

July 10, 1997

TO: Yvon Labbé, Director, Franco-American Centre  
FROM: Tony Brinkley, Coordinator, Commercial Initiatives, for the Franco-American Centre  
RE: Current Status of the Centre's Commercial Initiatives

Given changes this summer at all levels of the administration at the University of Maine (a new dean of a new College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, a new provost, and a new president), it may be a good time to review with the University the current status of the various commercial initiatives in which you and I have been involved. With that in mind, I am preparing this summary as a basis for future briefings by the Franco-American Centre for the administration on the Orono campus.

In 1995-1996, the Franco-American Centre achieved something of a break-through for its vision that the French reality in Maine is an economic resource for the state and for the region. In 1996-1997, the initiatives that produced the break-through have gained an increasingly momentum. The idea—that the Franco-American/North American French resource exists, that it can provide vital opportunities for economic development and contribute to the realization of a prosperous future for all the people of the state—is sufficiently obvious that resistance to the idea, both within and outside the University, may have been indicative of the overall resistance to the French presence in Maine, the tendency to devalue the cultural reality of 30 to 40 per cent of the people of the state. In this devaluation of a people and its culture the University of Maine has historically played a major role. Recently, in a meeting on the Orono campus, Congressman John Baldacci said that a state which denies 30-40 per cent of it people cannot be a healthy place. As in other areas, perhaps the major work of the Center in the commercial area since 1995 has been in the area of public health.

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The Centre's commercial initiatives include:

- The Franco-American Partnership Agreement between the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce and the University of Maine. The agreement was negotiated by the Franco-American Centre and signed in December 1995. A committee of the Chamber meets regularly to implement the agreement. The Partnership has been instrumental in creating a United States chapter of the Forum Francophone des Affaires and in locating that chapter in Maine. It has helped to initiate the process that has created new opportunities in cultural tourism. It has become a basis through which the Franco-American Centre could help shape Co-Entreprise. (These initiatives are listed below.) Perhaps the major accomplishment to date has been to make the Maine's French resource an integral part of the planning process for major Bangor institutions like Eastern Maine Development Corporation and Bangor Savings Bank.

- The establishment in Maine of the American Association of the Forum Francophone des Affaires. The Forum Francophone des Affaires is a commercial network of 37 countries in the French-speaking world. Its missions are to create business partnerships and promote economic development through those partnerships. It is the principle commercial organization for Francophonie, a political, economic, and cultural process includes 49 countries and 125 million people. As the site for the headquarters for American Association of the Forum Francophone des Affaires, Maine has the opportunity to become the link between the United States and the Francophone world.

The opportunity arose:

- 1.) from the Franco-American Partnership Agreement; and

- 2.) from an emerging working relationship between the Franco-American Centre and the Consulate for France in Boston.

The Franco-American Centre organized a coalition of public and business leaders and invited the Consul General to meet with this coalition on the Orono Campus in May 1996. The meeting was chaired by Severin Béliveau. From the meeting a planning process developed which led to the formal incorporation of the American Association of FFA at the Portland offices of Preti, Flaherty, Béliveau & Pachios in January 1997. Béliveau was elected the first president of the American Association. Yvon Labbé, the Director of the Franco-American Centre, was elected one of the two Vice-Presidents of the Association. The Franco-American Centre was a full partner in the planning process, and since January has been working closely with other partners to develop:

- 1.) a business plan for the American Association;
- 2.) a board of directors that represents all regions of the state and is inclusive of other Franco-American communities in the United States;
- 3.) a data base of the French resource in Maine;
- 4.) a trade delegation from the United States to Viet Nam in October 1997 for the biannual world meeting of FFA.

In developing both the data base and the trade delegation, the Franco-American Centre is linking the American Association to other resources at the University: for the data base, with the Margaret Chase Smith Center; for the trade delegation, with the University's Department of Industrial Cooperation and its director Jake Ward, and with Professor Ngo Vinh Long of the History Department. The trade delegation will work to connect economic sectors in Maine with matching sectors in Viet Nam and other Francophone countries. At the same time, the Franco-American Centre is using its working relation with the Québec government: 1.) to create a partnership between the US. and Québec delegations to Viet Nam; 2.) to make FFA a key player in brokering business partnering between Québec and New England. In the near future, the Centre will begin to play a key role the FFA Resource Committee of which Labbé is Vice-chair.

