



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# **OPENNESS TO THE INTERNATIONAL FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY: OPTIMIZING FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION TO CANADA**

**Report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages**

**René Arseneault, Chair**

**APRIL 2024  
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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Chair**

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### **Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons**

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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# **THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

has the honour to present its

## **FIFTH REPORT**

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(3), the committee has studied Increased Francophone Immigration to Canada and has agreed to report the following:





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS .....	1
OPENNESS TO THE INTERNATIONAL FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY: OPTIMIZING FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION TO CANADA.....	7
Introduction.....	7
Francophone Immigration: A Demographic and Economic Driver.....	8
Government of Canada’s Francophone Immigration Targets .....	9
A New Francophone Immigration Policy .....	10
An Approach that Respects the Principle of Substantive Equality.....	11
A Continuum for Settlement Services that Respects the Principle of Substantive Equality.....	12
Governance of the Francophone Immigration File .....	16
Recruiting, Retaining and Integrating Francophone Immigrants from Africa .....	17
Recruitment in Sub-Saharan Africa.....	18
Proximity of Services .....	18
Destination Canada.....	20
Accreditation for Immigration Representatives .....	23
Application Processing.....	24
Pre-departure Services .....	26
Settlement Services—Temporary Foreign Workers .....	28
The French Test .....	29
Socio-Economic Integration—Recognizing Qualifications .....	31
The International Student Program .....	34
Approval Rates for Candidates from Africa .....	34
Processing Applications for Study Visas .....	35
The Role of Francophone Minority Post-Secondary Institutions .....	37
Ensuring That French is Respected by Immigration Authorities .....	41
The Action Plan for Official Languages 2023–2028.....	42

Francophone Immigration in Quebec.....	44
Immigration as a Way to Address the Labour Shortage and Ensure the Long-Term Viability of Post-Secondary Programs.....	45
Challenges Associated with Increasing Francophone Immigration Both Outside Quebec and Within Quebec.....	48
Arguments in Favour of a Territorial Approach to Francophone Immigration.....	50
Conclusion .....	52
APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES .....	53
REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE .....	57
SUPPLEMENTARY OPINION OF THE BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS .....	59

# LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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*As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.*

## **Recommendation 1**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship acknowledge that the current francophone immigration rate, set at 6%, 7% and 8% for 2024, 2025 and 2026, respectively, is insufficient. The Committee encourages the government to increase its rate to 12% in 2024 and to continue increasing it gradually to reach a rate of 20% by 2036. The goal is to rebalance the demographic weight of francophones in Canada..... 10**

## **Recommendation 2**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship ensure that the francophone immigration policy is based on the principle of substantive linguistic equality and that this principle also be the foundation for designing and implementing the resulting programs and initiatives..... 17**

## **Recommendation 3**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship develop a separate economic program for francophone immigration in francophone minority communities that meets the specific workforce needs of these communities and that allows them to participate in the recruitment and selection process for French-speaking immigrants. .... 17**

## **Recommendation 4**

**That, in developing the francophone immigration policy, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship review the overall governance of francophone immigration. That, as part of this exercise, the Minister strengthen the Francophone Immigration Directorate within the department and that the Directorate be assigned, but not be limited to, the following tasks:**

- a) ensuring the implementation of a francophone immigration policy based on the principle of substantive linguistic equality; and**

- b) ensuring the coordination of francophone immigration at the departmental, interdepartmental and intergovernmental levels and with francophone minority communities..... 17

**Recommendation 5**

That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship allocate additional resources to embassies and visa processing offices responsible for significant francophone and Francophile populations to ensure shorter processing times for visa applications. .... 23

**Recommendation 6**

That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship ensure that francophone immigration becomes a factor in determining the locations abroad where on-site services should be established. That the Minister consider opening visa application centres in strategic locations in Africa, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire and Benin, as well as in other countries with a francophone population base. That the Minister increase the range of services at the visa application centre in Yaoundé and put in place measures to make it easier for candidates from Africa to apply and avoid unnecessary travel as much as possible. .... 23

**Recommendation 7**

That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship improve accessibility for applicants in the recruitment and application processes to adapt them to the level of connectivity and the realities of francophone immigration source countries. .... 23

**Recommendation 8**

That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship seek solutions to fraud issues occurring in francophone immigration source countries and that the Minister take action in this area; and that the Minister increase the presence and visibility of Canadian authorities and accredited representatives in these countries..... 24

**Recommendation 9**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship review the processing of applications in francophone immigration source countries in order to improve transparency for admission criteria and communication with applicants; and that the Minister ensure that immigration officers gather information from applicants to avoid application denials..... 26**

**Recommendation 10**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship increase the provision of settlement services in French along the entire continuum and for all categories of immigration and that the Minister create a separate settlement pathway for temporary residents who are francophones. .... 29**

**Recommendation 11**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship ensure better coordination with settlement service providers in francophone minority communities, including by improving the exchange of information..... 29**

**Recommendation 12**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship review all language tests and, with a view to improving access and the success rate, that he:**

- a) adopt, in addition to the Test d'évaluation du français pour le Canada (TEF Canada), a new test developed in Canada to assess language proficiency at a functional level and adapted to the situation and needs of Canadian society;**
- b) invite the networks of French-language colleges and universities in minority communities and in Quebec to develop and administer this new test;**
- c) make registration affordable and standardize the cost of the test referred to in paragraph (a) across the country so that the cost is the same for language testing in both English and French;**
- d) extend the validity period for language testing results to five years; and**

- e) give candidates the option of taking either a test administered by French-language post-secondary institutions or the existing TEF Canada test, as they prefer. .... 30

**Recommendation 13**

That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship work with the provinces and territories to improve the foreign credential recognition process to address labour shortages in francophone minority communities, specifically in the fields of early childhood learning, education and health, and that the Minister take into account the needs of rural communities..... 34

**Recommendation 14**

That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, despite the recent measures canceling new post-graduate work permits for students in a study program that is part of a curriculum licensing arrangement, quickly processes post-graduate work permits for international Francophone students after they have completed their post-secondary studies in a French-language institution in Canada. .... 40

**Recommendation 15**

That the Government of Canada permanently increase funding for French-language post-secondary institutions in minority settings so that they can continue to offer programs and services to students..... 40

**Recommendation 16**

That, to increase the recruitment and retention of francophone international students, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship adapt the International Student Program with a view to implementing the following actions:

- a) amend the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* to eliminate the requirement for francophone applicants to demonstrate that they will leave the country after graduation;
- b) make the system for assessing applications of francophone applicants, particularly as regards explaining the grounds for refusal, more transparent;

- c) if applicable, before an application is refused for administrative reasons, ensure that IRCC officers communicate with candidates to give them an opportunity to make any corrections or clarifications to their application and provide any required supporting documentation within a reasonable time frame;
- d) create a recourse mechanism for applicants who would like to appeal a refusal;
- e) create, in collaboration with post-secondary institutions in French-language minority communities and in Quebec, a separate settlement services program for international students who are francophones; and
- f) improve communication between the department and French-language post-secondary institutions to ensure a constant flow of information..... 40

**Recommendation 17**

That the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRBC) and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) ensure that the language rights of French-speaking lawyers, all their staff and newcomers who use their services are upheld; and that any correspondence sent by the IRBC and the CBSA be written in satisfactory French. .... 42

**Recommendation 18**

That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship ensure that, in recruiting French-speaking immigrants and in programs to improve access to permanent residency or encourage employers to hire French-speaking temporary foreign workers, he does not hinder the achievement of the Quebec government’s French-speaking immigration objectives. The Minister must ensure that the fees associated with obtaining permanent residency for candidates selected by Quebec are not duplicated or altered. .... 52

**Recommendation 19**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship continue to consult with the Quebec Minister of Immigration, Francization and Integration on all Canadian government initiatives that could affect the Government of Quebec’s immigration objectives, as provided for in Annex A of the *Canada–Québec Accord Relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens*. The Minister must ensure that processing times for applications from French-speaking immigrants to Quebec, including for study and work permits, are no longer than they are for all Canadian provinces. .... 52**





# OPENNESS TO THE INTERNATIONAL FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY: OPTIMIZING FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION TO CANADA

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2001, Canada introduced its new *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA). It was an important piece of legislation for francophone minority communities (FMCs), as the new version of the IRPA recognized that immigration could help FMCs with their demographic renewal.

The modernization of the *Official Languages Act* (the Act) in 2023 was another milestone for legislative development that supports francophone immigration to minority communities.

This was the context in which the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages (the Committee) undertook a study on “the challenges and opportunities associated with increasing Francophone immigration as well as settlement services needs across Canada.”<sup>1</sup> The Committee set three preliminary objectives for its study:

- [to] examine the consular services needed abroad to support immigrants from Francophone countries, notably Africa, as well as the services to be implemented across Canada to achieve the previously set goals for Francophone immigration;
- [to] examine the resources and supports needed for settlement services in across Canada to ensure successful economic and social integration of Francophone immigrants and sustainable development of Francophone communities; and
- [to] propose a plan, including a deadline, to improve the approval rate for applications from French-speaking immigrants, considering the economic impact of this increase.<sup>2</sup>

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1 House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages (LANG), *Minutes of Proceedings*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 21 April 2023.

2 Ibid.



This report summarizes the main ideas emerging from the testimony the Committee heard over the course of its study.<sup>3</sup> The recommendations draw from the evidence to guide the Government of Canada in increasing francophone immigration at a time when FMCs are experiencing labour shortages in several vital sectors.

## **FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION: A DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC DRIVER**

Currently, one of the leading ways to increase the number of francophones in Canada is to recruit and integrate immigrants whose first official language spoken is French, thereby ensuring the future of the French language in Canada. Furthermore, francophone immigration stimulates the economic development of FMCs and all communities in Canada.

Mr. Alain Desruisseaux, Director General of the Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), summarized the francophone immigration paradigm as follows:

Immigration plays a key role in supporting Canada's immediate economic needs, reversing our longer-term downward demographic trends, sustaining our official languages, and continuing to support humanitarian needs as part of the global community.<sup>4</sup>

The notion that francophone immigration is an economic and demographic driver is now enshrined in the preamble of the Act. In fact, the preamble outlines what is expected of the federal government, including that it:

- recognizes the importance of francophone immigration in enhancing the vitality of French linguistic minority communities, including by restoring and increasing their demographic weight; [and]
- recognizes the importance of the French language to trade and economic activity and the contribution of francophone immigration to the economy.<sup>5</sup>

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3 The Committee held seven meetings, hearing from 37 witnesses.

4 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 May 2023, 1615 (Mr. Alain Desruisseaux, Director General, Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

5 *Official Languages Act* (R.S.C. 1985, c. 31 (4<sup>th</sup> Supp.)).

In addition, immigration is identified as one of the “sectors that are essential to enhancing the vitality of English and French linguistic minority communities.”<sup>6</sup> Lastly, in subsections 44.1(1) and 44.1(2), the modernized Act sets out new duties and functions for the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship involving francophone immigration.

## GOVERNMENT OF CANADA’S FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION TARGETS

In 2022, IRCC announced that the immigration target to settle 4.4% of French-speaking immigrants outside Quebec had been met. However, as some witnesses explained, even if the 4.4% target were achieved consistently, year after year, it would not be enough to prevent the demographic weight of Canada’s French-speaking population outside of Quebec from continuing to decline.

