

HORIZON 2018: TOWARD STRONGER SUPPORT OF FRENCH-LANGUAGE LEARNING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA



Report of the Standing Senate Committee
on Official Languages #OLLO

MAY 2017

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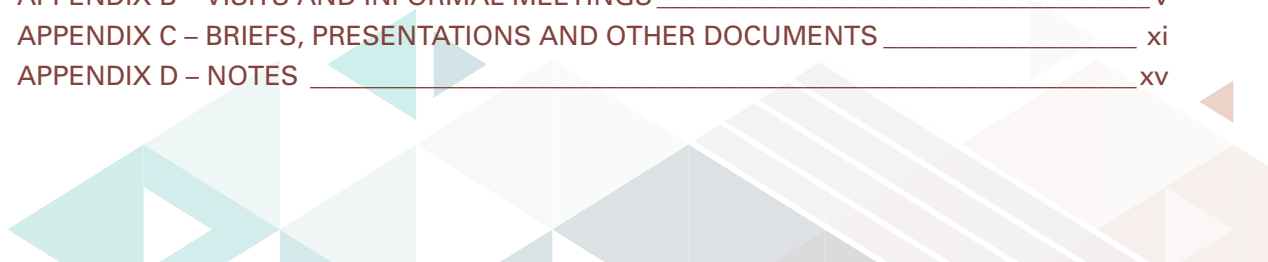
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MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE



**The Honourable
Claudette Tardif***
Chair



**The Honourable
Rose-May Poirier***
Deputy Chair



**The Honourable
Paul E. McIntyre***



**The Honourable
Raymonde Gagné***

THE HONOURABLE SENATORS:



Patricia Bovey



René Cormier



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Ghislain Maltais



Marie-Françoise Mégie



Percy Mockler



Lucie Moncion

*Members of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

The Honourable Senators Peter Harder, P.C.
(or Diane Bellemare) and Claude Carignan, P.C.
(or Yonah Martin)

OTHER SENATORS WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED FROM TIME TO TIME IN THIS STUDY:

The Honourable Senators Gwen Boniface,
Norman E. Doyle, Joan Fraser, Victor Oh,
Michel Rivard (retired), Judith G. Seidman

STAFF MEMBERS:

Marie-Ève Hudon, Analyst, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament
Kevin Pittman, Committee Clerk, Committees Directorate
Annie Trudel, Administrative Assistant, Committees Directorate
Geneviève Sicard, Communications Officer (committees), Communications Directorate

ORDERS OF REFERENCE

Excerpt from the *Journals of the Senate* of Wednesday, April 20, 2016:

The Honourable Senator Tardif moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Dawson:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages be authorized to examine and report on the challenges associated with access to French-language schools and French immersion programs in British Columbia;

That the papers and evidence received and taken, and work accomplished by the committee on its study of best practices for language policies and second-language learning in a context of linguistic duality or plurality during the Second Session of the Forty-first Parliament be referred to the committee; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than December 15, 2016, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Charles Robert

Clerk of the Senate

Excerpt from the *Journals of the Senate* of Thursday, December 1, 2016:

The Honourable Senator Tardif moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Joyal, P.C.:

That, notwithstanding the order of the Senate adopted on Wednesday, April 20, 2016, the date for the final report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages in relation to its study on the challenges associated with access to French-language schools and French immersion programs in British Columbia be extended from December 15, 2016 to March 30, 2017.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Charles Robert

Clerk of the Senate

Excerpt from the *Journals of the Senate* of Thursday, March 9, 2017:

The Honourable Senator Maltais moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Dagenais:

That, notwithstanding the order of the Senate adopted on Thursday, December 1, 2016, the date for the final report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages in relation to its study on the challenges associated with access to French-language schools and French immersion programs in British Columbia be extended from March 30, 2017 to May 31, 2017.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Charles Robert

Clerk of the Senate

ACRONYMS

BCATML	British Columbia (BC) Association of Teachers of Modern Languages
CIRLM	Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities
CJFCB	<i>Conseil jeunesse francophone de la Colombie-Britannique</i>
CNFS	<i>Consortium national de formation en santé</i>
CNPF	<i>Commission nationale des parents francophones</i>
CPF	Canadian Parents for French
CSF	<i>Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique</i>
FCFA	<i>Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada</i>
FCF	French Cohort Program
FFCB	<i>Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique</i>
FNCSF	<i>Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones</i>
FPFCB	<i>Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique</i>
IB	International Baccalaureate
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
OCOL	Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages
OFFA	Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs
OLA	<i>Official Languages Act</i>
OLLO	Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages
PP	Professional Programs
SFU	Simon Fraser University
UBC	University of British Columbia
VSB	Vancouver School Board



GLOSSARY

Authentic experiences	Activities that allow the use of a language in a context other than a simple school environment, immersing oneself in the history and culture of another linguistic community, engaging with its members and participating in activities in the community's language.
Basic training for teachers	Training acquired at university by teachers, including the basic elements needed to practise their profession.
Common Canadian framework of reference	Framework adapted to the Canadian context, modelled after the Common European Framework of Reference, which identifies common reference levels for teaching, learning and evaluating language proficiency in Canada.
Continuing education	Additional training acquired by teachers to develop or update their professional practice.
Core French programs	Education programs offered in English-speaking schools where French is taught as a subject and is part of the regular curriculum, in varying proportions from one school to the next (from 40 minutes to 120 minutes a week).
Early immersion	Immersion starts at a young age, generally in kindergarten or grade 1.
Education continuum	Education in French, from early childhood to post-secondary.
Exogamous couples	Couples in which the spouses are not members of the same linguistic group and in which only one of the two spouses is francophone.
Francophile	Generally, those whose mother tongue is not French but who have the ability to conduct a conversation in French or who demonstrate an attachment to French language and culture.
Francophone schools	Schools primarily intended for rights holders pursuant to section 23 of the <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> ("Charter") in which instruction is in French and which seek to build identity by not only providing a French education but transmitting French language and culture to children as well.
French first-language education	Education offered in francophone schools pursuant to section 23 of the Charter.

French immersion programs	Education programs offered in English-speaking schools where French is the language of instruction in all subjects, in varying proportions from one school year to the next (100% in kindergarten to 25% in grade 12).
French second-language education	Education offered in French immersion programs, core French programs and intensive French programs in English-speaking schools.
French second-language programs	French education programs offered in English-speaking schools, comprising French immersion programs, core French programs and intensive French programs.
Identity building	A dynamic process in which a person defines and recognizes themselves through their thoughts, actions and wants in society. In the context of francophone minority communities, identity building has an educational, linguistic and cultural dimension. French language and culture are ways of expressing who one is.
Institutional completeness	Right to control and management of institutions <i>by</i> and <i>for</i> the francophone population, assuming a complete offer of services in French to the francophone minority.
Intensive French programs	Education programs offered in English-speaking schools where French is taught intensively in grades 6 and 7.
Late immersion	Immersion starts later, generally in grade 6 or grade 7.
Official languages	Canada's two official languages are English and French, as set out in section 16 of the Charter and reaffirmed in the <i>Official Languages Act</i> .
Substantive equality	Principle recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada in <i>Arsenault-Cameron v. Prince Edward Island</i> , which is the norm in Canadian law. Substantive equality assumes that official language minorities can be treated differently, if necessary, according to their particular circumstances and needs, in order to provide a standard of education equivalent to that of the linguistic majority. This principle is distinct from formal equality, given the remedial nature of section 23 of the Charter.
Substantive equivalence	Principle recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada in <i>Association des parents de l'école Rose-des-vents v. British Columbia (Education)</i> , which involves the consideration of rights holders' views pursuant to section 23 of the Charter, compared with those offered in the neighbouring schools of the linguistic majority (as opposed to formal equivalence), given the specific challenges of protecting the language and culture of the minority and preventing assimilation.