• A major-role in planning Co-Entreprise, an annual meeting of businesses and governments leaders to foster economic cooperation between Maine and Québec. In large part because of the Franco-American Partnership Agreement and the FFA process, Yvon Labbé was asked by the Maine Chamber and Business Alliance to become a member of the Board for Co-Entreprise. In that capacity he and the Centre have helped shape a direction for Co-Entreprise in which Maine's French reality is now recognized as a crucial resource. This year, at the 3rd annual meeting in Rockport, Governor King and Premier Lucien Bouchard of Québec recognized the resource as vital to future political, cultural, and commercial relations between the Maine and Québec. Both Québec newspapers and Premier Bouchard endorsed a policy of the Governor's that was first formulated for him by the Franco-American Centre: "La Francophonie vit ses meilleures heures depuis plusieurs années dans le Maine. Le gouverneur a même émis une proclamation attestant que 'les Franco-Américains devraient être perçus comme une ressource économique du Maine!' Il voit là un excellent moyen d'ouvrir à l'État de nouveaux marchés étrangers." King and Bouchard announced the creation of a joint Maine-Québec Committee to develop cultural tourism, beginning with the Chaudière-Kennebec corridor. Governor King appointed Labbé as chair of the committee for Maine. The creation of the American Association of the Forum Francophone des Affaires was a focus for afternoon panels which the Franco-American Centre helped arrange and on which members of the Centre participated. Labbé will continue to be on the Co-Entreprise Board for 1997-1998, and the Centre will continue to play a key role in the planning process.

- The Québec/Maine Committee on the Chaudière-Kennebec Tourism Project. The committee, announced by the Governor and the Premier, has now been formed and has begun to meet. The Committee's work is being funded by the Governor's office. In addition to Labbé, Tony Brinkley is a member of the Committee. The initial tasks are:

- 1.) to develop a working partnership between Maine and Québec;
- 2.) to create a strategic plan for cultural tourism along the corridor created by the Chaudière and Kennebec Rivers.

This plan will include urban and rural sites (Augusta and Waterville, for example, but also the Canada Road in the Jackman area). It will support tourism in areas adjacent to the Kennebec corridor (the Moosehead Region, for example, but also Lewiston). The Committee will report to the Governor and Premier in April 1998. The report provides an opportunity to create a blueprint for economic and cultural development in the Kennebec River corridor. The project can also provide a model for economic and cultural development in other areas of the state. It can become a basis for funding major research projects like the Maine Historical Atlas.

In addition to the Chaudière-Kennebec Tourism Project, the Franco-American Centre is working closely with Eastern Maine Development Corporation to create opportunities for cultural tourism in the Penobscot and St. John Valleys. While this initiative is only at an early stage, it may well lead to a major Ford Foundation Grant for the region, with the Centre as a leading participant.

- An emerging Franco-American Partnership Project in Lewiston, based on the model created in 1995 between the University of Maine and the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce. In August 1996, Lewiston hosted a meeting in which the Franco-American Centre presented its vision of Maine's French reality. Since that time, Lewiston has taken this vision and made it a basis for economic development in the Androscoggin Valley. In the future they will expect the Franco-American Centre to support this effort. Together with Bangor (and more recently Augusta), Lewiston is now a crucial civic partner in creating the American Association of FFA.

- The development of Franco-American Partnership Projects in Biddeford and Fort Kent. At the suggestion of Senator Judy Paradis (Frenchville), the Franco-American Centre is working to link the Partnership Project in Bangor with a project in the St. John Valley. Business leaders in Bangor are working with Valley to connect our two regions on the basis of the French resource. At the suggestion of Congressman Tom Allen, the Centre will begin this month with Biddeford leaders to create a partnership project there.

- The Baldacci Proposal. Last January, Congressman Baldacci met with University of Maine officials to request that the University take a lead for the University of Maine System in supporting the creation of FFA, the French resource, and Franco-American culture in the state. After consulting with the Chancellor, the University of Maine and the University of Maine System agreed to respond with:

- 1.) a short-term plan to support FFA;
- 2.) a long-term plan to support the resource and the culture.

This long-term plan would involve Franco-American and Francophone Studies and significant research projects, for example, a Maine Historical Atlas. The Franco-American Centre has worked with a committee at the University and is now working with the Chancellor's office to develop the

short-term plan. When that plan has been finalized, a long-term plan will need to be developed. In return, the Congressman has pledged to work to support these plans, particularly in the area of funding. Recently his office and Congressman Allen's office have agreed to work together in this effort.

