



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

THE STATE OF FRENCH SECOND-LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN CANADA

Report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages

**Hon. Michael D. Chong
Chair**

FEBRUARY 2014

41st PARLIAMENT, SECOND SESSION

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has the honour to present its

FIRST REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108 (3)(f), the Committee has studied Second Official Language Immersion Programs in Canada and has agreed to report the following:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE STATE OF FRENCH SECOND-LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN CANADA	1
Introduction	1
1. Government of Canada support programs.....	1
1.1 Constitutional framework	1
1.2 Current federal programs.....	1
1.3 Consultations, accountability and performance measurement	4
1.3.1 Consultations.....	4
1.3.2 Accountability	5
1.3.3 Performance measurement.....	6
1.4 Evaluation by the Commissioner of Official Languages.....	8
2. Core French programs	9
2.1 Level of bilingualism among young people in 2011	9
2.2 Less attended regular French second-language programs	10
2.3 Extended French programs	10
3. Developing a continuum of French second-language learning	13
3.1 An overall strategy for achieving a continuum of French second-language learning.....	13
3.2 Improving access to elementary and secondary French second-language programs	13
3.2.1 Removing enrolment caps for French second-language programs ...	13
3.2.2 Providing various entry points into French immersion programs	14
3.2.3 Improving access to French second-language programs in rural and remote communities	16
3.2.4 For more inclusive French second-language programs.....	17
3.2.4.1 Promoting French second-language programs to immigrants... 18	
3.2.4.2 Promoting French second-language programs to parents of children with learning disabilities	19
3.3 Promoting access to French second-language instruction at the post-secondary level.....	20
3.3.1 The work of the Official Languages Commissioner	20

3.3.2 Supporting a campaign to promote French second-language programs at Canadian post-secondary institutions.....	21
3.3.3 Providing incentives to promote the recruitment and retention of students in French second-language education programs at the post-secondary level	21
3.3.4 Offering programs that support students' immersion in francophone culture and their participation in the vitality of francophone minority communities	22
3.4 Promoting access to French second-language programs outside the classroom	23
4. Immersion and minority-language schools.....	25
4.1 The distinction between immersion and francophone minority schools	25
4.2 French second-language education in anglophone minority public schools in Quebec.....	27
5. Professional development and educational resources.....	29
5.1 Supporting the creation of a common Canadian framework of reference for language learning.....	29
5.2 Supporting professional development	32
5.2.1 Recruiting teachers who specialize in French second-language instruction	32
5.2.2 Training teachers and offering professional development programs ..	33
5.3 Enriching educational resources.....	35
5.4 Investing in research	36
6. Recommendations	37
LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS	41
APPENDIX A: LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	43
APPENDIX B: LIST OF WITNESSES, 41 ST PARLIAMENT, FIRST SESSION	45
APPENDIX C: LIST OF WITNESSES, 41 ST PARLIAMENT, SECOND SESSION	47
APPENDIX D: LIST OF BRIEFS, 41 ST PARLIAMENT, FIRST SESSION	49
APPENDIX E: LIST OF BRIEFS, 41 ST PARLIAMENT, SECOND SESSION	51
REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE.....	53
SUPPLEMENTARY OPINION OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA ...	55

THE STATE OF FRENCH SECOND-LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN CANADA

Introduction

In spring 2013, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages (“the Committee”) undertook a study on French second-language education programs in Canada, particularly French immersion. The Committee looked at what steps the Government of Canada has taken to improve the delivery of French second-language education programs in terms of access, capacity, waiting lists, best practices and efficiency. This report presents common themes that arose from all the briefs received and evidence heard¹ during the Committee’s public hearings.

1. Government of Canada support programs

1.1 Constitutional framework

Under the Canadian Constitution, education is mainly a provincial responsibility. While minority-language education is constitutionally protected under section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, second-language instruction does not enjoy such protection.

Nevertheless, the Government of Canada supports official-language learning through other powers conferred to it under the Constitution, particularly its authority to spend. Since the early 1970s, the government has used this authority to provide the provinces and territories with complementary funding in support of second-language learning.

1.2 Current federal programs

A Protocol for Agreements signed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and the Government of Canada provides the general framework for partnerships between the federal and provincial/territorial governments with respect to two linguistic objectives: minority-language education and second-language learning.

This Protocol for Agreements sets out the financial commitments of both orders of government over a four- or five-year period. It also includes the commitments for two national programs administered jointly by CMEC and the provincial and territorial departments responsible for post-secondary education:

1 The witnesses are listed in the appendix.

- the bursary programs Explore and Destination Clic, which provide young Canadians with an opportunity to improve their first language or second language through a three- to five-week summer immersion program; and
- the language-assistant program Odyssey, which provides young Canadians with opportunities to support second-language instruction or minority-language education by working in elementary, secondary or post-secondary classrooms.

The protocol referred to in this report is the *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction 2009–2010 to 2012–2013* between the Government of Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada² (“the Protocol for Agreements”). Note that a new Protocol for Agreements was signed in August 2013.

Under the 2009–2010 to 2012–2013 Protocol for Agreements, the Government of Canada committed to investing \$1.034 billion over four years. Of this amount, 36.74% was to go toward second-language learning (immersion and other educational programs), totalling \$86.2 million per year.³ The provinces and territories generally invest an amount equal to or greater than what is provided by the Government of Canada under the Protocol for Agreements.

The Protocol for Agreements includes an outcomes framework agreed to by the Government of Canada and the provincial/territorial governments. This framework describes outcomes domains for both linguistic objectives. For the period from 2009–2010 to 2012–2013, six specific outcomes domains were identified for second-language learning:

- Primary and secondary
 - Student participation (recruitment and retention);
 - Provision of programs (programs and innovative teaching approaches);
 - Student performance (acquisition of measurable language skills); and

2 Canadian Heritage, *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction 2009–2010 to 2012–2013 between the Government of Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada*.

3 House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages [LANG], *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 28 May 2013, 1720 [Jean-Pierre Gauthier, Director General, Official Languages Branch, Canadian Heritage].

- Enriched school environment (curricular and extra-curricular initiatives).
- Post-secondary
 - Access to post-secondary education.
- All levels
 - Support for educational staff and research.

Once the Protocol for Agreements is signed, federal-provincial/territorial bilateral agreements are concluded. These agreements establish the objectives, initiatives, outcomes domains and the administrative and financial commitments of both orders of government.

These bilateral agreements also include action plans based on the outcomes framework in the Protocol for Agreements. The action plans describe the current situation in the province or territory with respect to its education programs in minority-language and second-language learning. They are accompanied by performance indicators and describe the consultation process established to implement the initiatives identified in the bilateral agreement. The provinces and territories develop their own performance targets and indicators.

It should be noted that the action plan approach was adopted in February 2000 following repeated criticism of the lack of accountability on the part of provincial governments and the lack of public information about the use and performance of federal funds.

In addition to the Protocol for Agreements and subsequent bilateral agreements, the Government of Canada contributes to second-language learning through the *Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013–2018: Education, Immigration, Communities*. For the duration of the Roadmap, the Government of Canada has committed to investing \$265.02 million to support minority-language education and \$175.02 million to support second-language instruction. As well, \$36.6 million is allocated to summer language bursaries, \$18.6 million to the official language monitors program and \$11.25 million to the Exchanges Canada program.⁴

4 Government of Canada, *Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013–2018: Education, Immigration, Communities*. Ottawa, 2013, pp. 18–20.

1.3 Consultations, accountability and performance measurement

1.3.1 Consultations

The Protocol for Agreements includes mechanisms for consulting with “interested associations and groups”. The Government of Canada’s obligations are set out in clause 9.3 of the Protocol for Agreements:

The Government of Canada intends to consult with interested associations and groups about the programs provided for in this Protocol and towards which it provides a financial contribution. When possible, consultations with national organizations will be conducted jointly with CMEC and the provinces and territories.⁵

Clause 9.4 of the Protocol specifies the responsibilities of the provinces and territories:

Similarly, each provincial/territorial government agrees to consult, as deemed necessary, with interested associations and groups about the programs and initiatives carried out under its action plan. When possible, these consultations will be held annually and may be conducted jointly by the federal and provincial/territorial governments. The preamble to the provincial/territorial action plan, as noted in Paragraph 3.4.2 will outline the consultation process established for initiatives undertaken pursuant to this Protocol and, as deemed necessary, the partners consulted.⁶

Despite these provisions, some witnesses raised concerns about the involvement of parents, school boards and community representatives in the development of the agreements and the key implementation stages. They generally wanted to see greater public input into how funding is allocated and objectives are selected to ensure that they truly address student and parent needs. Canadian Parents for French (CPF) argues that decision making must include, in addition to the various orders of government, “parents, post-secondary students, and the wider FSL stakeholder community”:⁷

Ensuring effective French-second-language programming is the shared responsibility of governments, school districts, teachers, school administrators and parents. Provincial policies and guidelines for French-second-language programs, including time allotted to French instruction, should be communicated directly to parents, teachers and administrators. ... Most importantly, parents and community stakeholder organizations are informed of FSL issues to be considered and are actively involved in decision-making at the school, school district, ministry, and government levels.⁸

5 Government of Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction 2009–2010 to 2012–2013*, Ottawa, 2009, p.14.

6 Ibid.

7 Canadian Parents for French, *French Second Language Learning in Canada*. Canadian Parents for French Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, n.d., p. 5.

8 Ibid.

CPF told the Committee that the action plans in the bilateral agreements do not always clearly identify the stakeholder representing parents.⁹ In fact, clause 9.4 states that the provincial or territorial government may identify the partners consulted only “as deemed necessary”.

1.3.2 Accountability

During an appearance before the Committee on 7 May 2013, the President of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA), Marie-France Kenny, also suggested that the Committee recommend that the Government of Canada establish better accountability mechanisms under the bilateral agreements to improve delivery of second official language instruction programs.¹⁰

CPF would like to see increased accountability to ensure that funding allocated in a bilateral agreement to a certain linguistic objective is actually spent on that objective:

The principal challenge, in our minds, resides in understanding the path the money takes once it reaches the provinces and territories. Does it go to classrooms, to projects, to administration, to FSL-only activities, or into general revenue? This is important to know because money is invariably at the root of the constraints on FSL and FI program growth. ... Even now, we do not know the true start-up costs of an early French immersion program.¹¹

Clause 8 of the Protocol for Agreements, “Public Reporting”, describes the responsibilities of the signatories with respect to accountability. The responsibilities of the provinces and territories are outlined in clause 8.2 of the Protocol as follows:

Each provincial/territorial government agrees to produce an annual report containing a financial statement of actual expenditures and contributions related to its action plan as well as a brief status update on initiatives recorded therein, with an explanation in the event of a discrepancy with respect to forecast implementation.¹²

The Committee notes that clause 8.4 of the Protocol for Agreements provides each provincial/territorial government with the discretion to present the information “in the manner considered by the provincial/territorial government to be most appropriate to its particular circumstances.”¹³ The Committee understands that financial statements are

9 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 28 May 2013, 1725 [Robert Rotheron, Executive Director, National Office, Canadian Parents for French].

