



Brief

submitted by the Association franco-yukonnaise (AFY)

**to the House of Commons
Standing Committee on Finance**

Pre-Budget Consultations

2019 Federal Budget

in Whitehorse, Yukon, October 15, 2018

Salutation

Committee Members,

The Association franco-yukonnaise thanks the Standing Committee on Finance for the invitation to give evidence during its pre-budget consultation for the 2019 budget, and for coming to visit our beautiful territory, the Yukon.

Background

In collaboration with government, community and private partners, the Association franco-yukonnaise (AFY) has been working since 1982 to create, develop and maintain the services, activities and institutions necessary for the advancement of life in French in the Yukon. The AFY has more than 220 members, including many families. Every year, more than 2,000 people participate in the various activities it organizes and coordinates.

The Francophone community has been present in the Yukon for more than 150 years, and fully participates in territory's community, cultural and economic life. It works to improve the quality of life of all Yukoners on a daily basis, while preserving its language and cultures.

The Yukon Francophone community is vibrant and diverse, thanks to the contribution of a growing number of people choosing to live in French in the Yukon.

According to the 2016 census, the Yukon is the third most bilingual jurisdiction in Canada after Québec and New Brunswick, with 13.8% of the population able to speak French. Statistics Canada forecasts a steady increase in the Francophone population between now and 2025–2030.

The community has established a number of organizations to respond to the needs of Yukon Francophones.

Active in a wide range of areas – education, early childhood, health, the economy, immigration, arts and culture – these organizations create jobs and provide a broad spectrum of services directly to the community (families, youth, seniors, women, and newcomers).

French and the Francophone community are major economic drivers for the Yukon and the country as a whole.

An asymmetrical approach

Recommendations

- That the government consider basing the fund distribution formula not only on numbers but also on the factors of community vitality and the economic reality of provinces and territories.
- That the government take into account the specific characteristics of different communities to provide them with the tools required in order to respond to the needs of Francophones.

The Action Plan for Official Languages announced in March contains some excellent measures. However, more needs to be done to support the Yukon Francophone community and respond to the call of the Interim Commissioner of Official Languages who, after the release of the 2017 census figures, urged the Government of Canada to “put concrete measures in place that take into consideration all the data released by Statistics Canada” regarding official languages in the territories, i.e., the increase in the number of Francophones.

A number of Government of Canada programs have seen significant increases in their funding, but these increases are still based on an approach that does not take into account the asymmetry of realities in different parts of the country.

Example

This means that those who are already receiving a higher amount see a more significant increase, which can make a real difference. In the case of the Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities, a program delivered by Employment and Social Development Canada, which partially funds our economic development services, it means we receive around \$30,000 more over the next five years. This is not sufficient to increase our capacity to meet the needs of a constantly growing community.

Language clauses in federal-territorial agreements

Recommendations

- That all federal departments include a language clause in all agreements on the transfer of funds from the federal government to territorial governments. This clause must be clear, binding, and enforced.
- That the government explore the possibility of matching the funds that are regularly channelled through the provinces, territories or municipalities with a Francophone component going directly to community organizations and institutions. (FCFA)

The federal government is directly or indirectly responsible for a number of areas of vital importance to the Yukon Francophone community, in particular because of its financial support. When it supports the French-speaking community of the Yukon, the federal government generally adopts an agreement with the Yukon (a “federal-provincial/territorial agreement”). It is through federal-provincial/territorial agreements that a large portion of the millions of dollars announced in the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018-2023* will be spent.

Unfortunately, the *Official Languages Act* does not require the federal government to include a “language clause” for the benefit of official language minority communities in its federal-provincial/territorial agreements.

Examples

The Canada - Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Agreement contains such a clause. As a result of that clause, we were able to negotiate with the territorial government, and the Yukon Francophone community is now part of the territorial government’s action plan. This would not have been possible without that clause.

On the other hand, the Canada - Yukon Agreement for the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program does not contain such a clause. The agreement includes more than 25 million dollars for community, cultural and recreational infrastructure, which could have been useful to the Yukon Francophone community. Because there is no language clause in the agreement, it will be extremely difficult to obtain any of those funds.

