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MAKING THE MOST OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR OFFICIAL LANGUAGES 2018-2023: INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

Report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages

The Honourable Denis Paradis, Chair

**FEBRUARY 2019
42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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**Hon. Denis Paradis
Chair**

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committee presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

has the honour to present its

FIFTEENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(3)(f), the Committee has studied the Action Plan for Official Languages 2018-23: Investing in our future and has agreed to report the following:

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LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Recommendation 1

That the federal institutions partnering in the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future* (Action Plan) improve implementation processes for programs in the Action Plan and that they report to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages on their progress. 32

Recommendation 2

That the federal institutions partnering in the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future* (Action Plan) conduct a study of both anglophone and francophone official language minority community funding specifically in order to determine whether the amounts provided by the Action Plan are sufficient to achieve substantive quality and that they report to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages on their progress..... 33

Recommendation 3

That the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie publish a horizontal management framework in order to explain the governance of the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future* and the way it fits into the broader structure of the Government of Canada’s Official Languages Program. 33

Recommendation 4

That the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie and the President of the Treasury Board consider developing a tool that enables Canadians to track the implementation and investments of the programs in the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future* (Action Plan) and the bilateral agreements; that they coordinate the collection of data from the federal institutions partnering in the Action Plan; and that they ensure the tool to be developed is regularly updated. 34

Recommendation 5

That the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie and the President of the Treasury Board commit to preparing a midterm report on the implementation of the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future* and that the midterm report reflect the objectives set out in Recommendation 4. 35



MAKING THE MOST OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR OFFICIAL LANGUAGES 2018–2023: INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

INTRODUCTION

The *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future* (the Action Plan) was launched in late March 2018. It is the Government of Canada’s fourth five-year plan for official languages.¹

In 2016, the Honourable Mélanie Joly, then Minister of Canadian Heritage, held cross-Canada consultations so that Canadians could share their priorities for official languages. The results of these consultations were used to develop the 2018–2023 Action Plan.

Ms. Joly explained the significance of the Action Plan:

the Action Plan [...] proposes historic investments of \$2.7 billion over five years, including \$500 million in new funding. It’s a clear indication of our government’s commitment to our communities and our official languages.”²

The \$2.7 billion comprises the following: an additional investment of \$500 million, \$1.1 billion of historical base funding and \$1.1 billion in funding from the former Roadmap.³

The Action Plan sets out the Government of Canada’s priorities for the next five years and is critical to the development and vitality of official language minority communities (OLMCs) and the promotion of Canada’s linguistic duality.

In September 2018, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages (the Committee) travelled to Whitehorse, Yukon; Vancouver, British Columbia; and

1 The *2003–2008 Action Plan*; the *Roadmap for Canada’s Linguistic Duality 2008–2013: Acting for the Future*; the *Roadmap for Canada’s Official Languages 2013–2018: Education, Immigration, Communities*; and the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*.

2 House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages [LANG], *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 1 November 2018, 0850 (Mélanie Joly, Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie).

3 Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Ottawa, 2018, p. 13.



Regina, Saskatchewan, to meet with community stakeholders and discuss the 2018–2023 Action Plan and its implementation. The Committee heard from 34 witnesses and received seven briefs. A list of these witnesses and briefs can be found at the end of the report.

During its fact-finding mission, the Committee heard testimony on the Action Plan, but witnesses also discussed other topics. These topics included the importance of including language clauses in bilateral agreements between the federal government and the provinces and territories (some of which are part of the Action Plan) and the modernization of the *Official Languages Act*. Witnesses from Yukon and Saskatchewan also took the opportunity to revisit early childhood matters with the Committee. In this report, the Committee focuses on issues related to the 2018–2023 Action Plan. The first section discusses how francophone communities reacted to the Action Plan six months after its launch. The second focuses on the Action Plan’s programs and investments, broken down by sector, and the third provides the Committee’s recommendations.

PART I – REACTION TO THE ACTION PLAN

1. A Welcome Initiative

Most witnesses agreed that, overall, the Action Plan is true to the results of the 2016 cross-Canada consultations. Mrs. Suzana Straus, Acting President of the Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique, said that the Fédération believes that “overall, the action plan reflects the cross-Canada consultations on official languages held by Canadian Heritage in 2016.”⁴ Mr. Yann Lacoste, President of the Conseil jeunesse francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, stated that “in terms of the action plan, the investments in and strengthening of minority communities are extremely positive for us.”⁵ Mr. Robert Rotheron, Executive Director of the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, reported that “overall, the federation is satisfied with the content of the action plan, since it contains much of what the francophone community asked for during the consultations held in 2016, namely a commitment by the government to official language minority communities.”⁶

4 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 0910 (Suzana Straus, Acting President, Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique).

5 Ibid., 0920 (Yann Lacoste, President, Conseil jeunesse francophone de la Colombie-Britannique).

6 Ibid., 1100 (Robert Rotheron, Executive Director, Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique).

Mr. Rotheron also said that, “since the implementation of the action plan, the federation has also been satisfied with its interaction with Canadian Heritage officials, and I can give you some concrete examples, as well as with IRCC [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada] officials.”⁷ In addition, the Chief Executive Officer of the Association des parents francosaskois said that Canadian Heritage showed a willingness to respect the principle of “by and for” communities:

I can congratulate the Department of Canadian Heritage for its receptive attitude toward the idea of services provided by and for the main persons concerned. That is a sign of respect for our community. We’ve been having regular discussions with the department’s representatives for two weeks now and have witnessed this openness and respect. They want to try to understand how they can grant funding based on our situation on the ground.⁸

Dr. Brian Conway, Medical Doctor and President of RésoSanté Colombie-Britannique, stated that the Action Plan “is, in my view, vital to the future of the francophone community here, in the province.”⁹ Mr. Denis Simard, President of the Assemblée communautaire francosaskoise, agreed, noting that the Assemblée “congratulated the government on this ambitious action plan the moment it was announced.”¹⁰

PART II – PROGRAMS AND INVESTMENTS

1. Increase to Core Funding for Community Organizations

All witnesses were pleased that core funding had been increased for community organizations. As Ms. Joly explained,

there were heartfelt pleas from community organizations when they told us about their lack of resources. We heard them. That is why we have increased their core funding by

7 Ibid., 1100 (Robert Rotheron, Executive Director, Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique).

8 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 0900 (Carol-Guillaume Gagné, Chief Executive Officer, Association des parents francosaskois).

9 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 1105 (Brian Conway, President and Medical Doctor, RésoSanté Colombie-Britannique).

10 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 1000 (Denis Simard, President, Assemblée communautaire francosaskoise).



20%. They are major partners, and we will continue to work closely with them to ensure that the action plan brings concrete results to communities.¹¹

Indeed, the Action Plan includes \$70 million over five years for community organizations across Canada. This represents a 20% increase in the first year, with an additional increase in later years of up to 40%.

Mrs. Suzana Straus said, “Starting this year, this has already meant a 20% increase in program funding for all the community organizations in our province.”¹² Mr. Jean-François Packwood, Executive Director of the Conseil culturel et artistique francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, also said that “the investment announced in the action plan and the increase in program funding” is a major step forward “for the entire arts and culture sector, and for the community.”¹³

A number of witnesses had questions about the framework governing core funding.¹⁴ They hoped that “these additional funds will be distributed in a way that will lessen the funding disparities among organizations. We also hope that it will tackle troubling or emerging situations.”¹⁵

Other witnesses were unhappy with the relative value of the amount being invested.¹⁶ The Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise was clear: due to the “increased cost of living”¹⁷ and the “lack of a new agreement between Canada and the Fransaskois community that would be consistent with [its] ambitions,”¹⁸ the “remedial 20% increase this year will not enable us to develop the plan for society that we must establish.”¹⁹ The Association des parents fransaskois agrees. According to Mr. Carol-Guillaume Gagné, the

11 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 1 November 2018, 0855 (Mélanie Joly, Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie).