PREFACE

The Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages is responsible for reviewing the federal government's role and its commitment to advancing English and French in Canadian society and to enhancing the vitality of official language minority communities.

Having heard for several years about the major challenges in British Columbia facing both franco-phone schools and French immersion programs, the Committee decided to have on-site visits in Vancouver and Victoria. We were interested in getting an accurate picture of French learning opportunities in this province.

Our study is a logical follow-up to the work carried out during the previous parliamentary session, following the tabling in June 2015 of the report *Aiming Higher: Increasing bilingualism of our Canadian youth.*

This report focused on best practices for language policies and second-language learning in a context of linguistic duality or plurality. The federal government provided its response in June 2016, although without a commitment specific enough for us to believe that there was significant improvement. We believed that this study warranted an even closer review.

The vast majority of the people we heard from in Vancouver and Victoria expressed their gratitude that we had taken the time to listen and to see for ourselves the magnitude of the challenges they face.

We wish to express our heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped us prepare for this fact-finding mission, attended our meetings and took the time to inform us about British Columbia's unique issues.

Having said that, we find it unfortunate that the Government of British Columbia refused to take part in our study, either formally or informally. The Senate Committee members would very much like the Government of British Columbia, after reading our report, to work with French-language education stakeholders, and with federal government support, to implement the report's recommendations.



**The Honourable
Claudette Tardif**
Chair



**The Honourable
Rose-May Poirier**
Deputy Chair

Horizon 2018: **Toward Stronger Support of French-language Learning in British Columbia**

Canadians living in British Columbia face major challenges in accessing Francophone schools and French immersion programs.

In this report, the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages chose to focus on accessing French first-language and French second-language education in British Columbia because the province is a typical case in which francophone schools and French immersion programs face significant challenges. These challenges, however, are not unique to B.C. and the lessons learned in this report can also be applied in other jurisdictions. The current report builds on the committee's 2015 report called *Aiming Higher: Increasing bilingualism of our Canadian youth*.

- The case of *École Rose-des-vents*, of which the committee heard in its study, is an example of the unmet need to support francophone schools in British Columbia. Structurally inadequate and overpopulated, **350 STUDENTS** are already packed into a **SPACE MEANT FOR 200**. ◀

What's more, it is estimated that approximately 1,200 children in the school's large catchment area could have the legal right to receive French first-language education and enroll in this school. Transportation is also an issue as some students also face unreasonable travel times.

The parents' association of *École Rose-des-vents*, the *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique* and the *Fédération des parents francophones de la Colombie-Britannique* have been fighting lengthy and costly court battles with the provincial government to address the above mentioned issues.

The Rose-des-vents case remains unresolved even after the Supreme Court of Canada upheld, in 2015, francophone parents' rights to have their children receive instruction in French and obtain equivalent educational experience to that provided to their counterparts in schools of the majority. The Supreme Court of British Columbia handed down a ruling in September 2016 recognizing systemic problems with the funding of French first-language education. Some aspects of the Court's decision have been appealed.

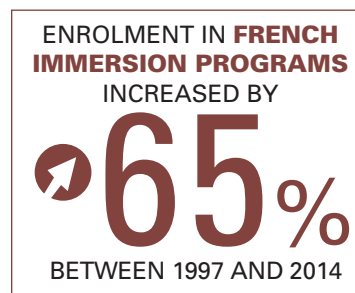
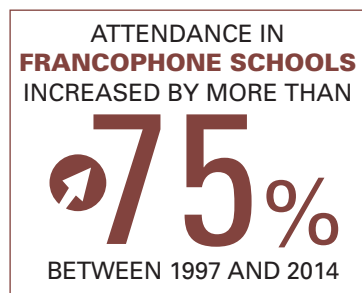
With regards to French immersion programs, B.C. parents who do not have constitutionally-guaranteed rights but who want their children to receive French second-language education also face barriers. Waitlists and lottery systems, the lack of nearby schools, a shortage of qualified teachers and the lack of postsecondary opportunities in French are some of the barriers to those wanting to attend French immersion programs.



The committee feels its report is particularly timely because the *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction* is up for renegotiation in 2018. It is an opportunity for the federal and provincial governments to prove they are serious about addressing the inadequacies present in British Columbia and across the country. The next multi-year official languages plan will also be announced in 2018.

The conclusions and recommendations of the committee's report apply to francophone schools, French immersion programs and British Columbia's French-speaking community at large, including francophones and francophiles, and the support they are entitled to.

For example, francophone minorities living in predominantly anglophone provinces have the right under section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to have their children receive instruction in French, subject to certain criteria. In B.C., it is estimated that only 25% to 30% of rights holders are enrolled in francophone schools. That said, the demand exists and attendance in B.C. francophone schools has increased by 75% in the last 20 years.



Part VII of the *Official Languages Act* describes the federal government's commitment to fostering the full recognition and use of both official languages in Canada. The federal government must therefore support the learning of English and French, Canada's two official languages, across the country. In B.C., the demand for French immersion programs has grown by 65% in the last 20 years, but there still remains a lack of spaces for students enrolled in primary and secondary schools relative to the demand.

Part VII also provides for supporting the development of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada. The federal government has a responsibility to enhance the vitality of B.C.'s francophone community but it has not increased its financial support to B.C. community organizations in more than 15 years.

The committee believes the federal government is not providing the needed support. The committee observed a strong desire from francophones and francophiles alike to obtain French-language instruction and services.

► The committee heard from **55 WITNESSES** in public hearings
and met **MORE THAN 150 PEOPLE** during on-site visits. ◀

Unfortunately, the government of British Columbia declined to take part in this study, making it difficult for the committee to work with the province to identify practical solutions to increase learning opportunities in French, one of Canada's official languages.

The committee also heard from the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and the Canada Lands Company. The committee strongly encourages the Canada Lands Company to recognize its obligations under Part VII of the *Official Languages Act* in acquiring urgently-needed sites for building two francophone schools. The Minister of Public Services and Procurement, while appearing before the committee, said that her department would work with all stakeholders in finding a solution and participate in the ongoing discussions.

Students, in particular, left an indelible impression on members of the committee during the fact-finding mission and public hearings. They spoke of a desire not just for education but also for opportunities to be part of a strong francophone community outside of their school and to live in French in B.C.

These young people are engaged but they have few opportunities to expand their learning of or receive services in French. This, despite the Commissioner of Official Languages' recommendations in 2009 to create a continuum of second-language learning opportunities, a finding repeated in the previous committee's report tabled in 2015. An education continuum, from early childhood to post-secondary, as well as a continuum of services in French are again both highlighted as key findings in this report.

► The committee makes **17 RECOMMENDATIONS** in this report that, if implemented, would begin to narrow the gulf between the rights of Canadian citizens and the narrow band of services in the language of their choice that is available to them. ◀

The committee believes that the federal government must make a conscious and long-term effort to provide the support to which it is committed under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and under the *Official Languages Act*. Access to French first- and second-language programs in British Columbia is still out of reach for many. The committee will continue to hold the federal government to account so that it meets its official languages obligations.

► This year, Canada is celebrating the 150th anniversary of Confederation and 2019 will mark the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the *Official Languages Act*. There could be no more appropriate time for the federal government to commit to promoting Canada's two official languages, which are at the core of the Canadian identity. ◀

RECOMMENDATIONS

► Recommendation 1

That the Minister of Public Services and Procurement:

- (a) intervene with Canada Lands Company Ltd., engaging with British Columbia's Ministry of Education and the City of Vancouver to advocate for the need of the *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique* in Vancouver, west of Main Street, to promptly acquire lands that are currently 50% owned by Canada Lands Company Ltd. to build two schools that will meet the needs of Vancouver's francophone community; and
- (b) adopt regulations requiring federal institutions to take into account the interests and needs of official language minority schools in the sale or transfer of real and personal property, by 2018.