10 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013, 1545 [Marie-France Kenny, President, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada].

11 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 28 May 2013, 1535 [Robert Rotheron, Executive Director, National Office, Canadian Parents for French].

12 Government of Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction 2009–2010 to 2012–2013*, Ottawa, 2009, p. 12.

13 Ibid.

certified by the provincial and territorial governments and that they must follow their own accounting rules. That said, clause 8.4 of the Protocol for Agreements states that model reports which provincial and territorial governments may use are provided in an appendix to the Protocol.¹⁴ The Committee also notes that, in the case of the provinces and territories annual financial statements, “the information is not necessarily posted publicly or distributed widely.”¹⁵

Lastly, clause 8.7 commits the Government of Canada to producing an annual financial statement for public information purposes.¹⁶ The Protocol for Agreements does not provide specific direction as to the statement content or to how the financial information is to be presented.

1.3.3 Performance measurement

During their appearance before the Committee, Canadian Heritage officials confirmed that the performance measures for programs funded through the Protocol for Agreements and subsequent bilateral agreements are developed by the provinces and territories in their action plans:

... The agreement protocol sets out six outcome domains that are agreed with the provinces. Within those outcome domains, each province is asked, in each bilateral agreement, which initiatives it wishes to undertake in the areas of second-language or minority-language teaching.

...The provinces therefore establish their priorities according to their overall priorities in the area of education. During the discussions that they have with us, the provinces also identify and specify performance targets and indicators that they are going to use. We document the objectives, the targets and the indicators as established by the provinces and we are content with them.¹⁷

That said, the provincial/territorial actions plans are subject to a number of rules included in the Protocol for Agreements. Clause 3.4.2.2 states that provincial/territorial actions plans must include a preamble that indicates “(baseline) reference data for provincial/territorial performance targets and indicators, the performance measurement strategy used and data sources.”¹⁸

14 Ibid.

15 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 28 May 2013, 1525 [Jean-Pierre Gauthier, Director General, Official Languages Branch, Department of Canadian Heritage].

16 Government of Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction 2009–2010 to 2012–2013*, Ottawa, 2009, p. 13.

17 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 28 May 2013, 1640 [Jean-Pierre Gauthier, Director General, Official Languages Branch, Department of Canadian Heritage].

18 Government of Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction 2009–2010 to 2012–2013*, Ottawa, 2009, p. 7.

As well, clause 3.4.3.2 states that for each linguistic objective (minority-language education and second-language learning), provincial/territorial action plans must present at least one performance indicator and one target for the duration of bilateral agreements.¹⁹

Clause 8.3 of the Protocol requires the provinces and territories to produce a biennial report presenting the progress made in each outcomes domain funded based on the indicators and targets identified in its action plan: “This report shall explain any discrepancy with respect to targets established. The report will be prepared after the second and fourth years of the Protocol and forwarded to the Department of Canadian Heritage and CMEC within six months of the end of the period covered, as specified in the bilateral agreements.”²⁰

Yet there is no indication that the biennial reports are publicly available. Canadian Heritage officials confirmed that they are not released:

The reports are sent by the provinces to the federal government as part of a financial agreement with us. So the information is not necessarily posted publicly or distributed widely. Having said that, a group that tries to get the information could submit a request, which would be reviewed in the same way as an access to information request, which we receive regularly.²¹

As is the case for provincial/territorial financial statements under the Protocol for Agreements, the provincial/territorial governments may, under clause 8.4, present the information in the manner they consider most appropriate, although model reports are provided.²²

Clause 8.5 of the Protocol for Agreements states that, through CMEC, the provincial/territorial governments will jointly compile two reports of pan-Canadian scope for public information purposes during the life of the Protocol for Agreements. With respect to the content, “these reports shall reflect the outcomes framework and be based on the contents of the reports of each provincial/territorial government.”²³ Clause 8.6 goes on to state that the Government of Canada may combine the provincial/territorial reports to produce one pan-Canadian summary to be made public once validated by each province and territory.²⁴

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., p. 12.

21 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 28 May 2013, 1725 [Jean-Pierre Gauthier, Director General, Official Languages Branch, Department of Canadian Heritage].

22 Government of Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction 2009–2010 to 2012–2013*, Ottawa, 2009, p. 12.

23 Ibid., p. 13.

24 Ibid.

Lastly, clause 8.8 sets out how the provincial and territorial governments must report on student participation and performance for the two linguistic objectives: “Provincial/territorial governments will endeavour, through CMEC, to establish comparable pan-Canadian measures of student participation and performance in minority-language education and second-language instruction programs.”²⁵

Clause 10 of the Protocol for Agreements pertains to the evaluation of the Protocol and programs. Clause 10.1 states that the Government of Canada and CMEC “may” conduct a joint evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Protocol’s implementation. Clause 10.2 states that Government of Canada programs, including the Development of Official-Language Communities Program and Enhancement of Official Languages Program, are routinely subject to evaluation by the federal departments concerned, and that the Government of Canada agrees to consult the provincial/territorial governments and CMEC on the design of any future evaluation of its programs and to seek their views during the course of such an evaluation.²⁶

Despite the Protocol for Agreements’ provisions, certain witnesses expressed dissatisfaction with the publicly available information regarding performance measurement and program evaluation. CPF stated that the agreements reporting “does not measure the complete success of FSL programs across Canada”²⁷ and that it wishes to see future agreements take “an outcomes-based approach [...] one using real and measurable targets.”²⁸

1.4 Evaluation by the Commissioner of Official Languages

In September 2013, the Commissioner of Official Languages released the final report into the audit of accountability for official languages transfer payments to the provinces from Citizenship and Immigration, Health Canada and Canadian Heritage. The audit had three objectives: determine whether senior management in the departments in question are strongly committed to accountability mechanisms for official languages transfer payments to the provinces and territories; verify whether the institutions have developed formal and effective accountability mechanisms and procedures; and look at whether the institutions in question are effectively tracking their performance in terms of accountability for official languages transfer payments.²⁹ It should be mentioned that “this was not a financial audit to determine how the provinces used their funding.”³⁰

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., p. 14.

27 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 28 May 2013, 1535 [Lisa Marie Perkins, President, National Office, Canadian Parents for French].

28 Ibid.

29 Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, *Horizontal Audit of Accountability for Official Languages Transfer Payments to the Provinces (Part VII of the Official Languages Act) Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Health Canada, Canadian Heritage, Final Report*, September 2013, p. 1.

30 Ibid., p. 2.

With respect to Canadian Heritage, the audit examined the *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction* and the subsequent agreements, specifically the ones signed with the governments of British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia.

The Commissioner said he was satisfied with Canadian Heritage's performance, particularly with respect to the processes established to "ensure effective management of accountability for transfer payments to the provinces."³¹ He added that the Department demonstrated leadership by taking concrete measures to monitor educational activities.³²

That said, the Commissioner did point out that Canadian Heritage "does not conduct on-site visits to validate the information that is received, although the agreements include a provision for access rights, which requires the provinces to allow the federal minister or his or her representatives to visit the sites where the funded projects are carried out under the agreement framework."³³ As a result, the Commissioner recommended that Canadian Heritage "proceed with field validations to follow up on activity and financial reports received in accordance with the outcomes domain in the agreements, to ensure better accountability for funds that are transferred to provincial and territorial departments of education. It must also ensure effective record keeping in this regard."³⁴ This recommendation was maintained by the Commissioner since the Department had not submitted an action plan in response to the recommendation by the time the Commissioner's audit final report was released.³⁵

Lastly, the Commissioner recommended that the Department, as part of an internal audit on the modernization of grants and contributions, "integrate all accountability activities related to transfer payments to the provinces and territories, and governed by official languages support programs, into its audit objectives."³⁶ With regard to this second recommendation, the Commissioner said he was satisfied with the measures taken by Canadian Heritage.

2. Core French programs

2.1 Level of bilingualism among young people in 2011

According to language data compiled by Statistics Canada during the 2011 Census, the number of Canadians who reported being able to conduct a conversation in both of Canada's official languages grew by almost 350,000 between 2006 and 2011 to

31 Ibid., p. 8.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., p. 9.

35 Ibid, p. 17.

36 Ibid., p. 13.

5.8 million. This means that the level of English-French bilingualism in Canada rose from 17.4% to 17.5% of the population.

That said, learning French as a second language remains a challenge in Canada outside Quebec. Statistics Canada reports that the rate of English-French bilingualism peaks in the 15- to 19-year-old age group, when young people are completing secondary school. Since 1996, bilingualism appears to be losing ground among young people in this age group who have English as their first official language spoken:

The proportion of these young people who could conduct a conversation in both official languages was 15.2% in 1996. It decreased steadily to 11.2% in 2011, down four percentage points.³⁷

2.2 Less attended regular French second-language programs

Statistics Canada reports that “approximately 57% of young people today have no contact with French-language instruction, either in immersion or core French programs.”³⁸ This is surprising to say the least, given the popularity of French-immersion programs in Canada. Public education figures show that, “since the 1991–1992 school year, the number of youth enrolled in an immersion program has gone from more than 267,000 to nearly 342,000, a 27.7% increase.”³⁹

Understanding the situation requires looking at the context surrounding the increase in French-immersion enrolments. Over the past 20 years, there has been a considerable decline in core French second-language program enrolments:

The number of youth enrolled in a regular French as a second language program fell from 1.8 million to 1.36 million, a 24% decrease. In short, despite the rise in immersion program enrolment, the proportion of youth outside Quebec who have received French as a second language instruction in the last 20 years has fallen from 53.3% to 43.9%.⁴⁰

Given these data, Statistics Canada states that “the rate of bilingualism in non-Francophones outside Quebec would be even lower, were it not for the success of immersion programs across the country.”⁴¹

2.3 Extended French programs

Are traditional core French programs in trouble? Currently available data appear to show that traditional core French programs are not as successful in retaining students in French second-language programs at the post-secondary level. In its report on the state of

37 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 May 2013, 1605 [Jean-Pierre Corbeil, Assistant Director, Chief Specialist, Language Statistics Section, Statistics Canada].