12 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 0910 (Suzana Straus, Acting President, Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique).

13 Ibid., 0925 (Jean-François Packwood, Executive Director, Conseil culturel et artistique francophone de la Colombie-Britannique).

14 Ibid., 0910 (Suzana Straus, Acting President, Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique).

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., 0925 (Jean-François Packwood, Executive Director, Conseil culturel et artistique francophone de la Colombie-Britannique).

17 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 0850 (Denis Simard, President, Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise).

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

Association's Chief Executive Officer, organizations cannot provide francophones with services that match the quality of what is provided to the majority, which inevitably affects the community's vitality:

We are unable to provide services of quality equal to that of the services provided by the majority. We still offer lower-quality services to the minority. How can we continue to attract our families and clients in these circumstances?²⁰

Mr. Gagné believes that the Action Plan does not provide a long-term solution for funding services in francophone minority communities:

If the government doesn't continue increasing funding for our services, we'll still be here talking about it in 10 years. We'll still be in the same situation, by which I mean that parents will be assisting the community's efforts because they believe in the cause, not because we are providing something of quality. It would be unfortunate for matters to come to that.²¹

He also said that the government would have to "determine the lower threshold at which organizations should be funded,"²² because how funding is currently allocated is not ideal:

Let's look at the numbers. An organization must have management. In many cases, it hires an assistant. There are normal operating costs. You may calculate minimum funding of \$60,000 or \$70,000, whereas the government instead provides \$20,000 or \$30,000 in funding to organizations, hoping they can prepare high-quality programming. That's not logical. Perhaps it should establish a lower threshold that organizations are guaranteed so they can offer something of quality.... We aren't underemployed. We also have to have decent salaries. If our organizations want to retain labour, they must offer high-quality services and good salaries. Our organizations have very high turnover rates as a result of their underfunding. We can't go on this way.²³

2. Payment-Related Challenges

As stated above, when the Committee went on its trip, it had been about six months since the Action Plan had been unveiled. At that time, many community organizations reported that funds had been slow to arrive. That said, they had only just received a

20 Ibid., 0900 (Carol-Guillaume Gagné, Chief Executive Officer, Association des parents fransaskois).

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.



letter from Ms. Joly saying that the additional amounts to top up core funding would be sent shortly.

Stakeholders were concerned about how slowly Action Plan programs have been implemented. In the past, delayed payments had major consequences for community organizations:

It takes longer than expected to implement the (Action plan), and most of our organizations are worried about this. In the past, we sometimes had to wait more than a year for implementation. This meant that we sometimes didn't have access to all of the initiatives and their financing. A lot of time is spent setting the criteria. Once they're set, we're given three months to implement them, but we don't have enough human or financial resources to do so.²⁴

It appears as though small community organizations are particularly affected by these delays. As Mr. Denis Simard explained, "for most of our regional organizations, which are smaller, it is impossible to get a line of credit, for example. So many of their activities are just suspended until the funds are delivered."²⁵

3. Education

3.1. Minority-Language Education

During the 42nd Parliament, the Committee has discussed a key part of francophone community vitality: the French-language education continuum. Its stance is that the education continuum begins in early childhood and continues beyond post-secondary education to include continuing learning for adults. The Action Plan supports minority-language education because the Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction has been integrated into it. The 2018–2023 Action Plan also includes two early childhood initiatives.

24 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 1120 (Marie-France Kenny, President, Coopérative des publications francosaskoises).

25 Ibid., 1000 (Denis Simard, President, Assemblée communautaire francosaskoise).



3.1.1. Early Childhood

The Action Plan includes the Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) program to provide support for early childhood development, worth \$20 million over five years, and the Public Health Agency of Canada's enhanced early childhood health promotion programming, worth \$10 million over five years.

As Ms. Joly explained, "this will include strong support from early childhood, so that our youngsters may be educated afterwards in the language of the minority, and develop a strong sense of belonging from a young age, which will contribute to the building of their identity."²⁶

3.1.1.1. Employment and Social Development Canada's Early Childhood Development Program

ESDC's program to support early childhood development was well received overall. As Mrs. Straus stated, "The action plan allocates additional investments in a sector that is particularly dear to our hearts. This is early childhood, where the need is great."²⁷

However, the parameters of the program gave rise to important questions. Mrs. Straus argued that the needs of the Franco-Columbian's community do not fit "at all well with the funding allocated very specifically to entrepreneurship and training."²⁸ She provided the following explanation:

Although we are delighted with the \$20 million in additional funding allocated both to professional education and training for early childhood educators and to help entrepreneurs, we still find it curious that the federal government has determined, with no prior notice and no consultation, that 33% of the funding will go to entrepreneurship and 66% to training. In a setting where the goal is to improve services for and by communities, and where needs and circumstances vary greatly from one province or territory to another, why not leave it up to the communities to decide which initiatives the funds should be used for, rather than setting limits or percentages on the strategies to be undertaken? The question has to be asked.²⁹

26 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 1 November 2018, 0855 (Mélanie Joly, Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie).

27 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 0910 (Suzana Straus, Acting President, Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique).

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.



Ms. Asselin also said that the program does not meet the needs of the community, as for francophones, “entrepreneurs are not the ones who start child care services. It’s the parents’ associations, non-profit organizations.”³⁰

While the program focuses on worker training, Ms. Asselin said that “training doesn’t fix worker retention and recruitment problems, not to mention all the other labour challenges.”³¹ Ms. Mélissa Castonguay Cossette of the Association des parents francosaskois said that uncompetitive salaries for early childhood workers make employee retention difficult for francophone daycares.

It is very hard to retain educators in the francophone early childhood sector in Saskatchewan. We have very good educators who take courses given by the Collège Mathieu. Those courses are subsidized by Saskatchewan’s Ministry of Education, which is excellent. The girls come and work at an educational centre once they’ve completed their training. Once they’ve earned a level 3 and a diploma, they can easily find work elsewhere and earn better salaries. Salaries at Saskatchewan educational centres are not very high relative to those at other institutions. We often lose our educators. We train them, and we are pleased, and then they go away. The process then has to start over with new educators. Changing educators is not always ideal for the children, or for the centre.³²

It is worth noting that educators’ wages are set by the provinces and territories.

Mr. Yvon Laberge, President of Educacentre College, was disappointed that the investments were only for offering programs in French and not for developing them: “We take it for granted that the program has already been developed” and “approved by the professional order.”³³ He also said, “Had officials consulted us before stating that a certain percentage would go to a certain sector and another percentage to another sector, we could have told them what our needs were. That would have been more effective and would have met our needs better.”³⁴

Francophones in British Columbia want “a small team to help build community capacity in order to increase the number of community-based day cares and support their start-

30 Ibid., 0955 (Marie-Andrée Asselin, Executive Director, Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique).

31 Ibid.

32 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 0905 (Mélissa Castonguay Cossette, Administrator, Association des parents francosaskois).

33 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 1100 (Yvon Laberge, President, Educacentre College).

34 Ibid., 1150.

up, in co-operation with parents.”³⁵ In other words, they want “to build community capacity first, after which [they] will be able to create new day care spaces.”³⁶

All told, witnesses would have preferred that “the criteria and solutions proposed in the new early childhood funding framework be flexible and tailored to the particular needs of the communities.”³⁷ Moreover, they would have liked to have been a part of the decision-making process:

If you want development by and for the communities, why not let our community choose the strategies it wants to put in place instead of setting funding limits and percentages? We were told that 33% of funding had to go to entrepreneurship and 66% to training. We would’ve liked to have a little more decision-making power because we’re the ones who are on the ground and who know our community’s early childhood needs. It’s essential that the criteria and solutions proposed under the new early childhood funding framework be flexible and adapted to the needs of our communities.³⁸

Witnesses were disappointed not only that no consultations were carried out when the ESDC fund was developed, but also that it has taken the department so long to share information with them. Ms. Asselin said that they had “just found out about the percentages.”³⁹ In addition, organizations had not yet “received the additional funding allocated to early childhood education programs and implementation.”⁴⁰ The Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique would like “things to move more quickly because the need is great and the early childhood years don’t last forever. We really have to do something now.”⁴¹

3.1.1.2. The Public Health Agency of Canada’s Initiative

As previously mentioned, the Action Plan also outlines a \$10 million investment over five years so that the Public Health Agency of Canada can expand its health promotion

35 Ibid.

36 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 0910 (Suzana Straus, Acting President, Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique).