Therefore, the Fédération de communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA) called on the Government of Canada to set an ambitious francophone immigration target: 12% by 2024.<sup>7</sup> As Mr. Yves-Gérard Méhou-Loko, Vice-President of the FCFA, explained, the new target must be increased “progressively, until it reaches 20% in 2036.”<sup>8</sup> More importantly, the new target must ensure that the demographic weight of francophones in minority communities can be restored to 6.1% of the population outside Quebec—the rate in the 1971 Census<sup>9</sup>—and that the proportion of francophones in minority communities can then be increased.

The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, the Honourable Marc Miller, said that the 4.4% target will be maintained in 2023,<sup>10</sup> but that IRCC is working with community stakeholders to set new targets for the next three years. He would like to see the target set at 6%, but remained cautious:

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6 Ibid.

7 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 June 2023, 0935 (Mr. Yves-Gérard Méhou-Loko, Vice-President, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada).

8 Ibid.

9 *Official Languages Act* (R.S.C. 1985, c. 31 (4<sup>th</sup> Supp.)).

10 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 4 October 2023, 1735 (Hon. Marc Miller, Minister, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship).



That would be a 50% increase of a target that was hard to achieve. We need to be ambitious, and we need to put mechanisms in place to ensure the system is sustainable and, then, increase the percentage.<sup>11</sup>

On 31 October 2023, after the witnesses had appeared before the Committee, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship announced in his *2023 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration* that the new “French-speaking permanent residents targets (outside Quebec)” would be “6% in 2024, 7% in 2025, and 8% in 2026.”<sup>12</sup> In a news release, the FCFA indicated that it was very disappointed with the new francophone immigration targets.<sup>13</sup>

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends:

### **Recommendation 1**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship acknowledge that the current francophone immigration rate, set at 6%, 7% and 8% for 2024, 2025 and 2026, respectively, is insufficient. The Committee encourages the government to increase its rate to 12% in 2024 and to continue increasing it gradually to reach a rate of 20% by 2036. The goal is to rebalance the demographic weight of francophones in Canada.**

## **A NEW FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION POLICY**

The Act now requires that the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship adopt a francophone immigration policy whose objective is “enhancing the vitality of French linguistic minority communities, including by restoring and increasing their demographic weight.”<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the policy must affirm that the Government of Canada recognizes that immigration is a sector that is essential to enhancing the vitality of FMCs and that it contributes to economic development across the country. The Act also states that the policy must include “objectives, targets and indicators”<sup>15</sup> and “mechanisms for

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11 Ibid., 1755.

12 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), *2023 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration*, p. 42.

13 Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA), *Cibles en immigration francophone: une occasion ratée de renverser le déclin de la francophonie*, 1 November 2023 [FRENCH ONLY].

14 *Official Languages Act* (R.S.C. 1985, c. 31 (4<sup>th</sup> Supp.)).

15 Ibid.

information sharing and for reporting.”<sup>16</sup> Under an order made on 12 December 2023,<sup>17</sup> the *Policy on Francophone Immigration*, revealed on 16 January 2024, is in force as of 1 January 2024.

## **An Approach that Respects the Principle of Substantive Equality**

According to the Act, the norm for the interpretation of language rights is substantive equality. This principle recognizes that the needs of the minority are different from those of the majority. Therefore, policies and programs involving official languages must be developed and implemented based on the specific needs of the minority. Additional resources can be granted to the minority, as it requires more support from the government, particularly with regard to service delivery and service quality. Clearly, implementing substantive equality requires federal institutions to consult the minority at every stage in developing policies and programs, particularly at the design stage. Federal institutions must also work closely with the minority at the policy and program implementation stage. Many stakeholders refer to this principle as “by, for and with.”

Speaking on behalf of the FCFA, Mr. Méhou-Loko called for the new policy to be “holistic” and to include “levers tailored to Canada’s francophonie [outside Quebec], including enhanced funding, to enable francophone communities to participate directly in its implementation.”<sup>18</sup> The Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada, Mr. Raymond Thériège, expressed a similar view.<sup>19</sup>

The FCFA also said that the government “must create a separate economic program for francophone immigration outside Quebec, tailored to the labour needs of francophone and Acadian communities, which will enable communities to participate in the recruitment and selection of French-speaking immigrants.”<sup>20</sup>

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16 Ibid.

17 *Order Fixing January 1, 2024 as the Day on Which Section 23 of An Act for the Substantive Equality of Canada’s Official Languages Comes into Force* (P.C. 2023-1301).

18 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 June 2023, 0935 (Mr. Yves-Gérard Méhou-Loko, Vice-President, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada).

19 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 1000 (Mr. Raymond Thériège, Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada).

20 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 June 2023, 0935 (Mr. Yves-Gérard Méhou-Loko, Vice-President, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada).



## A Continuum for Settlement Services that Respects the Principle of Substantive Equality

For over 25 years, the Centre francophone du Grand Toronto (CFGT) has been offering settlement services to francophone newcomers in the greater Toronto area and across Canada outside Quebec. In 2019, IRCC tasked the CFGT with implementing a welcome and referral service at Pearson Airport. Through the various programs the CFGT delivers, staff work with “over 50,000 French-speaking individuals each year.”<sup>21</sup> After six years as CFGT Director, Ms. Florence Ngenzebuhoro said that “we have noted challenges related to access to immigration services, and this applies throughout the continuum of services.”<sup>22</sup> She believes that “the journey of French-speaking immigrants, from their country of origin and after their arrival in Canada, is not always very complete or seamless.”<sup>23</sup>

Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden, Manager of the National Consultation on Economic Development and Employability for the Réseau de développement économique et d’employabilité (RDÉE) Canada, agreed. She said that “francophone settlement services are not as well developed as those offered to the English-speaking majority.”<sup>24</sup> She added that, due to a lack of funding, organizations promoting francophone economic development can offer only basic services:

The services we offer are basic. We help immigrants write a résumé, for example, when they need something else. I spoke to you about the different challenges of integration. We’re talking about recognition of prior learning and job search, among other things. We’re not able to offer much more than basic services to French-speaking immigrants, because we have limited funding.<sup>25</sup>

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21 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 0855 (Ms. Florence Ngenzebuhoro, Chief Executive Officer, Centre francophone du grand Toronto).

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 June 2023, 0940 (Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden, Manager, National Consultation on Economic Development and Employability, Réseau de développement économique et d’employabilité Canada).

25 Ibid., 1015.

According to Ms. Bintou Sacko, Director of Accueil francophone du Manitoba, there was a disparity between the anglophone majority and the francophone minority in terms of both service availability and service quality.<sup>26</sup> RDÉE Canada agreed.<sup>27</sup>

According to Ms. Sacko, FMCs should also play a larger role in designing and delivering francophone immigration services:

[W]e would also like to see some equity in terms of settlement services and service quality. We'd like to see the aforementioned principle [by and for francophones] taken into account, and for these services to be managed by French-speaking organizations, specifically to help French-speaking immigrants.<sup>28</sup>

In terms of recruitment abroad, Ms. Sacko made the following statement:

It's important for the Canadian government to take concrete action to improve accessibility to services at Canadian embassies and consulates in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, it must relieve some of the congestion in visa offices by increasing the number of consular services and application processing capacity in several sub-Saharan African countries.<sup>29</sup>

Witnesses were also concerned about the housing issue:

We've noticed that the majority of French-speaking newcomers who are welcomed at Pearson Airport choose Toronto as their destination city to settle in. As we know, there is a housing crisis in Toronto, which is the same across the country. It's important to spread the word about the reality of the housing market.

When it comes to pre-departure services, the French-speaking African immigrants, in particular, that we welcome at the airport don't necessarily have all the information about the housing and job markets.<sup>30</sup>

Dr. Luisa Veronis, Associate Professor at the University of Ottawa, provided some insight on the calls for action from the witnesses mentioned above. She observed that some

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26 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 June 2023, 1010 (Ms. Bintou Sacko, Director, Accueil francophone du Manitoba).

27 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 June 2023, 0940 (Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden, Manager, National Consultation on Economic Development and Employability, Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada).

28 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 June 2023, 1010 (Ms. Bintou Sacko, Director, Accueil francophone du Manitoba).

29 Ibid., 0930.

30 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 0920 (Ms. Aissa Nauthoo, Vice-President, Centre francophone du grand Toronto).



IRCC programs seem to have been designed for the needs of the anglophone majority, not to address the specific needs of FMCs and French-speaking immigrants:

However, it seems to me that our immigration policy was based and developed on the needs of Canada as a whole. That policy actually does more to serve the anglophone or English-speaking communities. The needs are very different. Those of the francophone communities are essentially demographic, cultural, linguistic and so on. However, the immigration system focuses on economic needs, which raises barriers.

[...] I don't think the present system meets the needs of francophone communities.<sup>31</sup>

According to the research of Ms. Mariève Forest, President and Senior Researcher at Sociopol (a company that specializes in applied social research), the principle of substantive equality is absent from IRCC settlement programs. She explained the issue as follows:

Year after year, our studies show that the services offered are more comprehensive on the anglophone side. They are deployed in more settings, and the staff of those organizations have access to more forums for consultation and professional development. [...]

Through our work with the Comité consultatif national en établissement francophone, a body established by IRCC, we recently conducted a broad consultation with settlement stakeholders in francophone communities, involving more than 100 people. These consultations and the analysis of the services offered clearly show the absence of the principle of substantive equality between the settlement of francophones and that of anglophones.<sup>32</sup>

Ms. Forest gave the example of settlement services for refugees: “the ability of francophone communities to provide resettlement assistance in French remains very limited today compared to what is provided in English.”<sup>33</sup>

According to Mr. Martin Normand, Director of Strategic Research and International Relations at the Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne (ACUFC), the Temporary Resident to Permanent Resident Pathway initiative<sup>34</sup> was not

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31 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 27 September 2023, 1655 (Dr. Luisa Veronis, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, As an Individual).

32 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 25 September 2023, 1110 (Ms. Mariève Forest, President and Senior Researcher at Sociopol, As an Individual).

33 Ibid.

34 This initiative was time-limited and ended in November 2021. It was intended to make the process easier for certain temporary workers: temporary residents working in health care or essential occupations, as well as recent graduates from Canadian post-secondary institutions.



successful in FMCs because a “national assessment of labour needs was conducted but didn’t consider the linguistic context.”<sup>35</sup> As a result, certain professions in high demand in FMCs, such as early childhood educators, were excluded from the eligibility criteria. Accordingly, educators with temporary permits working in FMCs were unable to take advantage of this program to become permanent residents.<sup>36</sup>

According to Mr. Alain Laberge, the Executive Director of the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, international talent recruitment “is the first important element in the revitalization of a French-speaking minority environment.”<sup>37</sup> He explained how it contributes to the vitality of FMCs:

When you close a day care, you alienate part of the French-language education continuum. When children enter our school system, early childhood education plays a very important role in setting up their academic journeys, especially in a minority community. When there isn’t a francophone day care, parents send their kids to an anglophone day care. That’s where children socialize, meet English-speaking friends and form a new circle, and they end up doing their schooling in English.

As a minority group, we are much harder hit by the shortage than anglophones.<sup>38</sup>

To encourage the recruitment of education professionals, the Government of Canada announced that it was establishing a “corridor for the selection and retention of French teachers in Canada.”<sup>39</sup> It seeks to implement a “series of targeted, interconnected initiatives to boost foreign recruitment of primary- and secondary-level French teachers and French-speaking teachers – teachers who will then immigrate to, and settle in, a Francophone minority community, thus helping to offset the shortage of teachers.”<sup>40</sup>

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35 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 27 September 2023, 1730 (Mr. Martin Normand, Director, Strategic Research and International Relations, Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne).

36 Ibid.

37 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 0910 (Mr. Alain Laberge, Executive Director, Division scolaire franco-manitobaine).

38 Ibid., 0935.

39 Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2023–2028: Protection-Promotion-Collaboration*, April 2023, p. 17.