► Recommendation 2

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in negotiating the new Protocol for Agreements on Education and the next multi-year official languages plan, conclude a special agreement with British Columbia's Ministry of Education to respond to the pressing infrastructure needs of the francophone community and guarantee the recognition of its rights under section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*.

► Recommendation 3

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage launch, by 2018, a national awareness and promotion campaign on both the merits of a French education and an education continuum, from early childhood through post-secondary, building on the full respect of rights guaranteed by section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

► Recommendation 4

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage take steps to support the education continuum as regards:

- (a) support for linguistic and cultural identity building for francophone students; and
- (b) retention of students in the francophone school system, throughout their education.

► Recommendation 5

- 5.1 That the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, in collaboration with British Columbia's Ministry of Children and Family Development and in consultation with the francophone community:
- (a) include a francophone vision in its national framework on early learning and child care; and
 - (b) commit to increasing access and funding to early childhood services in French, by 2018.
- 5.2 That the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development take similar steps with corresponding ministries in all provinces and territories with similar situations.

► Recommendation 6

- 6.1 That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in collaboration with the Ministry of Advanced Education and in consultation with post-secondary institutions, commit to increasing access and funding to additional French-language programs in post-secondary institutions, by 2018.
- 6.2 That the Minister of Canadian Heritage take similar steps with corresponding ministries in all provinces and territories with similar situations.

► Recommendation 7

That the federal government, in consultation with official language minority communities:

- (a) strongly encourage Statistics Canada to design and test new questions on school attendance in preparation for the 2021 census which would allow for the full implementation of minority language educational rights guaranteed in section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*; and
- (b) provide the necessary resources to Statistics Canada to conduct a new survey on the vitality of official-language minorities as part of its next multi-year official languages plan.

► Recommendation 8

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage work with the provincial and territorial governments and consult with language organizations, school boards and teachers to establish a specific, measurable objective to increase official-language proficiency among Canadians, particularly youth aged 15 to 19, by 2018.

► Recommendation 9

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage launch, by 2018, a public national awareness and promotion campaign on the merits of bilingualism that builds on the full respect of obligations in Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*.

► Recommendation 10

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage work with the provincial and territorial governments to establish a common Canadian framework of reference for languages that includes common reference levels for language teaching, learning and evaluation in Canada, by 2018.

► Recommendation 11

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in collaboration with British Columbia's Ministry of Education:

- (a) ensure access everywhere and for everyone to French immersion programs in British Columbia;
- (b) commit to increased and sustained funding for these programs; and
- (c) meet growing demand by retaining students, throughout their education.

► Recommendation 12

12.1 That the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship in collaboration with British Columbia's Minister of Education ensure that French-speaking immigrants are well informed on the opportunities to access French-language education in the province.

12.2 That the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship take similar steps with corresponding ministries in all provinces and territories with similar situations.

► Recommendation 13

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in negotiating the next Protocol for Agreements on Education, enter into a separate tripartite protocol on minority-language education that:

- (a) gives a voice to francophone communities, through their school boards, in the management of funds allocated for French first-language education; and
- (b) brings federal government practices in line with section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*.

► Recommendation 14

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in negotiating the next Protocol for Agreements on Education:

- (a) undertake to include more stringent provisions on money invested in federal–provincial/territorial agreements; and
- (b) undertake field validations to follow up on the activity and financial reports received from the Ministries of Education in the provinces and territories, as recommended by the Commissioner of Official Languages.

► Recommendation 15

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in negotiating the new Protocol for Agreements on Education and the next multi-year official languages plan, commit to increasing the envelope for Intergovernmental Cooperation on Education, for example by providing:

- (a) support for school infrastructure and school transportation in francophone schools;
- (b) support for post-secondary institutions to provide basic training and continuing education for French teachers; and
- (c) language and cultural exchanges and authentic experiences for students enrolled in French first-language and French second-language education, as well as for teachers.

► Recommendation 16

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in the next multi-year official languages plan:

- (a) commit to increasing the envelope for Cooperation with the Community Sector, especially with regard to support for community spaces in French; and
- (b) consult the francophone community in British Columbia, including organizations representing francophone youth and early childhood, to determine whether changes to cooperation arrangements are needed to meet their needs.

► Recommendation 17

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in negotiating the new federal–provincial/territorial agreements on minority language services and the next multi-year official languages plan, commit to increasing the envelope for Intergovernmental Cooperation on Services.



HORIZON 2018: TOWARD STRONGER SUPPORT OF FRENCH-LANGUAGE LEARNING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

INTRODUCTION

On 20 April 2016, the Senate authorized the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages to study the challenges associated with access to francophone schools and French immersion programs in British Columbia. The committee travelled to Vancouver and Victoria, from 2–7 October 2016, for public hearings and a fact-finding mission to examine French learning opportunities in this province.

This trip was preceded and followed by public hearings in Ottawa with experts in the field. The committee heard testimony from researchers, legal counsels, representatives of francophone organizations, the Commissioner of Official Languages, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and representatives of other relevant federal institutions, in addition to all the people it heard from during its trip to British Columbia. In all, the committee heard from 55 witnesses in public hearings and met more than 150 people during on-site visits.

Throughout the study, stakeholders expressed interest in the issues raised by the committee, which helped with trip preparations and identifying the questions to be asked. The overwhelming majority of the people the committee met in Vancouver and Victoria expressed their gratitude to its members for coming to see them and hear what they had to say.

However, the refusal by B.C. government representatives to participate in the study cast a pall over the trip. The testimony heard over the last few months suggests a certain lack of willingness on the part of the provincial government to support the demands of francophones and francophiles to increase opportunities for learning French and the related culture in their province. This lack of participation seems to justify the negative outlook of witnesses, yet federal-provincial collaboration is vital to supporting official languages in education.

For its study, the committee set out the following objectives:

- ▶ examine access to francophone schools in British Columbia;
- ▶ examine access to French immersion programs in British Columbia;
- ▶ meet key stakeholders during on-site visits and public hearings;
- ▶ identify key challenges in this area;
- ▶ identify best practices in this area; and
- ▶ present recommendations to the federal government to promote opportunities to learn French in British Columbia.

This study is a follow-up to a report tabled in June 2015 entitled *Aiming Higher: Increasing bilingualism of our Canadian youth*.¹ That report examined best practices for language policies and second-language learning in a context of linguistic duality or plurality. The Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Honourable Mélanie Joly, responded to the report in June 2016.²

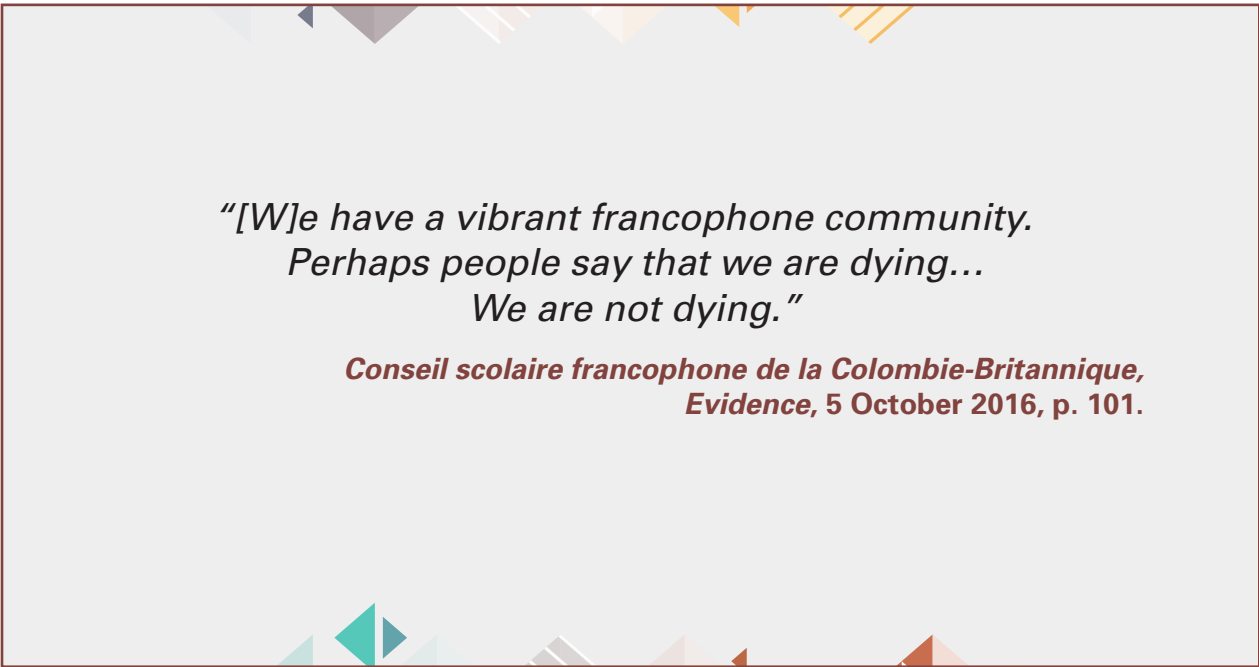
This study is also a follow-up to another report tabled 10 years earlier entitled *French-language Education in a Minority Setting: A Continuum from Early Childhood to the Postsecondary Level*.³ That report examined the various stages of the education continuum in a francophone minority setting, from early childhood to adulthood, and the measures to put in place to ensure the recognition of language rights in section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* ("Charter"). It is clear from the evidence presented that many of the findings in that report are still relevant today.