37 Ibid.

38 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 0905 (Mélissa Castonguay Cossette, Administrator, Association des parents fransaskois).

39 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 0955 (Marie-Andrée Asselin, Executive Director, Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique).

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.



program for young children. Mrs. Straus commented that this “is good news.”⁴² She also underlined that “the recent consultation with francophone communities allowed us to communicate to the agency our concern with certain aims of the program, and especially with the following points.”⁴³

The Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique (FPFCB) had two main concerns about this program. First, the Action Plan indicates that the Agency “will work with key stakeholders, to ensure projects respond to the needs of the communities.”⁴⁴ However, in “many minority francophone communities in Canada, services in French are delivered by a single organization, which often makes the development of local partnerships impossible.”⁴⁵ As a result, the FPFCB believes the Agency should “avoid imposing criteria and service delivery models that may suit the majority, but that do not correspond in any way to the reality of francophones in minority situations.”⁴⁶

Second, the FPFCB is concerned about the Agency’s approach. It would prefer for the federal institution to model its program on the ESDC initiative for social innovation and social finance. According to the FPFCB, a “middle-of-the road approach, focused on services designed by and for francophones, lends itself more to flexible initiatives that meet the needs of francophone minority communities. The approach offers a sense of community synergy that, in the long term, leads to the implementation of permanent strategies.”⁴⁷

3.1.2. Education and Community Infrastructure

The Action Plan proposes measures to address education and community infrastructure:

[The] new Action Plan will invest \$67.3 million in new funding over five years for the construction of community educational and cultural infrastructure in official-language minority communities. This is in addition to the 2017 Budget announcement of \$80 million over 10 years for community infrastructure (\$28 million for 2018–2023) in these communities.

42 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 0910 (Suzana Straus, Acting President, Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique).

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

This increased funding will help communities build new educational centres and cultural community centres, renovate and upgrade existing community infrastructure, and add multi-purpose spaces in more community centres. This will create more spaces for skills training, daycare services, community programming and cultural performances.⁴⁸

It is important to note that the term “community educational infrastructure” is used to describe community spaces attached to schools. They are funded through the Protocol for Agreements. Community educational infrastructure can include multi-purpose rooms (for holding cultural and community activities) or early childhood centres.

3.1.2.1 Government of Canada Real Property Disposal

The 2018–2023 Action Plan is silent on the disposal process for federal lands.

According to the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (CSFCB), the Action Plan does not go far enough; it does not propose any concrete solutions to the problems minority francophone school boards are facing.⁴⁹ The Action Plan reiterates that “the sale and transfer of federal lands remains complex, and decisions regarding the planning, allocation and approval for land uses on these properties involve multiple players.”⁵⁰ The CSFCB disagrees: “This is false. It is not a complex issue: the CSFCB is only asking for the opportunity to purchase or rent – at fair market value, incidentally! – small parts of properties deemed to be surplus by a federal government that is required to ensure the development of both official language communities.”⁵¹

The CSFCB is convinced that “the problems and concerns raised ... will not be addressed by the new Action Plan 2018–2023, by a new Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education, or by ‘reminding’ the institutions involved of a flawed process for

48 Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Ottawa, 2018, p. 22.

49 Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (CSFCB), *An Official Languages Act that serves minority French-language education to face the shortfalls of the Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023*, Submission by the CSFCB presented to LANG Committee in the context of its study on the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Vancouver, 26 September 2018, p. 5.

50 Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Ottawa, 2018, p. 35.

51 CSFCB, *An Official Languages Act that serves minority French-language education to face the shortfalls of the Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023*, Submission by the CSFCB presented to LANG Committee in the context of its study on the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Vancouver, 26 September 2018, p. 9.



transferring federal property.”⁵² Its belief is that legislation must be passed if the problems with the current disposal process for federal lands are to be addressed.

Given the importance of this issue, the Committee adopted a motion asking “the Canada Lands Company, the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada to appear regarding the implementation of Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*, more specifically the consultation of francophone minority school boards in the administration of the surplus federal lands and real property disposal process.”⁵³

3.1.2.2. Early Childhood Infrastructure

As mentioned previously, early childhood centres are eligible for community educational infrastructure funding under the Action Plan.

Early childhood stakeholders want to take full advantage of the new investments, but several comments they made indicated that the parameters of the program are not well-defined. For example, the Acting President of the Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique asked the following questions: “Will early childhood programming be tied solely to school infrastructure projects?”⁵⁴ Will funding new projects for community day care services be allowed?”⁵⁵ She also asked, “Will the funding program be flexible enough to provide parents with services in their vicinity?”⁵⁶ In short, she would like to know whether “the infrastructure program [is] sufficiently flexible to provide parents with a range of services that are tailored to their needs and their geographical reality.”⁵⁷

3.1.2.3 Education Infrastructure for Primary and Secondary Schools

In many provinces and territories, French-language primary and secondary schools are overcrowded. The quality of infrastructure – regardless of what it is used for – affects whether francophone minority communities can draw francophones to their facilities, which in turn affects community vitality.

52 Ibid., p. 3.

53 LANG, *Minutes of Proceedings*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018.

54 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 0915 (Suzana Straus, Acting President, Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique).

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

In Saskatchewan, the situation was described as follows:

School facilities in the education sector are obsolete in many cases. Infrastructure at many schools can no longer perform its original function, and there is a critical need for renovation and construction. There is also a chronic shortage of primary schools for francophones in Saskatchewan's largest cities as existing buildings cannot meet the demand. This gives cause for concern, and the community has come together to demand an adequate solution.⁵⁸

The Action Plan provides \$28 million over five years (\$80 million over 10 years) in "Support for Educational Community Infrastructure."⁵⁹ The Committee also looks forward to the release of the new Protocol for Agreements so that it can determine whether the investments from the provinces and territories and from the federal government will provide the boost required to put an end to decades of francophone school boards and parents and minority anglophones calling for changes, and especially to give English- and French-speaking young Canadians access to schools that match the quality of those attended by the majority.

3.1.3. Post-secondary Education

French-language post-secondary institutions also benefit under the Action Plan. Mr. Francis Kasongo, Executive Director of Collège Mathieu, the only college technical and professional French-language educational institution in Saskatchewan, made the following remarks about the investments:

Generally speaking, the action plan does reflect the cross-Canada consultations that Canadian Heritage conducted in 2016 because it addresses most of the recommendations respecting postsecondary institutions by providing for funding to develop new study programs and to increase the enrolment capacity of existing programs for language training, francophone immigration and bilingualism promotion. These are only some of the recommendations to which the current action plan responds.

...

The federal government's recent unveiling of the new Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future clearly affords postsecondary educational institutions such as Collège Mathieu many opportunities to expand their selection of

58 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 0855 (Denis Simard, President, Assemblée communautaire francosaskoise).

