

B.C. big on French immersion

Public schools and private pre-schools in British Columbia are having to turn away children from French immersion programs because the demand is so great.

Vancouver school authorities receive calls from parents in maternity wards wanting to reserve desks in future French immersion classes. On Vancouver Island, some parents drive their children 50 miles for French kindergarten.

"It's overwhelming," said Judith Gibson, president of the B.C. chapter of Canadian Parents for French. "Perhaps 95 per cent of the children enrolling to learn French as a second language have never heard more than a few words of French on Sesame Street before starting school.

"Classes are becoming very popular in B.C. now as word spreads that there is such an animal as immersion in existence."

In fact, immersion, now in its seventh year in Vancouver and tenth year in suburban Coquitlam, has built up a large following. Like other provinces, B.C. scurried to implement a formal minority-language program this fall.

Enrolment grows yearly

Province-wide immersion enrolment has been growing by at least 50 per cent in recent years — largely because of persistent lobbying by the Parents for French — and could top 3,000 in elementary grades in 12 school districts this year.

In Vancouver, and to a lesser extent in other centres, immersion is an anglophone, upper-middle-class phenomenon. And principals and parents agree that the interest is not inspired by fears of a fractured Canada.

"Most people are doing it because they think it's a good thing to speak a second language," said William Hay, principal of l'Ecole Bilingue, Vancouver's phenomenally successful all-French school. "French is an obvious language to learn in this country. And it's free."

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Algunos números de esta publicación aparecen también en español bajo el título Noticiario de Canadá.

News briefs

Premier Brian Peckford of Newfoundland has appointed a committee to find a flag for the province, which traditionally has been represented by the red, white and blue of the British flag. Pressure from sports federations has prompted the search for a new banner. When a group of athletes attended the Commonwealth Games in Edmonton last year they found themselves without a provincial flag because Prince Philip was in attendance and the Union Jack was being flown in his honour.

Monthly family allowance payments have risen to \$21.80 from \$20 a child in most provinces and territories, the Health and Welfare Department has announced. Child tax-credit benefits have also increased to \$218 a child for families earning \$18,000 or less annually. Family allowance payments vary in Quebec and Alberta according to the age or number of children in a family, providing the payments average \$21.80 for each child in the province.

Two engineering texts by University of Calgary faculty members are being published in Russian translations to be used as textbooks in the Soviet Union. The books are *Stirling Engines* by Dr. G. Walker and *Finite Element Analysis* by Dr. D.H. Norrie and Dr. G. de Vries. Relatively few Western engineering texts are selected for translation and publication in Russia, but those that are find wide distribution and use.

The National Energy Board has announced that it has approved an application by Fraser Inc. of Edmundston, New Brunswick for licences to export firm and interruptible power until 1987 to its subsidiary, Fraser Paper Limited in Madawaska, Maine.

Three airlines, Air Canada, British Airways and Air France are offering, for the first time, major discounts on seat sales across the North Atlantic with round trip fares of \$259 between Toronto and London and \$299 between Toronto and Paris. The Toronto-Paris flights will operate only on selected weekdays — Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays — from January 14 to March 14 and will be applicable only to flights originating in Toronto and Montreal.

The Canadian International Development Agency has announced the signing

of a \$7-million engineering contract with Acres International Limited of Niagara Falls, Ontario for engineering services connected with the construction of power lines in the most populated areas of Kenya. The contract is for the first of five projects which are part of an \$82.75-million energy package to bring electric power to the Kamburu and Mombasa regions. Acres International Limited will serve as the agents for the Government of Kenya in the procurement of all equipment for the \$68-million loan project. The company will also be responsible for negotiating a contract with a Canadian firm to serve as a prime contractor for the construction of the line.

Domtar Inc. has purchased a 25-per cent interest in a joint venture to explore petroleum and natural gas rights in northern Alberta and British Columbia. Under the agreement, Domtar Energy Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary, will fulfil 25 per cent of the 1980 capital commitments, amounting to \$35 million, to the venture of Agnew Lake Mines Ltd. of Toronto.

A new tourism and business travel, marketing and promotion group called Canadian Holiday and Travel Associates (CHTA) has been formed in London. Its members include Canadian federal and provincial government tourism bodies represented in the British capital, and airlines, hotels, tour operators and ground transport companies active in both Britain and Canada. CHTA is being funded by its members and will provide a co-ordinated marketing plan covering all aspects of travel in Canada.

George Garland, a professor of geophysics at the University of Toronto has been elected to a four-year term as president of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG). Professor Garland's appointment came at the end of the seventeenth General Assembly, which brought together some 2,000 scientists from around the world in Canberra, Australia. The IUGG is one of the world's largest non-government scientific organizations.

Sandra Wells, a swimming-pool guard from Arnprior, near Ottawa, has achieved a place in the *Guinness Book of Records* by breaking the record for treading water. In setting the new mark of 60 hours she outlasted four male companions and raised \$2,000 in aid of an aquatic program.