- Turtle Island Coalition and the ALAN Task Force on Education. Building on previous work by the Franco-American Centre, the Turtle Island Coalition began as a commitment on the part of members of the Centre (Labbé, Bishop, Brinkley) to work with Gerald Talbot, a leader in Maine's African-American Communities, and with Wayne Newell, a leader in Maine's Native-American Communities, to create mutually beneficial relationships among Maine's diverse communities. The Turtle Island Coalition has led to a partnership between the Franco-American Centre and ALANA, a coalition of people of color in Maine. This work in turn has led to the creation of the ALANA Task Force on Education, in which the Franco-American Centre is a full partner. In a meeting with the Governor, the Task Force requested and the Governor has since appointed an advisor to work for him with Maine's minority communities. At the Chancellor's invitation, the Task Force is presently meeting with representatives from the University of Maine System to create new approaches to diversity throughout the System. The task force is also meeting with the Commissioner of Education to rethink Maine's approach to teacher-training in the area of diversity education. The Centre believes that these initiatives are crucial to the economic and cultural future of the Maine.

- In June 1997, the Maine legislature passed and the Governor signed L.D. 1603, RESOLVE, TO FOSTER ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH THE RECOGNITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF MAINE'S FRANCO-AMERICAN RESOURCE. The bill creates a legislative commission to study Maine's French resource and recommend future directions and legislation. It provides \$50,000 funding, most of which will be allocated to the Franco-American Centre to work in support of the Commission in developing the report. The bill received broad bi-partisan support in the legislature. The report provides a major opportunity for the Franco-American Centre to help shape future policy direction for the state. At the same time it represents a major effort by Maine leaders (in particular, Severin Béliveau and his associate Mark LeDuc) to provide a new funding base for the Franco-American Centre, in particular, for its operating budget. In negotiating the bill with the legislature, Béliveau obtained a commitment of \$25,000 in matching funds for the Franco-American Centre from the University of Maine System. At the same time, during the negotiating process, University of Maine President Fred Hutchinson made a commitment to add \$15,000 of new funding to the base budget for the Franco-American Centre.

- A Network of Participants in the Franco-American Commercial Initiatives. Perhaps, the best way of understanding the Centre's commercial initiatives is by recognizing the broad network of people and organization now involved. Building and maintaining this network is fundamental to the work. In 1996-1997, participants have included:

- Sharon Albert (Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce);
- Michael Aubé (Maine Quality Centers);
- Patricia Aucoin (Jay Public Schools);
- Congressman John Baldacci;
- Severin Béliveau (Preti, Flaherty, Béliveau & Pachios; President, American Association of the Forum Francophone des Affaires; Honorary Consul for France in Maine);
- Jim Bishop (Franco-American Centre, University of Maine; Turtle Island Coalition);
- Tony Brinkley (Franco-American Centre, University of Maine; Turtle Island Coalition);

Nathaniel Bowditch (Maine Department of Tourism);  
Representative Joe Brooks (Winterport; Bangor Daily News);  
Michael Cantara (District Attorney, York County);  
Judith Cadorette (Congressman John Baldacci's Office, Lewiston);  
Sylvie Charron (Department of French, University of Maine at Farmington);  
David Cole (Eastern Maine Development Corporation);  
Michael Crowley (Eastern Maine Medical Center; Bangor Region Chamber of  
Commerce);  
Peter Daigle (Lafayette Hotels; Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce);  
Robert Daigle (Camden National Bank);  
Happy and Harry Dunn (Dunn Associates, Portland);  
Paul Dubé (Dubé Travel, Lewiston);  
David Edson (James W. Sewall Company, Old Town);  
Daphne Eyerer (Portland Centre, University of Maine);  
Dawn Gagnon (Le Forum; Bangor Daily News);  
Michelle Gagnon (Eastern Maine Development Corporation);  
Thomas Garriépy (Franco-American Centre, University of Maine);  
Virginia Gibson (College of Business Administration, University of Maine);  
Candace Guerette (Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce);  
Valérie Guillet (The Language Exchange, Portland);  
William Hanson (Rudman & Winchell, Bangor);  
Burton Hatlen (Professor of English, University of Maine);  
Joyce Hedlund (Eastern Maine Technical College);  
Charles Hewett (Chief of Staff, Governor's Office);  
Jeanne Hulit (Key Bank, Portland);  
Senator John Jenkins (Mayor, Lewiston);  
John Joseph (Thomas College, Waterville);  
Governor Angus King;  
Yvon Labbé (Franco-American Centre, University of Maine; Turtle Island  
Coalition);  
Estelle Lavoie (Preti, Flaherty, Béliveau & Pachios);  
Mark LeDuc (Preti, Flaherty, Béliveau & Pachios);  
Ngo Vinh Long (Department of History, University of Maine);  
Thomas Long (Center for Innovation in Biomedical Technology);  
George Manlove (Preti, Flaherty, Béliveau & Pachios);  
Lisa Michaud (Le Forum; Franco-American Centre, University of Maine);  
Senator Michael Michaud (Millinocket);  
Patrick and Victoria Murphy (Pan Atlantic Consultants, Portland);  
Gregory Nadeau (Governor's Office);  
Perry Newman (Maine International Trade Center);  
Wayne Newell (Passamquoddy Tribal Council; Turtle Island Coalition);  
Alain Ouellette (Northern Maine Development Commission);  
Senator Judy Paradis (Frenchville);  
Raymond Pelletier (Canadian American Center, University of Maine);  
Hemant Pendse (Department of Chemical Engineering, University of Maine);  
James E. Phipps (Preti, Flaherty, Béliveau & Pachios);  
Maurice Portiche (Consul Général de France à Boston);  
Normand Renaud (Androscoggin County Chamber of Commerce);  
Michel Robitaille (Ministère des Relations Internationales, Québec);  
Rachel Talbot Ross (City of Portland);  
Jeffrey Russell (Bangor International Airport);  
David Sewall (James W. Sewall Company, Old Town);  
Kristin Smith (Maine Chamber and Business Alliance);  
Gerald Talbot (Turtle Island Coalition);