40 Ibid.



## Governance of the Francophone Immigration File

To ensure the success of francophone immigration programs, departmental, interdepartmental and intergovernmental coordination is needed. IRCC must also maintain close ties with FMCs. IRCC officials acknowledged this fact:

First, the [francophone immigration] process can certainly be improved. It involves a number of players, and co-operation is essential. Many efforts have been made to improve this. I'm thinking in particular of the efforts that have been made to build bridges with the communities themselves and to ensure that the work corresponds to their needs. The FCFA is very supportive of that, in terms of aligning our efforts with the needs of the communities.

On the federal-provincial front, there is a lot of discussion at the Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration [...], and there will be more. There's also a lot of discussion at the Ministerial Council on the Canadian Francophonie.<sup>41</sup>

To ensure better coordination between the various stakeholders, Dr. Veronis suggested creating an agency that could coordinate the actions of all partners.<sup>42</sup> On that point, Mr. Normand said that IRCC already has a francophone immigration directorate that could play a more prominent role in terms of governance:

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada already has a francophone immigration directorate. The problem is responsibility. You said so yourself: If that office were placed higher on the org chart and reported directly to an assistant deputy minister who had interdepartmental responsibilities, real work could be done within the department to ensure that the francophone lens is applied everywhere, not only in matters under the responsibility of the francophone immigration directorate.

I think that's the path to take.<sup>43</sup>

In 2016, the Committee studied francophone immigration and recommended reviewing the governance of the francophone immigration file and the implementation of the principle of substantive equality in departmental programs.<sup>44</sup> Based on the Committee's

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- 41 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 May 2023, 1700 (Mr. Alain Desruisseaux, Director General, Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).
- 42 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 27 September 2023, 1745 (Dr. Luisa Veronis, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, As an Individual).
- 43 *Ibid.*, 1750 (Mr. Martin Normand, Director, Strategic Research and International Relations, Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne).
- 44 LANG, *Evidence*, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, *Toward a New Action Plan for Official Languages and Building New Momentum for Immigration in Francophone Minority Communities*, December 2016.

previous work, the requirements of the Act and the evidence heard during the current study, the Committee recommends as follows:

#### **Recommendation 2**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship ensure that the francophone immigration policy is based on the principle of substantive linguistic equality and that this principle also be the foundation for designing and implementing the resulting programs and initiatives.**

#### **Recommendation 3**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship develop a separate economic program for francophone immigration in francophone minority communities that meets the specific workforce needs of these communities and that allows them to participate in the recruitment and selection process for French-speaking immigrants.**

#### **Recommendation 4**

**That, in developing the francophone immigration policy, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship review the overall governance of francophone immigration. That, as part of this exercise, the Minister strengthen the Francophone Immigration Directorate within the department and that the Directorate be assigned, but not be limited to, the following tasks:**

- a) ensuring the implementation of a francophone immigration policy based on the principle of substantive linguistic equality; and**
- b) ensuring the coordination of francophone immigration at the departmental, interdepartmental and intergovernmental levels and with francophone minority communities.**

## **RECRUITING, RETAINING AND INTEGRATING FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRANTS FROM AFRICA**

In this section, the Committee identifies the primary concerns of FMCs with regard to measures taken by the Government of Canada to recruit and integrate francophone immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa.



## Recruitment in Sub-Saharan Africa

Generally speaking, immigration stakeholders from FMCs are concerned about Canada's recruitment efforts in sub-Saharan Africa, a source region for francophone immigration.<sup>45</sup> In particular, they have questions about service availability in that region.

## Proximity of Services

Abroad, Canada's immigration services are available on site at visa offices and visa application centres. Visa offices are run by IRCC and are often located in Canadian embassies and high commissions. They provide a range of services, although these may vary from office to office. Visa application centres receive applications for study permits, work permits, visitor visas (temporary resident visas) and permanent resident travel documents only. They are run by third parties acting on behalf of IRCC.

Canada has 13 visa offices and 26 visa application centres in Africa. Some witnesses said that Canada does not have enough of a presence in Africa. Ms. Sacko explained that some visa offices must serve applicants from several neighbouring countries. That is the case for the Dakar office in Senegal, which "has 16 countries in its catchment area."<sup>46</sup> However, other consulates "are unable to provide any services at all."<sup>47</sup>

Ms. Sacko believes that having access to a visa office or visa application centre affects whether people apply.<sup>48</sup> Many of the steps can be done online,<sup>49</sup> but applicants must still go in person to a visa office or visa application centre to complete their application:

Applicants must give their biometrics in order to complete the application; to do so, they must go to a biometric collection site such as a Visa Application Centre (VAC).<sup>50</sup>

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45 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 May 2023, 1635 (Mr. Olivier Jacques, Area Director, Latin America, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

46 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 June 2023, 0930 (Ms. Bintou Sacko, Director, Accueil francophone du Manitoba).

47 Ibid., 0955.

48 Ibid.

49 IRCC, LANG 63.7 – *List of Areas in Africa where IRCC Should Improve its Services Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) response to a request for information made by the Standing Committee on Official Languages on June 9, 2023*.

50 Ibid.

Many witnesses said that the Government of Canada should open more visa offices,<sup>51</sup> particularly in areas where offices are very far apart, so that applicants do not have to travel such long distances.

Dr. Luisa Veronis, Associate Professor at the University of Ottawa, supported the idea of making more services available in closer proximity. As she explained, it is not reasonable to think that the entire process could be done online. Even the IRCC website itself is a challenge.<sup>52</sup> Dr. Veronis tried accessing the IRCC forms online, and her efforts were not successful: “When I browse the site, I constantly come back to the same point. There’s a kind of loop, and I can’t go any further.”<sup>53</sup> Dr. Veronis, who was herself “a bilingual international student,” did not hesitate to say, “I don’t think I could file my application today because it’s done online. So just imagine what it’s like for African applicants.”<sup>54</sup>

The same observation was made about relying on telephones. When discussing how applicants can find out the status of their file, Ms. Sacko said that toll-free numbers do not necessarily meet the needs of immigration applicants from sub-Saharan Africa:

One problem is access to Canadian embassies or consulates, which is difficult for prospective immigrants. It’s not easy to pass through, enter or request services. Sometimes you have to call a number, which may not be accessible to everyone, especially when we’re talking about toll-free numbers in Africa. As a result, people can’t find out how their file will be processed, which can take a very long time if it’s handled by a consulate. These people have no way of contacting the consulate to find out the status of their file, and this discourages some people.<sup>55</sup>

Mr. Olivier Jacques, Area Director for Latin America at IRCC, conceded that opening more visa offices or visa application centres in sub-Saharan Africa could be “one of the

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51 See: Dr. Luisa Veronis: LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 27 September 2023, 1635; Ms. Bintou Sacko: LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 June 2023, 0955; Ms. Florence Ngenzeuhoro: LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 0855; and Mr. Roger Pichette, LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 4 October 2023, 1645.

52 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 27 September 2023, 1705 (Dr. Luisa Veronis, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, As an Individual).

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 June 2023, 1025 (Ms. Bintou Sacko, Director, Accueil francophone du Manitoba).



measures”<sup>56</sup> to improve recruitment for immigration applicants, and that “[a]dding resources does help facilitate the process.”<sup>57</sup> He also made the following statement:

The operations sector is just as important. We have to be able to meet the high demand for our services. We need to strengthen our operations. The department has therefore added resources in our offices in Africa. Since 2018, 67 new positions have been created on the African continent. We have also opened two visa offices there.<sup>58</sup>

With regard to processing applications from Cameroon, Mr. Jacques stated as follows:

The processing of applications from Cameroon, which are electronic applications, can be divided between different offices. Some applications can be processed by our colleagues in Dakar.<sup>59</sup>

IRCC did not discount the possibility of opening more visa application centres. The Minister said that “Canada is constantly monitoring its VAC network to ensure it meets the needs of applicants and may decide to open new additional locations at a later date.”<sup>60</sup> When it considers opening a new point of service, IRCC must take a number of factors into account, such as the “geographic distribution of clients and past temporary resident application trends” and “the security situation in the country, and cost of VAC services to applicants and Canada.”<sup>61</sup> Mr. Jacques also explained that opening new visa application centres is based on the number of potential applications, as IRCC must “see how many applications there are and whether it’s profitable for private enterprise.”<sup>62</sup>

## Destination Canada

On the topic of recruiting francophone immigrants, it is important to highlight the Destination Canada Mobility Forum, an annual recruitment event that started in 2003. Organized by IRCC, this forum gives immigration applicants the opportunity to meet

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56 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 May 2023, 1635 (Mr. Olivier Jacques, Area Director, Latin America, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

57 Ibid., 1650.

58 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 June 2023, 0910 (Mr. Olivier Jacques, Area Director, Latin America, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

59 Ibid., 1020.

60 IRCC, LANG 63.7 – *List of Areas in Africa where IRCC Should Improve its Services Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada’s (IRCC) response to a request for information made by the Standing Committee on Official Languages on June 9, 2023*.

61 Ibid.

62 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 May 2023, 1655 (Mr. Olivier Jacques, Area Director, Latin America, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

representatives of provinces, territories, cities and regions, as well as FMC organizations and potential employers. In November 2023, two in-person conferences ran for two to three days each in Paris, France, and in Rabat, Morocco. An online conference also took place over three days in December 2023.

According to Mr. Desruisseaux, Destination Canada is one of the tools that ensured that the department could reach its francophone immigration target:

We reached our target for francophone through concrete actions, including increasing the additional points allocated to francophone and bilingual candidates under the express entry system in 2020; introducing the time-limited temporary resident to permanent resident pathway in 2021, a measure that had no cap; and improving promotional activities in Canada and abroad, including the Destination Canada mobility forum.<sup>63</sup>

Ms. Forest said, “When we interview immigrants, many tell us that they travelled to Canada after interacting with Destination Canada.”<sup>64</sup>

The Multicultural Association Chaleur Region in New Brunswick explained that Destination Canada gives it an opportunity to promote FMCs:

As an association, we attend Destination Canada forums to promote our regions and francophone immigration to Canada. Through these forums, we promote other provinces where it is possible to live in French outside Quebec. We have encouraged newcomers to settle in our province and start up businesses while retaining the French language.<sup>65</sup>

According to Ms. Valérie Morand, there is no doubt that Destination Canada has had an impact on enrolment in minority schools:

I had the opportunity to take part in its international fair a number of times. The people who went there were almost at the end of their immigration process in Canada, and we would walk away with at least 200 new enrolments in our schools. The Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones booth was one of the busiest. Parents don’t know that they can have their children continue their education in French. They mistakenly believe that they have to give up education in French for their children when

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63 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 May 2023, 1615 (Mr. Alain Desruisseaux, Director General, Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

64 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 25 September 2023, 1135 (Ms. Mariève Forest, President and Senior Researcher at Sociopol, As an Individual).

65 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 27 September 2023, 1645 (Mr. Francesco Viglione, Director General, Multicultural Association Chaleur Region).



they come to Canada and live in a minority setting, and that’s not true. We offer a range of services, including enrolling their children in a French-language school.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to participating in Destination Canada to raise awareness of education in French as a first language in a minority setting, Ms. Morand attended as a potential employer: “I was also there to collect resumés from teachers and staff who wanted to come work for our school boards.”<sup>67</sup> As Ms. Morand explained, not all school boards have the opportunity to send representatives abroad: in 2022, “of the 29 school boards that make up the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones, only 6 or 7 will go.”<sup>68</sup>

According to Ms. Morand, networking activities like Destination Canada help immigration applicants better prepare for their arrival in Canada:

When people stop by the kiosk, the first question I ask them is whether they have determined where they will settle in their immigration plans. Some tell me they’re thinking of Ontario, the Northwest Territories or Manitoba. You understand that they have no idea of the distances between Canada’s various regions. If they’ve chosen to settle in one province and then decide to move, new steps must be taken, since Canada is a federation.