The committee chose to focus on British Columbia because the province is a typical case where challenges related to French-language learning are felt by both francophone schools and French immersion programs. The fight for equality in education and access to French second-language programs is set against a background of a lack of available spaces, a shortage of qualified teachers, and enrolment that outpaces funding. The federal government transfers several million dollars to the Government of British Columbia to promote learning French, one of Canada's two official languages, as a first language or as a second language, and has for decades. The committee therefore decided to examine the situation very carefully, as these problems repeat from year to year and study to study.

The committee's report is divided into three chapters. The **first chapter** provides an overview of the linguistic situation in British Columbia, as well as the policies and frameworks in place to promote French-language learning. It is based on the main statistical trends in this province. The **second chapter** summarizes the key challenges heard during the trip to Vancouver and Victoria and during the public hearings held in Ottawa. It addresses the specific challenges of francophone schools and French immersion programs, and then describes the challenges common to both based on the evidence gathered. The **third chapter** proposes a series of recommendations to the federal government and presents the committee's observations to promote French learning opportunities in order to:

- ▶ improve access to francophone schools;
- ▶ increase bilingualism among youth;
- ▶ review the funding mechanism and improve accountability; and
- ▶ support the vitality of francophone communities.

The timing of this report could not be better. The federal government is about to renegotiate the *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction* ("Protocol for Agreements on Education") with the provinces and territories. Its next multi-year official languages plan will be announced in 2018. In its response in June 2016 to the June 2015 committee report, the government committed to using best practices identified by the committee as a basis for preparing its new plan. The time for action to strengthen support of Canada's official languages is now.



*"[W]e have a vibrant francophone community.
Perhaps people say that we are dying...
We are not dying."*

***Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique,
Evidence, 5 October 2016, p. 101.***



CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Situation in British Columbia

This first chapter provides an overview of the linguistic situation in British Columbia, as well as the policies and frameworks in place to promote French-language learning. It presents the main statistical trends in the province in terms of the francophonie, the evolution of bilingualism and school attendance.

1.1 British Columbia's francophone community

The most recent census data shows a francophonie in British Columbia that is vibrant, growing, diverse and scattered throughout the province, but whose vitality is threatened by a lack of measures and infrastructure that promote French, one of Canada's two official languages.

1.1.1 A growing francophone population

Various language characteristics are used to describe the francophone population: mother tongue, language spoken at home, first official language spoken and ability to conduct a conversation in French. Between 2006 and 2011, the number of francophone speakers in British Columbia increased for all these language characteristics, as Table 1 shows.

Table 1 – Number of People and Proportion of the Population Reporting French by Selected Language Characteristic, British Columbia, 2006 and 2011

Language Characteristic	2006		2011	
	Number	%	Number	%
Mother tongue	63,295	1.6	70,760	1.6
Language spoken at home	57,105	1.4	69,535	1.6
Most often	19,990	0.5	24,445	0.6
On a regular basis	37,115	0.9	45,090	1.0
First official language spoken	61,740	1.5	62,195	1.4
Ability to conduct a conversation	297,720	7.3	298,695	6.9

Source: Statistics Canada, "[French and the francophonie in Canada](#)," Census in Brief, Catalogue no. 98-314-X2011003, Ottawa, 2012, p. 6.

The growth rate of the population with French as their mother tongue or language spoken most often at home was +12% and +22% respectively between 2006 and 2011, the second-highest growth rates after Alberta.⁴



1.1.2 A diverse francophone population

Another aspect of the francophonie in British Columbia is its diversity. Children of foreign-born or second- or third-generation parents and first-generation children in ethnocultural communities — those whose mother tongue is not necessarily French but who have knowledge of it — increasingly identify with British Columbia's francophone community and demonstrate a sense of belonging to French culture. This means that francophone schools and French immersion programs are seeing increased demand and take in students who are increasingly heterogeneous. As we will see in Chapter 2, however, there are not enough resources to ensure access to French learning opportunities in the province and meet the needs of this diverse student body.

A total of 185,120 immigrants settled in the province between 2006 and 2011, making it the province with the second-highest immigrant population after Ontario. The province's share of newcomers did, however, drop slightly, as compared with 2006 census data, a phenomenon attributable to interprovincial migration. The annual share of French-speaking permanent residents remains relatively low.⁵ In total, however, more than 30% of British Columbia's francophone population is of immigrant origin.⁶

In 2011, about 11% of the French mother tongue population was born in the province, while 71% were born in another Canadian province. Net interprovincial migration of the French mother tongue population was 855 migrants between 2006 and 2011 in British Columbia. As for the number of people who settled in the province, a total of 6,205 francophones migrated during this period, mainly from Quebec, Ontario and Alberta, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Interprovincial Migration Between 2006 and 2011, French Mother Tongue, Province of Destination: British Columbia

Province/Territory	Number
Newfoundland and Labrador	20
Prince Edward Island	0
Nova Scotia	125
New Brunswick	195
Quebec	3,010
Ontario	1,340
Manitoba	200
Saskatchewan	140
Alberta	1,115
Yukon	50
Northwest Territories	10
Nunavut	0
Total (Canada)	6,205

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 and 2011 census data.

The fact that a very large proportion of francophones in British Columbia is from Quebec distinguishes this province from the others, a fact also noted by a researcher from the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities.⁷

1.1.3 A scattered francophone population

Approximately two-thirds of British Columbia's francophone and francophile population live in the major centres of Vancouver and Victoria, where the committee went on its fact-finding mission. One-third of the remaining population is scattered across the province, in places where there is sometimes, but sometimes not, a francophone school or a French immersion program. Given this scattered population, some communities have difficulty justifying their demands for services in French because they lack the demographic weight. In many parts of the province, French is not available in early childhood programs or high school. In some areas, French-language education is not even possible in elementary schools, resulting in a loss of French in some families.⁸

1.1.4 A vibrant francophone community... whose vitality is under threat

As many witnesses told the committee, there is a strong desire to live in French in British Columbia. What prevents this from becoming a reality is the lack of adequate political, community and educational infrastructure. This, in turn, threatens the vitality of British Columbia's francophone community, for both French first- and second-language speakers.

Given its dispersion and great diversity, the francophone community must make constant efforts to remain inclusive, renew itself and engage all segments of its population.⁹ Unfortunately, the lack of political support and the fact that francophones still have to go to court to have their constitutional educational rights recognized does nothing to promote the vitality of French in British Columbia.