38 Ibid., 1620.

39 Ibid., 1605.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., 1610.

French second-language education in 2005, CPF reports that 44% of students who complete immersion programs choose to take French as a second language at university, compared with only 18% of students who complete a core French program.⁴²

CPF surveyed students who completed a core French program in an attempt to understand why these programs are less successful than immersion and enriched or extended programs in retaining students. Interviews with students from primary school programs suggested that these students were satisfied with their experiences. However, the same could not be said for the more than half of students who attended secondary school programs. While they expected to learn to speak French, “they are unable to converse in the target language.”⁴³

In core French programs, the subject studied is the target language, so students are given lessons on French vocabulary and grammar. However, the students expressed “boredom”⁴⁴ with the curriculum, which discouraged them from continuing to learn French. This disconnect between student expectations and teaching methods partly explains the high attrition rate — estimated at 95%⁴⁵ — in secondary core French programs.

In light of these findings, CPF believes that program curricula need to be revised in order to shift the emphasis onto developing conversation skills. This view is shared by the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT), which maintains that “the new approaches are communicative, interactive and much more dynamic than the old methods, and we have to work on that.”⁴⁶

The Committee notes that efforts are already underway. New intensive core French programs are currently being piloted in 10 provinces and territories.⁴⁷ In an effort to improve its core French program, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) developed a voluntary Grade 12 French proficiency test based on the Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELF). According to OCDSB officials, the test results allowed students to measure their progress and earn a DELF certificate. These results led the OCDSB to conclude that oral communication must be a key component of any French second-language program:

42 Canadian Parents for French, *The State of French-Second-Language Education in Canada*. Annual Report 2005, 2005, p. 33.

43 Canadian Parents for French, *French Second Language Learning in Canada*. Canadian Parents for French. Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, n.d., p. 2.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013, 1610 [Guy Leclair, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers].

47 Canadian Parents for French, *French Second Language Learning in Canada*. Canadian Parents for French. Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, n.d., p. 2.

Whether they're coming from a core French background or from a French immersion background, children and students leaving our system have to be confident in their skills and willing to use these skills outside the classroom.⁴⁸

During their appearance before the Committee, Canadian Heritage officials distributed a document in which the Department states that intensive learning will be one of the federal priorities with respect to second-language learning in a future Protocol for Agreements.⁴⁹

Regarding the future of core French programs, the Commissioner of Official Languages has made it clear that immersion is not “a panacea, nor is it the only way to learn French. Neither should it drain resources away from core French instruction in Canada, as I sometimes fear it does, by attracting the best teachers and the most committed students and teachers.”⁵⁰ He said that the importance of core French needs to be recognized and it needs to stop being treated, “as it is in many schools and school boards, as a second-class program.”⁵¹ The Commissioner went on to say that it is important for students from core French programs to “have access, in addition to this foundation that can be very important, to exchange programs, summer jobs or summer camps, for example, to work on their French outside the classroom.”⁵²

Similarly, CASLT said that the potential of core French programs and of the intensive French programs in second-language instruction in Canada must not be underestimated: “The core program needs some improvements, of course, but it is a good program that needs to be reanalyzed, revised, improved and redeployed.”⁵³ CASLT said that “immersion programs must not be increased to the detriment of core language schools.”⁵⁴

For these reasons, CPF encourages “educational decision-makers to address student retention and achievement in core programs by making alternative core French programs available across the country.”⁵⁵

48 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 May 2013, 1605 [Jennifer Adams, Director of Education, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board].

49 Canadian Heritage, *Intergovernmental Cooperation in Education. Background Information*. Presentation to the Standing Committee on Official Languages, 28 May 2013, p. 11.

50 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 December 2013, 1530 [Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages].

51 *Ibid.*, 1610.

52 *Ibid.*

53 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013, 1535 [Guy Leclair, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers].

54 *Ibid.*, 1600.

55 Canadian Parents for French, *French Second Language Learning in Canada*. Canadian Parents for French. Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, n.d., p. 2.

3. Developing a continuum of French second-language learning

The Commissioner of Official Languages and a number of other witnesses believe that a continuum of French second-language learning from elementary school to the post-secondary level, and even into the workplace,⁵⁶ is needed to prepare young Canadians to take leadership roles and to stand out in the domestic and international job markets. Currently there are disparities in how French second-language programs are delivered across Canada that hinder the achievement of a true continuum of French second-language learning.

3.1 An overall strategy for achieving a continuum of French second-language learning

In his 2012–2013 annual report and during his appearance before the Committee, the Commissioner of Official Languages said that, in order to achieve a true continuum of French second-language learning, “the federal government must demonstrate its leadership by developing an overall strategy on this issue.”⁵⁷

3.2 Improving access to elementary and secondary French second-language programs

3.2.1 Removing enrolment caps for French second-language programs

In general, demand for elementary and secondary French second-language programs, including immersion, exceeds supply.⁵⁸ There are many reasons for this, as outlined by the Commissioner of Official Languages: “Registration issues, such as enrolment caps, overnight lineups and lotteries, continue to hinder access to second-language programs in many regions.”⁵⁹

In its brief to the Committee, CPF pointed out that some school boards have capped enrolments or decline to introduce more programs despite significant demand. CPF therefore recommends that the various orders of government work together to remove enrolment caps from existing immersion programs and implement additional programs to meet demand.⁶⁰ This view is shared by Dr. Joseph Dicks:

The enrolment trend is upward, and that is positive, but we need to do better. We need to remove the barriers. There is no need for lotteries to decide who gets in, and the lack of

56 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 December 2013, 1535 [Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages].

57 Ibid.

58 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013, 1530 [Guy Leclair, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers].

59 Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, *Annual Report 2012–2013*, Ottawa, 2013, p. 68.

60 Canadian Parents for French, *French Second Language Learning in Canada*. Canadian Parents for French. Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, n.d., p. 4.

support for struggling learners should not be creating a system where only some can stay in.

We can do better, and to create a more truly bilingual society, we must do better.⁶¹

3.2.2 Providing various entry points into French immersion programs

According to the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers (CAIT), “there are essentially three entry points: early immersion, which is for students in kindergarten and Grade 1; middle immersion, in Grades 4 and 5; and late immersion, usually in Grades 7 or 8.”⁶²

Several witnesses pointed out that the timing of entry into a French second-language program, particularly French immersion, is critical to success, retaining what was learned, and student interest in continuing to learn his or her second language.

This is the case for CPF, which believes that French second-language learning can start at the beginning of elementary school:

CPF and its members believe that Early Immersion is the most equitable option and is suitable for the widest range of student ability. It is offered at the age and grade when students would begin formal study of their mother-tongue and, unlike middle and late immersion in which students must quickly develop the level of French-language skills required to comprehend sophisticated concepts in their second language, Early French immersion presents no such requirement.⁶³

This view is shared by the Peel District School Board (PDSB): “the research is really clear that, yes, the earlier the better, and that’s why we start our immersion program in grade one.”⁶⁴ At this school board, interest for early French immersion is such that one in four students choose this program as early as Grade 1. CAIT also argues that early immersion programs generally produce better results than the other programs.⁶⁵

Recent data on bilingualism in Canada tend to support the idea that early French second-language programs promote retention. According to Statistics Canada, “the much higher rate of bilingualism — and therefore the much higher retention rate — of youth who had been enrolled in an immersion program varies depending on the number of years

61 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 December 2013, 1650 [Joseph Dicks, Director, Second Language Research Institute of Canada (L2RIC) at the University of New Brunswick, As an Individual].

62 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1545 [Philippe Le Dorze, President, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers].

63 Canadian Parents for French, *French Second Language Learning in Canada*. Canadian Parents for French Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, n.d., p. 3.

64 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 November 2013, 1550 [Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction Support Services, Peel District School Board].

65 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1545 [Philippe Le Dorze, President, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers].

spent in the program and when the youth were first enrolled in the program.”⁶⁶ This is clearly explained by the following:

Youth who had been enrolled in an immersion program for at least six school years had a bilingualism rate of 75% at age 21. As well, youth who had been enrolled in an immersion program before grade 4 had a rate of bilingualism of 64% at age 21, compared with a rate of 45% for youth who had been first enrolled in grade 4 or later.

Lastly, note that, for youth who were enrolled in immersion at the elementary level only, the rate of bilingualism at age 21 was approximately 40%, compared with 66% for those who continued in the program to the secondary level.⁶⁷

Other witnesses, such as the OCDSB, maintain that evaluation findings do not show much of a difference in student performance, whether or not they attended an early immersion program:

We conducted a major study to see what research said about that. As for entering immersion programs, the study showed that at the end of these early programs, oral results were normally somewhat higher than results in other programs. However with writing, we noted that immersion courses starting later yielded the same results.

... As regards the number of children who went on to obtain a French-language diploma, we saw very little difference between children who completed the intermediary program and those who completed the early immersion program.⁶⁸

Currently, there is no national standard regarding entry points for immersion programs.⁶⁹ According to Dr. Dicks, the Government of Canada, “while providing support for other entry points to immersion, [should focus] upon early French immersion as the standard entry point for French immersion across Canada.”⁷⁰ Although CAIT favours early immersion, it believes that “we also need to encourage jurisdictions to offer a variety of entry points so that everyone has access to French immersion and so that we have sufficient numbers to offer the full range of courses at the secondary level.”⁷¹ The OCDSB also supports having multiple entry points. School board officials told the Committee that several immigrant parents are learning English and, because they “speak a language other than French and English at home,” they “prefer to register their children in the intermediate program, in order to give those children an opportunity to acquire a good

66 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 May 2013, 1610 [Jean-Pierre Corbeil, Assistant Director, Chief Specialist, Language Statistics Section, Statistics Canada].

67 Ibid.

68 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 May 2013, 1705 [Jennifer Adams, Director of Education, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board].

69 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1545 [Philippe Le Dorze, President, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers].

70 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 December 2013, 1645 [Joseph Dicks, Director, Second Language Research Institute of Canada (L2RIC) at the University of New Brunswick, As an Individual].

71 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1545 [Philippe Le Dorze, President, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers].

grounding in English up until grade 3.”⁷² The OCDSB therefore created two entry points in order to provide more options to parents and students interested in French second-language programs.⁷³

3.2.3 Improving access to French second-language programs in rural and remote communities

Some witnesses told the Committee that access to French second-language programs is problematic for young people living in rural or remote communities. According to CAIT, these disparities may exist even within a single school board: “the immersion program offers 100% of classes in French in an urban area, and only 50% of classes in French in a rural area. ... It would be advisable to support adding more immersion classes in rural areas and in places with high demand.”⁷⁴ CAIT therefore recommends that the Government of Canada focus on this issue and that it support “adding more immersion classes in rural areas and in places with high demand.”⁷⁵

The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) drew the Committee’s attention to a significant problem on the Lower North Shore, where access to French second-language programs is closely linked to the region’s low youth employability:

For example, in the Lower North Shore, where learning French is difficult, the bilingualism rate among the English-speaking population is 22% compared with 65% across the entire community. When the fishery collapsed, residents were forced to leave not only their home villages but also their home province to find seasonal work, because of a lack of French language skills.