So they often need to be reminded to finalize their immigration plans properly. It’s to their own advantage.<sup>69</sup>

Ms. Abdi Aden believes that, while the Destination Canada forum should be maintained, it would be beneficial to “explore other recruitment pools”<sup>70</sup> and increase efforts to “match employers’ needs with immigrants’ skills”<sup>71</sup> in order to better “select people based on job opportunities in the various provinces.”<sup>72</sup>

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66 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 25 September 2023, 1140 (Ms. Valérie Morand, Executive Director, Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones).

67 Ibid., 1150.

68 Ibid., 1210.

69 Ibid.

70 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 June 2023, 1020 (Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden, Manager, National Consultation on Economic Development and Employability, Réseau de développement économique et d’employabilité Canada).

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.



Based on the witness testimony during the current study, the Committee recommends as follows:

#### **Recommendation 5**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship allocate additional resources to embassies and visa processing offices responsible for significant francophone and Francophile populations to ensure shorter processing times for visa applications.**

#### **Recommendation 6**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship ensure that francophone immigration becomes a factor in determining the locations abroad where on-site services should be established. That the Minister consider opening visa application centres in strategic locations in Africa, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and Benin, as well as in other countries with a francophone population base. That the Minister increase the range of services at the visa application centre in Yaoundé and put in place measures to make it easier for candidates from Africa to apply and avoid unnecessary travel as much as possible.**

#### **Recommendation 7**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship improve accessibility for applicants in the recruitment and application processes to adapt them to the level of connectivity and the realities of francophone immigration source countries.**

### **Accreditation for Immigration Representatives**

Some witnesses said they were concerned about the growing number of immigration applicants who are victims of fraud at the hands of scammers who claim to be legitimate recruitment officers. Dr. Veronis said, "I often receive emails from people in Africa who want to come here and who are desperate. They've been scammed several times and have paid a lot of money to unofficial actors."<sup>73</sup> Mr. Roger Pichette, a lawyer who specializes in immigration, also sees it on a regular basis. That is why he recommended strengthening the role of authorized representatives with francophone populations in

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73 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 27 September 2023, 1635 (Dr. Luisa Veronis, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, As an Individual).



Africa and La Francophonie.<sup>74</sup> As Mr. Pichette pointed out, Canada must explain to candidates abroad that “not everyone is able to help them properly.”<sup>75</sup>

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends:

### **Recommendation 8**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship seek solutions to fraud issues occurring in francophone immigration source countries and that the Minister take action in this area; and that the Minister increase the presence and visibility of Canadian authorities and accredited representatives in these countries.**

## **Application Processing**

Many witnesses raised the issue of processing times for visa applications, particularly for temporary work visas. Ms. Marie-Josée Chouinard, the Vice-President of International Talents and Foreign Investment at Québec International (a non-governmental regional economic development agency), believes that Canada should improve processing times for visa applications,<sup>76</sup> particularly for applications from countries with a francophone population. Mr. Pichette underscored the same point by comparing the processing times for work permits in anglophone and francophone countries:

The majority of English-speaking immigrants come from India, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, China or the United States. In these five countries, the processing time for a work permit application is 9, 8, 6, 11 and 5 weeks, respectively. In France, it is 15 weeks; in Tunisia, 19 weeks; in Morocco, 19 weeks; in Algeria, 18 weeks; in Senegal, 11 weeks; and in Ghana, 13 weeks.<sup>77</sup>

Mr. Pichette said that longer processing times for candidates from francophone countries could affect an employer’s decision when hiring foreign talent.<sup>78</sup>

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74 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 4 October 2023, 1645 (Mr. Roger Pichette, Lawyer, BB Immigration).

75 Ibid., 1655.

76 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 0915 (Ms. Marie-Josée Chouinard, Vice-President, International Talents and Foreign Investment, Québec International).

77 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 4 October 2023, 1655 (Mr. Roger Pichette, Lawyer, BB Immigration).

78 Ibid.

In addition, Mr. Pichette raised the matter of transparency in processing applications. He said that IRCC must first “allow officials to gather additional information when an application that is overall solid contains insufficient details.”<sup>79</sup> Mr. Pichette said that “[the] file may be very solid, but it may be missing something like a comma or it needs clarification, or another version of a document may be required. This now leads to a denial, whereas the official reviewing the application could simply send a letter requesting clarification, in order to do a more specific analysis and make a decision based on the application.”<sup>80</sup> Second, Mr. Pichette called for “more descriptive and detailed reasons for denial.”<sup>81</sup> He believes that the reasons given for denying an application are “so nebulous” that candidates “do not know at all the reasons for the decision” to reject the application the first time.<sup>82</sup> Mr. Pichette explained that there are legal remedies, but they are out of reach for most immigration applicants:

[Y]ou will agree with me that an African immigrant cannot easily go to the Federal Court of Canada to challenge a decision. He could also make access to information requests, but that it is not always straightforward, as you know. Therefore, in real life, if someone asks me what to do after a denial, I tell them in 85% of cases that the best strategy is to file a new application, to wait again for the same duration and, if the applicant does not know clearly why the application was rejected, to pray that it will work this time.<sup>83</sup>

With regard to improving processing times for applications from Africa, Mr. Jacques explained that IRCC relies on its integrated network of offices in Canada and abroad:

[W]hen the resources in our offices on the African continent are insufficient to ensure the processing of applications, we can count on a helping hand from immigration offices elsewhere in the network or in Canada. This allows us to ensure more equitable processing times.<sup>84</sup>

The network in question includes “60 offices that the department has set up abroad, as well as the offices established in Canada.”<sup>85</sup>

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79 Ibid., 1645.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid., 1655.

84 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 May 2023, 1635 (Mr. Olivier Jacques, Area Director, Latin America, Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship).

85 Ibid., 1650.



With regard to processing times, Ms. Christiane Fox, Deputy Minister at IRCC, said that the initiatives taken by the department after the COVID-19 pandemic ensured that IRCC had “returned to [its] service standards in several categories.”<sup>86</sup>

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends as follows:

### **Recommendation 9**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship review the processing of applications in francophone immigration source countries in order to improve transparency for admission criteria and communication with applicants; and that the Minister ensure that immigration officers gather information from applicants to avoid application denials.**

### **Pre-departure Services**

Some witnesses told the Committee they were concerned that pre-departure services were lacking for French-speaking immigrants from Africa. Ms. Aissa Nauthoo, Vice-President of the CFGT, said that, on the ground, stakeholders found that “there’s not enough information about everything to do with settling in Canada.”<sup>87</sup>

The CFGT representatives spoke about the shortage of information on housing and the job market.<sup>88</sup> As Mr. Raymond Th  berge, Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada, explained, Canada must provide information and services in these areas to retain immigrants.<sup>89</sup> The CFGT representatives highlighted issues involving an understanding of the Canadian job market, especially the need to speak enough English to function in a work environment.<sup>90</sup> They also said that francophone immigrants are not told about French-language schools.<sup>91</sup> And yet, French-language primary and secondary schools play a key role in integrating children who immigrate and their families, and in ensuring

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86 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 4 October 2023, 1820 (Ms. Christiane Fox, Deputy Minister, Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship).

87 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 0920 (Ms. Aissa Nauthoo, Vice-President, Centre francophone du grand Toronto).

88 Ibid.

89 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 1005 (Mr. Raymond Th  berge, Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada).

90 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 0920 (Ms. Aissa Nauthoo, Vice-President, Centre francophone du grand Toronto).

91 Ibid.

that they continue to use French.<sup>92</sup> The Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones would like all levels of government to recognize this fact and to respond by providing the funding necessary to offer a full range of immigration services in French within its network.<sup>93</sup>

Based on their experience on the ground, the CFGT representatives recommended “an integrated approach to facilitating access and referral to services for francophone newcomers, from pre-departure to arrival and settlement,”<sup>94</sup> as well as “strengthening data and information sharing among the various stakeholders involved in the continuum of services to increase the effectiveness of support offered to francophone newcomers.”<sup>95</sup>

IRCC officials talked about the pre-departure services offered by Connexions Francophones,<sup>96</sup> a free service provided to francophone immigrants whose applications for permanent residency have been approved and who will settle in a territory or province other than Quebec. Essentially, the department offers information sessions about housing, education, employment and health care, as well as webinars on the job market, and it organizes job fairs that bring Canadian employers together with immigrants. Most activities take place online, but some information sessions are available in person in Rabat, Morocco.

Mr. Jacques explained that “[i]mmigrants who have been selected by Canada attend an orientation session just before boarding the plane. They get help writing their résumé and preparing for what they will face when they arrive in Canada.”<sup>97</sup> Mr. Desruisseaux said that, “[w]hether virtual or in person, we make sure that people have information on

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92 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 25 September 2023, 1120 (Ms. Tanya Saumure, 2nd Vice-President, Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones).

93 Ibid.

94 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 0855 (Ms. Florence Ngenzebuhoro, Chief Executive Officer, Centre francophone du grand Toronto).

95 Ibid.

96 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 June 2023, 0915 (Mr. Alain Desruisseaux, Director General, Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

97 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 June 2023, 0915 (Mr. Olivier Jacques, Area Director, Latin America, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).



the services offered and the people to contact when they arrive, so that the networks are already in contact with the newcomers.”<sup>98</sup>

## Settlement Services—Temporary Foreign Workers

As Ms. Forest explained, since the early 2000s, a growing number of temporary foreign workers have become permanent residents.<sup>99</sup> This is known as a two-step immigration process.

According to Ms. Forest, between 2012 and 2021, just over 10,000 francophones who were temporary foreign workers settled in the Western provinces, in Ontario or in the Atlantic provinces,<sup>100</sup> which accounted for 2.3% to 3.3% of all skilled temporary foreign workers in Canada.<sup>101</sup> Thousands of them obtained their permanent resident status, but they might not necessarily be living in FMCs. As Ms. Forest explained, this outcome is partly because the Government of Canada does not fund settlement services for temporary residents who speak French. As a result, many of them do not know about FMCs and hear about them several years after they arrive.<sup>102</sup>

Mr. Normand recommended that IRCC consider allowing temporary residents to use the settlement services currently reserved for permanent residents.<sup>103</sup> Ms. Forest recommended creating a settlement pathway specifically for temporary residents who are francophones:

Considering the increase in the proportion of temporary residents who transition to permanent residence and the difficult language retention of French in a minority context, we cannot afford to come into contact with these people several months or years after their arrival in Canada. Therefore, it seems important to us to create a settlement pathway specifically for francophone temporary residents, so that these people understand, even before they set foot in Canada, that francophone institutions

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98 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 June 2023, 0920 (Mr. Alain Desruisseaux, Director General, Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

99 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 25 September 2023, 1110 (Ms. Mariève Forest, President and Senior Researcher at Sociopol, As an Individual).

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 27 September 2023, 1700 (Mr. Martin Normand, Director, Strategic Research and International Relations, Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne).

are ready to welcome them and integrate them. This is a unique situation. It may not be necessary for anglophones, but it is important for francophones.<sup>104</sup>

Based on the evidence heard, the Committee recommends as follows:

### **Recommendation 10**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship increase the provision of settlement services in French along the entire continuum and for all categories of immigration and that the Minister create a separate settlement pathway for temporary residents who are francophones.**

### **Recommendation 11**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship ensure better coordination with settlement service providers in francophone minority communities, including by improving the exchange of information.**

## **The French Test**

To obtain permanent residency, applicants must take a language test.