Another factor to take into consideration is the steady rise in the number of exogamous couples, or couples in which the spouses are not members of the same linguistic group, where one of the two spouses is francophone. In 2011, in couples where one spouse had French as a mother tongue, 74% lived with an anglophone spouse; English was transmitted as the mother tongue to 80% of their children.¹⁰ This means that French does not play a vital role in the family environment. A study by the *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique* ("*Conseil scolaire francophone*") found that, among households with children in francophone schools, only 36.4% spoke French at home in 2013, a share that continued to drop from 42.8% in 2009.¹¹

1.2 Evolution of bilingualism in British Columbia

In 2011, nearly 300,000 people could conduct a conversation in English and French in British Columbia, or 6.9% of the province's population. This is a decrease in percentage from 2006, but an increase in number. The appeal of official languages is strong in this province, yet bilingualism among young people continues to vary.

1.2.1 Obvious appeal of both official languages

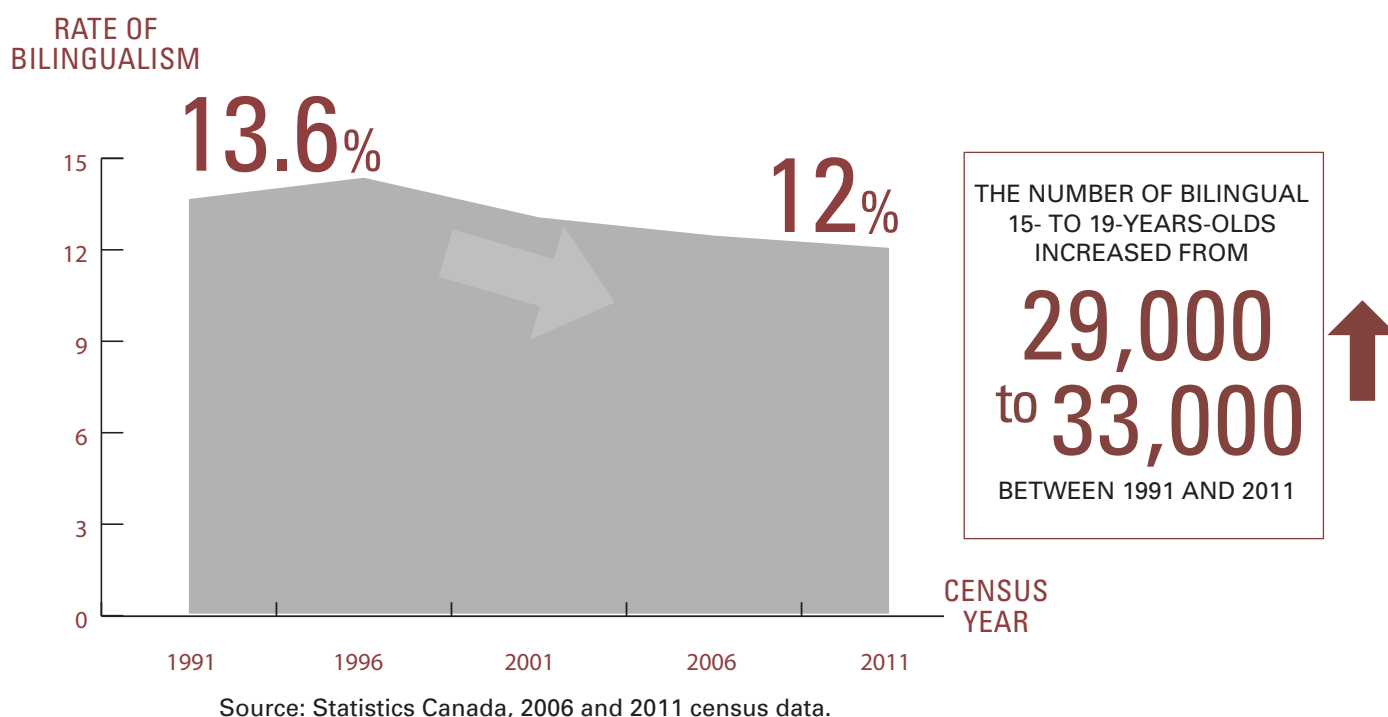
A recent survey conducted on behalf of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages found that 82% of British Columbians support bilingualism and 84% support the objectives of the *Official Languages Act* (OLA).¹² The greatest support was found among the youngest generation. As noted in a brief submitted by the Canadian Parents for French – British Columbia and Yukon Branch, support for bilingualism in British Columbia is much higher today than it was when the Charter came into force.¹³ The number of people able to conduct a conversation in French, more than four times higher than that of people with French as a mother tongue, demonstrates a clear interest in French. In fact, the committee's public hearings bolstered this interest. In British Columbia, in 2011, the number of people who considered themselves bilingual was the third highest outside Quebec, after Ontario and New Brunswick.¹⁴ That said, the bilingualism rate of British Columbians continues to vary. It was 7% in 2001, 7.3% in 2006, and 6.8% in 2011.

1.2.2 Bilingualism among young people

The rate of bilingualism among 15- to 19-year-olds has fallen as a percentage since 1991 across all language groups, from 13.6% in 1991 to 12% in 2011, and has varied from year to year and language group to language group, as Table 3 shows. However, the number of 15- to 19-year-olds able to conduct a conversation in English and in French, for all language groups, increased over the same period, from 29,000 in 1991 to 33,000 in 2011. However, there has been an overall decrease over the past 20 years in the ability of young anglophones to conduct a conversation in French, in number and percentage. During the same period, the rate of bilingualism among young people whose mother tongue is not an official language remained about the same, fluctuating slightly from census to census, but increased in absolute numbers. The rate of bilingualism among francophone

youth has been rising fairly steadily, except between 2006 and 2011, when the rate fell proportionately but rose in absolute numbers. As discussed later in this chapter, the high drop-rate at the secondary level and the lack of opportunities to learn French at the post-secondary level may explain in part why bilingualism has not increased at the same rate as youth's interest in French.

Table 3 – Ability to Conduct a Conversation in French and English, 15- to 19-year-olds, all language groups in British Columbia, 1991 to 2011



1.3 Legislative and policy framework in British Columbia

To better understand the findings presented in this report, it is fitting to provide a picture of the legislative and policy framework in place in British Columbia.

1.3.1 French-language promotion

British Columbia does not have any legislation or policy governing the status of French or the delivery of French-language services. It is currently the only province not to have any such measures in place. However, the province does have a Francophone Affairs Program to manage services in French and funding through the Canada–British Columbia Official Languages Agreement on French-Language Services 2013–2014 to 2017–2018.¹⁵ The province also has a Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs, the Honourable Norm Letnick, who participates each year in the Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie along with his provincial and territorial counterparts.

1.3.2 French-language education

British Columbia's school system is governed by the *School Act*.¹⁶ and the regulations and policies made under it. Approximately 1,600 public schools offer programs from kindergarten to grade 12. The Ministry of Education administers the Canada–British Columbia Agreement on Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction 2013–2014 to 2017–2018 through its French Programs branch.¹⁷ The Minister of Education, the Honourable Mike Bernier, is responsible for this file and sits with his provincial and territorial counterparts on the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, which negotiates the Protocol for Agreements on Education. The Minister is not supported by a Deputy Minister for French first-language education, a criticism that was made in the public hearings.¹⁸ The Minister also administers funding for national bursary programs for language learning (Explore and Destination Clic) and language assistants (Odyssey). Below we provide an overview of the province's French-language learning programs.

1.3.2.1 French as a first language: Charter rights

The right to French first-language education is protected under section 23 of the Charter. This guarantee includes the right to primary and secondary education in the minority language, the right to school facilities for the linguistic minority and the right to management and control of education for and by the linguistic minority.¹⁹

In 2006, the Survey on the Vitality of the Official-Language Minorities estimated that approximately 15,000 children had at least one parent whose mother tongue was French in British Columbia.²⁰ That year, around 3,800 children were enrolled in a francophone school, or roughly 27% of students eligible for instruction in French.²¹ However, this picture is incomplete and we do not have comparable data for 2011. These difficulties in calculating rights holders were raised in public hearings and we will return to them in Chapter 2.