Along *la Côte-Nord*, English-speaking unemployment was 28.7% compared with 10.9% for the majority. The promise of good jobs in the future mining industry of northeastern Quebec is not accessible for members of this isolated English-speaking community, in large measure because the population does not have the French skills to acquire the required technical and trades training and provincial certification.⁷⁶

The problem of access in rural and remote communities is also one of transportation. According to CAIT, several school boards do not provide transportation to students who opt for this program, or they charge additional transportation fees.⁷⁷

72 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 April 2013, 1705 [Jennifer Adams, Director of Education, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board].

73 Ibid.

74 Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, April 2013, p. 3.

75 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1540 [Philippe Le Dorze, President, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers].

76 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1535 [James Shea, Member, Board of Directors, Quebec Community Groups Network].

77 Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, April 2013, p. 3.

While the problem of student transportation is certainly more pressing in rural areas, it also poses a challenge in major cities such as Edmonton. According to officials from the Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB), “Edmonton has a large urban sprawl, a growing population, and numerous program choices for parents. Providing all families with easy and local access to French immersion schools is challenging. Transportation costs and transportation time also pose significant problems.”⁷⁸ This was also the case in Toronto:

First, in terms of access, in my own experience living in Canada’s largest city, growing up in Toronto, the closest French immersion school was never the most convenient option. This required considerable time spent on buses, on public transit, and of course there was the financial hardship that put on my family in order to pay for public transit to travel 45 minutes across the city.

I’m talking from my experience in Toronto. I know that across Canada it could be an even longer distance and higher costs incurred to get to the closest French immersion school.⁷⁹

Because of cases like these, Canadian Youth for French,⁸⁰ CAIT⁸¹ and other witnesses recommended that more subsidized transportation is needed to improve access to immersion schools for students both in urban and in rural or remote communities.

3.2.4 For more inclusive French second-language programs

The EPSB told the Committee that the Protocol for Agreements identified primary and secondary student participation as an outcomes domain for the second-language linguistic objective (clause 3.2.2.1). Specifically, the Protocol for Agreements aims to recruit and retain students in second-language education programs up to secondary school graduation.⁸² However, EPSB believes that this outcomes domain needs to be reworded to send a clear message that French second-language programs, including immersion, are inclusive:

To that end, we recommend the statement be changed to read “recruitment and retention of a wide range of students with diverse learning skills, abilities, and needs, and second language education programs up to secondary school graduation.” Or we recommend adding a new outcome that expresses the need to expand access and supports for a wider range of students with a range of learning needs to learn the other

78 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 December 2013, 1630 [Valérie Leclair, Program Coordinator for French Language Programs, Support for Staff and Students, Edmonton Public School Board].

79 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 April 2013, 1615 [Calina Ellwand, Member of the Board of Directors, Canadian Youth for French].

80 Ibid., 1640.

81 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1545 [Philippe Le Dorze, President, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers].

82 Government of Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction 2009–2010 to 2012–2013*, Ottawa, 2009, p. 5.

official language. From our perspective this alteration would more strongly communicate the goal that all students be enabled to become bilingual.⁸³

This recommendation by EPSB clearly illustrates the expressed need to integrate a greater number of students, particularly young immigrants and students with learning disabilities, in French second-language programs, including immersion programs.

3.2.4.1 Promoting French second-language programs to immigrants

Several witnesses told the Committee that allophone parents are keenly interested in having their children learn both official languages. According to CAIT, these parents see it as a valuable asset in the labour market.⁸⁴ A CPF survey of parents of allophone children revealed that 60% felt that learning both of Canada's official languages would benefit their children, and 40% had enrolled their children in French immersion.⁸⁵ The Commissioner of Official Languages also heard from immigrant students in immersion and their parents:

... many new arrivals have expressed a stronger sense of belonging to Canada simply through their children's learning of both official languages. I've also seen examples in which members of visible minority groups are actually more bilingual in English and French than are unilingual Canadians who have been in Canada for generations.⁸⁶

However, immigrant students interested in French second-language programs face certain challenges. The problem appears to lie in promoting French second-language education to parents of allophone children. In its report *The State of French-Second-Language Education in Canada in 2010*, CPF describes the problem this way:

Allophone students ... are often overlooked in French-second-language (FSL) promotional and advocacy initiatives. Allophone students are not encouraged, and are sometimes actively discouraged, from enrolling in FSL education despite the impressive performance of those who do. Indeed, no federal or provincial policy explicitly ensures that Allophone students have access to FSL education.⁸⁷

83 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 December 2013, 1635 [Valérie Leclair, Program Coordinator for French Language Programs, Support for Staff and Students, Edmonton Public School Board].

84 Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, April 2013, p. 4.

85 Canadian Parents for French, *The State of French-Second-Language Education in Canada 2010*, Executive Summary, Ottawa, 2010, p. 5.

86 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 December 2013, 1535 [Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada].

87 Canadian Parents for French, *The State of French-Second-Language Education in Canada in 2010*, Executive Summary, Ottawa, 2010, p. 5.

CPF also states that “80% of these parents received no information about French immersion options from the school system.”⁸⁸

In light of the survey responses, CPF, CAIT and other witnesses recommended that the Committee focus on the importance of reaching out to allophone parents when promoting French second-language programs. CPF stated that the current bilateral agreements between the federal and provincial/territorial governments do not include components for including immigrant students in French second-language programs. They would like to see such initiatives included in future agreements.⁸⁹

3.2.4.2 Promoting French second-language programs to parents of children with learning disabilities

Disparities in the active offer of French second-language programs also appear to affect children with learning disabilities. CAIT believes that parents are not adequately informed about the opportunities available to their children, and they are sometimes even discouraged from enrolling their children into these kinds of programs, particularly immersion programs.⁹⁰

CAIT believes that this stems from a tendency to view immersion programs as being for gifted students. Dr. Fred Genesee believes that work is needed to make immersion programs more inclusive:

... there is a tendency for these programs to be somewhat elitist insofar as students who might have learning challenges, or who have been diagnosed with a learning challenge, being either precluded from being in these programs or excluded once they get in. No school system has an official policy of this sort because this would be unacceptable, but unofficially and informally, many students who have difficulties in school are not participating in these programs, even though many years of research have shown that these kinds of children can succeed in immersion just as well as they can in a monolingual program, and at the same time be bilingual. I think for the sake of promoting official bilingualism we should be encouraging immersion programs to be more inclusive, and we need leadership in making that happen.⁹¹

With regard to success in immersion programs by children with learning disabilities, CAIT believes that “[t]hese students even achieve better results in French than students enrolled in a regular French program.”⁹² This view is shared by the EPSB, which stated

88 Ibid.

89 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 28 May 2013, 1535 [Lisa Marie Perkins, President, National Office, Canadian Parents for French].

90 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1545 [Philippe Le Dorze, President, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers].

91 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 11 June 2013, 1545 [Fred Genesee, Professor, McGill University, As an Individual].

92 Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, April 2013, p. 5.

that “students with various special learning needs can be successful and sometimes flourish in the program, achieving many benefits from second language learning.”⁹³

CAIT laments that, in many educational institutions, there is a lack of specialized services for students with learning disabilities:

It is important to provide support for children, parents and immersion teachers by giving them the tools they need to help children with learning disabilities succeed and benefit from all the advantages of bilingualism.⁹⁴

CPF argues that only the *2009–2013 Canada–Ontario Agreement on Minority Language Education and Second Official Language Instruction* has an objective to increase the number of students with learning disabilities.⁹⁵ CPF hopes that future agreements will include measures to make it easier for students with learning disabilities to access French second-language programs.⁹⁶

3.3 Promoting access to French second-language instruction at the post-secondary level

Some people say that the continuum for French second-language instruction should continue all the way to post-secondary, and perhaps even to the workforce. To some witnesses, the possibility of continuing post-secondary studies in one’s second official language is the greatest factor contributing to English–French bilingualism in Canada. It appears few Canadian post-secondary institutions give their students an opportunity to take courses in their major while continuing to learn French as a second language.

3.3.1 The work of the Official Languages Commissioner

In 2009, the Commissioner of Official Languages released a study called *Two Languages: A World of Opportunities*. The findings showed that there were relatively few universities that recognized the importance of offering second-language learning opportunities and of their role in building a bilingual workforce. The study also found that there is no comprehensive approach for building a system to support a continuum of second-language learning.⁹⁷ At the time, the Commissioner made nine recommendations

93 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 December 2013, 1630 [Valérie Leclair, Program Coordinator for French Language Programs, Support for Staff and Students, Edmonton Public School Board].

94 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1545 [Philippe Le Dorze, President, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers].

95 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 28 May 2013, 1535 [Lisa Marie Perkins, President, National Office, Canadian Parents for French].

96 Ibid.

97 Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, *Annual Report 2012–2013*, Ottawa, 2013, p. 67.

to federal, provincial and territorial governments and post-secondary institutions to improve the situation.

Since the report was released, work has been done to increase opportunities for young Canadians wanting to learn or improve their official second language at the post-secondary level. It is important to note that increased access to French second-language programs at the post-secondary level is one of the six outcomes domains set out in the Protocol for Agreements under the linguistic objective “second-language learning”.

3.3.2 Supporting a campaign to promote French second-language programs at Canadian post-secondary institutions

While some universities have increased their French second-language learning opportunities, the Commissioner of Official Languages finds that “others have reduced their efforts in this area.”⁹⁸ The Commissioner says this decrease is caused by the Government of Canada not expressing its need for bilingual workers loudly and clearly enough. He adds this would prompt “post-secondary education officials to pay more attention to the benefits of second-language learning.”⁹⁹

Federal investment in French second-language education at the post-secondary level aims to support linguistic duality in the federal public service and in the workforce in general. In his 2008–2009 report, the Commissioner wrote that, “by encouraging and supporting Canadian post-secondary students in learning their second language, the federal government not only supports their personal and professional advancement, but also strengthens all Canadian federal institutions that require bilingual resources to sufficiently meet the needs of their clients.”¹⁰⁰

In his appearance before the Committee, the Commissioner reiterated that the Government of Canada must send a clear message to post-secondary institutions that “the federal government, the biggest employer in Canada, needs bilingual employees and it is their responsibility to provide learning opportunities to students.”¹⁰¹

3.3.3 Providing incentives to promote the recruitment and retention of students in French second-language education programs at the post-secondary level

To encourage young graduates of high school French immersion programs to continue learning French at the post-secondary level, the Association des universités de la

98 Ibid., p. 68.

99 Ibid.

100 Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, *Annual Report 2008–2009: Two Official Languages, One Common Space: 40th anniversary of the Official Languages Act*, 2009, p. 80.

