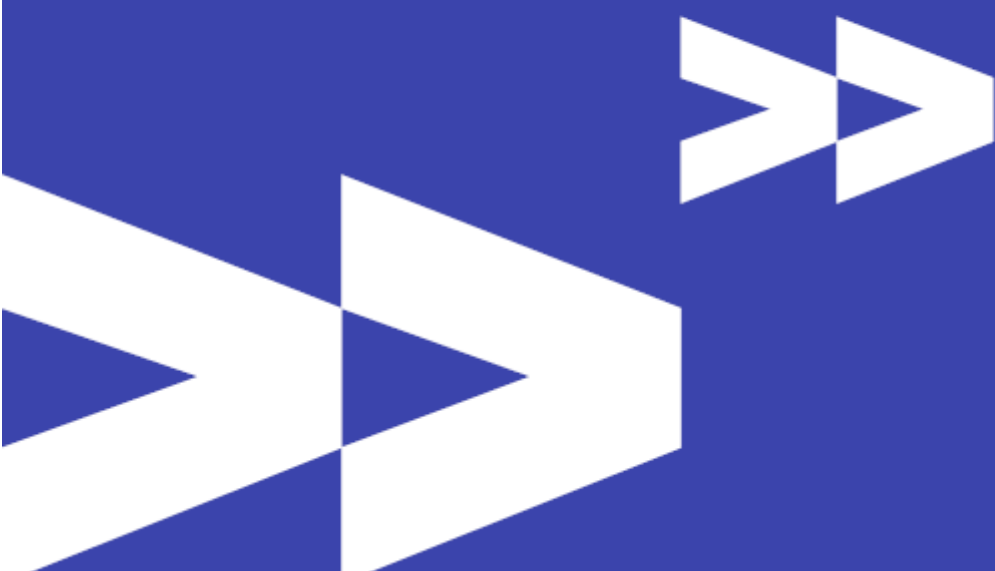


December 2022

Supporting academic publishing in French in Canada

**Brief submitted by Acfas to
the Standing Committee
Science and Research
House of Commons of Canada**



1. Introducing Acfas

For 100 years, Acfas has been a key player in the journey that is francophone science in Quebec and Canada. The association brings together and supports francophone researchers in Canada so that they can fully participate in the country's scientific community under the same conditions as those of their anglophone colleagues. Acfas is intersectoral, forging strong and productive connections between research, innovation and knowledge-sharing organizations. We foster links within a vast network of partners throughout Quebec, the Canadian Francophonie and internationally. Our Canadian presence is strengthened by our six regional offices in Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Sudbury, Toronto and Acadia, all of which contribute to the vitality of research in French and its democratization in their province or region.

2. Introduction

Acfas is grateful to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Science and Research for focusing its fall 2022 work on academic publications in French.

As mentioned by the individuals and organizations who were invited to testify before the committee, this subject is of vital importance because research in French in our country is in dire straits.

In June 2021, Acfas published an important report entitled *Portraits et défis de la recherche en français en contexte minoritaire au Canada* [overview and challenges of research in French in a minority context in Canada], the result of a two-year study by researchers Éric Forgues, Executive Director of the CIRLM, and Vincent Larivière, professor at the Université de Montréal and Canada Research Chair on the Transformations of Scholarly Communication. This research was made possible with the financial support of Canadian Heritage.

- **The summary version of** the report can be read here [French only]:
https://www.acfas.ca/sites/default/files/documents_utiles/rapport_francophonie_som_mayor_final_1.pdf
- And the **full version** here [French only]:
https://www.acfas.ca/sites/default/files/documents_utiles/rapport_francophonie_final_1.pdf

More recently, in July 2022, as part of the Canada-wide consultations on Canada's next Action Plan for Official Languages, Acfas published a brief entitled *Soutenir la production et la diffusion des savoirs en français partout au pays* [supporting the production and dissemination of knowledge in French across Canada].

- The brief can be read here [French only]:
https://www.acfas.ca/sites/default/files/documents_utiles/MemoireAcfasConsultationsPancanadian2022Final.pdf

With this brief, Acfas wishes to share with the members of the Standing Committee excerpts from these two documents, hoping that they will shed light on the critical state of research in French in Canada and on the actions that need to be taken to stop the observed decline.

3. Disturbing patterns

Here are some key elements on the state of academic publishing in French, taken from our report *Portraits et défis de la recherche en français en contexte minoritaire au Canada*:

- Analysis of the data in the Ulrich periodical directory confirms the attraction of publishing research in English worldwide. Since the 1960s, the majority of new journals created, globally, are in English. Very few are in French, and the proportion is declining, in contrast to English, which continues to grow. In Canada, the situation is similar: English-language journals make up the vast majority (over 90% since 2005) of all journals created in the country, which leaves very little room for new bilingual journals and even less in French. In fact, French-language journals represent only about 10% of the journals created since the 1960s in Canada. (page 15)
- Analysis of the databases known as Dimensions.ai and Web of Science demonstrates that the percentage of articles in English has been growing since the 1950s. More than 90% of the articles, in all fields, are in English. Moreover, there has been a decline in French articles in both francophone universities in minority situations and in Quebec universities. Since 2010, the proportion of articles published in French in bilingual minority universities, such as University of Ottawa (less than 10%) and Laurentian University (5%), compared to English-language institutions such as McGill University (2%) and the University of Toronto (about 1%). (page 16)