An action plan to achieve the target of 4.4% Francophone immigration

Recommendations

- That the government invest additional funds for the recruitment of Francophone immigrants, taking into account labour needs in the different provinces and territories.
- That the government work with the communities and the provincial and territorial governments to develop a recruitment action plan that will enable us to finally reach the target of 4.4% Francophone immigrants that was set in 2003.

There is a pressing need for labour in the Yukon, where the unemployment rate is less than 3%. We have seen the interest of employers in recruiting at the Tournée de liaison, organized by the Canadian embassy in Paris and the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes (FCFA), which was held in Whitehorse in September 2018.

The target of 4.4% Francophone immigrants outside Québec was set in 2003 and has never been reached. The winning conditions are now in place to finally achieve that target. It is time to work with the communities to establish a credible, effective plan that will allow us to reach the target quickly and fill Canada's pressing labour needs.

Canadian Arts Presentation Fund (CAPF)

Recommendation

- That the government increase the annual funding of the Canadian Arts Presentation Fund (CAPF) by 30 million dollars per year over three years as recommended by the Fédération culturelle canadienne française (FCCF).

In Canada, the creative economy contributes 55 billion dollars to the GDP each year and provides more than 630,000 jobs; the cultural sector delivers an outstanding return on investment. The arts foster civic engagement, a sense of belonging, social cohesion, dialogue, individuality, originality, and intercultural dialogue within communities large and small throughout the country.

The direct and indirect economic benefits of festivals and performance series are felt in communities of all sizes across Canada, including in the Yukon.

The Canadian Arts Presentation Fund (CAPF) supports 600 professional arts festivals in more than 250 communities, for more than 20 million citizens and tourists. Currently, funding for this program is 13.4% lower than it was in its first year (2003-2004), and this inhibits the growth potential of many communities, including the Yukon Francophone community.

Example

The AFY has submitted applications, all of which have been rejected. The main reason cited was that the budget allocated by the CAPF to Western and Northern Canada is woefully inadequate to respond to all the applications for projects, particularly with the emergence of broadcasting and the increase in innovative projects the region has seen in recent years.

The AFY must therefore use money from its core funding – community life – to respond to the growing demand for performances in the Francophone and Francophile community.

French first-language education and the development of post-secondary programs in French in Western and Northern Canada.

Recommendations

- That the government invest more in education from kindergarten through post-secondary by bolstering the funding of bilateral education agreements for French-language education at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels. An increase similar to the one provided to community organizations in 2018 (20%) would be a good start.
- That the government allocate specific funding to increase the number of post-secondary programs in French in Western and Northern Canada.

Education is conspicuous by its absence in the official languages action plan. This is of particular concern considering the fact that the bilateral education agreements have not seen an increase in funding over the last ten years. The number of students in our French first-language program has been steadily increasing in recent years. This growth means greater needs and greater expenses. This growth must be supported.

In addition, the reality faced by students in the Yukon Francophone community is that they have to leave the territory to pursue a post-secondary education in French. In most cases, they have to go east, either to the University of Ottawa or the University of Moncton.

One young Yukon Francophone, Anna Tölgyesi, started a petition on this subject. She gathered more than 500 names, and her petition was presented to the House of Commons by the MP for Yukon, Larry Bagnell, in June 2018.

We believe federal support to increase the number of accessible programs in French in Western and Northern Canada would only help the economy, innovation and economic development. These programs would also allow French immersion students to pursue their education in French and help achieve the federal government's objective of seeing a significant increase in bilingualism over the next five years.

Additional considerations for the 2019-2020 budget:

Recommendation

- That the government significantly increase investments in programs for seniors and take into account the realities of Francophones in minority communities when establishing the criteria for the distribution of funds.

Canada's economic development must not neglect the needs of the elderly. There is an urgent need to make serious investments in services for seniors across Canada, taking into account the specific needs of Francophones in minority communities. Our seniors face serious issues, including isolation, lack of affordable housing and difficulties in access to health care, and these all have a social and economic cost.