



PERT PROVINCIAL
EMPLOYMENT
ROUNDTABLE

**Written Submission for the Pre-
Budget Consultations in Advance of
the Upcoming Federal Budget**

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the government allocate dedicated funding to improve the availability and quality of linguistic data and official language minority community labour force data through the Labour Force Survey and Job Vacancy and Wage Survey, which should be collected regularly between census years.

Recommendation 2: That the government increase investments in community-based research on the employment and socioeconomic conditions of Québec's English speakers in order to fill in existing data gaps.

Recommendation 3: That the government recognize employment and economic development as cornerstones of community vitality for official language minority communities in Canada. This should include the development of an employment strategy that addresses the employment disparities facing English-speaking Quebecers. The strategy must set specific targets and allocate sufficient resources to address the employment and socioeconomic challenges in Québec's English-speaking communities.

Recommendation 4: That the government increase direct funding to organizations providing employability programs and services to Québec organizations serving English speakers. Funding agreements must provide both program and project funding, particularly for organizations to develop, implement, and sustain innovative employment programs that meet the needs of their communities.

Recommendation 5: That the government develop a pan-Canadian action plan to strengthen investments in free and accessible French-language training programs, including bursaries, work-integrated learning, and flexible learning environments. This should also include investments for recruiting, training, and retaining French-language teachers.

About Us

The Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT) is a non-profit, multi-stakeholder initiative that aims to address the employment and employability challenges facing Québec's English-speaking communities. Through our research and the work of our partners, we engage all levels of political decision-makers in developing solutions and ensuring adequate resources to improve the prospects of English-speaking Quebecers in the labour market.

PERT's main pillars:

Stakeholder Engagement

- Foster an environment of engagement and collaboration between different stakeholder groups
- Mobilize resources and other solutions
- Work with governments for the benefit of stakeholders

Research & Policy

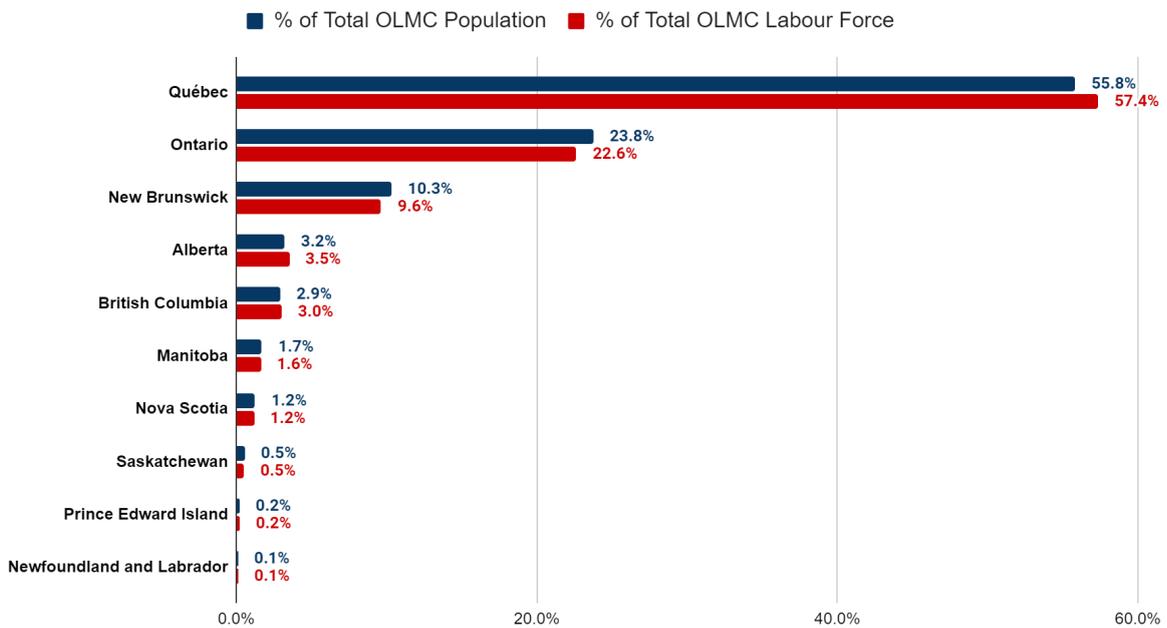
- Develop a deeper understanding of the challenges & problems in the employability and employment landscape
- Identify gaps in the data and improve the availability of information
- Develop solutions & policy recommendations

Context

Québec’s English-speaking community (ESC) consists of approximately 1,253,578 English speakers, who represent 14.9% of Québec’s total population.¹

The ESC is also the largest Official Language Minority Community (OLMC) within a Canadian province, representing 55.8% of Canada’s entire OLMC population. The ESC also makes up the largest share (57.8%) of Canada’s OLMC labour force.