IRCC's language testing requirements vary depending on the program or stream selected, and "the exams were designed as a function of the program under which a person submits an application."<sup>105</sup> The French exam required to obtain Canadian citizenship and some types of permanent residence is called the Test d'évaluation du français pour le Canada (TEF Canada).

The TEF Canada is one of several versions of the Test d'évaluation du Français (TEF) developed by the Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de région Paris-Île-de-France (CCI Paris-Île-de-France). It has four components—reading, listening, speaking and writing—and is designed for people whose first language is not French. In Canada, the exam is administered in person in an accredited facility.

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104 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 25 September 2023, 1110 (Ms. Mariève Forest, President and Senior Researcher at Sociopol, As an Individual).

105 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 28 March 2022, 1720 (Ms. Caroline Xavier, Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).



According to various witnesses, the French test is an obstacle to obtaining permanent residency.<sup>106</sup> the test is difficult and many candidates fail; registration is expensive and candidates must pay every time; the price of the TEF Canada varies, as the testing centre determines the cost; accredited testing centres are centralized, which means that candidates must travel to take the test, sometimes very long distances; and a passing mark is valid for only two years,<sup>107</sup> yet the process to obtain permanent residency can take longer than that.

The Commissioner of Official Languages mentioned that he had heard from various individuals about the difficulties associated with the French test. He said, “[w]e have to wonder whether the tests meet the needs of those who have to take them.”<sup>108</sup>

Ms. Forest believes that steps should be taken “to reduce the number of people who are forced to take this exam,” especially for candidates who have done their schooling in French.<sup>109</sup>

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends:

### **Recommendation 12**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship review all language tests and, with a view to improving access and the success rate, that he:**

- a) adopt, in addition to the Test d’évaluation du français pour le Canada (TEF Canada), a new test developed in Canada to assess language proficiency at a functional level and adapted to the situation and needs of Canadian society;**

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106 The Committee made a recommendation about the French test in 2016: LANG, 42nd Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, *Toward a New Action Plan for Official Languages and Building New Momentum for Immigration in Francophone Minority Communities*, December 2016.

107 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 March 2022, 1630 (Ms. Honorine Ngountchoup, International Student Reception and Integration Support Officer, Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick, As an Individual).

108 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 30 March 2022, 1635 (Mr. Raymond Théberge, Commissioner of Official Languages, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages).

109 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 25 September 2023, 1230 (Ms. Mariève Forest, President and Senior Researcher at Sociopol, As an Individual).



- b) invite the networks of French-language colleges and universities in minority communities and in Quebec to develop and administer this new test;**
- c) make registration affordable and standardize the cost of the test referred to in paragraph (a) across the country so that the cost is the same for language testing in both English and French;**
- d) extend the validity period for language testing results to five years; and**
- e) give candidates the option of taking either a test administered by French-language post-secondary institutions or the existing TEF Canada test, as they prefer.**

## **Socio-Economic Integration—Recognizing Qualifications**

Some witnesses said that the process for having foreign credentials recognized impedes the socio-economic integration of immigrants in FMCs and in Canadian society in general. Mr. Francesco Viglione, Director General of the Multicultural Association Chaleur Region, explained the issue as follows:

Our clients are currently experiencing credential recognition problems. We have French teachers from Africa who are not allowed to exercise their occupation despite the labour shortage in that sector. A major step forward has been taken for francophone health sector workers, who may now practise their profession as professional nurses thanks to recruitment missions and international agreements. However, most employers are anglophone, and that is also a handicap for francophone newcomers looking for their first jobs.<sup>110</sup>

According to Mr. Laberge, the entire education sector is seriously affected by the labour shortage. It is even more difficult for francophone minority schools, especially those that are far from big cities:

You hear a lot about the shortage of teachers, but we also need education aides and principals. If Quebec has more than 300 vacant positions right now, imagine how hard it is for a town like Thompson—which is a seven-hour drive from Winnipeg—to get teachers and staff to settle there and keep the community alive.<sup>111</sup>

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110 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 27 September 2023, 1645 (Mr. Francesco Viglione, Director General, Multicultural Association Chaleur Region).

111 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 0930 (Mr. Alain Laberge, Executive Director, Division scolaire franco-manitobaine).



As previously shown, school boards are taking steps to recruit staff abroad. However, as Mr. Laberge explained, the current process for recognizing foreign credentials is a significant obstacle to their recruitment efforts:

What's more, there is little recognition of credentials. We also look for candidates in Africa and Latin America, but once they're in Canada, it usually takes a very long time for them to become permanent residents, so they often go elsewhere. The credential recognition process is a real maze. The five, six, seven or eight teachers we might be able to get can't be hired as teachers until their credentials are recognized in Canada. That usually means they have to go back to school, so supporting them in that process is also very important.<sup>112</sup>

Furthermore, Mr. Laberge highlighted that one of the measures the government could take to improve recruitment and retention rates for minority schools would be to recognize diplomas:

We believe that the government should allow professional cultural exchanges; international school cultural exchanges; the recognition of high school and university diplomas and credits; embassies and a government that promote and accelerate the process of granting Canadian citizenship; scholarships for school internships; transferability of credits; work scholarships in northern rural regions and a premium for distance from major centres, given that the cost of living is much higher in northern environments.<sup>113</sup>

Mr. Viglione said that the Government of New Brunswick has taken steps to accelerate the accreditation process for health care professionals who studied outside of Canada, with the process beginning before they arrive in Canada. Thanks to a partnership with foreign post-secondary institutions, these professionals can obtain a licence to practise in New Brunswick. For nurses in particular, this process can take as little as 18 days.<sup>114</sup>

For her part, Dr. Veronis mentioned World Education Services (WES), an organization that specializes in validating international degrees and certificates.<sup>115</sup> WES has been a designated supplier for IRCC since 2013.

Mr. Viglione also addressed the issue of professions that do not require certification in some countries, but do require certification in Canadian provinces and territories.

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112 Ibid.

113 Ibid., 0910.

114 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 27 September 2023, 1720 (Mr. Francesco Viglione, Director General, Multicultural Association Chaleur Region).

115 Ibid., 1720 (Dr. Luisa Veronis, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, As an Individual).

According to Dr. Veronis, in such cases, participating in an internship could be a step toward certification:

For jobs and professions that aren't regulated, we should consider providing [...] internships or supplementing practice with theoretical content. I very much believe in matching with employers and in internships. Internships often enable employers and immigrants to get to know each other and the latter to gain Canadian experience, which is a major challenge.<sup>116</sup>

As Mr. Normand pointed out, recognizing foreign credentials falls to professional associations, which are under provincial or territorial jurisdiction. In his experience, “not all the professional associations are sensitive to the language issue.”<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, Mr. Normand said that “it’s not because credential recognition work is done for the majority that it necessarily works for francophones seeking to have their credentials recognized.”<sup>118</sup> Certification is difficult for francophones living in minority communities because there is a shortage of people who are qualified to assess their skills.

However, Mr. Normand believes that the Government of Canada can take action on credential recognition by, for example, ensuring that professional associations take the language issue into account.<sup>119</sup> He believes that it is a duty of the federal government with regard to the vitality of francophone communities. He added that “[i]t will be difficult to enhance the vitality of francophone communities in the context of a shortage in which people are unable to have their credentials recognized or find ways to complete the training that would enable them to access the professions.”<sup>120</sup>

Mr. Alain Desruisseaux said that credential recognition was “something we heard a lot during the public consultations we held last year to develop the measures in the action plan”<sup>121</sup> and emphasized that “[d]iscussions are under way.”<sup>122</sup> He also added a clarification about interdepartmental and intergovernmental collaboration in this area:

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116 Ibid.

117 Ibid., 1740 (Mr. Martin Normand, Director, Strategic Research and International Relations, Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne).

118 Ibid.

119 Ibid., 1745.

120 Ibid.

121 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 June 2023, 0935 (Mr. Alain Desruisseaux, Director General, Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

122 Ibid.



Obviously, this involves several departments as well as the provinces. It's really a horizontal issue. It's outside my area of responsibility, but I know that discussions are ongoing with EDSC, and the provinces and territories to see how this issue can be addressed. It's not a simple matter, unfortunately.<sup>123</sup>

The Official Opposition proposed creating a national standard to recognize credentials, the "blue seal," which would ensure that the government could issue licences to practise for professionals, such as doctors or nurses, who have the required skills. This initiative is modelled on the "Red Seal" endorsement, which is offered for most regulated trades in the majority of provinces and territories. Mr. Viglione said, "[t]hat could be a very good solution."<sup>124</sup> He explained his reasoning as follows:

As I said earlier, people are being blocked even if they have the credentials. So I definitely think that a standard like the "blue seal" would be useful in the case of individuals trained in the medical field outside Canada. Yes, I believe that would increase francophone immigration to Canada.<sup>125</sup>

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends as follows:

### **Recommendation 13**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship work with the provinces and territories to improve the foreign credential recognition process to address labour shortages in francophone minority communities, specifically in the fields of early childhood learning, education and health, and that the Minister take into account the needs of rural communities.**

## **The International Student Program**

The International Student Program was a topic of much discussion among those who appeared before the Committee. For FMCs, this program is an important gateway for future permanent residents.

### **Approval Rates for Candidates from Africa**

Several witnesses shared their concerns about the low approval rates for visa applications from francophone African countries through the International Student

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123 Ibid.

124 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 27 September 2023, 1735 (Mr. Francesco Viglione, Director General, Multicultural Association Chaleur Region).

125 Ibid.

Program. IRCC officials said that, “in terms of the acceptance rate of study permits for francophone students from Africa ... it’s generally lower than elsewhere.”<sup>126</sup> However, Mr. Jacques emphasized that the department has noted an increase in the number of French-speaking African students.<sup>127</sup> It went from 27% in 2021 to 35% in 2022.<sup>128</sup> In addition, IRCC said that it had taken steps to increase the approval rate for francophone African applicants:

The Department analyzes data, refines criteria, and designs tools to improve decision-making and ensure that genuine, admissible students are able to study in Canada. It monitors compliance rates where the designated learning institutions report back on whether international students are attending school as planned. It maintains quality assurance measures to achieve consistency in decision-making on these applications. The Department has expanded its training curriculum to include further unconscious bias, cultural and antiracism, diversity, equity and inclusion training. Additionally, it continues to work with partners to attract eligible, admissible applicants from Africa by regularly participating and hosting in-person and virtual events to explain application processes and requirements.<sup>129</sup>

Mr. Normand said he had observed a slight improvement in the acceptance rates for applications for study permits from African countries for the school year beginning in September 2022.<sup>130</sup>

## Processing Applications for Study Visas

According to IRCC, the top three reasons that applications for the International Student Program are rejected are “the frequency of fraud in acceptance letters from Canadian educational institutions and in bank documents sent;”<sup>131</sup> “the difficulty of knowing whether students are acting in good faith, meaning whether they are really going to study in Canada;”<sup>132</sup> and “funding,” meaning personal finances: “It’s expensive for foreign

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126 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 May 2023, 1635 (Mr. Olivier Jacques, Area Director, Latin America, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

127 Ibid.

128 Ibid.

129 IRCC, LANG 63.6 – *Main reasons for refusal of French-speaking Student. IRCC’s response to a request for information made by the Standing Committee on Official Languages on June 9, 2023.*

130 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 27 September 2023, 1640 (Mr. Martin Normand, Director, Strategic Research and International Relations, Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne).