101 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 December 2013, 1540 [Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages].

francophonie canadienne (AUFC) has introduced a scholarship program. Funded by Canadian Heritage, 25 scholarships each worth \$5,000 were awarded to graduates who enrolled in one of the AUFC's member universities.¹⁰²

The decision of whether to continue learning French at the post-secondary level also depends on the support given to students throughout their academic career. According to the AUFC, some immersion graduates choose to pursue their post-secondary studies in English for fear of failure in a French second-language education program. According to the AUFC, students are now aware that some AUFC member universities offer support programs to promote students' academic success while they continue to learn French as a second language.

However, the AUFC pointed out that such services are not available across its entire network. It argues that the federal government could invest in this area to improve the capacity of smaller francophone minority universities to offer flexible programs and personalized follow-up to immersion students in order to promote their success and keep them in French second-language education programs.

The Committee notes that work in this area has already begun. Canadian Heritage is funding a study to be conducted jointly by the AUFC and CAIT. The purpose of the study is to determine the needs of students coming from immersion who have enrolled in AUFC member universities in order to introduce support and assistance services that would provide a better orientation for these students, especially in the transition year when arriving from high school.¹⁰³

In general, the AUFC argues that increased financial support from the federal government is needed to support French second-language education at the post-secondary level, especially by "strengthening the capacity and infrastructures of small francophone universities outside Quebec."¹⁰⁴ The AUFC hopes that the next Protocol for Agreements will increase federal investments to improve French second-language education at the post-secondary level.¹⁰⁵

3.3.4 Offering programs that support students' immersion in francophone culture and their participation in the vitality of francophone minority communities

As mentioned previously, the transition between secondary school and university is a critical step for young people wanting to pursue their education in French as a second language. According to the AUFC representative, this move creates a lot of

102 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 November 2013, 1530 [Jocelyne Lalonde, Director General, Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne].

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid., 1535.

105 Ibid.

insecurity for students because “they now find themselves in class with francophone students, whereas they were used to being with their anglophone peers in high school.”¹⁰⁶

The Academic Forum on French Immersion at the University Level, held in February 2012, looked at this issue. To help students with this transition and to retain them in French second-language programs, the Forum recommends that universities put orientation programs and services in place “in order to provide a cultural and social context that will allow the students to continue their immersion experience outside of their campus and during their internships.”¹⁰⁷

It is for this very reason — to discover and integrate into francophone minority communities — that the AUFC requires its scholarship recipients from immersion programs to work in the francophone community.¹⁰⁸ The increased contact with francophone minority communities gives students a better understanding of why they are learning French as a second language.¹⁰⁹ As well, their participation contributes to the vitality of francophone minority communities.

3.4 Promoting access to French second-language programs outside the classroom

Several witnesses argued that young Canadians must have more opportunities to learn or improve their French outside the classroom, at all levels.

At the elementary level, these opportunities are what teachers call “authentic experiences”.¹¹⁰ They include visits, group trips, meetings or experiences outside the classroom that allow the student to enter in direct contact with the language, culture and people of the community. According to Raymond Sokalski, a social science teacher in an immersion program at a Manitoba high school, these experiences are important because they give students the confidence to speak in their second official language.¹¹¹

To create these authentic experiences, it is important to have the participation of francophone minority communities. According to CAIT, these communities have a role to play in welcoming and integrating participants:

... French-language learning does not occur solely in classrooms, but also in the community. One of the possible actions is to build a bridge between francophones and francophiles. Immersion programs will be better off only if they are supported by

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid., 1530.

108 Ibid., 1535.

109 Ibid., 1650.

110 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 21 May 2013, 1550 [Chris Young, History Teacher, Kelvin High School, Winnipeg School Division].

111 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 21 May 2013, 1540 [Raymond Sokalski, Teacher, Kelvin High School, Winnipeg School Division].

strong francophone communities that welcome these types of programs. We have an open francophone community. Consider this example: if my son marries your daughter who is in immersion, my grandchildren may attend a French-language school, and French will continue to flourish in Canada.

I believe that people in immersion must also be offered genuine experiences. Speaking French only in the classroom is not enough since one student merely speaks to another who has the same accent as he or she. We must promote exchanges, but also programs in which open communities can offer immersion students authentic experiences.¹¹²

EPSB has already taken action in this area:

We actually participated in many activities that were happening in our small francophone community. These were such things as attending L'UniThéâtre, which has plays in French. They would go to the French restaurant, or they would visit the *cabanes à sucre*. They were always welcomed in these situations. It was very interesting to see how our students reacted to that.¹¹³

To create authentic experiences, school groups must also have access to cultural organizations and heritage sites:

Cultural organizations rely on grants. When we turn to what the federal government can do, I think about our context. In Winnipeg, we have the Cercle Molière theatre, the Maison Gabrielle-Roy museum, the Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site, the Forks National Historic Site. However, it is difficult for us to have access to tours in French, because only one or two people can give those tours. It is very important for people to be able to present, share and create those experiences in both languages.¹¹⁴

Witnesses therefore recommended that the Government of Canada continue to “support authentic experiences from which students and teachers can benefit outside the classroom.”¹¹⁵ During their appearance before the Committee, Canadian Heritage officials distributed a document in which the Department states that authentic experiences will be a federal priority in second-language learning in the next Protocol for Agreements.¹¹⁶

Beyond elementary, language exchange programs at the secondary and post-secondary levels promote the mobility of students and young workers, increase cultural

112 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1630 [Chantal Bourbonnais, Director General, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers].

113 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 December 2013, 1705 [Valérie Leclair, Program Coordinator for French Language Programs, Support for Staff and Students, Edmonton Public School Board].

114 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 21 May 2013, 1625 [Laura Sims, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Université de Saint-Boniface, as an individual].

115 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 21 May 2013, 1545 [Chris Young, History Teacher, Kelvin High School, Winnipeg School Division].

116 Canadian Heritage, *Intergovernmental Cooperation in Education. Background Information*. Presentation to the Standing Committee on Official Languages, 28 May 2013, p. 11.

exchanges and enable participants to create ties with their host community and achieve personal growth. In his 2011–2012 report, the Commissioner of Official Languages recommends that, in the run-up to Canada’s 150th anniversary, “the Prime Minister take the necessary measures to double the number of young Canadians who participate each year in short- and long-term language exchanges at the high school and post-secondary levels.”¹¹⁷

The following statement, taken from the testimony of a former participant in a federal exchange program, illustrates the importance of such experiences for young people:

I remember an opportunity that I had when I was 16. It was through the summer work student exchange program, which is a federal government program. [...] it allowed me to go to a very small community in New Brunswick for six weeks and work in a summer camp. It was a community that was entirely French speaking. I did not know until that point that communities like that existed in Canada.

Having that six-week opportunity where they took me out of my comfort zone, out of my downtown Toronto life, my anglophone life, and threw me into a minority community, a French community, really changed my perspective on where French was used and how French was used in Canada, and how French could benefit me in the future. I think more opportunities like that...More opportunities like this within Canada, where we’re exchanging languages with other communities and seeing different realities, can really make an impression on someone at a young age.¹¹⁸

4. Immersion and minority-language schools

As part of its study on French second-language programs, the Committee invited representatives of anglophone and francophone minority schools to appear in order to understand the distinction between their educational institutions and French immersion schools in terms of their mandate and objectives.

4.1 The distinction between immersion and francophone minority schools

Anglophone and francophone minority schools, like all educational institutions, must provide a basic learning experience. However, minority schools have the added objective of developing the heritage and culture of the group. Representatives of the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones (FNCSF) expressed this difference as follows:

In addition to making it possible to communicate, think and obtain information, learning a second language in an immersion program helps build a Canadian identity characterized by linguistic and cultural duality. In French-language schools, language learning occurs in a linguistic, cultural and civic context. In other words, all activities related to teaching the curriculum contribute to the learning of French as a first language, whether it be shows,

117 Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, *Annual Report 2011–2012*, Ottawa, October 2012, p. 12

118 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 April 2013, 1715 [Calina Ellwand, Member of the Board of Directors, Canadian Youth for French].

the arts, celebrations, mathematics or science. We learn and we build our cultural identity as much during mathematics and science classes as in French classes. This characterizes our French-language schools.

As a result, the cultural approach of teaching in a French-language civic community school contributes to and influences the construction of an individual and collective cultural identity. When students enter the school, they therefore construct an individual and collective cultural identity characteristic of the francophone and Acadian communities that created Canada.¹¹⁹

The FNCSF believes that the federal government should “support the steps taken to inform the Canadian population, including immigrants, that we have a French-language education system and immersion programs in English-language schools, and to explain the distinction between the particular scope and mandate of both systems.”¹²⁰ The FNCSF also believes that such an initiative would support the francophone minority school system while decreasing the “high percentage of students from eligible families who do not attend French-language schools.”¹²¹

This recommendation is interesting because it addresses the overloaded French immersion schools and programs outside Quebec as well as the low participation rates of eligible students in francophone minority schools. The Survey on the Vitality of Official-Language Minorities conducted in 2006 by Statistics Canada found:

... that 53% of parent rights holders outside Quebec chose to send their children to a minority school, that 15% decided to enrol their children in an immersion program and that the others chose to send their children to an English-language school. We took the survey a little further and asked those parents whether they would have sent their children to a minority school if they had had the choice. Forty percent of those parents said they would have done it had that been possible.¹²²

In the same vein, CPF believes that the growing relationship between Francophones and francophiles will inevitably lead these two groups to look at their school systems to see how they can best meet the long-term needs of their respective communities.¹²³

An information and promotion strategy like that proposed by the FNCSF could be part of a larger campaign to promote learning French as a second language. The Committee heard this recommendation a number of times during its study. Groups such as CASLT suggested that such a strategy be aimed at parents, students, the

119 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 May 2013, 1615 [Roger Paul, Executive Director, Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones].

120 Ibid.

121 Ibid.

122 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 May 2013, 1720 [Jean-Pierre Corbeil, Assistant Director, Chief Specialist, Language Statistics Section, Statistics Canada].