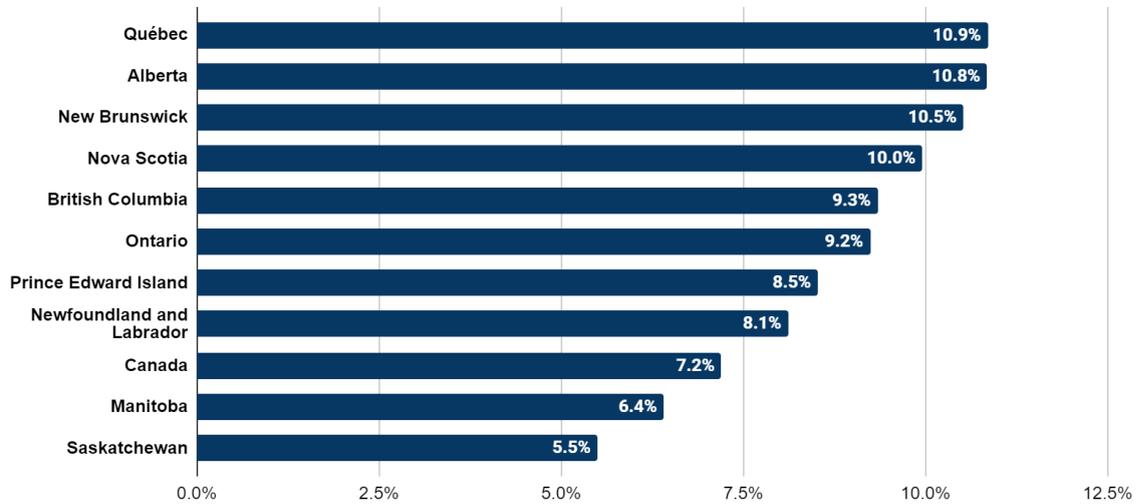
Share of Total Population and Total Labour Force of OLMCs in the Provinces of Canada



Québec’s ESCs face unique circumstances and challenges, particularly in the labour force. There are 699,015 English speakers participating in Québec’s labour market, comprising 15.8% of Québec’s total labour force. As of the 2021 census, English-speaking Quebecers face an unemployment rate of 10.9%, four percentage points higher than French-speaking Quebecers’ 6.9%. This difference has doubled since the 2016 census, when the unemployment gap between English and French speakers was two percentage points. Compared to other OLMCs across Canada, Québec’s English speakers have the highest unemployment rate.

¹ English speakers and French speakers are classified according to Statistics Canada’s definition of First Official Language Spoken (FOLS). Individuals who speak both English and French as their first official language are evenly divided among English and French speakers in order to provide a more accurate portrait of the Anglophone and Francophone population in Québec.

