



# **Economic Growth: Ensuring Canada's Competitiveness**

*The important contribution of francophone  
community colleges and universities in Canada*

## **Written Submission**

presented to the

**House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)**

by the

**Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne  
(ACUFC)**

as part of the

**Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2019 Budget**

**July 27, 2018**

## 1. RECOMMENDATION

That the Government of Canada increase its investments in the Official Languages Education Program by 35% over the next four years, representing an additional investment of \$455 million over four years, in order to meet its linguistic targets, as set out in its *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018-2023: Investing in our Future*.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance invites Canadians to participate in its pre-budget consultation process in advance of the 2019 budget, which will focus on economic growth and competitiveness.

In response to the Committee's invitation, the ACUFC is pleased to submit this brief. The ACUFC is an association of 21 francophone and bilingual post-secondary institutions located in French linguistic minority communities in Canada. More than 23,000 college and university programs are offered in English and in French in Canada, and only 1,200 of these are offered in French by our Association's member institutions. The ACUFC's mandate is to increase access to French post-secondary education across the country in order to provide a true French education continuum, from early childhood to post-secondary levels. The ACUFC also coordinates the Consortium national de formation en santé (national health training consortium) and the Réseau national de formation en justice (national justice training network), two initiatives that have proven their worth by supporting collaborative action between institutions and by supporting the increase in the number of post-secondary and continuing education programs offered in French-language minority environments.

ACUFC members benefit from the Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP) funding, under the responsibility of Canadian Heritage, since the program's inception. The purpose of this brief is to share our concerns about the amounts allocated to this program.

## 3. LINGUISTIC TARGETS OF THE *ACTION PLAN FOR OFFICIAL LANGUAGES 2018-2023: INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE*

On March 28, 2018, the federal government tabled its *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018-2023: Investing in our Future (Action Plan)*. This announcement is a follow-up to the 2018 budget, with the theme *Equality + Growth: A Strong Middle Class*.

In the budget, the government recognizes the importance of supporting Canada's linguistic duality. It affirms that strong official language minority communities are an integral part of Canada's history and identity and that they are "**essential to Canada's competitiveness** in an increasingly globalized world."<sup>1</sup> The budget calls for \$400 million in new funding over five years,

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada, *Equality + Growth - A Strong Middle Class*, February 27, 2018, p. 181.

starting in 2018-2019, and \$88.4 million per year in subsequent years to support the *Action Plan*.

The *Action Plan* lays out the government's bilingualism and linguistic duality vision to 2036. It is centered on three main pillars, namely: the support of Canadian Francophonie, the access to services, and the support of second official language learning. **Measurable linguistic targets** have been established for two of the three pillars: to stabilize the demographic weight of French-speaking minority communities at 4%<sup>2</sup> and to raise the bilingualism rate of English speakers outside Quebec from 6.8% to 9%<sup>3</sup> by 2036.

While ambitious, these targets have the merit of being clear, thereby allowing the determination of the numbers of persons who should self-identify as Francophones as well as the numbers who should self-identify as bilingual Anglophones on the 2036 Census. The table below highlights these numbers based on Statistics Canada's published projections.

**Table 1. Federal Government's Linguistic Targets - 2036<sup>4</sup>**

Demographic Target	2016	Action Plan Target - 2036	Absolute Numbers in 2036	Net Increase
Francophone population, Canada less Quebec	1,000,000	4%	1,400,000	400,000
Bilingual Anglophone population, Canada less Quebec	1,800,000	9%	3,100,000	1,300,000

\* According to the medium-growth population scenario, [Statistics Canada](#) forecasts an approximate population of 35 million people in Canada's provinces and territories less Quebec in 2036 (rounded numbers).

In the next 18 years, the measures set out in the *Action Plan* should bring about an increase of 400,000 Francophones in minority communities and 1,300,000 bilingual Anglophones outside Quebec.

<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018-2023: Investing in our Future*, March 28, 2018, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> Bisson, Ronald, *Analyse du plan d'action pour les langues officielles 2018-2023*, juin 2018, p. 4.

#### 4. ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES OF BILINGUALISM

These targets will play an important role in contributing to the **country's economic growth** and to favourably position Canada on the international trade stage. A Conference Board of Canada study commissioned by the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada (RDÉE Canada) and the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC) has in fact confirmed the extent to which the knowledge of French has increased commercial exchanges between New Brunswick and Quebec and Francophone countries.<sup>5</sup> According to the Director of the Centre for Municipal Studies at the Conference Board of Canada, a shared language plays a central role in trade relations, enabling a country to multiply the number of its potential trading partners.

In his address, at the closing of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie held in Whitehorse (Yukon) in July 2018, the Honourable Jean-Marc Fournier, the Quebec Minister responsible for Canadian Relations and the Canadian Francophonie stated that Canada's two official languages opens the world to us, and that the greater the number of Canadians who speak French, the greater the **trade benefits** for all Canadians.<sup>6</sup>

These observations are additional reasons to commend the federal government's linguistic targets put forward in the *Action Plan*.

#### 5. Impact of the Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP) Investment Gap

The government has selected several measures to reach its linguistic targets. However, the education sector is often recognised as the best option for young people to learn French<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, the 1967 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism clearly considered education to be the most fundamental environment to maintain the language and culture of Francophones living in minority communities<sup>8</sup>.

In addition, an analysis of bilingualism among youth in 2006 undertaken for Statistics Canada showed that advanced learning of a second language in an enriched or immersion school

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<sup>5</sup> Rythmebeat.com, [Bilingualism Leads to Economic Advantages](#), website consulted in July 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Marc Fournier, Conférence ministérielle sur la francophonie canadienne, [https://twitter.com/jeanmfournier\\_lang=fr](https://twitter.com/jeanmfournier_lang=fr), juillet 2018.