French-language education

French is one of Canada's two official languages. It is taught as a first language and as a second language in programs that vary from one school board to another. British Columbia has:

- **francophone schools**, which are primarily intended for rights holders under section 23 of the Charter, where instruction is in French and which seek to build identity by not only providing a French education but transmitting French language and culture to children as well;
- **french immersion programs**, where French is the language of instruction in all subjects, in varying proportions from one school year to the next (100% in kindergarten to 25% in grade 12);
- **core French programs**, where French is taught as a subject and is part of the regular curriculum, in varying proportions from one school to the next (from 40 minutes to 120 minutes a week); and
- **intensive French programs**, where French is taught intensively in grades 6 and 7.

British Columbia's *School Act* defines the circumstances in which the French-language educational program operates.²² The admission policy of the *Conseil scolaire francophone* authorizes the enrolment of children with at least one rights holder parent pursuant to section 23 of the Charter.²³ It also provides for the enrolment of children who meet the following criteria:

Excerpt from the admission policy of the *Conseil scolaire francophone*

- 2.1. *one of their parents is an immigrant who, if they were a Canadian citizen, would be a rights holder under section 23 of the Charter; or*
- 2.2. *one of their parents is a Canadian citizen or an immigrant who understands and speaks French fluently; or*
- 2.3. *one of their Canadian or Canadian-resident grandparents:*
 - 2.3.1. *has French as their mother tongue; or*
 - 2.3.2. *received instruction in Canada, at the primary or secondary level, in French as a first language.*

However, sections 2.2 and 2.3 of the admission policy have been suspended pending a court challenge at the time of writing.²⁴ We will return to this in Chapter 2.

British Columbia's first francophone education program, known as "Programme-cadre de français," was created in the late 1970s. In the late 1980s, a court challenge was launched to have the right to French-language education recognized; that right was enshrined in provincial legislation at that time. The *Conseil scolaire francophone* was not granted the right to manage itself until 1997, further to another court challenge:

- The ***Conseil scolaire francophone*** is the only school board that manages minority-language education programs in the province. Unlike English-language school boards, the *Conseil scolaire francophone's* mandate extends throughout the province. Students are therefore widely dispersed. It has 37 schools, including a virtual school.

1.3.2.2 Compulsory second-language learning: French and other non-official languages

Since 1997, second-language learning has been mandatory in British Columbia in grades 5 to 8.²⁵ However, French is only one of several choices. Pursuant to the province's Language Education Policy, "boards of education decide which second languages will be offered. Core French will be the language offered if the board does not offer an alternative."²⁶ School boards manage choice and access to these programs. The boards must ensure continuity of instruction in the same language throughout the course of the student's education. Second-language programs are available in French, Aboriginal languages, Arabic, Russian, Italian, Korean, Spanish, Panjabi, Mandarin, Japanese and German, among others.

In 2011, 26.5% of British Columbians had a language other than English or French as their mother tongue. The three most common non-official languages were Punjabi, Cantonese and Mandarin. Among the school boards the committee visited, second-language programs other than French were offered in Mandarin and Punjabi. In its brief, the *Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique* pointed out that this multilingual environment can have practical ramifications on French-language education programs, for example the addition of elements to a curriculum for which there is no French version or cutting French programs in the interest of other language programs.²⁷ In this context, the organization suggested that learning French be promoted as a gateway to learning other languages.²⁸

With regard to French, one of Canada's two official languages, as a second language, the programs available, the admission criteria and the characteristics of the education provided vary from one school board to another. For example, among the three school boards with which the committee met:

- ▶ The **Vancouver School District** offers a range of French immersion programs, including early and late immersion at the elementary level. Registration is online, according to specific criteria and deadlines, and spaces are awarded based on a waitlist and draw. The board also offers secondary school immersion, from grades 8 to 12, which requires the successful completion of French immersion in elementary school as a prerequisite. The proportion of French instruction is as follows: 100% from kindergarten to grade 3, 50% to 80% in grades 4 to 7, 50% in grades 8 to 10, 25% in grade 11 and at least 12.5% in grade 12. The board also offers core French programs in all grades as well as intensive French programs in grades 6 and 7. These intensive programs are offered in three schools and 80% of instruction is in French during these two years. Approximately 10% of the board's students are in French immersion or intensive French programs.²⁹
- ▶ The **Surrey School District** offers a range of French immersion programs at the primary and secondary levels. Many of its schools face long waitlists. Spaces for early immersion (entry point: kindergarten) are awarded based on a waitlist and draw. The proportion of French instruction is as follows: 100% from kindergarten to grade 2 and 80% from grades 3 to 7. Late immersion (entry point: grade 6) is also offered. Instruction is 100% in French in grade 6, dropping to 80% in grade 7. French immersion is also offered in high school, from grades 8 to 12. The proportion of subjects taught in French is as follows: a minimum of 50% in grades 8 to 10, 25% in grade 11 and a French course in grade 12. Students who complete the program receive a bilingual diploma. The school district also offers core French programs in all grades, intensive French in grades 6 and 7, and enhanced French in high school. It was the first English-language school district in British Columbia to offer intensive French programs, starting in 2004.³⁰
- ▶ The **Greater Victoria School District** offers French immersion programs at the primary and secondary levels. For early immersion programs (entry point: kindergarten and grade 1), spaces are awarded based on a waitlist and draw. This option is available in nine schools. Late immersion (entry point: grade 6) is available in five schools and spaces are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Four secondary schools offer French immersion. The proportion of subjects taught in French is as follows: 100% from kindergarten to grade 2, 80% in grades 3 to 5, 70% to 80% in grades 6 to 8, 50% in grades 9 and 10, and 25% in grades 11 and 12.

Distance education is available for high school students. Approximately 20% of the district's students are enroled in French immersion programs, one of the highest rates in the province.³¹

In the 41st Parliament, the national organization, Canadian Parents for French, submitted a brief to the committee as part of its study on best practices for second-language learning.³² This report compiled data on provincial policies for French second-language learning. According to this data, in British Columbia, the policies in place have numerous challenges respecting admission, transportation and promotion of the programs.³³ While the province encourages second-language learning from grades 5 to 8, there are still structural barriers to learning French.

1.4 Schools and school attendance in British Columbia: opportunities to learn French

This section provides a portrait of school attendance in French first- and second-language education programs in British Columbia and general trends in both.

1.4.1 French first-language instruction

In 2013–2014, there were more than 5,000 students enroled in a francophone school in British Columbia, from kindergarten to grade 12.³⁴ Three-quarters of them were enroled in an elementary education program, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 – French First-language Education Programs, British Columbia, 2013–2014

	Kindergarten	Elementary (Grades 1 to 8)	Secondary (Grades 8 to 12)	Total
Number	609	3,720	732	5,067
%	12	73.5	14.5	100

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM, Table 477-0027 (education programs).

1.4.2 French second-language instruction

In total, in 2013–2014, more than 224,000 students studied French as a second language in British Columbia. As elsewhere in Canada, different types of programs are offered: French immersion programs, which are increasingly popular; core French programs, attendance in which continues to drop; and intensive French programs.

1.4.2.1 French immersion programs

According to estimates by the Canadian Parents for French – British Columbia and Yukon Branch provided before the committee's trip, French immersion programs would be offered in approximately 223 schools in British Columbia. In 2013–2014, just under 50,000 students were enroled in a French immersion program, from kindergarten to grade 12.³⁵ Among them, roughly two thirds were enroled in an elementary education program, as is shown in Table 5.

