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Canadian Mayor Impresses Lafayette Area Residents

The charming and personable gray-haired mayor, who speaks excellent English, expressed his delight at the enthusiastic reception accorded him and Councilman Leo LaFrance during their visit to the Daily Advertiser Friday morning.

Mayor Robidas said he was especially impressed with the "so symphonic" reception the airporters by hundreds of citizens and public officials on his arrival.

Deeply interested in the region's economic and historical features, Mayor Robidas commented that "we are an surprise at the enthusiasm we generated as we are increased with Lafayette." He noted what was the most memorable thing about his visit the mayor replied. "The friendliness and hospitality of the people. I am impressed that this French has been kept for that many people speak it," he added.

Apparently none of the French-speaking citizens of the community with which Mayor Robidas came in contact had difficulty understanding the mayor when he did speak in French. Though some words were obviously different from the Cajun brand of French, it was easy to understand the mayor.

He pointed out that Longueuil had about 77,000 population, making it smaller than Lafayette, and about 70 per cent of the population was English-speaking. French is the main language in the Canadian city, but there are also English-speaking schools, most of them attended by Protestants. The province of Quebec subsidizes both the French and English schools.

Longueuil is far ahead of Louisiana in the matter of distributing school funds — they are distributed on a per capita basis, so that everyone community shares, equally according to its population.

The mayor who has been in office for 18 months, succeeded a man who had held that position for 32 years. However, the mayor's primary concern is with the Quebec government, since he heads the Trade Mission Branch.

Another feature in which Longueuil is in advance of Lafayette is its support for parks and playgrounds. This department is the biggest department of the local government in Longueuil. A cultural center, modern library, all the French-speaking citizens can reach, is recent-ly finished and utilized, one week, there had been 1,000 new registrations in the children's library section. There are over 1,000 people registered for various cultural programs offered, including art, photography, copper enameling, sculpture, etc.

A free newspaper, paid for by advertisers, is distributed within the community every Wednesday afternoon.

Among the Canadian visitor's objectives was to determine the feasibility for "twinning" the cities of Lafayette and Longueuil. Mayor Robidas said he had already decided that this was feasible and the project would be put into operation in the near future. Checking into the feasibility of student exchanges, in which individual students from the ten cities would live with counterpart families for a period of time, Mayor Robidas was confident that this could also be arranged.

Many high school students in Lafayette who speak French! He reported that this program has successfully been carried out between Canadian cities to encourage exchange of ideas and broaden the students' knowledge of other cultural environments.

Longueuil also has expertly planned zoning with zones designated for the public, industrial, commercial and residential requirements.

For several months, the community hosted several million visitors in its homes, restaurants and churches because of the city's nearness to Expo 67. In the 18 months the mayor has been in office, the Planning Commission reorganized, faire were constructed, Mayor Robidas has stabilized the city's financial state, put into service a hydroelectric plant.

An economic evaluation of Longueuil was made, which includes an urban renovation study, plans for the Metro and river zones to promote the construction of important buildings, and more rational use of building lands. The city is on the St. Lawrence Seaway.

LAFAYETTE, LOREAUVILLE GREETINGS—These scenes illustrate the type of Acadiana hospitality accorded the mayor and a council member from Longueuil, Canada, during their Easter holiday visit here. The first photo shows activity at the Lafayette Municipal Airport. In the lower photo are men from a Quebec city who joined in a special dinner held at Roy Brennan's home in Loreauville. Seated from left are Brennan, the host; Leo LaFrance chats in French with ladies back in Acadiana. Students from Cathedral-Carmel stage a special dance and the flags of the two countries flutter in the breeze at City Hall. (Advertiser Staff Photo)