123 Canadian Parents for French, *French Second Language Learning in Canada*, Canadian Parents for French Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, n.d., p. 4.

general public and newcomers to Canada as well as school principals, administrators and decision makers.¹²⁴ EPSB believes such a campaign must “include communicating the wide range of benefits that second language learning provides.”¹²⁵ According to the AUFC, deciding to continue with French second-language studies at the post-secondary level depends in large part on the information made available to students regarding “the quality and the breadth of programs offered.”¹²⁶ The AUFC therefore recommends the creation of a “promotion, awareness and information campaign to inform Canadians [...] about the existence of a continuum of French-language education, from elementary to post-secondary.”¹²⁷

4.2 French second-language education in anglophone minority public schools in Quebec

Quebec’s English public school system is the birthplace of French immersion programs in Canada and in many ways around the world. Today, French immersion programs in Quebec are as successful as ever. In fact, enrolment in French immersion programs in the English public school system in Quebec is on the rise. In 2006, 66% of elementary students were enrolled in such a program. In 2011, that number had increased to 83%. In the English public system, 35% of secondary school students were enrolled in immersion or an intensive French program in 2006. Five years later, that percentage had doubled.¹²⁸

Language data from the most recent census shows that the rate of English–French bilingualism in Quebec went from 40.6% in 2006 to 42.6% in 2011.¹²⁹ Nationally, this increase has a significant impact, as Statistics Canada attributes the 0.1% growth in the English–French bilingualism rate in Canada in large part to the increase in the number of Quebecers who reported being able to conduct a conversation in English and in French.¹³⁰ Moreover, Statistics Canada reported that, “as for official-language minorities, Anglophones in Quebec had a bilingualism rate of 61% (compared with 6% for

124 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013, 1535 [Guy Leclair, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers].

125 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 December 2013, 1635 [Valérie Leclair, Program Coordinator for French Language Programs, Support for Staff and Students, Edmonton Public School Board].

126 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 November 2013, 1535 [Jocelyne Lalonde, Director General, Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne].

127 Ibid.

128 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 2 May 2013, 1530 [Christine Dénommée, Pedagogical Services Assistant Director, English Montreal School Board, Quebec English School Boards Association].

129 Jean-François Lepage and Jean-Pierre Corbeil, “The Evolution of English–French Bilingualism in Canada from 1961 to 2011,” *Insights on Canadian Society*, Statistics Canada, May 2013, p. 1.

130 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 20 November 2012, 1110 [Jean-Pierre Corbeil, Chief Specialist, Language Statistics Section, Statistics Canada].

Anglophones in the rest of Canada).¹³¹ These statistics bolster the idea put forward by representatives of the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) that schools in their system contribute to growth in English–French bilingualism in Quebec.

As for access to French second-language programs, the problems of anglophone communities in Quebec are in many respects similar to those of parents and students in other regions in Canada. However, important distinctions exist and must be noted.

Anglophone communities in Quebec are adamant about maintaining and providing high-quality immersion and intensive French programs in their schools, as these programs are “perhaps the most vital ingredient in the future vitality of Canada’s English-language minority community.”¹³² According to the QESBA, “these programs in our schools are the required passport to full participation, to full access to opportunity within Quebec society.”¹³³

The QCGN argued that access to French second-language programs is critical to ensure the employability of young Anglophones in Quebec:

We want this committee to understand that becoming bilingual is not an altruistic pursuit for English-speaking youth in Quebec. Bilingualism is not a matter of simply expanding opportunities or acquiring a desirable asset for potential employers. ... Bilingualism for English-speaking Quebec is a matter of getting a job; it is an economic necessity.¹³⁴

Despite the high rate of bilingualism among young Anglophones, the QCGN pointed out that there are inequities undermining youth employability:

For example, data contained in a research report recently published by Canadian Heritage and the Canadian Institute for Research in Linguistic Minorities, demonstrated that the baseline salaries of unilingual English-speakers are 18% less than unilingual French-speaking Quebecers. The salaries of bilingual English-speakers and unilingual French-speakers are at par, with bilingual French-speakers earning 12.6% more than both of these cohorts.

Bilingualism is not a silver bullet for finding a job. Despite overall higher levels of education and high rates of bilingualism within our population, 2006 Census data shows an overall unemployment rate within the English-speaking community of Quebec 2.2% higher than the French-speaking majority.¹³⁵

131 Jean-François Lepage and Jean-Pierre Corbeil, “The Evolution of English–French Bilingualism in Canada from 1961 to 2011,” *Insights on Canadian Society*, Statistics Canada, May 2013, p. 4.

132 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 2 May 2013, 1530 [Suanne Stein Day, Board Member, Quebec English School Boards Association, and Chair, Lester B. Pearson School Board].

133 Ibid.

134 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1530 [James Shea, Member, Board of Directors, Quebec Community Groups Network].

135 Ibid.

The QESBA argues that English public schools in Quebec must be given the necessary support to maintain and expand access to and delivery of French second-language programs to students across Quebec, whatever the student's potential. "Our schools must meet the challenge, all the while delivering on their mandate to serve and support the English language, culture, and history that give meaning to the constitutional underpinnings that ultimately define our existence."¹³⁶

Quebec's anglophone minority public schools depend on financial support from the federal government through its bilateral agreement with Quebec for minority-language education and French second-language instruction to contribute to the vitality of Quebec's anglophone minority and Canada's linguistic duality.

5. Professional development and educational resources

Some witnesses said that offering more French second-language programs must be accompanied by initiatives and investments with respect to professional development and educational resources. This part of the report presents the needs expressed by witnesses in this regard.

5.1 Supporting the creation of a common Canadian framework of reference for language learning

Several witnesses who appeared as part of this study expressed the need for a national reference tool for language learning that would assess the language skills of Canadian students based on a national standard. Currently, the Diplôme d'étude de langue française (DELF) is one of the most common assessment tools used in Canada. The DELF is a diploma consistent with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages:

Recognized internationally, the DELF is valid for life. Nearly 300,000 people earn it every year, including more than 5,000 from Canada, and that number is rising fast. Moreover, the DELF for schools is completely consistent with the language skills targeted by the various FSL programs across Canada.¹³⁷

The CMEC studied the CEFR in depth and in January 2010 published a guide on its use in the Canadian context. As a result, some education departments tied their French second-language programs to the CEFR:

It is used in some locations in Alberta, as well as in B.C., and in the Atlantic provinces as well. Those provinces are quite connected to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and the DELF, which is actually the evaluation, is a piece

136 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 2 May 2013, 1530 [Christine Dénomée, Pedagogical Services Assistant Director, English Montreal School Board, Quebec English School Boards Association].

137 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1550 [Philippe Le Dorze, President, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers].

of that. The work we're doing in the province of Ontario [...] is using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.¹³⁸

As to the CEFR's effectiveness, EPSB representatives said they "have worked with many languages for many years in the implementation of several frameworks, and by far the common European framework of reference, CEFR, has been the strongest for kindergarten to post-secondary education."¹³⁹

Nevertheless, several witnesses such as CAIT regret that "there are no common tools in Canada to assess bilingualism levels, whether in the education system or by employers in both the public sector and the private sector."¹⁴⁰ According to CAIT, this is a considerable shortcoming because it "means there is no common language to describe the various levels of bilingualism."¹⁴¹ Similarly, CASLT believes such a framework would serve to "standardize the terminology of second-language teaching, learning and evaluation. In other words, everyone is talking about the same thing."¹⁴²

Many witnesses believe the federal government can assume a leadership role in this area by encouraging the creation of a common framework for language learning in Canada that facilitates the assessment of young Canadians' language skills from elementary to post-secondary, and even to the labour market.

The absence of such a framework seems to create problems for learners. CAIT told the Committee that, "without common tools to define bilingualism, students can — and often do — underestimate their linguistic abilities and believe that they are not qualified for a bilingual position. The reverse is also true."¹⁴³ CASLT supported this view, adding that student surveys confirm that students often feel uncertain about their language skills.¹⁴⁴

EPSB, like many other witnesses, argued that implementing a common framework of reference for language learning would have numerous benefits:

National implementation of this framework would strengthen French programming across Canada in many ways including by increasing coherence and transparency around

138 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 April 2013, 1720 [Jennifer Adams, Director of Education, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board].

139 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 December 2013, 1635 [Valérie Leclair, Program Coordinator for French Language Programs, Support for Staff and Students, Edmonton Public School Board].

140 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1550 [Philippe Le Dorze, President, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers].

141 Ibid.

142 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013, 1640 [Guy Leclair, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers].

143 Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, April 2013, p. 7–8.

144 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013, 1530 [Guy Leclair, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers].

language proficiency expectations, by fostering understanding among school authorities, elected officials, parents, post-secondary institutions, and employers regarding what to expect from graduates of these programs at various levels, and by facilitating a smoother transition of students into post-secondary second language courses.¹⁴⁵

According to CASLT, such a framework would increase the interprovincial and international mobility of students and young workers:

For students, the benefit of having an accurate idea of their level of bilingualism based on an internationally recognized scale would help them gauge their learning in the real world, become more interested in learning their second language, develop confidence in their skills and promote themselves more effectively to potential employers in Canada and internationally.¹⁴⁶

CASLT argued that, in addition to giving learners a better indication of their performance and promoting the mobility and employability of students and young workers, the creation of a Canadian framework for language learning would help improve instruction and educational resources:

The second benefit is that this framework assists in teaching, the production of education material and teacher training. All teachers in Canada would be on the same page. They would teach in virtually the same way, but they would teach different things, depending on their provincial or territorial situation. That would enable everyone to be at the same level, within a single framework.¹⁴⁷

From another perspective, the OCDSB believes that the federal government should support the implementation of such a framework because it would allow the government to evaluate the nationwide effectiveness and success of programs to which it contributes:

Bilingualism has been a policy stance in Canada for almost a half century. The federal government has directed funding to the provinces to ensure the provision of French as a second language instruction to school-age children. From an accountability standpoint, it is reasonable to assume that Canadians would want to know the number of students graduating from Canadian high schools who are proficient in French, and to what level of proficiency. A national measure is required to be able to speak of student outcomes at the national level.¹⁴⁸

In general, the OCDSB believes such a tool would improve “our ability to have a national conversation about our progress toward becoming a bilingual nation.”¹⁴⁹

145 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 December 2013, 1635 [Valérie Leclair, Program Coordinator for French Language Programs, Support for Staff and Students, Edmonton Public School Board].

146 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013, 1535 [Guy Leclair, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers].