59 Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Ottawa, 2018, p. 49.



study programs, particularly in the health field, and to refresh their infrastructure, even though that is not expressly stated in the action plan.⁶⁰

That said, Mr. Kasongo mentioned that the “literacy component intended for francophone minority adults does not appear to be funded under the present action plan.”⁶¹ In his opinion, this area is a priority, because “improved adult literacy could very well address the need for labour in the job market and promote citizen engagement in the community.”⁶²

As previously mentioned, the Protocol for Agreements is part of the 2018–2023 Action Plan. Mr. Kasongo had several criticisms to make about support for French-language post-secondary institutions through the Protocol. Note that this funding was released in January 2019. When he appeared before the Committee, Mr. Kasongo said that the “lack of accountability mechanisms in federal-provincial agreements is another aspect that concerns us. To some extent, it does not help a postsecondary institution such as ours benefit from certain programs developed in accordance with provincial criteria.”⁶³ He also pointed out that negotiations for the next Protocol for Agreements for education take time. He argued that “delays in allocating and transferring grants and contributions are clearly too long and jeopardize the activities of institutions such as the Collège Mathieu.”⁶⁴

Furthermore, the funding for francophone post-secondary institutions “comes in large part from supplementary funding under bilateral education agreements.”⁶⁵ However, “these funds are allocated near the end of the fiscal year, and the institutions do not know what amounts that will be allocated to them.”⁶⁶ As a result, it is “virtually impossible for these institutions to function properly in the face of this uncertainty.”⁶⁷ When he appeared before the Committee, Mr. Kasongo did not know “what [their] core

60 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 0915 (Francis Kasongo, Executive Director, Collège Mathieu).

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

funding will be and when things will be resolved.”⁶⁸ Collège Mathieu had to “negotiate with a financial institution to continue [its] activities.”⁶⁹

3.2. Education in the Second Official Language

Stakeholders in French second-language instruction were pleased with the investments in the Action Plan. Glyn Lewis, the Executive Director of Canadian Parents for French – British Columbia and Yukon (CPF British Columbia and Yukon), said the following about the Action Plan:

[T]here were some bold and important funding commitments and some new priorities and initiatives in the action plan that are going to help us. I think it was very much reflective of some of the things that we had been mentioning to this committee and to the government before, in terms of priorities that we saw in the community.⁷⁰

3.2.1. Shortage of Teachers

In October 2018, the Committee tabled a report in the House of Commons entitled *French as a Second Language Learning Programs in Western Canada: Enhancing Availability*.⁷¹ The four recommendations in the Committee’s report sought to make the government aware of a number of issues that require specific attention, namely the need to support language development for teachers, expand linguistic and cultural experiences for learners across the education continuum, create or adapt teaching material for second-language learning and immersion programs suited to the Canadian context, and include and support students with learning disabilities.

As Mr. Lewis pointed out, the shortage of qualified teachers in British Columbia (the province needs between 100 and 150 French teachers) has become a pan-Canadian problem.⁷²

68 Ibid., 1000.

69 Ibid.

70 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 1050 (Glyn Lewis, Executive Director, Canadian Parents for French, British Columbia and Yukon).

71 LANG, *French as a Second Language Learning Programs in Western Canada: Enhancing Availability*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 17 October 2018.

72 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 1050 (Glyn Lewis, Executive Director, Canadian Parents for French, British Columbia and Yukon).



The 2018–2023 Action Plan outlines investments of over \$30 million, starting in 2019–2020, to develop teacher recruitment strategies for French immersion and French second-language teachers.⁷³

Given this investment, Mr. Lewis believes that it is important to determine teacher recruitment and retention priorities.⁷⁴ CPF British Columbia and Yukon has already identified three strategies: recruiting from other provinces and territories and from abroad; supporting post-secondary institutions so they can train more teachers; and supporting teachers.⁷⁵

Mr. David Pajot, Associate Director at Simon Fraser University’s Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs, expressed concern that teaching institutions would not be able to use funds from the program to train teachers:

All those professionals have to be trained, and the priority would be to train them first at local level, in order to make it easier to retain them.

Training those professionals comes at a cost and requires investments. If the investments are frozen, it means difficulties in maintaining the programs currently in place in our universities in British Columbia, and perhaps elsewhere in Western Canada. There are also difficulties in developing programs, expanding the range of programs, and tailoring them to local situations.⁷⁶

3.2.2. French as a Second Language at the Post-secondary Level

Mr. Pajot believes that the Action Plan does not provide adequate support for learners who wish to continue learning their second official language at the post-secondary level. He asked whether the federal government could “be more ambitious and also train people in French after their post-secondary studies.”⁷⁷

73 Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Ottawa, 2018, p. 44.

74 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 1050 (Glyn Lewis, Executive Director, Canadian Parents for French, British Columbia and Yukon).

75 Ibid.

76 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 0905 (David Pajot, Associate Director, Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs, Simon Fraser University).

77 Ibid.

4. Arts and Culture

Mr. Jean-François Packwood, Executive Director of the Conseil culturel et artistique francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, said that his organization, “as well as the sector in its entirety, is particularly pleased to see arts and culture clearly established in the Action Plan.”⁷⁸ He believes that the fact that arts and culture appears under Pillar 1 of the Action Plan, “Strengthening our Communities,” shows that the federal government recognizes “the sector and [...] the work being done across the network.”⁷⁹

That said, Ms. Suzanne Campagne, Director of the Conseil culturel fransaskois, believes that “arts and culture [must be seen] as the lifeblood.”⁸⁰ In her view, arts and culture “always seem to be an afterthought in all the action plans and roadmaps, even in the *Official Languages Act*.”⁸¹ In her opinion, arts and culture should not be funded as if they are secondary or ancillary activities – rather, they should be seen as a driver of cultural vitality and an economic driver: “There seems to be this idea that only once people have jobs and food on the table can we turn our attention to singing and dancing, but the opposite is true. We need to devote more attention to arts and culture so that funding can flow to where arts and culture are happening.”⁸²

4.1. Interdepartmental Coordination in Arts and Culture

Despite the attention the Action Plan pays to arts and culture, the Conseil culturel et artistique francophone de la Colombie-Britannique believes that better interdepartmental coordination is needed to ensure that Canadian Heritage’s conventional arts and culture programs are aligned with the new investments in the key official languages programs:

we must point out the importance of other programs that are not in the ambit of the department responsible for official languages, such as the Canada arts presentation fund. This program is a pillar for communities and for our members involved in the performing arts. That means festivals and community and cultural centres. The funds allocated to this program have not increased for practically as long as those allocated to the community life component of the official languages program. This program, with the

78 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 0925 (Jean-François Packwood, Executive Director, Conseil culturel et artistique francophone de la Colombie-Britannique).

79 Ibid.

80 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 1135 (Suzanne Campagne, Director, Conseil culturel fransaskois).

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.



official languages, really enhances the vitality of our communities. We believe that it is important to give it particular attention in the years to come, certainly, but sooner rather than later, because there is a great need for arts and culture to flow freely throughout our country.⁸³

4.2. Community Infrastructure

Appropriate community infrastructure is obviously needed to accommodate artists and their audiences. As the Assemblée communautaire francosaskoise noted, “Those institutions have spaces where French language and culture can spread. These are places for gathering and exchange where the cultural experience enables communities to excel, create and define themselves.”⁸⁴ Yet, “Resources available to date prevent us from doing more than the bare minimum to maintain those centres.”⁸⁵

The Action Plan provides for investments in educational and cultural infrastructure.⁸⁶ This issue was discussed in section 3.1.2 of this report.

4.3. Succeeding at Home

Francophone artists have long felt the need to travel to Quebec, and Montréal in particular, in order to break into the francophone market. Whether the move is permanent or for a contest or professional commitment, travel entails significant costs, especially for emerging artists. Ms. Campagne explained the problem as follows:

Travel is tough for our artists. They have to spend a lot more than other artists to get to francophone markets. In many cases, nobody picks up the travel tab from places like Manitoba or Saskatchewan to wherever the francophone audiences are.⁸⁷

83 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 0925 (Jean-François Packwood, Executive Director, Conseil culturel et artistique francophone de la Colombie-Britannique).

84 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 0855 (Denis Simard, President, Assemblée communautaire francosaskoise).

85 Ibid.

86 Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Ottawa, 2018, p. 22.

87 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 1135 (Suzanne Campagne, Director, Conseil culturel francosaskois).



4.4. Promoting and Supporting Artistic Creation

In recent years, the federal government has invested in arts and culture by allocating more resources to major national institutions such as the Canada Council for the Arts and CBC/Radio-Canada.⁸⁸ However, Ms. Campagne lamented that “none of that money is making its way to us.... If organizations like ours don’t get funding, we can’t really create the space and opportunity for that to happen.”⁸⁹

Therefore, it is important for the federal government to develop programs that promote and support every link in the artistic value chain (from the artist to the audience) while paying special attention to individual artists.