131 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 June 2023, 0945 (Mr. Olivier Jacques, Area Director, Latin America, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

132 Ibid.



students to study in Canada, with tuition fees higher than those charged to Canadian citizens, not to mention housing costs.”<sup>133</sup> According to IRCC, from January 2019 to May 2023, “the reasons for refusal of French-speaking study permit applicants with a country of residence in Africa are mainly related to the finances of the principal applicant.”<sup>134</sup>

IRCC also said that an application could be refused if the officer handling it “is not satisfied that the applicant will depart Canada at the end of the period authorized for their stay if they no longer have valid status in Canada.”<sup>135</sup> As IRCC explained, this requirement is in keeping with section 216(1)(b) of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations*.

Some witnesses were skeptical about the reasons for refusal and called for them to be reviewed. Ms. Sacko used the terms “arbitrary refusals” and “systematic rejection:”

[I]f students say they want to stay in Canada after their studies, the officer refuses them the visa outright. If they have to present a career plan and the officer doesn’t find it clear, he can refuse them a visa.

In other words, an agent can sometimes reject an application simply because he or she is not convinced of the merits of the case. But what exactly does this mean? Does it mean that the applicant does not have sufficient financial means? Does it mean that the agent simply doesn’t like the photo? Does it mean that the form is badly filled in?

There are arbitrary refusals like this which are not justified and which lead to a kind of systematic rejection. It’s the system that rejects people, and we have no idea why there are these arbitrary refusals.<sup>136</sup>

Her statement aligns with Mr. Pichette’s recommendations about transparency in the application processing system.

In Ms. Sacko’s view, rejecting a candidate because they want to stay in Canada after they complete their studies, work and obtain their landed immigrant status is contrary to the objectives of FMCs.<sup>137</sup>

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133 Ibid.

134 IRCC, LANG 63.6 – *Main reasons for refusal of French-speaking Student. IRCC’s response to a request for information made by the Standing Committee on Official Languages on June 9, 2023.*

135 Ibid.

136 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 June 2023, 1015 (Ms. Bintou Sacko, Director, Accueil francophone du Manitoba).

137 Ibid., 0950.

The former minister of Immigration, the Honourable Sean Fraser, was open to changing the criteria that would require foreign students to leave Canada after their studies, but he explained that it would be a very involved process:

There are students who are currently being refused on the basis that they're not likely to return home, when we want them to stay as permanent residents. That's an obstacle we can and must overcome. However, it will take some serious policy work, because it represents a fundamental change in the way we process temporary resident applications in Canada.<sup>138</sup>

Ms. Sacko called for the admission criteria to the International Student Program to be reviewed and for the assessment process to be more transparent. Like Mr. Pichette, she recommended a proactive approach with more communication between officers and applicants:

If the file is poorly put together, the person should be given the chance to review or update it. If it's a question of a lack of financial means, the applicant should be given the chance to prove, for example through other bank accounts, that he or she has sufficient financial means to make the application acceptable.<sup>139</sup>

Lastly, Ms. Sacko suggested creating a system for recourse – either an ombudsman's office or an audit office:

When an officer makes a decision, there's no way to overturn it. There is no way to verify the veracity of the elements on which the officer based his decision to refuse an application. There is no recourse. Maybe it's time to have recourse for people whose applications are refused arbitrarily, so that we can at least review their files.<sup>140</sup>

## The Role of Francophone Minority Post-Secondary Institutions

Francophone minority post-secondary institutions play an important role in increasing francophone immigration in minority communities because they attract international students and help foreign students integrate socio-economically. In fact, all institutions

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138 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 6 December 2022, 1125 (Hon. Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship).

139 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 June 2023, 1015 (Ms. Bintou Sacko, Director, Accueil francophone du Manitoba).

140 *Ibid.*, 1035.



along the French-language education continuum—from early childhood to post-secondary—contribute in this way.<sup>141</sup>

However, according to Ms. Saumure, underfunding francophone minority schools<sup>142</sup> affects the school system’s ability to welcome and support students:

Welcoming and supporting students and staff from immigrant backgrounds has a cost for our institutions. We can’t do it with 50% of the funds when enrolments are growing. The funding has to increase accordingly.<sup>143</sup>

Mr. Cyril Simard, Vice-President of Development at the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (CCNB), which is a member of the ACUFC, explained that graduates make successful transitions to the labour market partly because of strategic partnerships between French-language post-secondary institutions and local economic stakeholders:

As a professional and technical training institution, the CCNB works closely with local economic stakeholders to ensure that its training is aligned with labour market needs and requirements.

Our graduates, after having been with us for a few years, are not only ready to enter the labour market, but have also developed deep ties within our communities.<sup>144</sup>

However, foreign students are not economic immigrants. As temporary workers, they do not have access to federal government settlement services, as these services are strictly for permanent residents.<sup>145</sup> According to Mr. Simard, in order to maximize the contribution that post-secondary institutions make to integrating and retaining francophone students, “a change is essential.”<sup>146</sup>

As Mr. Normand explained, while some post-secondary institutions are able to offer services to foreign students, “the range of services is not always equivalent to what’s

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141 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 25 September 2023, 1120 (Ms. Tanya Saumure, 2nd Vice-President, Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones).

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid., 1130.

144 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 25 September 2023, 1115 (Mr. Cyrille Simard, Vice-President, Development, Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick).

145 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 May 2023, 1635 (Mr. Olivier Jacques, Area Director, Latin America, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

146 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 25 September 2023, 1115 (Mr. Cyrille Simard, Vice-President, Development, Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick).



offered at anglophone institutions.”<sup>147</sup> He suggested that the Government of Canada could allow temporary residents and workers, or “at least francophone students, to use certain services reserved for permanent residents.”<sup>148</sup>

More generally, he proposed changing the paradigm for the International Student Program:

To continue retaining a portion of that clientele in Canada, we have to come up with a systemic, coherent, effective and ethnic approach in which the academic paths that international francophone students follow are viewed as part of a plan for society in which ties are established among the educational institutions, community service organizations, employers and the community as a whole.<sup>149</sup>

Mr. Normand also recommended that the Government of Canada recognize the role played by French-language minority post-secondary institutions in welcoming and accompanying international students, and that this recognition include financial support.<sup>150</sup> The ACUFC has been calling for many years for the federal government to establish a permanent support fund for the francophone minority post-secondary education sector. According to the ACUFC, the Government of Canada’s current funding formula means that institutions cannot offer their programs of study and services on a permanent basis, particularly those for foreign students.<sup>151</sup>

In terms of administration, Mr. Normand would like to see IRCC improve communication with post-secondary institutions, particularly as regards applicants and the number of graduates who obtain permanent residency. Having more data would mean post-secondary institutions could better plan their academic programs and assess whether their programs are meeting labour market needs.<sup>152</sup>

Lastly, it is worth noting that French-language minority educational institutions play an important role in training professionals who work in the networks of associations and institutions in FMCs.

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147 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 27 September 2023, 1700 (Mr. Martin Normand, Director, Strategic Research and International Relations, Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne).

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid., 1640.

150 Ibid., 1645.

151 Ibid., 1715.

152 Ibid., 1700.



The Committee learned that, on 22 January 2024, Minister Miller announced that the Government of Canada would set a national intake cap on student permit applications for a period of two years.<sup>153</sup> Changes were also made to the eligibility criteria for the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program. One change worth noting, which will take effect on 1 September 2024, is that “international students who begin a study program that is part of a curriculum licensing arrangement will no longer be eligible for a post-graduation work permit upon graduation.”<sup>154</sup>

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends as follows:

#### **Recommendation 14**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, despite the recent measures canceling new post-graduate work permits for students in a study program that is part of a curriculum licensing arrangement, quickly processes post-graduate work permits for international Francophone students after they have completed their post-secondary studies in a French-language institution in Canada.**

#### **Recommendation 15**

**That the Government of Canada permanently increase funding for French-language post-secondary institutions in minority settings so that they can continue to offer programs and services to students.**

#### **Recommendation 16**

**That, to increase the recruitment and retention of francophone international students, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship adapt the International Student Program with a view to implementing the following actions:**

- a) amend the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* to eliminate the requirement for francophone applicants to demonstrate that they will leave the country after graduation;**

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153 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, News release, *Canada to stabilize growth and decrease number of new international student permits issued to approximately 360,000 for 2024.*

154 Ibid.

- b) make the system for assessing applications of francophone applicants, particularly as regards explaining the grounds for refusal, more transparent;**
- c) if applicable, before an application is refused for administrative reasons, ensure that IRCC officers communicate with candidates to give them an opportunity to make any corrections or clarifications to their application and provide any required supporting documentation within a reasonable time frame;**
- d) create a recourse mechanism for applicants who would like to appeal a refusal;**
- e) create, in collaboration with post-secondary institutions in French-language minority communities and in Quebec, a separate settlement services program for international students who are francophones; and**
- f) improve communication between the department and French-language post-secondary institutions to ensure a constant flow of information.**

## **ENSURING THAT FRENCH IS RESPECTED BY IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES**

Mr. Stéphane Handfield, an immigration lawyer, made the following statement about respect for the French language at the Immigration and Refugee Board, as well as at IRCC and at the Canada Border Services Agency:

Over the past 30 years, I have often had to deal with the lack of respect for the French language in immigration matters in various forums. This has happened at the Immigration and Refugee Board, at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and at the Canada Border Services Agency. I have seen that this situation has been getting worse for a number of years.<sup>155</sup>

He primarily spoke about his experience as a francophone legal expert appearing before the Immigration and Refugee Board. While the Board is subject to the *Official Languages Act*, he had to defend his client's right to proceed in the language of their choice, which in this case was French:

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155 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 March 2022, 1625 (Mr. Stéphane Handfield, Lawyer, Handfield et Associés, Avocats, As an Individual).



At a refugee protection claimant’s hearing, the Immigration and Refugee Board tried to prevent me from using the language of proceedings chosen by my client, in this case French. The Federal Court had to intervene to ensure that my client’s choice was respected, which involved time and energy that could have been invested in a much better way.<sup>156</sup>

Mr. Handfield also explained that it was “impossible to communicate in French with registry officers of the Immigration and Refugee Board at the regional office in Toronto, even though several files of refugee protection claimants from Montreal had been transferred to that office.”<sup>157</sup> More recently, “in Montreal, while the language of the proceedings was French, it was impossible to use the services of a French-speaking interpreter to translate from French to the claimant’s mother tongue,” because “[o]nly an English-speaking interpreter was assigned to the file.”<sup>158</sup> Worse yet, Mr. Handfield experienced verbal abuse from Board representatives when he stood up for his language rights:

I insisted on proceeding in French, although the panel wanted to proceed in English for its own reasons. So I insisted and brought up that good old Federal Court decision. I got a curt reply, in English, that the panel knew who I was and that I was a troublemaker. The panel then walked out and, subsequently, we were given a hearing in French.<sup>159</sup>

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends as follows:

#### **Recommendation 17**

**That the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRBC) and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) ensure that the language rights of French-speaking lawyers, all their staff and newcomers who use their services are upheld; and that any correspondence sent by the IRBC and the CBSA be written in satisfactory French.**

### **THE ACTION PLAN FOR OFFICIAL LANGUAGES 2023–2028**

The new *Action Plan for Official Languages 2023–2028: Protection-Promotion-Collaboration* (2023–2028 Action Plan), released on 26 April 2023, outlines seven new francophone immigration initiatives. They are in addition to existing initiatives that were

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156 Ibid.

157 Ibid.

158 Ibid.

159 Ibid., 1650.

renewed, making francophone immigration one of the pillars of the 2023–2028 Action Plan.