And some excerpts from the brief titled *Soutenir la production et la diffusion des savoirs en français partout au pays*:

- In fact, research in French and on francophone communities was shelved by the federal government in 2012. In previous years, the federal government organized symposia on official languages research and supported the creation of the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities. It is unfortunate that this support is now much harder to obtain. (page 4)

The Official Languages Act and the forthcoming Action Plan on Official Languages have the power to change this state of affairs, and to finally provide adequate support to ensure the sustainability and vitality of research in French in Canada. (page 4)

4. Successful recommendations

Before presenting our recommendations, it is important to make one clarification: this is not in conflict with the ecosystem¹ of research in English or any other language; the ecosystem of research in French is intended to be open and inclusive. It welcomes people of all backgrounds, ages and origins and is driven by the desire to bring together people who choose to study and work in French.

The recommendations we wish to bring to your attention are aimed at achieving equality between francophone and anglophone researchers in Canada, a country that is officially bilingual. At present, the practice of research in French, its funding, its dissemination and its influence do not allow francophone researchers to work in conditions equal to those of their anglophone counterparts.

The recommendations that we have included here address the issue of academic publishing in French. The above-mentioned report and brief contain recommendations on other aspects of the decline of research in French.

Here are **three recommendations** from our report *Portraits et défis de la recherche en français en contexte minoritaire au Canada*:

- that federal granting agencies provide funding and programs to support small universities and francophone campuses and offices to help them develop their research activities; (page 23)
- that Canadian Heritage and the provincial governments establish a fund to support university presses and other activities for the dissemination of knowledge in French, such as scientific journals and popular science magazines and media; (page 24)

¹ Ecosystems include individuals, educational institutions, research groups and centres, scholarly journals and gatherings such as the annual Acfas conference.

- that all federal funding agencies ensure that their programs are equitable by allocating sufficient funds to francophone journals in minority situations to guarantee their sustainability. (page 24)

And a **fourth recommendation**, taken from our brief titled *Soutenir la production et la diffusion des savoirs en français partout au pays*:

- Federal granting councils have an important role to play in improving support for the French-language research community in Canada, and thereby enhancing its vitality. To achieve these objectives, and in keeping with the objectives of the proposed Official Languages Act, we suggest the following administrative proposals, which could be accompanied by new investments of at least \$6M per year (page 11, *highlighting the actions that affect academic publications*):
 - Provide funds and programs to support smaller universities and francophone campuses and offices to help them develop their research activities;
 - Create and maintain long-term funding programs that target francophone minority communities as a focus of study;
 - Create and maintain long-term programs that enable minority community organizations to conduct collaborative studies with researchers;
 - Ensure that all granting councils have funds to support science outreach (knowledge sharing) initiatives in French;
 - Implement or maintain (depending on the council) measures to restore balance in the success rates of applications submitted in French to ensure that these rates are at least proportional or equivalent to those of applications submitted in English. In addition, we recommend that the granting councils exercise continual vigilance to ensure that the proportion of applications submitted in French generally reflects the proportion of francophones in the country;
 - *Ensure that programs dedicated to academic publishing are equitable by allocating sufficient funds to francophone journals in minority contexts to guarantee their sustainability;*
 - Better assess the level of bilingualism of assessors to ensure that they understand applications written in French.

Recognizing the need to act quickly and sustainably to stop the decline in research in French in Canada, a decline that has been observed for several decades;

Recognizing the complexity of the changes required to start a movement towards the development of research in French;

Recognizing that Canadian parliamentarians have an important role to play in this paradigm shift;

Recognizing that in May 2021, in the second session of the 43rd Parliament, the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion that the House “(i) recognize that science and research are of critical importance to all Canadians, including, but not limited to, improving the health of Canadians, improving the environment, driving innovation and economic growth, and improving the quality of life of Canadians, (ii) recognize that science and research are more important than ever, as the economic, environmental and social challenges we face are greater, (iii) affirm its commitment to science, research and evidence-informed decision-making,” and that the Standing Orders be amended at the beginning of the 44th Parliament to add the Standing Committee on Science and Research to the list of Standing Committees of the House of Commons;

Recognizing that the members of the Standing Committee on Science and Research of Canada’s House of Commons have the opportunity to produce a report that can identify the decline in French-language research and propose actions to stop this decline;

Acfas adds these four recommendations to the previous four:

- That the parliamentarians who are members of the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Science and Research bring the findings and issues related to the decline of research in French in Canada to the attention of the federal government and its authorities;
- That parliamentarians on the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Science and Research identify the most appropriate recommendations to halt the decline;
- That they support these recommendations with concrete implementation scenarios;
- That they create, to support the implementation of the recommendations, a working group responsible for identifying the actions to be taken, the bodies involved, the deliverables, the deadlines, etc.

Acfas thanks the members of the Standing Committee on Science and Research of the House of Commons of Canada for their consideration of this submission.



Faire avancer
les savoirs