5. Health Care

The provision of health services in the language of one’s choice is neither an option nor a courtesy; it is a matter of safety. Ms. Anne Leis, President of the Réseau santé en français de la Saskatchewan, summarized the main problems that arise when language barriers impede the delivery of health services:

The research has also conclusively and systematically established the negative impacts of linguistic barriers.... Consider the following examples: “low participation in health promotion and prevention activities; delayed presentation for care; barriers to initial access for most health services; increased risks of misdiagnosis; poorer patient understanding of and adherence to prescribed treatment; lower patient satisfaction; increased risk of experiencing adverse events; poorer management of chronic disease; and less effective pain management.”⁹⁰

The 2018–2023 Action Plan provides for health care investments totalling \$191.20 million over five years.

Dr. Brian Conway, a medical doctor and President of the Réseau Santé Colombie-Britannique, stated that the Action Plan is an important tool for improving access to

88 New funding since 2016: \$675.0 million for CBC/Radio-Canada; \$550.0 million for the Canada Council for the Arts; \$114.0 million for the National Arts Centre; \$22.0 million for Telefilm Canada; \$13.5 million for the National Film Board; \$468.2 million for the Cultural Spaces Fund; \$35.0 million for the Cultural Export Strategy; and \$172.0 million for the Canada Media Fund. Source: Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Ottawa, 2018, p. 25.

89 Ibid.

90 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 0925 (Anne Leis, President, Réseau santé en français de la Saskatchewan).



French-language health services. If the commitments are “properly targeted,”⁹¹ he believes it “will make it possible to meet the expectations of many in our community, expectations that have been clearly laid out.”⁹²

Over the next five years, francophone health networks will focus on increasing access to French-language health services. In Saskatchewan, the priority will be to serve “families and their children, newcomers and seniors,” as well as to ensure “access to health services in rural areas and to provide resources to students and health professionals so they are better equipped to serve francophone patients.”⁹³

Dr. Conway discussed the issue of francophone representation within provincial structures. Currently, the inclusion of francophones “in the health industry is based on the premise whereby public health is improved by providing people with services in French. So far, that has translated into pilot projects, a clinic or an inventory.”⁹⁴ Dr. Conway believes that francophones need to be part of “a set of structures within their health organizations.”⁹⁵ In other words, the goal should be “to integrate the language variable within health organizations that provide services.”⁹⁶

The Committee noted that Quebec’s anglophone communities are in a similar position. In June 2018, it presented a report entitled *Toward a Real Commitment to the Vitality of Official Language Minority Communities* that discusses English health services in Quebec.⁹⁷

In Saskatchewan, recent reforms to the health care system have given the Réseau santé en français the opportunity to work closely with the new provincial health authority. Apparently, this new province-wide institution has already publicly acknowledged the francophone community and met with the Réseau santé en français. The latter hopes

91 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 1105 (Brian Conway, President and Medical Doctor, RésoSanté Colombie-Britannique).

92 Ibid.

93 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 0925 (Anne Leis, President, Réseau santé en français de la Saskatchewan).

94 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 1205 (Brian Conway, President and Medical Doctor, RésoSanté Colombie-Britannique).

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid.

97 LANG, *Toward a Real Commitment to the Vitality of Official Language Minority Communities*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, June 2018.

“to formalize this cooperation by officially becoming a French-language health care advisory committee, as already exists in Manitoba, Nova Scotia and other provinces.”⁹⁸

Ms. Leis asked Health Canada to examine two issues. The first concerns the collection of data on the languages spoken by health professionals. She believes that national surveys of health professionals should systematically identify which languages they speak and what their language training needs are. The second concerns making it “the universal standard ... for patients’ language preferences to be stated on their health cards.”⁹⁹

Ms. Leis believes that the federal government could take steps to encourage the provinces and territories to adopt this practice, as “is already the case in Prince Edward Island.”¹⁰⁰

6. Immigration

For many years now, francophone communities have been trying to increase the number of francophone immigrants to Canada. With the federal government’s support, they established francophone immigration networks, and community organizations have helped many newcomers settle successfully.

Community organizations that deliver immigration services want to offer a range of services to francophone immigrants throughout the immigration process, but they do not always have the resources to do so. They rely on federal government support to increase their capacity to recruit, settle and integrate francophone immigrants.

Ms. Céline Moukoui, President of the Communauté des Africains francophones de la Saskatchewan, named a number of challenges that she believes have yet to be overcome. In general, access to French-language settlement services is limited.¹⁰¹

Support in the following areas could be improved: economic integration (employability and credential and skill recognition); social integration (understanding of the legal system,¹⁰² understanding of the school system); access to health care (including

98 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 0930 (Anne Leis, President, Réseau santé en français de la Saskatchewan).

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.

101 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 1100 (Céline Moukoui (President, Communauté des Africains francophones de la Saskatchewan).

102 Ibid.



psychological services);¹⁰³ and intercultural dialogue (especially in educational programs).¹⁰⁴

Over the past few years, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has taken some steps to make it easier to achieve the francophone immigration targets. The 2018–2023 Action Plan includes \$70.26 million over five years in immigration-related funding.¹⁰⁵ It provides support for a consolidated francophone integration pathway that will inform newcomers throughout the immigration process about francophone communities and the services offered by francophone organizations.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the Action Plan announced the launch of the Welcoming Francophone Communities initiative, which will help francophone communities carry out immigration-related projects.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the government committed to boosting the capacity of the francophone settlement sector and the supply of and access to language training that is tailored to the needs of francophone immigrants.¹⁰⁸ The Action Plan also includes a more administrative component that would strengthen coordination within the department and create a francophone immigration public policy centre.¹⁰⁹

The Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique underscored the importance of the measures IRCC has taken:

I would also like to mention that we just had a regional immigration summit with IRCC last week. We are delighted with the cultural shift that this department is taking by developing a service approach designed by and for key stakeholders. I think this is something that cannot be overemphasized. Until the arrival of this policy or measure, immigration, overall, had contributed to the assimilation of francophones outside Quebec. In fact, immigration to Canada was a way of assimilating francophones. I think that was an unexpected consequence. The government now has objectives, a strategic plan and a mechanism date, and that is quite commendable.¹¹⁰

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.

105 Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Ottawa, 2018, p. 51.

106 Ibid., p. 29.

107 Ibid., p. 30.

108 Ibid., pp. 30–31.

109 Ibid., p. 31.

110 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 1100 (Robert Rotheron, Executive Director, Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique).

7. Official Language Minority Community Media

In June 2018, the Committee presented a report on the precarious state of community newspapers and radio stations in OLMCs. Since then, the federal government has provided additional funding “to help minority community media.”¹¹¹

Like other newspapers, Saskatchewan’s *L’Eau vive* was to receive \$50,000. However, as Ms. Marie-France Kenny, President of the Coopérative des publications francsaskoises, explained, publishers are not allowed to hire staff with this money. Ms. Kenny argues that this directive is contrary to the government’s objectives:

We have one and a half employees, or one full-time and one part-time employee who work between 60 and 80 hours a week. One of them is here this morning. We have been told to use the money to develop new markets, and so on. We need a staff member to do that.¹¹²

Like multiple other witnesses, Ms. Kenny believes the program’s requirements should be more flexible in order to meet the needs of OLMC media:

I recommend that the government at least set a percentage. I would not mind if the government decided that 30% of the money could be used to hire employees, but the media need to be able to use some of this funding to hire staff.¹¹³

In addition to the funding cited above, the Action Plan includes a total investment of \$14.53 million to strengthen community media. Of that amount, \$4.53 million will go toward the Young Canada Works program to create 35 internships for students and recent graduates to work at OLMC media organizations.