First, the Action Plan allocates \$13.4 million over five years for a policy and operational framework on francophone immigration. It is described as “a new policy and operational framework [...] that will revisit overall governance and the Department’s current commitments.”<sup>160</sup>

Next, the Action Plan seeks to “develop new capacity to analyze the efforts to boost the selection of Francophone and bilingual immigrants under existing programs.”<sup>161</sup> This initiative has a \$3.5 million budget over five years.

As regards recruitment, the 2023–2028 Action Plan provides “\$18.5 million over five years to boost promotion and recruitment support both in Canada and abroad, including in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and the Americas.”<sup>162</sup> It states that the initiatives are intended to “attract more French-speaking or bilingual workers to Canada to support the efforts of employers in official language minority communities and to better address labour-market imperatives.”<sup>163</sup>

To encourage newcomers to integrate socially and economically, the 2023–2028 Action Plan allocates \$10.5 million over five years to provide language training for immigrants.<sup>164</sup>

The 2023–2028 Action Plan outlines two main initiatives to strengthen settlement services. First, the government announced a strengthened integration pathway. This program seeks to facilitate the settlement and integration of newcomers to Canada and bolster the reception capacity of FMCs.<sup>165</sup>

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160 Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2023–2028: Protection-Promotion-Collaboration*, April 2023, p. 17.

161 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

162 *Ibid.*

163 *Ibid.*

164 *Ibid.*

165 *Ibid.*



Second, it announced the Centre for Innovation in Francophone Immigration (CIFI).<sup>166</sup> The Centre has a budget of \$25 million over five years and was described by IRCC as follows:

The CIFI has a national mandate to capitalize on the expertise of Francophone minority communities (FMCs) and facilitate their involvement in the testing of innovative projects, in order to solve barriers to Francophone immigration, particularly with regard to the promotion of FMCs internationally, as well as the identification, support and recruitment of French-speaking candidates.<sup>167</sup>

Mr. Desruisseaux said that the CIFI opened its doors in November 2022, but no programs had been launched as of 9 June 2023.<sup>168</sup> The Minister made the following statement:

This will be a very important centre for distributing and selecting projects, and for fostering the contribution of people who have more expertise than I do in promoting the French fact outside Quebec. What's more, this centre will perfect our systems and the way we do things in West Africa or the rest of the world. There are already six people working there, which isn't as many as we'd hoped. There's reason to talk about enhancing their work.<sup>169</sup>

## FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION IN QUEBEC

Like FMCs, Quebec is counting mainly on international francophone immigration to slow the demographic decline of francophones within its borders, with a view to eventually increasing the proportion of francophones in the province.

The 1991 *Canada–Québec Accord relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens* (Canada–Québec Immigration Accord) outlines the division of powers between the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec. One principle outlined in this framework agreement is that the two levels of government wish to preserve the

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166 Ibid.

167 IRCC, *LANG 63.1 – Centre for Innovation in Francophone Immigration in Dieppe. IRCC's response to a request for information made by the Standing Committee on Official Languages on June 9, 2023.*

168 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 June 2023, 0910 (Mr. Alain Desruisseaux, Director General, Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

169 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 4 October 2023, 1820 (Hon. Marc Miller, Minister, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship).

francophone identity of the province.<sup>170</sup> That is why Quebec, unlike the other provinces, plays a key role in selecting immigrants.

### **Immigration as a Way to Address the Labour Shortage and Ensure the Long-Term Viability of Post-Secondary Programs**

Quebec, like other regions in Canada, is experiencing a labour shortage. In the regions of Quebec City and Chaudière-Appalaches, 80% of the companies supported by the agency Québec International said in a survey that the labour shortage was impeding their growth.<sup>171</sup> Entrepreneurs in these regions, as in many others, are looking to immigrants to fill the gap.<sup>172</sup> Post-secondary institutions in Quebec want to attract international students to ensure the long-term viability of their programs. However, as Ms. Chouinard explained, “employers and educational establishments, just like the candidates we accompany, face many challenges linked to their international mobility project.”<sup>173</sup>

One challenge Ms. Chouinard identified, as did many witnesses from FMCs, was the high rejection rates for study or work permits from francophone African nations.

The Committee did not obtain specific data on refusal rates for francophone applicants from Africa applying to study at Quebec institutions. However, IRCC submitted data showing that the refusal rates under the International Student Program for applicants with Quebec as their province of destination—or all languages and countries of origin—was 50% in 2019, while the rate of refusal for all provinces and territories was 40%. Refusal rates for applicants wanting to study in Quebec increased to 60% in 2020 (49% for all provinces and territories), dropped to 56% in 2021 (40% for all provinces and territories) and then dropped again to 53% in 2022 (44% for all provinces and territories). The refusal rate was 60% from January to May 2023 (42% for all provinces and territories).<sup>174</sup> If these data are compared with the other provinces and territories, Quebec has consistently been in the top five with the highest refusal rates.

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170 Government of Canada, *Canada–Québec Accord relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens*, 5 February 1991.

171 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 0900 (Ms. Marie-Josée Chouinard, Vice-President, International Talents and Foreign Investment, Québec International).

172 Ibid.

173 Ibid.

174 IRCC, LANG 63.5 – *International Student Refusal Rates by Province. IRCC’s response to a request for information made by the Standing Committee on Official Languages on June 9, 2023.*



It is also worth noting that the processing time for study permits for students whose intended destination was Quebec was 82 days, while it was 66 days for applications for the other provinces and territories.<sup>175</sup>

With regard to work permits, Ms. Chouinard said there were “abnormally long processing times for work permits, in excess of five months, in Côte d’Ivoire, Senegal, Togo and Tunisia.”<sup>176</sup> The Committee did not obtain specific data on processing times for these African countries. However, the data provided by IRCC show that obtaining work permits for Quebec, from all countries of origin, took an average of 118 days, while the processing time for the other provinces and territories was 65 days.<sup>177</sup>

Therefore, Ms. Chouinard called on the Government of Canada to “ensure more efficient processing of entry visa applications.”<sup>178</sup> In terms of intergovernmental relations, she stated categorically that “[i]t’s really on the federal side that things need to improve.”<sup>179</sup>

In another vein, Ms. Chouinard said that “Canadian embassies sometimes find themselves in competition with Quebec to help attract French-speaking immigrants

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175 The data cover applications processed from 1 December 2022 to 31 May 2023: “Processing times refer to the time in which 80% of completed applications were finalized by IRCC within the past eight weeks. A minimum of 10 cases are required to calculate processing times. Applicants seeking to work, study or become a permanent resident in Quebec require specific documentation from the Quebec provincial government before they can submit their application to IRCC. This is provided in the form of a Certificat d’acceptation du Québec (CAQ) for a work or study permit and in the case of permanent residence, a Certificat de sélection du Québec (CSQ).” IRCC, *LANG 63.4 – Table of immigration application deadlines. IRCC’s response to a request for information made by the Standing Committee on Official Languages on June 9, 2023*, table entitled “Top 6 Categories of Francophone Temporary Resident Applications Processed by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) between December 1, 2022 and May 31, 2023, by Volume and Intended Province of Destination including associated Processing Times.”

176 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 0900 (Ms. Marie-Josée Chouinard, Vice-President, International Talents and Foreign Investment, Québec International).

177 The data cover applications processed from 1 December 2022 to 31 May 2023: “Processing times refer to the time in which 80% of completed applications were finalized by IRCC within the past six months. A minimum of 10 cases are required to calculate processing times. Applicants seeking to work, study or become a permanent resident in Quebec require specific documentation from the Quebec provincial government before they can submit their application to IRCC. This is provided in the form of a Certificat d’acceptation du Québec (CAQ) for a work or study permit and in the case of permanent residence, a Certificat de sélection du Québec (CSQ).” IRCC, *LANG 63.4 – Table of immigration application deadlines. IRCC’s response to a request for information made by the Standing Committee on Official Languages on June 9, 2023*, table entitled “Top 6 Categories of Francophone Permanent Resident Applications Processed from 1 December 2022 to 31 May 2023, by Volume and Intended Province including associated Processing Times.”

178 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 0915 (Ms. Marie-Josée Chouinard, Vice-President, International Talents and Foreign Investment, Québec International).

179 Ibid.



outside Quebec.”<sup>180</sup> She noted that there is “a lack of complementarity in the discourse of Canadian embassies.”<sup>181</sup> She would like representatives abroad “to talk about both Quebec and Canada [...] but in a complementary way,”<sup>182</sup> so that applicants have a better understanding of what Quebec and FMCs have to offer.<sup>183</sup> She sees it as an advantage in an international context where “global competition is very fierce when it comes to attracting talent.” She believes that “we need to pull together to attract more people to Canada, whether in Quebec or in francophone communities outside Quebec.”<sup>184</sup>

According to Mr. Alain Desruisseaux, collaboration between the governments of Canada and Quebec “is excellent,” and “there have been discussions about the risk” of putting FMCs and Quebec in competition for francophone immigration.<sup>185</sup> Mr. Desruisseaux also explained that, even though FMCs and Quebec “target the same clientele,” the international Francophonie is “a pool of 350 million people.”<sup>186</sup>

With regard to recruitment capacity in Quebec, Mr. Desruisseaux explained that “[t]he Quebec government has been very active and effective for many years in terms of promotion.”<sup>187</sup> He told the Committee that “there is a lot of collaboration with the Quebec government in the field. It’s something [IRCC is] watching closely.”<sup>188</sup>

In terms of welcoming newcomers and helping them integrate, Ms. Chouinard said that Quebec “is well equipped.”<sup>189</sup> She explained that it is “Quebec’s ministry of immigration, francization and integration that oversees those services,”<sup>190</sup> adding that the federal government “transfers the funding to Quebec, and Quebec sets up the co-operation

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180 Ibid., 1000.

181 Ibid., 0915.

182 Ibid.

183 Ibid.

184 Ibid.

185 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 May 2023, 1640 (Mr. Alain Desruisseaux, Director General, Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

186 Ibid.

187 Ibid.

188 Ibid.

189 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 16 June 2023, 0925 (Ms. Marie-Josée Chouinard, Vice-President, International Talents and Foreign Investment, Québec International).

190 Ibid.



agreements with the organizations dedicated to welcoming and integrating newcomers.”<sup>191</sup>

Furthermore, Mr. Desruisseaux said that IRCC supports the provinces and territories, including Quebec, and helps with recruitment:

[T]he Government of Canada supports all provinces and territories in their efforts to recruit foreign workers, permanent residents and immigrants. This includes Quebec. For example, if Quebec organizes a Quebec Abroad Day, IRCC will participate—if invited, of course—and will pass on information about the immigration process and talk to applicants to explain the steps they need to take before coming to Quebec.

We work directly in the field, in close collaboration, in offices such as those in Rabat, Morocco, and Dakar, Senegal. There are constant exchanges to promote study in Quebec and to support Quebec’s recruitment efforts.<sup>192</sup>

## Challenges Associated with Increasing Francophone Immigration Both Outside Quebec and Within Quebec

Ms. Meggs said that the Government of Canada’s measures to increase francophone immigration outside Quebec are making it more difficult for Quebec to achieve its objectives, despite the Canada–Québec Immigration Accord. First, she mentioned the Temporary Resident to Permanent Resident Pathway initiative.<sup>193</sup> This program did not cap the number of francophone applicants, but Ms. Meggs said that “the federal government provided a cap for immigration in general.”<sup>194</sup> As a result, she believes that it “could have encouraged francophones in Quebec to move outside the province to apply for permanent residency.”<sup>195</sup> She added that there is already “a lot of interprovincial migration, so there’s no need to encourage that.”<sup>196</sup> However, she made the following observation:

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191 Ibid.

192 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 9 June 2023, 0920 (Mr. Alain Desruisseaux, Director General, Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

193 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 June 2023, 1000 (Ms. Anne-Michèle Meggs, Former Director of Planning and Accountability, Ministère de l’Immigration, de la Francisation et de l’Intégration, Gouvernement du Québec, As an Individual).