147 *Ibid.*, 1640.

148 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 April 2013, 1605 [Jennifer Adams, Director of Education, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board].

149 *Ibid.*

Lastly, CAIT noted, “No doubt we have the expertise in Canada. We simply need to work together to create this new Canadian tool.”¹⁵⁰

During their appearance before the Committee, Canadian Heritage officials distributed a document in which the Department states that measuring language proficiency will be a federal priority in second-language learning in the next Protocol for Agreements.¹⁵¹

5.2 Supporting professional development

Although the most recent Protocol for Agreements provided funding for programs, innovative teaching approaches, educational staff and research, some witnesses told the Committee that there are still problems at all these levels.

5.2.1 Recruiting teachers who specialize in French second-language instruction

In terms of recruitment, a number of witnesses said there are not enough teachers who specialize in teaching French as a second language. This is one reason school boards have trouble meeting the rising demand for French second-language programs, including immersion programs.

The Peel District School Board (PDSB) is a good example. In 2011–2012, it reviewed its elementary school French immersion program. The review showed that it is difficult to recruit and retain qualified immersion teachers—teachers who are, according to the definition of the PDSB’s review committee, qualified, fluent in French and committed:

The review committee found that although principals were finding it very difficult to hire teachers who are qualified to teach French immersion, qualifications alone were not enough to ensure a quality program.

The review committee heard repeatedly from different stakeholders regarding instances where a teacher had the requisite paper qualifications but was not fluent in French. Furthermore, the review committee heard that qualified and fluent teachers sometimes chose to leave the French immersion program to teach in the English program. The review committee heard that although it is very difficult for principals to find French immersion teachers for permanent contract teaching assignments, it is even more problematic for them to find FI teachers for long-term occasional assignments.¹⁵²

150 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1555 [Philippe Le Dorze, President, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers].

151 Canadian Heritage, *Intergovernmental Cooperation in Education. Background Information*. Presentation to the Standing Committee on Official Languages, 28 May 2013, p. 11.

152 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 November 2013, 1540 [Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction Support Services, Peel District School Board].

CAIT believes the shortage of specialized teachers in Canada affects the quality of education:

Schools sometimes hire teachers who do not have adequate language skills or who do not know the methods for teaching living languages (e.g., methods focused on oral expression, relevant themes, exposure to the language outside the classroom).¹⁵³

Some witnesses attributed the shortage of teachers who specialize in French second-language instruction to the fact that the profession is not well known, and even undervalued. According to CASLT, “Language teachers are marginalized relative to teachers of other subjects.”¹⁵⁴ Therefore, CASLT believes that the Government of Canada should “encourage the universities to raise the profile of the second language teaching profession.”¹⁵⁵ CAIT supports this recommendation.¹⁵⁶ It would support the steps already taken by some school boards, like the PDSB, that have collaborated with faculties of education in order to encourage teachers-in-training to pursue this specialization:

One of the things that we’re doing is that we’re working in collaboration with faculties of education so that we can work with students who have not yet completed their teacher training to make them aware of the opportunities to teach French immersion or French as a second language in our board, so that they can be aware of that as a decision earlier in their teacher preparation.¹⁵⁷

5.2.2 Training teachers and offering professional development programs

Dr. Dicks said that many teachers-in-training want to specialize in teaching French as a second language, but they do not have the language proficiency required:

Our experience has consistently been that there are many students who wish to undertake studies in education to teach in immersion, but do not have the required language proficiency level. Many of these are graduates of French immersion and a number have also completed majors in French at Canadian universities. Clearly, in order to reach a level of language proficiency to teach French, one needs to do more.¹⁵⁸

The shortage of teachers who specialize in French second-language instruction is linked to the language training available to students in the field of education at post-

153 Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, April 2013, p. 6.

154 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013, 1530 [Guy Leclair, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers].

155 Ibid., 1535.

156 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1645 [Philippe Le Dorze, President, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers].

157 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 November 2013, 1650 [Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction Support Services, Peel District School Board].

158 LANG, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 2 December 2013, 1650 [Joseph Dicks, Director, Second Language Research Institute of Canada (L2RIC) at the University of New Brunswick, As an Individual].

secondary institutions. Many witnesses recommended that the Government of Canada increase its support for cultural and language exchange programs so students in faculties of education and graduate teachers can have the opportunity to improve their French.

According to CASLT, the Government of Canada could “encourage faculties of education to enrich their second language teacher training programs”¹⁵⁹ and take on a leadership role in funding and coordinating language and cultural exchange programs, and even language courses for teachers.¹⁶⁰

As regards exchange programs, Canadian Youth for French proposed that the Government of Canada take action to encourage teachers to participate in interprovincial exchanges.¹⁶¹ CAIT also suggested offering French second-language teachers “intensive language courses, exchanges and extended stays in a second-language environment.”¹⁶² Dr. Dicks agreed as well.¹⁶³

With regard to graduate teachers, CAIT told the Committee that most teachers who specialize in teaching French as a second language, especially those who teach immersion, work for anglophone school boards. Therefore, there are few professional development opportunities in French. “There is a need for professional development opportunities tailored to the needs of immersion teachers so that they can keep abreast of new educational practices.”¹⁶⁴

Chris Young talked about the positive impact these professional development programs can have, including language and cultural exchange programs for teachers:

For educators, these experiences outside the classroom are rich and invaluable, but the students are the real winners. In the classroom, they will be exposed to a wider range of viewpoints. They will better understand their country and the entire world. They will be better citizens.¹⁶⁵

Laura Sims pointed out that these programs provide a number of benefits:

159 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013, 1535 [Guy Leclair, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers].

160 Ibid.

161 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 April 2013, 1615 [Justin Morrow, Founder and Executive Director, Canadian Youth For French].

162 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013, 1550 [Philippe Le Dorze, President, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers].

163 LANG, *Evidence*, 2e session, 41e législature, 2 décembre 2013, 1650 [Joseph Dicks, Institut de recherche en langues secondes du Canada (IRL2C) à l'Université du Nouveau-Brunswick, à titre personnel].

164 Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, April 2013, p. 8.

165 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 21 May 2013, 1545 [Chris Young, History Teacher, Kelvin High School, Winnipeg School Division].

I think that one of the most important elements of forming future teachers for immersion and supporting current ones in their professional development is providing them with meaningful opportunities to live the language, to understand its importance, and to constantly be able to develop their French language skills. This means supporting cultural organizations in the communities where we live so that all citizens can partake and benefit.¹⁶⁶

Just as francophone minority communities can be encouraged to participate in creating authentic experiences for students in French second-language programs, they can also be encouraged to participate in creating training and professional development programs for teachers. According to the FCFA, “there is an opportunity for cultural exchanges in our communities. We have strong, vibrant communities, but we do not very often see immersion teachers taking part in activities.”¹⁶⁷

5.3 Enriching educational resources

Witnesses told the Committee that, in addition to the need to train teachers, there is a need for new educational resources, especially for French immersion programs. CAIT confirmed that educational resources have improved in the last few years, but “they are still rarely adapted to immersion and are often simply translations. There is a need for immersion-specific resources.”¹⁶⁸ According to CASLT, “resources that are more relevant to students and based on new technologies, social media and the labour market would also help teachers, especially the youngest ones.”¹⁶⁹

According to Mr. Sokalski, the Government of Canada can play a key role in producing educational materials, including quality audiovisual productions that reflect Canada’s history, values and current issues to make students aware of the reality of Francophones in Canada:

One example is the television series *8^e feu*, which was recently produced by CBC/Radio-Canada. It is an outstanding series. In many cases, this is the first time my students have had an opportunity to listen to French-speaking aboriginal peoples talk about current issues in connection to Canadian history. In addition, the series offers a national vision from coast to coast to coast.¹⁷⁰

166 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 21 May 2013, 1545 [Laura Sims, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Université de Saint-Boniface, as an Individual].

167 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013, 1645 [Marie-France Kenny, President, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada].

168 Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, *Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages*, April 2013, p. 7.

169 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013, 1530 [Guy Leclair, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers].

170 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 21 May 2013, 1540 [Raymond Sokalski, Teacher, Kelvin High School, Winnipeg School Division].

Mr. Sokalski believes that, in addition to providing funding for new productions, it is important to translate television series, films, documentaries and other existing resources that are already available in English.¹⁷¹

5.4 Investing in research

Several witnesses told the Committee that the Government of Canada could improve French second-language education programs by investing in research.

CASLT maintains that comparative studies are needed on second-language instruction materials. The results of this research would allow decision-makers and the various levels of government to identify and implement best practices for French second-language programs.

Dr. Genesee agrees. He pointed out that the success of immersion programs has been well documented, but that “the pedagogical practices that underlie this success have not been well documented.”¹⁷² He carried out several comparative studies, which led him to criticize Canada’s educational practices:

In fact, it’s my opinion, from having worked in many different countries, that the pedagogical practices in Canadian immersion programs are falling behind those of other countries that have instituted these programs. In many communities around the world that are introducing these programs, they’ve embarked on fairly systematic and vigorous professional programs to look at the best way to teach through a second language and the best way to train teachers to do that.

These kinds of activities are really lacking in Canada, for the most part, and where they do exist, they are at a local level, or at a provincial level at best.¹⁷³

Dr. Genesee believes that Canada needs “more focus on effective educational practices in these programs if they are to continue to remain state-of-the-art.”¹⁷⁴

Furthermore, CASLT informed the Committee that there is a significant need for research on the effectiveness of the various entry points for French second-language programs and on the effectiveness of intensive French programs.¹⁷⁵

Representatives from Statistics Canada mentioned the importance of gaining “a clearer understanding of why some individuals who left immersion programs and whose

171 Ibid., 1615.

172 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 11 June 2013, 1540 [Fred Genesee, Professor, McGill University, As an Individual].

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid., 1545.

175 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013, 1530 [Guy Leclair, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers].

bilingualism levels were very high subsequently managed to maintain those levels.”¹⁷⁶ They also mentioned the importance of carrying out comparative studies on the success and level of second language retention between immersion programs and other programs. Funding for research on acquiring and maintaining a second official language would allow the Government of Canada to obtain reliable data on the evolution of English-French bilingualism in Canada.

CASLT suggested that the Government of Canada “mandate the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to encourage research and the dissemination of research findings on the acquisition, teaching and evaluation of second languages and on teacher training by offering research grants in those fields.”¹⁷⁷

6. Recommendations

In light of the testimony heard and the briefs submitted as part of its study, the Committee made the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 1

That the Department of Canadian Heritage, together with all the provinces and territories and through CMEC, maintain the funding allocated for the 2013–2014 to 2017–2018 Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction and subsequent bilateral agreements.