Dean Van Deusen (Maine Department of Transportation);  
James Ward (Department of Industrial Cooperation, University of Maine);  
Robert Whelan (President's Office, University of Maine);  
Edward Youngblood (Bangor Savings Bank);  
Bob Ziegelaar (Bangor International Airport).



The initiatives and network listed above represent major commitments by the Centre to the economic and cultural future of Maine. They represent future work by the Centre that state leaders have defined as in the interests of the state. In response to the Centre's leadership and in support of this work, new sources of funding are emerging in the state, not only for the Commerce area but for all areas of the Centre's work. Partnerships keep developing. In the coming months, the Centre's partners will look to see if the Centre's commitments are shared by the administration at the University of Maine. The Chancellor's office has given a clear indication of its support. Other campuses in the University of Maine System have signaled their interest, for FFA in particular. In the past, signals from the administration on the Orono campus have been especially mixed, often stronger in words than in actions. With that in mind, it is particularly important that the new administration be fully briefed. In that way the administration can determine its level of support, and we can clearly communicate it to our partners in the state.

On an individual level, given what has become my day to day responsibilities for the Centre's commercial initiative, I need to know the level of University's commitment in order to know on what basis I will coordinate the work in the future. In the past, the initiatives have developed without a budget. The results have been fairly remarkable, particularly given the lack of funding. At the same time, the initiatives have generated at least \$75,000 of new funding for the Centre in fiscal 1997-1998. They have produced a basis for future funding beyond the next fiscal year. Given this success, funding for the Centre's commercial initiatives needs to be clarified.

Less than two years ago, for the signing of the Franco-American Partnership Project between the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce and the University of Maine, the Centre drafted language for Governor King in which he articulated the value of Maine's French resource:

As we look to the future and to our role in the global economy, as we develop new trading partnerships and create new business opportunities, French in Maine is a vital resource, a link to the Francophone world that we cannot afford to overlook. Often we have overlooked it. Often we have not regarded French in Maine as the resource that it is. It is time that we did. It is time that we did so in such a way that those who have this resource to share—Maine's Franco-American communities and people—are fully honored in the process.

This year at Co-Entreprise, Premier Bouchard quoted the Governor's words and offered them as a basis for future economic and cultural relations between Maine and Québec. This June the same vision was endorsed in the bill passed by the Legislature:

The people of Maine wish to encourage the development of the Franco-American resource to the benefit of all Maine Citizens. . . . [T]he Franco-American Center at the University of Maine at Orono has been a leading voice for the recognition of Maine's Franco-American heritage and the development of its Francophone resource. . . . [T]he Maine business community has become increasingly active in efforts to stimulate trade between Maine and Québec, through an effort known as 'Co-Entreprise'

. . . . [T]hese efforts, in addition to many others, have provided Maine with the opportunity to establish the national headquarters of the American Association of the Forum Francophone des Affaires . . . . [A]ll of the people of the State of Maine stand to benefit by the expansion of international trade through the American Association of the Forum Francophone des Affaires and the many other ongoing efforts to strengthen and utilize the resources of Maine's Franco-American communities.

The Governor's language, the Premier's, the Legislature's—all are indicative of distance traveled and of future directions the Centre's commitments now require.