194 Ibid.

195 Ibid.

196 Ibid., 1005.

Recruitment has never been easy, but it has to be said that, in terms of principal applicants in the skilled worker category, Quebec was able, thanks to its selection grid, which it has just set aside and which gave points for French, to select a majority of people who spoke French.<sup>197</sup>

Second, Ms. Meggs said that the Francophone Mobility work permit created privileges “for employers outside Quebec who hire French-speaking temporary foreign workers, but these privileges do not apply to Quebec employers.”<sup>198</sup> She believes that a measure similar to Francophone Mobility should be developed to promote francophone immigration in Quebec.<sup>199</sup> On the topic of immigrants’ knowledge of French, Ms. Meggs explained as follows:

Quebec recently announced that it would make knowledge of French mandatory for all categories of permanent residents. This means that the newcomer will have to know some French before being selected by Quebec. The level of French knowledge will be verified by language tests.<sup>200</sup>

Third, Ms. Meggs highlighted that the federal government does not adjust the fees associated with obtaining permanent residency for applicants who choose Quebec. She believes charging the full amounts is unfair, because “the federal government’s only job is to check their medical and criminal records. It doesn’t have to process these files, because that’s already been done by Quebec.”<sup>201</sup>

In her view, the measures taken by the Government of Canada in the area of francophone immigration contravene both the Canada–Québec Immigration Accord and the new *Official Languages Act*. She explained her perspective as follows:

The Canada-Quebec agreement on immigration is an example of how the asymmetry of the language issue was recognized 50 years ago. In this agreement, as in previous ones, the federal government clearly recognized the need to protect French in Quebec. To this was added Bill C-13, which specifies that Canada should not implement policies that run counter to the objective of protecting French in all provinces, including Quebec.<sup>202</sup>

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197     *Ibid.*, 0950.

198     *Ibid.*, 1000.

199     *Ibid.*

200     *Ibid.*, 1015.

201     *Ibid.*, 1000.

202     *Ibid.*, 1005.



## Arguments in Favour of a Territorial Approach to Francophone Immigration

Mr. Charles Castonguay, retired professor of mathematics and statistics, said that “the current Canadian policy to promote francophone immigration outside Quebec seems quite irresponsible.”<sup>203</sup>

Mr. Castonguay shared the following geolinguistic observations based on 2021 Census data: “[T]he percentage of Canadians who speak French as a language of use at home dropped below 20%.”<sup>204</sup> In Quebec, “the francophone majority has fallen to record lows, reaching 76% for native speakers and 79% for the language used at home.”<sup>205</sup>

For Canadians whose first language is French, language transfer to English is becoming more common, even within Quebec: “Between 2001 and 2021, the anglicization of Quebecers whose mother tongue is French has seen their number increase from 8,000 to 40,000.”<sup>206</sup> Anglicization also affects Canadians whose first official language is neither of the official languages:

2.9 million now use English, while the number who now use French, almost all of whom live in Quebec, is only 290,000, or exactly ten times less. Across Canada, English gains more than 3.3 million speakers through assimilation while French has a net loss of 170,000.<sup>207</sup>

Therefore, Mr. Castonguay believes that the best way to strengthen the Canadian French-speaking minority is to promote the integration of francophone immigrants in Quebec or New Brunswick, where the French-speaking minority is still quite strong.<sup>208</sup> He argued that “a growing majority of Quebecers with [a] mother tongue other than French or English have assimilated to French rather than to English.”<sup>209</sup> Outside Quebec, the opposite is true:

[O]utside Quebec, Canadians whose mother tongue is neither French nor English did not show any tendency towards higher francization. In 2006, more than 2.2 million had

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203 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 4 October 2023, 1640 (Mr. Charles Castonguay, Retired Professor, As an Individual).

204 Ibid.

205 Ibid.

206 Ibid.

207 Ibid.

208 Ibid.

209 Ibid.

become anglicized, compared to a minuscule 10,700 who had become French-speaking.<sup>210</sup>

According to Dr. Veronis, this approach would not be in line with the Act:

The objective is to provide support across the country. Consequently, we can't choose the place. Certain communities may be better off than others, but it's precisely the ones that are less well off that are more in need.<sup>211</sup>

Mr. Normand noted that retaining the French language in minority communities largely depends on institutional completeness within a community. Networks of associations and institutions that support the vitality of francophone communities need newcomers to work with them.<sup>212</sup> According to Mr. Normand, building up the capacity of these communities is important to “ensure there's a range of appropriate services with which to welcome and integrate them.”<sup>213</sup> That way, everyone can “benefit from the collective efforts made to increase the demographic weight of francophones in Canada.”<sup>214</sup>

Dr. Veronis proposed bolstering pre-departure services, particularly as regards employment and language of work in FMCs: “[E]mployment is the major challenge, especially in the small communities where there are no institutions where people can work in French, for example. [...] Applicants should be given more information about what the communities are really like.”<sup>215</sup> Dr. Veronis believes that smaller communities could also benefit from family reunification.<sup>216</sup> In addition to attracting more immigrants, having a family network would make it easier for them to integrate and would somewhat make up for the lack of settlement services in smaller communities that are unable to offer them. However, as Dr. Veronis pointed out, “[f]amily reunification should therefore be reinforced, expedited and simplified.”<sup>217</sup>

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends:

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210 Ibid.

211 LANG, *Evidence*, 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 27 September 2023, 1705 (Dr. Luisa Veronis, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, As an Individual).

212 Ibid., 1705 (Mr. Martin Normand, Director, Strategic Research and International Relations, Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne).

213 Ibid.

214 Ibid.

215 Ibid., 1705 (Dr. Luisa Veronis, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, As an Individual).

216 Ibid., 1635.

217 Ibid., 1710.



### **Recommendation 18**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship ensure that, in recruiting French-speaking immigrants and in programs to improve access to permanent residency or encourage employers to hire French-speaking temporary foreign workers, he does not hinder the achievement of the Quebec government’s French-speaking immigration objectives. The Minister must ensure that the fees associated with obtaining permanent residency for candidates selected by Quebec are not duplicated or altered.**

### **Recommendation 19**

**That the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship continue to consult with the Quebec Minister of Immigration, Francization and Integration on all Canadian government initiatives that could affect the Government of Quebec’s immigration objectives, as provided for in Annex A of the *Canada–Québec Accord Relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens*. The Minister must ensure that processing times for applications from French-speaking immigrants to Quebec, including for study and work permits, are no longer than they are for all Canadian provinces.**

## **CONCLUSION**

The enactment of the modernized *Official Languages Act* and the launch of the 2023–2028 Action Plan provide IRCC with a favourable context to rethink francophone immigration. As the witness testimony shows, a fragmented approach based on programs designed for the majority is no longer sustainable. The Act also now requires that IRCC include francophone immigration in a new paradigm based on substantive equality and that it take concerted action that includes greater consideration for FMCs and more collaboration with them.

Lastly, the Committee would like to warmly thank all the witnesses who appeared for its study on increasing francophone immigration in Canada.

## APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p><b>Department of Canadian Heritage</b></p> <p>Sarah Boily, Director General, Official Languages</p> <p>Julie Boyer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Official Languages, Heritage and Regions</p>	2023/05/09	60
<p><b>Department of Citizenship and Immigration</b></p> <p>Alain Desruisseaux, Director General, Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division</p> <p>Olivier Jacques, Area Director</p>	2023/05/09	60
<p><b>Department of Canadian Heritage</b></p> <p>Sarah Boily, Director General, Official Languages</p> <p>Julie Boyer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Official Languages, Heritage and Regions</p>	2023/05/12	61
<p><b>Department of Citizenship and Immigration</b></p> <p>Alain Desruisseaux, Director General, Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division</p> <p>Olivier Jacques, Area Director, Southern Europe and Maghreb</p>	2023/05/12	61
<p><b>Accueil francophone du Manitoba</b></p> <p>Bintou Sacko, Director</p>	2023/06/02	62
<p><b>As an individual</b></p> <p>Anne-Michèle Meggs, Former Director of Planning and Accountability, Ministère de l’Immigration, de la Francisation et de l’Intégration, Gouvernement du Québec</p>	2023/06/02	62

<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<p><b>Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada</b></p> <p>Alain Dupuis, Executive Director</p> <p>Yves-Gérard Méhou-Loko, Vice-President</p>	2023/06/02	62
<p><b>Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité du Canada</b></p> <p>Roukya Abdi Aden, Manager, National Consultation on Economic Development and Employability</p>	2023/06/02	62
<p><b>Department of Canadian Heritage</b></p> <p>Sarah Boily, Director General, Official Languages</p> <p>Julie Boyer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Official Languages, Heritage and Regions</p>	2023/06/09	63
<p><b>Department of Citizenship and Immigration</b></p> <p>Alain Desruisseaux, Director General, Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division</p> <p>Olivier Jacques, Area Director, Southern Europe and Maghreb</p>	2023/06/09	63
<p><b>Centre francophone du grand Toronto</b></p> <p>Aissa Nauthoo, Vice-President</p> <p>Florence Ngenzebuhoro, Chief Executive Officer</p>	2023/06/16	64
<p><b>Division scolaire franco-manitobaine</b></p> <p>Alain Laberge, Executive Director</p>	2023/06/16	64
<p><b>Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages</b></p> <p>Isabelle Gervais, Assistant Commissioner, Compliance Assurance Branch</p> <p>Pascale Giguère, General Counsel, Legal Affairs Branch</p> <p>Pierre Leduc, Assistant Commissioner, Policy and Communications Branch</p> <p>Raymond Théberge, Commissioner of Official Languages</p>	2023/06/16	64



<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>Québec International</b> Marie-Josée Chouinard, Vice-President, International Talents and Foreign Investment	2023/06/16	64
<b>As an individual</b> Mariève Forest, President and Senior Researcher at Sociopol	2023/09/25	66
<b>Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick</b> Cyrille Simard, Vice-President, Development	2023/09/25	66
<b>Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones</b> Valérie Morand, Executive Director Tanya Saumure, 2nd Vice-President	2023/09/25	66
<b>As an individual</b> Luisa Veronis, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa	2023/09/27	67
<b>Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne</b> Martin Normand, Director, Strategic Research and International Relations	2023/09/27	67
<b>Multicultural Association Chaleur Region</b> Francesco Viglione, Director General	2023/09/27	67
<b>As an individual</b> Charles Castonguay, Retired Professor	2023/10/04	68
<b>BB Immigration</b> Roger Pichette, Lawyer	2023/10/04	68
<b>Department of Citizenship and Immigration</b> Hon. Marc Miller, P.C., M.P., Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Christiane Fox, Deputy Minister Catherine Scott, Assistant Deputy Minister, Settlement and Integration	2023/10/04	68



## REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 60 to 64, 66 to 68, 74, 76 to 78, 80 to 81, 83 to 84 and 89](#)) in relation to the study of Increased Francophone Immigration to Canada and ([Meetings Nos. 8, 9, 12 to 16](#)) in relation to the study of Francophone Immigration to Canada and Quebec is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

René Arseneault  
Chair



Report on immigration – Supplementary opinion of Mario Beaulieu

“The Bloc Québécois agrees with most of the Report, but wishes to make the following comment:

That regarding recommendation 12 (b) and recommendations 16 (e) and (f), given that education is an exclusively provincial responsibility, the department of immigration ensure that it does not interfere in Quebec’s jurisdiction when implementing these recommendations. It is in fact up to the Government of Quebec to administer post-secondary institutions, and this applies both to language assessments and to programs for francophone international students.”