RECOMMENDATION 2

That the Department of Canadian Heritage, together with all the provinces and territories and through CMEC, improve the reporting mechanisms in the 2013–2014 to 2017–2018 Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction and subsequent bilateral agreements. That it publish on its website the annual financial statements prepared by the provinces and territories and that they be easily accessible to the public.

RECOMMENDATION 3

That the Department of Canadian Heritage, together with all the provinces and territories and through CMEC, improve the performance measures in the 2013–2014 to 2017–2018 Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction and subsequent

176 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 May 2013, 1630 [Jean-Pierre Corbeil, Assistant Director, Chief Specialist, Language Statistics Section, Statistics Canada].

177 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013, 1535 [Guy Leclair, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers].

bilateral agreements in order to have more reliable data on the progress and success of French second-language education programs across Canada.

RECOMMENDATION 4

That the Department of Canadian Heritage, together with all the provinces and territories and through CMEC, focus on student retention and achievement in core French programs in Canada with a view to improving these programs.

RECOMMENDATION 5

That the Department of Canadian Heritage, together with all the provinces and territories and through CMEC, develop an information and promotion strategy to inform parents, school administrators and the general public about the French second-language education programs offered in Canada, and that this strategy be designed in consultation with the provinces and territories.

RECOMMENDATION 6

That, as part of the 2013–2014 to 2017–2018 Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction and subsequent bilateral agreements, the Department of Canadian Heritage, together with all the provinces and territories and through CMEC, maintain its support for language and cultural exchange programs for students at the secondary and post-secondary levels, and that the Department maintain its support for authentic language and cultural experiences for elementary school students. The Committee encourages the Department to continue to include francophone minority communities in these programs.

RECOMMENDATION 7

That the Department of Canadian Heritage take on a leadership role within CMEC so that a common national framework of reference for language learning can be adopted across the country.

RECOMMENDATION 8

That the Department of Canadian Heritage, together with all the provinces and territories and through CMEC, develop and implement an information campaign at Canadian post-secondary institutions in order to promote French second-language instruction as a profession.

RECOMMENDATION 9

That the Department of Canadian Heritage, through CMEC, encourage all the provinces and territories to create interprovincial language and cultural exchange programs for French second-language teachers and that these programs encourage francophone minority communities, among others, to promote and raise awareness of the Canadian Francophonie.

RECOMMENDATION 10

That the Government of Canada continue to fund research projects in the acquisition and maintenance of French second-language skills, instruction and French second-language assessment in order to improve educational methods and resources and obtain reliable data on the evolution of bilingualism in Canada.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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That the Department of Canadian Heritage, together with all the provinces and territories and through CMEC, develop an information and promotion strategy to inform parents, school administrators and the general public about the French second-language education programs offered in Canada, and that this strategy be designed in consultation with the provinces and territories..... 38

RECOMMENDATION 6

That, as part of the 2013–2014 to 2017–2018 Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction and subsequent bilateral agreements, the Department of Canadian Heritage, together with all the provinces and territories and through CMEC, maintain its support for language and cultural exchange programs for students at the secondary and post-secondary levels, and that the Department maintain its support for authentic language and cultural experiences for elementary school students. The Committee encourages the Department to continue to include francophone minority communities in these programs. 38

RECOMMENDATION 7

That the Department of Canadian Heritage take on a leadership role within CMEC so that a common national framework of reference for language learning can be adopted across the country..... 38

RECOMMENDATION 8

That the Department of Canadian Heritage, together with all the provinces and territories and through CMEC, develop and implement an information campaign at Canadian post-secondary institutions in order to promote French second-language instruction as a profession. 38

RECOMMENDATION 9

That the Department of Canadian Heritage, through CMEC, encourage all the provinces and territories to create interprovincial language and cultural exchange programs for French second-language teachers and that these programs encourage francophone minority communities, among others, to promote and raise awareness of the Canadian Francophonie..... 39

RECOMMENDATION 10

That the Government of Canada continue to fund research projects in the acquisition and maintenance of French second-language skills, instruction and French second-language assessment in order to improve educational methods and resources and obtain reliable data on the evolution of bilingualism in Canada. 39

APPENDIX A LIST OF ACRONYMS

AUFC	Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne
CAIT	Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers
CASLT	Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CMEC	Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
CPF	Canadian Parents for French
DELFL	Diplôme d'étude de langue française
EPSB	Edmonton Public School Board
FCFA	Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada
FNCSF	Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones
FSL	French-second-language
OCDSB	Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
PDSB	Peel District School Board
QCGN	Quebec Community Groups Network

APPENDIX B LIST OF WITNESSES

41st Parliament – First Session

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Canadian Youth for French Calina Ellwand, Member of the Board of Directors Justin Morrow, Founder and Executive Director</p>	2013/04/23	76
<p>Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Jennifer Adams, Director of Education</p>		
<p>Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers Chantal Bourbonnais, Director General Philippe Le Dorze, President</p>	2013/04/25	77
<p>Quebec Community Groups Network James Shea, Member, Board of Directors Stephen D. Thompson, Director, Policy, Research and Public Affairs</p>		
<p>Quebec English School Boards Association David Birnbaum, Executive Director Christine Dénommée, Pedagogical Services Assistant Director, English Montreal School Board Suanne Stein Day, Board Member, Chair, Lester B. Pearson School Board</p>	2013/05/02	78
<p>Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers Guy Leclair, Executive Director</p>	2013/05/07	79
<p>Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada Marie-France Kenny, President Serge Quinty, Director of Communications</p>		
<p>Université de Saint-Boniface Laura Sims, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education</p>	2013/05/21	81
<p>Winnipeg School Division Raymond Sokalski, Teacher, Kelvin High School Chris Young, History Teacher, Kelvin High School</p>		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones</p> <p>Robert Maddix, President Roger Paul, Executive Director</p> <p>Statistics Canada</p> <p>Jean-Pierre Corbeil, Assistant Director, Chief Specialist, Language Statistics Section</p> <p>François Nault, Director, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division</p>	2013/05/23	82
<p>Canadian Parents for French</p> <p>Lisa Marie Perkins, President, National Office</p> <p>Robert Rotheron, Executive Director, National Office</p> <p>Department of Canadian Heritage</p> <p>Yvan Déry, Director, Policy and Research, Official Languages Branch</p> <p>Jean-Pierre C. Gauthier, Director General, Official Languages Branch</p> <p>Hubert Lussier, Assistant Deputy Minister, Citizenship and Heritage</p>	2013/05/28	83
<p>As an individual</p> <p>Fred Genesee, Professor, McGill University</p>	2013/06/11	84

APPENDIX C LIST OF WITNESSES

41st Parliament – Second Session

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne</p> <p>Jocelyne Lalonde, Director General</p>	2013/11/25	5
<p>Peel District School Board</p> <p>Scott Moreash, Associate Director, Instructional Support Services</p> <p>Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction Support Services</p>		
<p>As an individual</p> <p>Joseph Dicks, Director, Second Language Research Institute of Canada (L2RIC) at the University of New Brunswick</p>	2013/12/02	7
<p>Edmonton Public School Board</p> <p>Marie Commance-Shulko, French Immersion Consultant, Support for Staff and Students</p> <p>Valérie Leclair, Program Coordinator for French Language Programs, Support for Staff and Students</p>		
<p>Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages</p> <p>Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages</p> <p>Sylvain Giguère, Assistant Commissioner, Policy and Communications Branch</p> <p>Carsten Quell, Director, Policy and Research, Policy and Communications Branch</p>		

APPENDIX D LIST OF BRIEFS

41st Parliament – First Session

Organizations and Individuals

Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers

Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers

Canadian Parents for French

Department of Canadian Heritage

Dicks, Joseph

Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada

Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones

Genesee, Fred

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

Quebec English School Boards Association

Statistics Canada

Winnipeg School Division

APPENDIX E LIST OF BRIEFS

41st Parliament – Second Session

Organizations and Individuals

Edmonton Public School Board

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. 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 83 and 84](#)) from the 41st Parliament, First Session and ([Meetings Nos. 5, 7, 8, 10 and 11](#)) from the 41st Parliament, Second Session is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Michael D. Chong

Chair

**Supplementary Opinion of the New Democratic Party of Canada
Second Official Language Immersion Programs in Canada
Official Languages Committee**

We would like to thank each of the witnesses who appeared before the Committee during its study on Canada's second official language immersion programs. They made valuable contributions that enabled us to better understand the challenges and opportunities presented by French immersion in Canada.

We are disappointed that most of the Committee's recommendations do not reflect parts of the witnesses' testimony and that the Committee did not endorse a number of their key recommendations. Therefore, we would like to supplement the Committee's report with the following.

First, based on the testimony heard, we encourage the Department of Canadian Heritage to consider increasing the funding for future protocols for agreements for minority-language education and second-language learning, taking into account the growing demand and the resources available.

The preparation of such protocols for agreements requires significant federal-provincial-territorial cooperation. The federal government must ensure that it respects the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories while meeting its obligations under the *Official Languages Act*.

Second, the NDP requests that, in negotiating future protocols for agreements, the Government of Canada, together with the provinces and territories and through the CMEC:

- ensure that the bilateral agreements include annual consultations with the sector's key associations and that these associations are clearly identified in the agreements;
- develop a strategy for creating a continuum of French second-language education from primary school to the post-secondary level to the labour market;
- take into account the following priorities: better meeting the demand for French second-language education programs, including French immersion, at the primary and secondary levels; providing various entry points into French immersion programs, including early immersion; providing French second-language education programs in rural and remote areas and addressing the transportation issue; developing specialized services for immigrant students and students with learning disabilities as well as for their parents;

– take the necessary steps to facilitate access to post-secondary French second-language programs and consider the following:

- (a) providing incentives such as scholarships to encourage students to continue learning French as a second language at the post-secondary level; and
- (b) offering programs at Canadian post-secondary institutions whose goal is to retain and foster the success of post-secondary students who choose to continue learning French as a second language;

– take the necessary steps to help Canadian post-secondary institutions enrich their training programs for instructors who specialize in French second-language education, with a focus on retaining them;

– consider, in light of available resources, increasing its support for French second-language education programs in Quebec so that the schools of the province’s anglophone minority can provide high-quality French second-language programs, thereby enhancing the vitality of the anglophone minority in Quebec; and

– work with the key Canadian stakeholders in French second-language education to identify educational resource needs and take the necessary steps to enhance these resources.

The NDP hopes that the Department of Canadian Heritage will implement these recommendations so that Canada’s immersion programs can grow and improve.