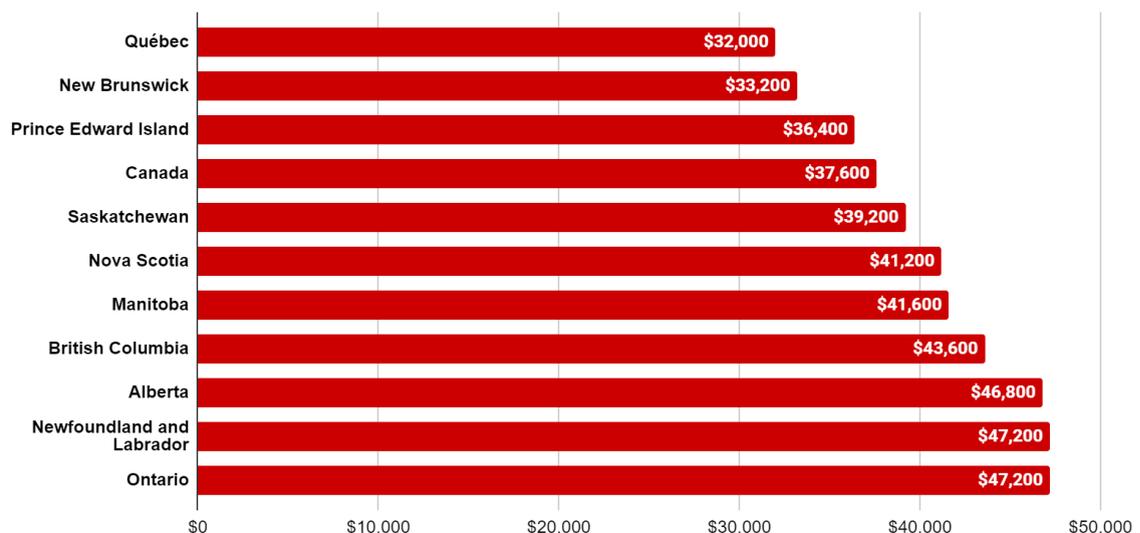
Unemployment Rate of OLMCs in the Provinces of Canada



In addition to employment challenges, Québec’s ESC also continues to face significant income disparities. The gap in median employment income between English and French speakers has widened since the last census: English-speaking Quebecers now have a median employment income that is \$5,200 less than that of French-speaking Quebecers (previously \$2,648 in the 2016 census).

English speakers in Québec also have the lowest median employment income compared to other OLMCs.

Median Employment Income of OLMCs in the Provinces of Canada



The precarious employment and economic situation of Québec’s ESC is compounded by factors such as declining birth rates and an aging population, the out-migration of youth, regional isolation, linguicism, lack of childcare, and housing. Considering that Québec’s English-speaking community is Canada’s largest OLMC and faces growing employment and

economic challenges, our community needs more government support to better adapt and respond.

Challenges and Opportunities

Linguistic and Employment Data

There are considerable gaps in the federal and provincial governments' understanding of the situation of Québec's English speakers. The Québec government does not regularly collect linguistic data; as such, Québec's English-speaking communities primarily rely on the Census of Canada for socioeconomic data on linguistic communities.

While the census is a major asset to English-speaking Quebecers, there are significant gaps: it is only administered every five years, it is administered in May and therefore does not adequately capture the employment realities of seasonal workers, and it does not collect critical socioeconomic information such as job vacancies or wages. There is a need for more regular and granular linguistically-disaggregated socioeconomic data for OLMCs, particularly Québec's ESC. Pre-existing infrastructure such as Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey and Job Vacancy and Wage Survey should be mobilized to fill these data gaps, improving our ability to analyze and address the disparities between linguistic communities in Québec.

It is also important to complement quantitative data with additional qualitative research to better understand the factors contributing to these worrying trends for English speakers. Alongside other organizations serving Québec's English speakers, PERT has conducted qualitative research projects that have improved our understanding of the employment experiences of English speakers and enabled the development of evidence-based strategies to address these challenges. However, more resources are needed to strengthen the capacity of researchers and organizations in the English-speaking communities across Québec and empower them to identify local solutions to the most pressing issues in their communities.

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Recommendation 2: That the government increase investments in community-based research on the employment and socioeconomic conditions of Québec's English speakers in order to fill in existing data gaps.

Employment & Employability

Existing research has established the precarious socioeconomic position that English-speaking Quebecers face compared to both French-speaking Quebecers and other OLMCs in the rest of Canada. The 2021 census data is the latest evidence in a

decades-long trend that sees English speakers faring worse than French speakers in Québec in the realms of employment and income, disparities that have been growing for more than twenty years.²

The employment and socioeconomic challenges faced by Québec's English speakers intersect with broader challenges facing communities across the province, such as housing and cost-of-living crises. Research indicates that the proportion of income that Canadian households are devoting to housing has rapidly increased in the last five years.³ In Québec's urban centres, vacancy rates for apartments declined or plateaued at the lowest figures in over a decade, while Montréal and Gatineau observed the largest increase in average rent in at least two decades.⁴ In Québec, which had the second highest year-over-year increase in rent of any Canadian province,⁵ English speakers occupy a distinctly vulnerable position. They have fewer resources to dedicate to essentials such as housing and, perhaps in relation to this, experience a poverty rate almost double that of French speakers (10.0% compared to 5.8%).

