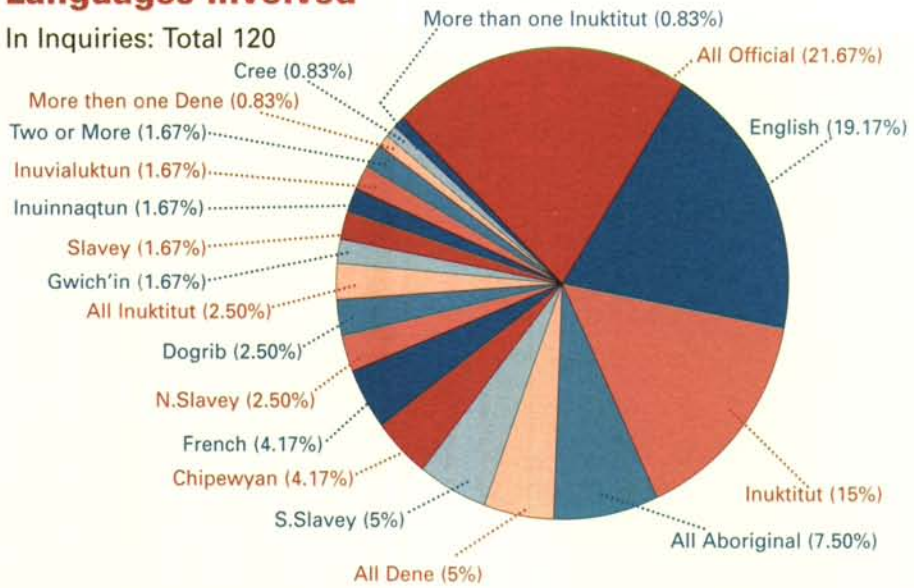
people are not aware of their rights or the availability of services provided by the Languages Commissioner is not known. The high number of complaints around French may be because of the federal Official Languages Act, and therefore there is a greater awareness of language rights.

## Languages Involved in Inquiries:

The majority of inquiries involved all official languages, or 21.67%. English ranked second with 19.17%, and the Inuktitut language inquiries were the next highest group with 15%. All other languages, including French represented 5% per group or less, except when all Aboriginal languages were involved (7%).

## Languages Involved

Inquiries: Total 120



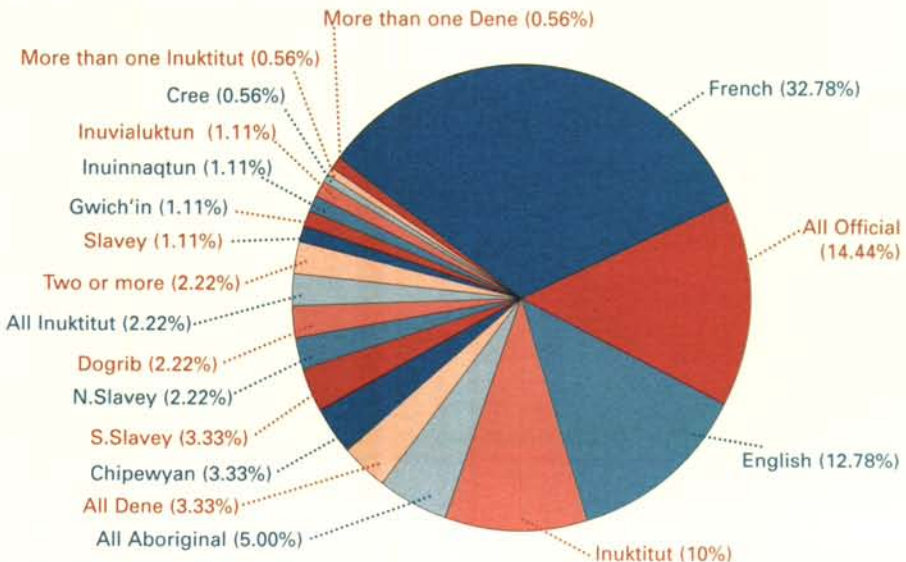
## Languages Involved in Complaints and Inquiries:

When the total of complaints and inquiries are combined, French constitutes the highest percentage involved, with about 33%, or one third of the case load. English is involved in approximately 13% of the cases, followed by all other official languages for a combined total of 43%. All official languages were involved in 14% of cases and included all of the Aboriginal languages.

## Languages Involved

Complaints and Inquiries:

Total 180



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## **Recommendations from 1996 - 1997**

1. That the Government of the Northwest Territories develops a promotional plan regarding official languages in the Northwest Territories.
2. That the Government of the Northwest Territories develops a comprehensive accountability framework to guide all levels of government in languages issues.
3. That the Government of the Northwest Territories develops an implementation plan regarding the policy and guidelines of official languages.
4. That the Government of the Northwest Territories implements in all printed materials of departments, boards and agencies an active offer to receive information in one or more of the official languages.

## **Recommendation from 1997 - 1998**

1. That the Government of the Northwest Territories addresses the issue of privatization of language services and its impacts on government departments, boards and agencies.

**Please be advised that these recommendations are from the 1996 - 1997 and 1997 - 1998 Annual Reports. The Languages Commissioner has yet to hear from the Legislative Assembly on whether the above noted recommendations have been accepted or rejected. If they are accepted, the Languages Commissioner wishes to know how the Legislative Assembly will implement them.**

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## Recommendations from 1998 - 1999

1. That the Government of the Northwest Territories establish an Advisory Council to assist the Languages Commissioner's office, and that the Council be comprised of representatives of the language groups of the Northwest Territories. The mandate of the Council should be to provide assistance at all levels to the Languages Commissioner and to review terminology as required.
  
2. That the Government of the Northwest Territories amend the *Official Languages Act* to include a time frame in which the Legislative Assembly must respond to recommendations arising out of the Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner. It is recommended that the Speaker table the Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner in the Legislative Assembly within 10 days of the first sitting following receipt of the Annual Report. It is further recommended that the Legislative Assembly respond to the recommendations contained in the Annual Report within 60 sitting days of tabling of the Annual Report.

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**To Contact the Languages Commissioner of the Northwest Territories**

**In Person or by Mail:**

**3rd Floor, Panda II Centre**

**#19, 4915 - 48 Street**

**Yellowknife, NT X1A 3S4**

**By Telephone: (867) 873-7034 Toll Free: 1-800-661-0889**

**By Fax: (867) 873-0357 Toll Free: 1-888-305-7353**

**By Email: [langcom@gov.nt.ca](mailto:langcom@gov.nt.ca)**

**By Web Site: [www.gov.nt.ca/Lang\\_Com](http://www.gov.nt.ca/Lang_Com)**

