



# **Restarting the Canadian Economy in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

## ***The essential contribution of Canadian francophone colleges and universities***

### **Brief**

Submitted to the

**House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance**

By the

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

As part of the

**Pre-budget consultations for the 2021 Budget**

**August 7, 2020**



**National Secretariat** 223 Main Street, Ottawa, ON, K1S 1C4  
Telephone: 613-244-7837 Toll-free: 1-866-551-2637  
**ACUFC.CA**

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

**That the federal government adopt the following public policy statement in the 2021 budget:**

**The Government of Canada recognizes that French-language post-secondary institutions in minority communities contribute to the development of a bilingual labour force within Canadian society and the vitality of francophone minority communities, and that they are tools for economic development, innovation and integrating immigrants.**

## 2. BACKGROUND

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance has invited Canadians to participate in its pre-budget consultation process in advance of the 2021 Budget. In particular, the Committee will examine measures to take to restart the Canadian economy as it recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne (ACUFC) is pleased to submit its brief in response to the Committee's invitation. The Association represents 22 francophone or bilingual colleges and universities in francophone minority communities ([www.acufc.ca](http://www.acufc.ca)). The ACUFC's mission is to promote increased access to quality post-secondary education in French in francophone minority communities.

The federal government recognizes that official language minority communities are a key part of Canada's history and identity. As the country recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is even more important to understand the three-pronged role of ACUFC members. Its **educational mandate**, which is under provincial jurisdiction, is balanced with its roles as an **economic driver** and an **immigration hub**, which fall under both federal and provincial jurisdiction.

ACUFC member institutions are essential partners that contribute to the vitality of francophone minority communities.

The government must show openness, pragmatism and innovation to ensure that recovery efforts in minority communities are not deployed only in English, as this would increase the assimilation of francophones.

As part of their civic mission, ACUFC members have identified ways they can participate fully in restarting the economy right across the country.

This brief provides the government with structuring solutions to restart the economy in French in francophone minority communities, which would help support the vitality of these communities as the country recovers from the pandemic.

### 3. THREE-PRONGED ROLE OF ACUFC MEMBERS

ACUFC's 22 member institutions offer college and university programs in French to more than 40,000 francophone and francophile students and over 5,000 foreign students in francophone minority communities. These institutions not only play a key role in **training a francophone and bilingual labour force across the country**, but also have a sphere of influence that extends beyond the number of students who attend.

A recent Conference Board of Canada study carried out on behalf of the ACUFC estimated that, in 2018, bilingual workers generated 10% of Canada's gross domestic product outside of Quebec, or \$134.8 billion. This clearly illustrates the second important role played by francophone and bilingual post-secondary institutions—that of being an **economic driver**.

In addition, a major study carried out by the ACUFC showed that 92% of respondents who were international graduates stayed in Canada after completing their studies and that more than two thirds of them still reside in the province in which they studied. In 2019, over 5,000 foreign students attended ACUFC member institutions. We estimate that, of that number, approximately 1,250 were graduating, and more than 1,000 of these graduates planned to stay in Canada and possibly obtain Canadian citizenship.

These figures clearly show the key role of ACUFC members in the third area: **francophone immigration in minority communities**. The study reveals how significant the role of ACUFC member institutions is, placing the ACUFC in a position to help the federal government achieve its objectives as regards francophone immigration.

### 4. WHY A PUBLIC POLICY?

A public policy on post-secondary education in francophone minority communities would ensure that francophone and bilingual institutions could:

- ✓ fully contribute to Canadian society by training a truly bilingual labour force; and
- ✓ play a central role in economic development, integrating immigrants and innovation.

The proposed public policy aligns with overarching government objectives, including bilingualism, economic development, integrating francophone immigrants, global competitiveness, and the vitality of official language minority communities. The policy would also ensure an **equitable economic recovery** for francophones and anglophones.

In times of crisis, section 41 of the *Official Languages Act* is not enough to encourage federal government departments and agencies to take positive measures, as required by the Act. The federal government must specifically state, in its 2021 budget, that francophone and bilingual post-secondary institutions in minority communities provide valuable contributions to the advancement of Canadian society. They **train a labour force that is predominantly and fluently bilingual**, whose members play an integral role in Canadian society in an economic, professional and intellectual capacity. Furthermore, these institutions are foundational to the vitality of francophone minority communities, and they are helping restart the Canadian economy in the context of the pandemic.

Post-secondary institutions in francophone minority communities train bilingual workers and are a tool for **economic development** at the community, regional, national and international levels.

ACUFC members are present in large cities, in smaller urban centres, and also in rural areas. Some are in environments where English is very prominent, others are in predominantly francophone environments, and still others are in a fully bilingual environment. Each of these institutions has adapted their programming to meet the needs of their students and the labour market. This flexibility showcases the **innovative nature** of post-secondary education in francophone minority communities in Canada.

Over the years, member institutions have succeeded in **welcoming and integrating foreign students**. They have continued to improve the structures required to receive more immigrants, in both urban and rural areas. It is important to note that a significant number of foreign francophone students remain in the country after their studies.

## 5. THE PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENT

The ACUFC has only one recommendation in advance of the next federal budget:

**That the federal government adopt the following public policy statement in the 2021 budget:**

**The Government of Canada recognizes that French-language post-secondary institutions in minority communities contribute to the development of a bilingual labour force within Canadian society and the vitality of francophone minority communities, and that they are tools for economic development, innovation and integrating immigrants.**

This policy would encourage federal departments and agencies to implement positive

measures to support the vitality of francophone minority communities across the country, which would increase Canada's prosperity and competitiveness both nationally and internationally.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The ACUFC is calling on the federal government to establish **a public policy that recognizes the Canada-wide civic mission of French-language and bilingual post-secondary institutions in minority communities**. These institutions contribute to the vitality of their communities and the development of a bilingual workforce than can participate fully in the economic recovery.