Given the growing employment and socioeconomic challenges English speakers face in addition to broader social issues, employment service providers and community organizations serving English speakers describe struggling to meet their communities' diverse and evolving needs. More resources are needed to support organizations that serve Québec's English speakers, including improvements to funding allocation and eligibility criteria to ensure adequate resourcing.

More resources are specifically required to fund English-language employment services, which can be difficult for English speakers to access. English speakers in regions outside of Montréal, as well as English-speaking youth, mature workers, immigrants, and racialized individuals, are among the groups who require dedicated employment programs. In addition to employment programs, more focus is needed on programs that help improve English speakers' employability, including programs to help English speakers:

- Develop essential skills (including both technical and soft skills), programs to help English speakers obtain necessary documentation and resources (ranging from drivers licenses to interview-appropriate clothing)
- Meet their holistic needs (ranging from food security to mental health support)

² Official Languages Support Programs Branch. (2011). *A portrait of the English-speaking communities in Québec*.

<https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/communaction/en/communities/statistical-profiles/portrait-english-speaking-communities-quebec>

³ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2022). *Canada's housing supply shortages: Estimating what is needed to solve Canada's housing affordability crisis by 2030*.

<https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sites/cmhc/professional/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-research/research-reports/2022/housing-shortages-canada-solving-affordability-crisis-en.pdf?rev=88308aef-f14a-4dbb-b692-6ebbddcd79a0>

⁴ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2023). *Rental Report Market, January 2023 Edition*. <https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sites/cmhc/professional/housing-markets-data-and-research/market-reports/rental-market-report/rental-market-report-2022-en.pdf?rev=ff8ebfd2-961f-4589-8ae2-fac01d1aedac>

⁵ Rentals.ca, & Urbanation. (2023). *Rentals.ca July 2023 Rent Report*. Rentals.ca. <https://rentals.ca/national-rent-report>

- Change careers and learn new skills
- Retain or incentivize the return of English-speaking professionals to the regions
- Support the socioprofessional integration of newcomers (including non-permanent residents)

Community organizations also need more representation in the policymaking process. Organizations within our stakeholder network have indicated a lack of sufficient consultation and participation of official language minority community representatives when it comes to decision-making by the federal government, especially concerning the economic development and vitality of English speakers in Québec.

Recommendation 3: That the government recognize employment and economic development as cornerstones of community vitality for official language minority communities in Canada. This should include the development of an employment strategy that addresses the employment disparities facing English-speaking Quebecers. The strategy must set specific targets and allocate sufficient resources to address the employment and socioeconomic challenges in Québec’s English-speaking communities.

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French-language Learning

PERT’s research has established that two-thirds of English-speaking Quebecers identify a lack of French-language proficiency as a barrier to employment.⁶ Given that French is the official language of work in Québec, achieving functional French-language proficiency is often a necessary requirement for many linguistic minorities to integrate into Québec’s labour market.⁷ Further research indicates that there is often limited accessibility as well as restrictive eligibility criteria for workforce-oriented French-language training courses in Québec, posing barriers for English speakers looking to learn job-specific French-language skills to improve their employability. Addressing the French-language training needs of linguistic minorities in Québec requires a variety of different programming options, such as work-integrated learning, bridging programs, internships, mentoring and pairing programs, and a network of volunteer opportunities.⁸ It should also involve diverse stakeholders,

⁶ Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2022). *2021 employment survey of English-speaking Quebecers and organizations*.

https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/PERT_MC_Design_SRQEA_CORE_EINR_D5R02_20220823_EN_Web.pdf

⁷ Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2022). *French-language training for the workforce: A review of French-language training programs for the workforce in Québec*.

<https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/FSL-Inventory-Assessment-Report.pdf>

⁸ Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2023). *Learning French as an adult: A review of current best practices in adult French-language training in Québec*.

https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Learning-French-As-an-Adult_EN_Final.pdf

including federal and provincial governments, the education sector, community organizations, and private enterprises, to ensure a variety of program offerings tailored to adult language learners who are actively trying to enter and advance in the labour market.

Recommendation 5: That the government develop a pan-Canadian action plan to strengthen investments in free and accessible French-language training programs, including bursaries, work-integrated learning, and flexible learning environments. This should also include investments for recruiting, training, and retaining French-language teachers.