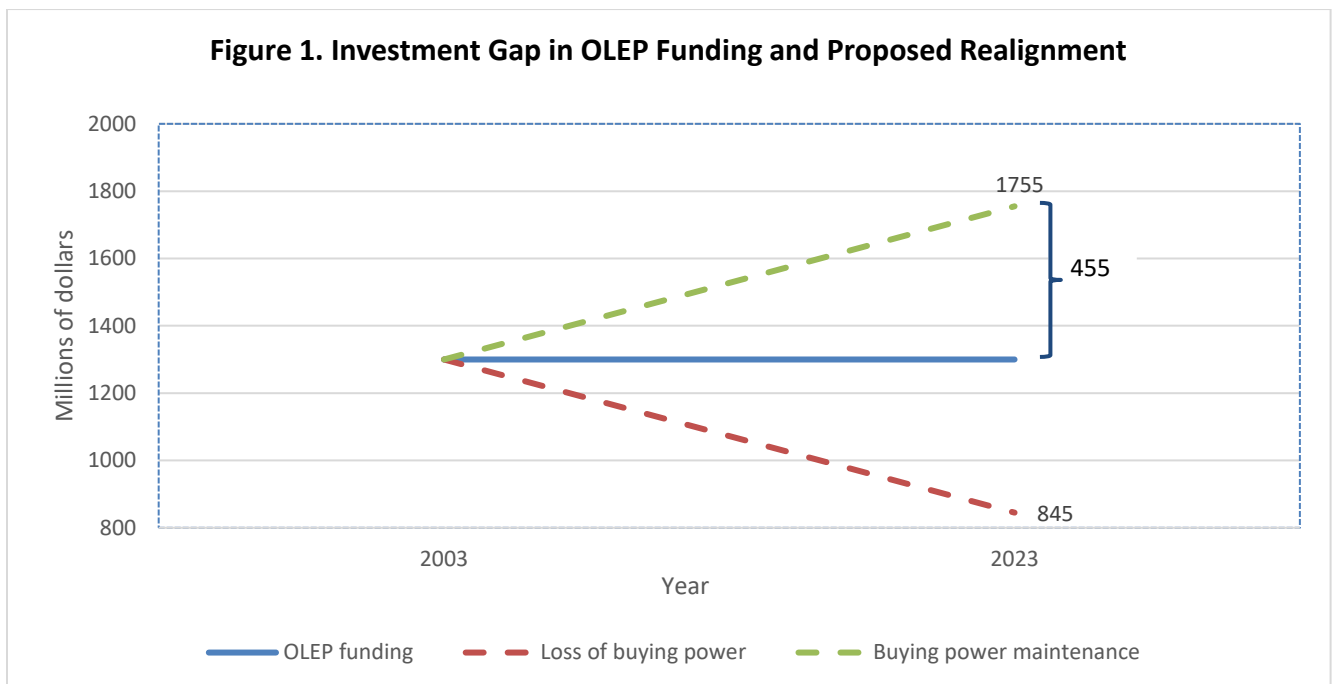
<sup>7</sup> Canadian Council on Learning, *French-Immersion education in Canada*, May 2007, p. 3

<sup>8</sup> Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. *Official Languages*. Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1967, p. 122.

environment has a long-term positive impact on bilingualism, and that the longer youth are exposed to their second language, the greater their rate of bilingualism<sup>9</sup>.

Studies unequivocally show that education is a fundamental pillar of the vitality of Francophone minority communities in Canada and bilingualism of Anglophones.

Despite this, the government has not increased its investments in the OLEP since 2003, and the *Action Plan* does not provide any additional funding for this program over the next five years<sup>10</sup>. In 2023, actual federal OLEP investments will be 35% lower than in 2003, taking into account the increase in the cost of living between 2003 and 2023. This represents an investment gap of \$455 million.



Given inflation, the actual decrease in OLEP investment is felt across the country, as much at the elementary and high school levels as well as at the post-secondary level. For ACUFC member institutions this investment gap, amongst other things leads to:

- ✓ Difficulties to maintain, develop and enhance educational programs and resources in French;
- ✓ Difficulties to recruit female university professors<sup>11</sup>;

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada, [Youth bilingualism in Canada](#), website consulted in July 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018-2023: Investing in our Future*, March 28, 2018, p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> Statistics Canada, [Women and Education](#), December 2011, p.25.

- ✓ Difficulties to recruit students from minority-language schools or students coming from second-language learning programs, into teachers' training programs or other post-secondary programs in French;
- ✓ A lack of funding to improve access to post-secondary programs in French, and in particular, to increase the participation of women in specialized trades as well as in technology, engineering and mathematic occupations<sup>12</sup>;
- ✓ A lack of funding to undertake research and knowledge-sharing activities.

The fact that post-secondary member institutions of the ACUFC face problems to maintain the quality and the number of programs offered in French represents a real obstacle to the federal government's ability to meet the linguistic targets it set out in the *Action Plan*.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The *Action Plan* represents a courageous undertaking by the Government of Canada. It establishes clear measurable targets to improve the demographic footprint of French linguistic minority communities and to increase bilingualism of Anglophones outside Quebec.

The government has significantly increased its investments in several areas, such as immigration, early childhood and support for Francophone minority community organisations. These new amounts will help these communities to better position themselves to fully contribute to the growth of Canada's economy.

Regrettably, the government has not increased its investment in the Official Languages in Education Program, one of the most important pillars to achieve the targets set in the *Action Plan*. **It is for this reason, that the ACUFC recommends that the government inject an additional \$455 million over the next four years in the Official Languages in Education Program.**

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21