According to Ms. Kenny, the new internships will enable a newspaper such as *L’Eau vive* “to hire an intern, an entry-level journalist, for one year.”¹¹⁴ This is an important resource: “We will be growing to two and a half employees, which is very much needed. Next year, we will be allowed to hire another intern.”¹¹⁵

111 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 1115 (Marie-France Kenny, President, Coopérative des publications francsaskoises).

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid.

115 Ibid.



That said, Ms. Kenny fears that the current program parameters make it less likely the interns will stay on the job:

I'm sure you understand that these interns need orientation, training and supervision. In return, they learn and gain experience so that they can find a full-time job at the end of the year. This means that, at the end of the year, when they've finally found their footing and are starting to understand how things work, we'll have to let them leave and find someone new. We start over from scratch.¹¹⁶

As a result, Ms. Kenny recommended that Canadian Heritage consider "allowing newspapers to decide whether they want to keep the same intern for two years, in order to provide more stability and to give new journalists a two-year internship, which would make it easier for them to get a job afterwards."¹¹⁷

Ms. Kenny also mentioned the issue of financial recovery. She believes these "much-appreciated investments are absolutely essential to the survival of our newspaper,"¹¹⁸ but she criticized the fact that they "are one-time investments, which do not reverse the damage caused by the cuts to federal advertising we've experienced, which are in violation of the *Official Languages Act*."¹¹⁹ She noted that, despite this one-time funding support, the annual financial shortfall remains the same:

We are talking about \$50,000 a year. An investment of \$50,000 this year to help us out of a difficult situation will not be renewed next year.¹²⁰

8. Access to Justice

Mr. Patrick Hopf, President of the French-Speaking Jurists Association of Saskatchewan (AJEFS), said that the members of his association welcomed the Action Plan's investments in the justice sector (103.55 million dollars over five years).

First, he cited the restoration of core funding to community organizations working on justice issues. He asserted that this funding "will ensure the stability of AJEFS services and provide flexibility with respect to training for its members."¹²¹ The AJEFS plans to

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.

121 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 1050 (Patrick Hopf, President, French-Speaking Jurists Association of Saskatchewan).

use this funding to “increase its relations and exchanges with different levels of government, and with the different provincial, national and territorial francophone legal communities.”¹²² Accordingly, the core funding will help strengthen Saskatchewan’s francophone community “by giving it a stronger voice.”¹²³

Mr. Hopf also underlined the “reinstatement and modernization of the Court Challenges Program” and “the creation of the action plan to improve the bilingual capacity of the Superior Court judiciary.”¹²⁴ In September 2017, the Minister of Justice had unveiled the Action Plan: Enhancing the Bilingual Capacity of the Superior Court Judiciary. This strategy includes seven measures to improve access to justice in both official languages.

Despite this progress, Mr. Hopf noted that Saskatchewan still does not seem to have the capacity to meet the legal services needs of its growing francophone population:

In the entire province, there are only five bilingual judges and three bilingual employees working in Provincial and Superior Court Services. At this time, only about 50 of our laws are available in French. We have very long wait times for criminal proceedings because of a shortage of court interpreters.¹²⁵

The shortage of professionals who can provide legal services in French means that “the active offer of legal services in French is not automatic, and we do not have enough stakeholders working in the legal system to be able to offer services in French that would be comparable in quality to the services provided in English.”¹²⁶ The unfortunate result is that “litigants cannot exercise their right to be heard and understood in French without the assistance of an interpreter.”¹²⁷ Mr. Hopf believes the Government of Saskatchewan should “develop the reflex for providing legal services in French in order to leverage investments and help strengthen our community.”¹²⁸

122 ibid.

123 ibid.

124 ibid.

125 ibid., 1055.

126 ibid.

127 ibid.

128 ibid.



The Committee is also aware that problems with access to justice in English still exist in Quebec. It discussed these issues in its report *Ensuring Justice Is Done in Both Official Languages*.¹²⁹

9. Economic Development

Economic development in Western Canada's francophone communities is supported by the federal agency Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD). In addition, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) manages the Enabling Fund for OLMCs, which essentially funds the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE Canada), 12 provincial and territorial organizations which fall under the RDÉE and the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC) for English-speaking residents of Quebec. These organizations offer community economic development, business development and employability services.

The Action Plan did not enhance WD programs or the Enabling Fund. Funding amounts remained the same as those announced in the previous Roadmap, namely, \$3.2 million over five years and \$69 million over five years, respectively. However, it is worth noting that ESDC is increasing core funding for organizations by \$4.5 million over five years.¹³⁰

Generally speaking, the witnesses reported that resources are limited.

Mr. Kouame N'Goandi of the Conseil économique et coopératif de la Saskatchewan asked the following question: "How can we provide services to Fransaskois residents without really being able to do it in a very professional way?... the resources available to address the expectations we have are always very limited."¹³¹ He continued:

given what we see on the ground and the projects we see that majority organizations are able to carry out, we still have some challenges to overcome. They must be taken into consideration in certain programs and agreements.¹³²

Like most francophone community groups, those that work in economic development face unique challenges, including the dispersion of the francophone population over a vast area. This fact means that it "always costs more to provide services to

129 LANG, *Ensuring Justice Is Done in Both Official Languages*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, December 2017.

130 Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Ottawa, 2018, pp. 50 and 51.

131 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 0915 (Kouame N'Goandi, Manager, Accountability, Conseil économique et coopératif de la Saskatchewan).

132 Ibid.

francophones” than it costs to provide services to other audiences.¹³³ The problem is exacerbated by funding levels that, in many cases, are too low to support regional organizations:

Since our operating budget hasn’t increased in eight to 10 years, we have to limit our service offerings to Vancouver. All over the province, though, the demand for the kind of expertise we provide is huge, from both a training and business creation standpoint. We don’t have the capacity to serve the entire province, however, given that the funding we receive is enough to cover only Vancouver¹³⁴.

Economic development organizations are also dealing with the issue of upholding language rights in federal–provincial/territorial agreements, including the need to consult francophone organizations:

The francophone file is not solely the federal government’s responsibility. The provinces also have some responsibilities. The representative associations should probably notify the organizations affected by these programs and agreements so they can see to what extent services will be offered to francophones.¹³⁵

Mr. Donald Cyr, Executive Director of the Société de développement économique de la Colombie-Britannique, argued that the Action Plan does not do a lot to support economic development: “I looked at the upcoming plan, and it doesn’t contain all that much in terms of economic measures, so I’d like to see more along those lines.”¹³⁶ He believes that the vitality of communities depends on their economic health. Therefore, support for economic development must be evaluated accordingly:

it bears repeating that the strength of a language is in direct proportion to its economic capacity. Without that capacity or the services needed to integrate all the francophone newcomers into our economy, the effort isn’t worth the trouble.¹³⁷

133 Ibid.

134 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 1110 (Donald Cyr, Executive Director, Société de développement économique de la Colombie-Britannique).

135 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 0920 (Kouame N’Goandi, Manager, Accountability, Conseil économique et coopératif de la Saskatchewan).

136 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 26 September 2018, 1110 (Donald Cyr, Executive Director, Société de développement économique de la Colombie-Britannique).

137 Ibid.



10. Other Considerations

10.1. Women and Seniors

According to Marie-France Kenny, the 2018–2023 Action Plan left out two important groups: francophone seniors and women.¹³⁸ Ms. Kenny wants the organizations representing women’s interests to be named in the Action Plan. More specifically, she would like the Fédération provinciale des Fransaskoises to receive financial support so that it can submit a detailed programming application next year.¹³⁹

Ms. Kenny also highlighted the importance of the work done by organizations such as the Fédération des aînés fransaskois. Over the past five years, it seems that the Fédération has received funding for specific projects but has not been eligible for multi-year funding for its programming. As Mr. Roger Gauthier of the Fédération explained, this lack of stable funding prevents the organization from fully committing to the community and undertaking joint projects with other members of Saskatchewan’s francophone network, including intergenerational initiatives:

We know that a lot of organizations want to work with seniors, and the Fédération des aînés fransaskois really is the organization that can help them open doors to work with that group of people, but we don’t have the staff to do it. Right now, we have one person doing that half-time. That needs to change.¹⁴⁰

Regarding the priorities of Saskatchewan’s francophone seniors, Mr. Roger Gauthier said that access to French-language health services, including home care, is a major concern. Mr. Gauthier offered the following explanation:

Now their top priority is quality of life. They want to remain in their communities. They want services in French and they want to participate in cultural development. That is why it is so important for them to engage in intergenerational initiatives.