Table 5 – French Immersion Programs, British Columbia, 2013–2014

	Kindergarten	Elementary (Grades 1 to 8)	Secondary (Grades 8 to 12)	Total
Number	4,782	33,591	11,064	49,446
%	9.7	67.9	22.4	100

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM, Table 477-0027 (education programs).

1.4.2.2 Core French programs

The committee was unable to determine the number of schools offering core French programs in British Columbia. Given the funding provided by the federal government for learning French as an official language, it would appear that several schools opt for this type of program, which competes with second-language programs other than French. In 2013–2014, just under 175,000 students were enrolled in a core French program in British Columbia, from kindergarten to grade 12.³⁶ Three-quarters of them were enrolled in an elementary education program, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 – Core French Programs, British Columbia, 2013–2014

	Kindergarten	Elementary (Grades 1 to 8)	Secondary (Grades 8 to 12)	Total
Number	684	131,391	42,855	174,972
%	0.4	75.1	24.5	100

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM, Table 477-0027 (education programs).

1.4.2.3 Intensive French programs

The committee was unable to determine the number of schools offering intensive French programs in British Columbia or the number of students enrolled in these programs.

1.4.3 General trends

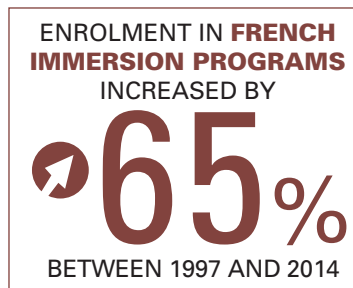
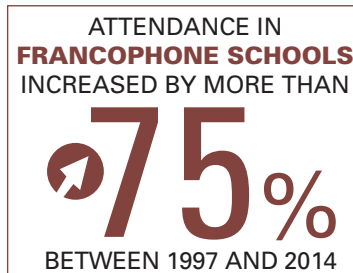
The evidence and statistical data on school attendance in French first and second language education programs in British Columbia had some factors in common. First, the importance of ensuring opportunities to live in French starting in early childhood. Second, a clear attraction for learning French over the past 15 years, specifically with respect to francophone schools and French immersion programs, which are limited by a lack of school spaces. Third, high attrition rate at the secondary level. Fourth, few opportunities to learn French at the post-secondary level.

1.4.3.1 Living in French from a young age

As shown in Tables 4, 5 and 6 above, very few students learn French in kindergarten in British Columbia. Learning French at school mainly occurs in elementary school, for all programs. As we will see in Chapter 2, the lack of early childhood services in French makes learning French from an early age even more difficult.

1.4.3.2 Lack of school spaces, in spite of a clear attraction for learning French

As evidenced by the enrolment increase in francophone schools and French immersion programmes over the past 15 years, there is a clear attraction for learning French in British Columbia. **Attendance in francophone schools increased by more than 75% between 1997 and 2014.** The *Conseil scolaire francophone* has seen the highest increase in student enrolment in recent years.³⁷ The popularity of **French immersion programs** was similar. **Enrolment in these programs increased by 65% between 1997 and 2014**, while enrolment in core French programs decreased by 30% during the same period. Enrolment in francophone schools and in French immersion programs continues to grow, in number and percentage, but the number of spaces available in schools and qualified teachers is limited. Resources are not keeping pace with enrolment. As we will see in Chapter 2, there are several barriers preventing the expansion of French-language programs, despite a clear demand.




1.4.3.3 High attrition in secondary school

Recent statistical data show that school attendance at the elementary level is significantly higher than at the secondary level for all three program types. The difference is especially noticeable for core French programs; a part of the explanation lies in the fact that second-language learning is not mandatory before grade 5 or past grade 8.³⁸ The difference is also significant for francophone schools; a part of the explanation lies in the fact that some parts of the province do not offer French-language programs at the high school level and also that students begin to consider their post-secondary studies at that time.³⁹ In terms of French immersion programs, the shortage of qualified teachers and the choice programs at English-language neighbourhood schools partly explain the high attrition rates at the secondary level.⁴⁰ As we will see in Chapter 2, studying French means students will run into obstacles throughout their education.

1.4.3.4 Limited opportunities to learn French at the post-secondary level

One of the obstacles, encountered by both francophone schools and French immersion programs, is the lack of French-language programs at the post-secondary level. Without a real education continuum, it is difficult for a young francophone or francophile from British Columbia to consider a French education, a social life in that language, and eventually a career that puts their language skills to use.⁴¹ Programs do exist, as we will see in Chapter 2, but there are not enough to meet demand. The direct consequence of this shortage is that many young people abandon French because they cannot see their future in this language and opt to pursue their post-secondary studies in English. There is some hope for improvement, however, as some young people make a deliberate choice to live in French, despite the obstacles they face throughout their education.



“The French education continuum from early childhood to post-secondary must be strengthened to inspire students to embrace French education as a lifelong journey.”

Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs, Report presented to the Senate Committee, September 2016, para. 163.

“This is a generation that is losing its culture and assimilating in large numbers into the surrounding community. I am speaking to you today because I am part of the minority that has survived this process. I could have easily been lost to this assimilation and this great discouragement of francophones perpetuated by the province’s public institutions. ... When I think about my experience, I wonder how I managed to keep my francophone identity alive when so many friends lost heart. In reality, I was the perfect candidate. I lived in the city. I had a school bus service. I had new infrastructure. I was more interested in academics than sports. I was drawn to an organization that promoted activities in French. I had a social life and a community, all in French. My friends did not ... have this chance. But no one should have to satisfy a list of criteria in order to live in the official language of their choice.”

Conseil jeunesse francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, Evidence, 5 October 2016, pp. 197 and 199.





CHAPTER 2

Challenges Accessing Francophone Schools and French Immersion Programs in British Columbia

This second chapter summarizes the main challenges raised during the trip to Vancouver and Victoria, as well as at the public hearings in Ottawa. It deals with issues specific to francophone schools and French immersion programs, and then outlines the challenges common to both these elements of the education system. It is clear from the testimony that several problems repeat from year to year, study to study.

2.1 Francophone schools

The struggle for equality in education remains on the agenda in British Columbia, with court challenge after court challenge claiming that current funding does not provide equal services to students in francophone schools as that provided to students in English-language schools. Francophone schools lack basic infrastructure and spaces. Many witnesses criticized the provincial government for its lack of support in this area. Access to early childhood services in French is lacking. Moreover, the availability of French-language services in the province is limited, which hampers the development of the francophone and francophile communities.

2.1.1 Lack of school spaces

The *Conseil scolaire francophone* has seen attendance grow substantially in recent years. Yet this increase has created a challenge: a lack of space. Francophone schools in British Columbia have to put extra effort into fulfilling their mission, which is both educational and cultural. They face specific challenges related to overcrowding, transportation and the recruitment of rights holders. These obstacles influence many francophones in deciding whether to pursue their education in French.

2.1.1.1 Dual mission of francophone schools

The mission of francophone schools is both educational and cultural. These schools play a vital role in transferring French language and culture to children, especially those from exogamous couples. As one researcher pointed out:

The French language in minority communities must be spread in ways other than through education. It must be spread through culture.⁴²

Linguistic and cultural identity building is one of the main characteristics that distinguishes francophone schools from French second-language programs.⁴³ One example that resonated with the committee was that of *École Gabrielle-Roy* in Surrey, home to both the *Garderie La Coccinelle* – a day-care centre – and the offices of the *Association francophone de Surrey*. Witnesses argued that more effort is needed to ensure that francophone schools can be a driving force in passing on French language and culture to children. As the president of the *Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada* explained to the committee:

These are not just academic efforts, that is to say efforts to teach French grammar or spelling and so on. They are also attempts to make children understand why their language is important to them personally, for their ability to live in their community, to live in society, even if it is a second and minority language. They are also efforts to make them understand the values that ... language can convey and the impact it can have on their society.⁴⁴

2.1.1.2 Quickly overcrowded schools

The *Conseil scolaire francophone* faces pressing demands in terms of expanding schools and building new ones. As soon as a school opens, it fills up almost instantly.⁴⁵ Many francophone schools in the province receive more students than they can actually take in. This is the case of *École Rose-des-vents* in Vancouver, which now houses 350 students in facilities originally planned for 200. *École Anne-Hébert*, also in Vancouver, was built for 250, but is home to more than 400. *École Victor-Brodeur* in Victoria accommodates more than 700 students in facilities built 10 years ago for under 500 children.

