

*"Although French is recognized as one of Canada's Official Languages, Kenora has become more culturally diversified over the past few years.*

*I took French all through high school and some conversational French programs at University. However, French was otherwise not spoken outside of school (my parents were Ukrainian and Polish immigrants, but we only spoke English at home). When I lived in Montreal for four years my limited French was helpful but I was a little rusty. Many of my friends and colleagues spoke other languages as well as French and English. In Montreal, it was sometimes embarrassing that I, speaking English, spoke to them in their second language, but I could not speak with them in their first language, and we are in the same country. That underscores the importance of continuing French Immersion programs in the schools, speaking French at home, as well the need for a higher profile for French culture (among others) in the community.*

*Although several cities in Ontario offer French language services under the "French Language Services Act", and although there may be bilingual employees within the City Corporation, recognizing and maintaining one's cultural identity and heritage are very important.*

*With the ethnic diversity in Kenora, I would like to see more multicultural events, one being similar to Winnipeg's Folklorama, on a smaller scale.*

*As for policies to make it available, or to improve access to municipal information in French, that would be great. We also have a large Indigenous community and they must be considered as well. However, to produce such a policy, input is needed. I would turn the question back to the French community and ask – what would you like to see proposed and adopted for consideration?"*

Ron Malashewski