We do not want to be shipped off to homes. We want to be healthy and live in our own homes for a long time. That is why home care is one of our big issues.¹⁴¹

138 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 1115 (Marie-France Kenny, President, Coopérative des publications fransaskoises).

139 Ibid.

140 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 1130 (Roger Gauthier, Fédération des aînés fransaskois).

141 Ibid., 1125.

As for social development, the Fédération des aînés fransaskois would like decision-makers to draw on the World Health Organization’s age-friendly cities and communities program: “We want cities and communities to be places where it is easy to live in French, places that are adapted to seniors.”¹⁴²

In addition, culture and access to French-language cultural programming are important to Saskatchewan’s francophone seniors: “Fransaskois seniors have impeccable French. They are the ones who demanded the right to education, family services and children’s services. They are the ones whose blood, sweat and tears kept French language and culture alive.”¹⁴³

10.2. Upholding Language Rights in Intergovernmental Relations

As noted previously, a number of the programs included in the Action Plan are bilateral agreements: federal–provincial/territorial agreements for minority-language education (\$805.1 million over five years); intergovernmental cooperation on provincial or territorial minority-language services (\$81 million over five years); enhanced support for French-language services in the territories (\$60 million over five years); and federal–provincial/territorial agreements to support second-language learning (\$448 million over five years).¹⁴⁴

For a number of years now, OLMC representatives have been calling on the federal government to systematically include binding language clauses in bilateral agreements to ensure the provinces and territories uphold Canadians’ language rights. The education sector is particularly affected by this issue.^{145;146}

The Committee has studied language rights in the context of intergovernmental relations several times. Table A (Appendix A) shows the various recommendations the Committee has made since the 2nd Session of the 37th Parliament.

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid.

144 Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Ottawa, 2018, p. 22.

145 CSFCB, *An Official Languages Act that serves minority French-language education to face the shortfalls of the Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023*, Submission by the CSFCB presented to LANG Committee in the context of its study on the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Vancouver, 26 September 2018, p. 11.

146 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 0920 (Alpha Barry, Chair, Conseil des écoles fransaskoises).



PART III – FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

1. Findings and Recommendations

The *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future* is very important to OLMCs because, as noted in the introduction, it sets out the federal government’s official languages priorities in key sectors for the next five years.

However, the 2018–2023 Action Plan does not include all federal government actions respecting official languages. The Action Plan brings together and shines a spotlight on the key pieces of the Official Languages Program – the main official languages initiatives of 11 federal institutions. It is important to remember that all federal institutions are responsible for implementing the *Official Languages Act*.

The 2018–2023 Action Plan has the benefit of setting out a clear objective: “to restore the relative proportion of francophones outside Quebec, and increase the bilingualism of English-speakers outside Quebec.”¹⁴⁷ In addition, the main document organizes the information in order to show which areas or programs will receive further support and to draw a distinction between new initiatives and those that were part of the previous Roadmap.

1.1. Implementing Programs Effectively

An analysis of the testimony heard by the Committee reveals certain problems with the implementation of the programs in the Action Plan. These problems appear to stem from the slow flow of information to the organizations concerned, the clarity and amount of detail provided on program parameters, and the time it takes to receive payments.

The Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 1

That the federal institutions partnering in the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future* (Action Plan) improve implementation processes for programs in the Action Plan and that they report to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages on their progress.

147 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 1 November 2018, 0855 (Mélanie Joly, Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie).

1.2. Providing Enough Funding to Meet Needs

Despite new initiatives, enhancements to various programs and core funding for community organizations, it appears that, if the investments are not increased, they will not enable francophone minority communities to provide services of equal quality to those offered to the majority. Furthermore, these communities will be unable to solve the problems that have persisted for years and continue to hurt community vitality. The Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 2

That the federal institutions partnering in the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future* (Action Plan) conduct a study of both anglophone and francophone official language minority community funding specifically in order to determine whether the amounts provided by the Action Plan are sufficient to achieve substantive quality and that they report to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages on their progress.

1.3. Establishing a Management Framework

Since the Action Plan was launched in the spring of 2018, major governance changes have been made. The official languages responsibilities of the Minister of Canadian Heritage were transferred to the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie. This change raises a number of questions.

The Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 3

That the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie publish a horizontal management framework in order to explain the governance of the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future* and the way it fits into the broader structure of the Government of Canada's Official Languages Program.

1.4. Obtaining an Overview of the Action Plan's Implementation

Each program in the 2018–2023 Action Plan has its own objectives, performance measures and reporting requirements. As a result, the public has a difficult time tracking the implementation of the Action Plan as a whole. During the Roadmap era, the Treasury Board Secretariat regularly published the plans, spending and results for each initiative.



The information was presented as a table in the online results database for horizontal initiatives.

At the time of writing, no comparable online resources appear to exist for the 2018–2023 Action Plan. Granted, Canadian Heritage’s and the Treasury Board’s annual reports on official languages will provide annual data on the Action Plan, but these are static documents. They are limited in the amount of information and level of detail they can provide. Moreover, these reports are not regularly updated to account for new funding or programming announcements. The Committee believes that, as part of the measures to improve accountability in the area of official languages, the federal government should create a tool that enables Canadians to track the implementation of the 2018–2023 Action Plan. The Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 4

That the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie and the President of the Treasury Board consider developing a tool that enables Canadians to track the implementation and investments of the programs in the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future (Action Plan)* and the bilateral agreements; that they coordinate the collection of data from the federal institutions partnering in the Action Plan; and that they ensure the tool to be developed is regularly updated.

1.5. Preparing a Midterm Evaluation

Conducting a midterm evaluation enables federal institutions partnering in the Action Plan to engage in dialogue with beneficiaries and make adjustments, where necessary. Ms. Kenny argued that the federal government should commit to completing a rigorous midterm evaluation for accountability purposes:

This was done in the past as part of the roadmap. However, at the time, the evaluations were simply anecdotes. There was no information about where the money had been invested. The money from the last two roadmaps still hasn’t been fully invested.¹⁴⁸

In 2005, the federal government published a midterm report that outlined the implementation of the programs in the 2003–2008 Action Plan. The report also provided information on the Action Plan’s management framework, future prospects and an Action Plan funding summary that broke down spending (budgeted and actual) by

148 LANG, *Evidence*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, 27 September 2018, 1120 (Marie-France Kenny, President, Coopérative des publications francosaskoises).

department and by program for the initial years of the plan.¹⁴⁹ In light of the above, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 5

That the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie and the President of the Treasury Board commit to preparing a midterm report on the implementation of the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future* and that the midterm report reflect the objectives set out in Recommendation 4.

2. Conclusion

The Committee believes that strengthening the management framework will make it easier for the federal government to achieve the objectives of its 2018–2023 Action Plan for Official Languages. The Committee will closely monitor the implementation of both its recommendations and the Action Plan. In closing, the Committee would like to sincerely thank all the witnesses who appeared before it for this study.

149 Government of Canada, Privy Council Office, *Update on the Implementation of the Action Plan for Official Languages: Midterm Report*, Ottawa 2005.

APPENDIX A

Table 1. House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, Recommendations Regarding Language Clauses in Federal-Provincial/Territorial Bilateral Agreements, from the 2nd Session of the 37th Parliament to the 1st Session of the 42nd Parliament.

Year and Parliament	Report Title	Recommendation
2003 — 37 th Parliament, 2 nd Session	<u><i>Immigration as a Tool for the Development of Official Language Minority Communities</i></u>	Recommendation 6: The Committee recommends that from now on a language clause be included in all federal-provincial-territorial agreements on immigration, providing for the input of official language communities on all issues involving promotion, recruitment and immigration of new arrivals whose first language is that of the minority.
2007 — 39 th Parliament, 1 st Session	<u><i>Communities Speak Out: Hear Our Voice. The Vitality of Official Language Minority Communities</i></u>	Recommendation 24: That all federal transfer payments to the provinces or territories for a sector under provincial jurisdiction or shared jurisdiction include a clause allocating separate funding in order to work towards equality of services for francophone language minority communities.
2010 — 40 th Parliament, 3 rd Session	<u><i>Recruitment, Intake and Integration: What Does the Future Hold for Immigration to Official Language Minority Communities?</i></u>	Recommendation 5: That Citizenship and Immigration Canada proceed without further delay with a systematic review of all memorandums of understanding on immigration between Canada and the provinces/territories to ensure that they contain all of the clauses to foster immigration to OLMCs. Recommendation 9: That Citizenship and Immigration Canada, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, revise in the next fiscal year the memorandums of understanding on off-campus work permits for foreign students, on the post-graduation hiring of foreign students, and on a pilot project to issue work permits to international students, so that specific objectives are included for the number of francophone international students that the provinces want to admit to FMC [francophone minority community] postsecondary institutions.
2014 — 41 st Parliament, 2 nd Session	<u><i>The State of French Second-Language Education Programs in Canada</i></u>	Recommendation 2: That the Department of Canadian Heritage, together with all the provinces and territories and through CMEC [Council of Ministers of Education, Canada], 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.

Year and Parliament	Report Title	Recommendation
		<p>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 bilateral agreements in order to have more reliable data on the progress and success of French second-language education programs across Canada.</p>
<p>2015 — 41st Parliament, 2nd Session</p>	<p><u><i>The Economic Situation of Official Language Minority Communities: Building Sustainable and Growing Economies</i></u></p>	<p>Recommendation 8: That the Government of Canada ensure that all bilateral agreements, including labour market agreements, include language clauses and accountability mechanisms to ensure that the provinces and territories offer OLMC services of equal quality to those offered to the majority. The Committee further recommends that the Government of Canada increase awareness in the provinces and territories of the needs of OLMC and the need to consult them as part of labour market agreements.</p>
<p>2016 — 42nd Parliament, 1st Session</p>	<p><u><i>Toward a New Action Plan for Official Languages and Building New Momentum for Immigration in Francophone Minority Communities</i></u></p>	<p>Recommendation 12: That, further to commitments made by the provinces and territories for francophone immigration, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) better intergovernmental coordination by including positive measures with respect to francophone minority communities in framework agreements and other bilateral agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories; and b) the alignment of bilateral immigration agreements with the immigration action plans and community development plans of francophone minority communities.
<p>2018 — 42nd Parliament, 1st Session</p>	<p><u><i>Adult Literacy and Skills Development: An Essential Component of the Education Continuum in Official Language Minority Communities</i></u></p>	<p>Recommendation 7: That, in the area of intergovernmental cooperation, the Minister responsible for adult literacy and essential skills development ensure the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) that bilateral agreements with provinces and territories include binding clauses concerning official language minority communities (OLMCs), including clauses respecting consultations with community representatives (identifying the interlocutors and the frequency of consultations) and the accountability obligations of the two levels of government; b) that provincial and territorial action plans be public and clearly demonstrate how provincial and territorial governments will meet their respective commitments to OLMCs; and c) that the accountability provisions enable OLMCs to determine how much of the federal and provincial or territorial investments are allocated to them.
<p>2018 — 42nd Parliament, 1st Session</p>	<p><u><i>Growing Up in French in Western Canada: A Review of Federal Support</i></u></p>	<p>Recommendation 1: That the Treasury Board Secretariat create a new policy instrument to require that all bilateral agreements, no matter the subject matter, include the following:</p>

Year and Parliament	Report Title	Recommendation
	<p><u>for Early Childhood Education</u></p>	<p>a) initiatives and programs specific to official language minority communities (OLMCs) that deliver services equal in quality to those received by the majority;</p> <p>b) binding provisions that require the provinces and territories to hold official consultations with OLMCs;</p> <p>c) targets and performance measures tailored to OLMCs; and</p> <p>d) explicit accountability provisions that require the provinces and territories to disclose exactly how much funding is owed to OLMCs under the bilateral agreements.</p> <p>Recommendation 2: That the Treasury Board Secretariat remind federal institutions about the Policy on Transfer Payments and, more specifically, paragraph 6.5.14 on an annual basis. This paragraph provides that deputy heads of federal institutions are responsible for the following:</p> <p>Ensuring, when transfer payment programs support activities that benefit members of both official language communities, that their design and delivery respect the obligations of the Government of Canada as set out in Part VII of the <i>Official Languages Act</i> and that services and benefits are made available in both official languages in compliance with the <i>Official Languages Act</i>.</p> <p>Recommendation 4: That, after the current Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework expires, in negotiating future agreements, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, with his provincial and territorial counterparts, take the steps necessary to make official language minority communities a mandatory investment area.</p>

Sources: Table prepared using content from the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages reports from the 37th Parliament, 2nd Session, to the 42nd Parliament, 1st Session.

APPENDIX B LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the Committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the Committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Canadian Parents for French - British Columbia & Yukon Glyn Lewis, Executive Director	2018/09/26	109
Conseil culturel et artistique francophone de la Colombie-Britannique Jean-François Packwood, Executive Director		
Conseil jeunesse francophone de la Colombie-Britannique Yann Lacoste, President Youth		
Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique Marie-France Lapierre, Chair Marc-André Ouellette, Vice-Chair		
Educacentre College Yvon Laberge, President		
Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique Robert Rotheron, Executive Director		
Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique Marie-Andrée Asselin, Executive Director Suzana Straus, Acting President		
Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs David Pajot, Associate Director Simon Fraser University		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
RésoSanté Colombie-Britannique Brian Conway, President and Medical Doctor	2018/09/26	109
Société de développement économique de la Colombie-Britannique Donald Cyr, Executive Director		
Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise Ronald Labrecque, Executive Director Denis Simard, President	2018/09/27	110
Association des parents fransaskois Mélissa Castonguay Cossette, Administrator Carol-Guillaume Gagné, Chief Executive Officer		
Canadian Parents for French Karen Pozniak, Executive Director Saskatchewan		
Collège Mathieu Francis Kasongo, Executive Director Postsecondary Education		
Communauté des Africains Francophones de la Saskatchewan Céline Moukoumi, President		
Conseil culturel fransaskois Suzanne Campagne, Director Gilles Groleau, Chairman of the Board of Directors		
Conseil des écoles fransaskoises Alpha Barry, Chair		
Conseil économique et coopératif de la Saskatchewan Kouame N'Goandi, Manager Accountability		
Coopérative des publications fransaskoises Marie-France Kenny, President		
Fédération des aînés fransaskois Roger Gauthier		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Francophone Immigration Network of Saskatchewan Marie Galoppe, Coordinator	2018/09/27	110
French-Speaking Jurists Association of Saskatchewan Patrick Hopf, President		
Réseau santé en français de la Saskatchewan Frédérique Baudemont, Executive Director Anne Leis, President		
Hon. Mélanie Joly, C.P., M.P., Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie	2018/11/01	117
Department of Canadian Heritage Yvan Déry, Senior Director Policy and Research, Official Languages Branch France Fortier, Acting Director Operations and Regional Coordination, Official Languages Branch Denis Racine, Director General Official Languages Branch		
Department of Industry Guylaine F. Roy, Deputy Minister Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie		

APPENDIX C LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the Committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the Committee's [webpage for this study](#).

Association des parents fransaskois

Association franco-yukonnaise

Conseil des écoles fransaskoises

Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique

Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique

Partenariat communauté en santé du Yukon

Scouts francophones de la Colombie-Britannique

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. 109, 110, 117 , 129, 130 and 132) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Denis Paradis, P.C., M.P.
Chair