École Victor-Brodeur in Victoria is a case in point. The school, built in 2008, has seen a spiralling increase in enrolment. It was expanded with funding from the Canada–British Columbia Agreement on Education. The *Conseil scolaire francophone* has committed to splitting the school's catchment area into three in order to give better access to eligible students.⁴⁶ To date, it is still awaiting funding. However, a letter written by the parents' association of *École Victor-Brodeur* to the *Conseil scolaire francophone* the year after the school opened highlighted the lack of space and the need to expand the school.⁴⁷

Many francophone schools must lease space in English-language schools or elsewhere in the neighbourhood to accommodate their students. For example, *École Victor-Brodeur* has leased the premises of an old English-language school in the Greater Victoria School District for five years in order to offer French-language education to all its students, who are therefore scattered. At *École La Vérendrye*, in Chilliwack, a community centre serves as a gymnasium, and student interaction is difficult.⁴⁸ As two legal counsels from Power Law put it in their brief:

The lack of predictability with regard to the medium and long-term future of these schools creates uncertainty in the communities affected, undermining the ability of the [*Conseil scolaire francophone*] to attract and retain students at these schools. Moreover, this situation leads to problems regarding the division of responsibilities between the [*Conseil scolaire francophone*] and the owner, particularly with regard to the general maintenance of the buildings, which, although they belong to the majority, must be renovated at the expense of the [*Conseil scolaire francophone*].⁴⁹

Other schools are simply not in homogeneous environments, which adds to the challenges.⁵⁰ For example, the principal of *École La Passerelle* in Whistler and *École La Vallée* in Pemberton met the committee and explained that these schools share facilities with neighbouring English-language schools.⁵¹ In the case of La Passerelle, the premises are shared within the school, while at La Vallée students are placed in portables attached to the English-language school or in a community centre about a 20 minute walk away.⁵² Even more bewildering, the principal of this school does not have space to meet with students' parents and so has to hold such meetings in a public café.⁵³ *École du Pacifique* in Sechelt shares buildings with anglophone programs, including an adult secondary education program.⁵⁴ In all these situations, the very mission of the francophone school is threatened, since the surrounding environment does not support the transmission of French language and culture to children.

Overcrowding is such that some francophone schools depend on other francophone schools for space. For example, two classrooms at *École Secondaire Jules-Verne* in Vancouver are available for students at the neighbouring *École Rose-des-vents*. Given the use of some of its facilities by another school, Jules-Verne must lease space in a nearby church. Eight years after its opening the school is already over capacity, especially since it is the only secondary school in this catchment area.⁵⁵ During their visit, committee members noted how challenging it is for the administration to manage space issues at Rose-des-vents and Jules-Verne schools and meet the needs of their respective students.

Portable classrooms have become commonplace in order to accommodate students in the *Conseil scolaire francophone*. At *École Rose-des-vents*, there are six portable classrooms, a dome serves as a gymnasium and the library is too small.⁵⁶ *École Gabrielle-Roy* in Surrey also has five portable classrooms.⁵⁷ The *Conseil scolaire francophone* would like to split the school's current catchment area into two.⁵⁸ *École Anne-Hébert* has 10 portable classrooms, which take up some of the outdoor play area for students.⁵⁹ At *École André-Piolat* in North Vancouver, two new schools are needed.⁶⁰ In Port Coquitlam, it is already known that the new school, currently under construction, will be over capacity as soon as it opens given the sheer size of its catchment area.⁶¹ In short, lasting solutions must be promptly found to accommodate increased enrolment.

2.1.1.3 School proximity: the challenge of school bussing

Francophone schools in British Columbia are located in very large catchment areas. They are scattered across the province. This means that some students have to spend more than three hours a day on buses to get to school. The travel time that this situation entails affects the substantive equality of services offered to the province's francophone schools compared with the majority schools. This has a negative impact on the ability to recruit and retain francophone students.⁶² The Secretary-Treasurer of the *Conseil scolaire francophone* described the situation that parents face as "tough."⁶³ For example, in one of the Vancouver catchment areas, there are only two French-language primary schools but 50 English-language primary schools.⁶⁴ In Nelson, *École Sentiers-Alpins* is located outside the urban area, while most of the children attending it live in town.⁶⁵

The *Conseil scolaire francophone* invests heavily in school transportation, but it does not have enough resources to ensure reasonable travel times everywhere.⁶⁶ In September 2016, the Supreme Court of British Columbia found that the chronic underfunding of the transportation system breached section 23 of the Charter and asked the province to pay \$6 million to the *Conseil scolaire francophone* in compensation.⁶⁷ As discussed below, funding for school transportation is still unresolved as the province has appealed this aspect of the decision. Witnesses argued that the financial needs for school transportation go well beyond the compensation awarded by the court.⁶⁸ According to a legal counsel:

The establishment of an effective transportation system will eliminate a major barrier to the accessibility of French first language programs in the province. To that end, funding from the federal government would be extremely useful to the [*Conseil scolaire francophone*] and would allow it to reduce bus times and thereby attract more children of rights holders under section 23 of the Charter.⁶⁹

2.1.1.4 Potential rights holders

Not all rights holders enrol in francophone schools. The risk of assimilation remains when only some students invoke their right to education in French recognized by the Charter. According to a researcher who appeared before the committee, only 25% to 30% of rights holders attend a francophone school in British Columbia.⁷⁰ A similar proportion enrol in French immersion programs.⁷¹ The rest choose to go to school in English, a trend that becomes even stronger once they are in high school.⁷² In its brief, the *Conseil scolaire francophone* said that, if it were able to obtain the infrastructure that the community needs and is entitled to, its enrolments could more than triple over the next 20 years.⁷³

Current census questions do not collect much information on rights holders, except with regard to section 23(1)(a) of the Charter, which identifies the parents' mother tongue. A member of the *Association des parents de l'école Rose-des-vents* asked that in the next census Statistics Canada collect information on sections 23(1)(b) and 23(2) of the Charter relating to the language of instruction received by the parents or siblings. This information "would be very useful to school boards and the Ministry of Education" in British Columbia, according to this witness.⁷⁴ Legal counsels from Power Law raised the

same concern, arguing that the current census underestimates the number of potential rights holders, including for section 23(1)(a) of the Charter, because it discourages multiple responses.⁷⁵ They recommended that Statistics Canada develop and test new questions in preparation for the 2021 census in order to enhance the vitality of official language minority communities.⁷⁶ The committee asked a Statistics Canada representative about this, who confirmed testing could be done in anticipation of the next census, provided that it was done by 2018.⁷⁷

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the admission policy of the *Conseil scolaire francophone* also applies to francophone immigrant students, francophile students or students with a francophone grandparent. Their purpose is to curb assimilation in British Columbia and to get children back into the education system whose parents are not direct rights holders or who have lost that right. Two of these three provisions have been suspended because of a court challenge. The *Conseil scolaire francophone* would like to adopt a more flexible admissions policy, as is the case in other provinces.⁷⁸

Even if these provisions of the admission policy were in force, it would not be possible to assess the needs of these potential students. It is impossible from the census in its current form to determine the number of children, and their children, who may be rights holders. Similarly, current practices make it impossible to estimate the number of allophones who were educated in French in Quebec but then move elsewhere in Canada, where they are entitled to a French education.⁷⁹ As we saw in Chapter 1, many people with French as their mother tongue move from Quebec to British Columbia each year. School boards must have more comprehensive data to give them a better idea of the number and distribution of their potential students and ensure provincial and territorial governments have a better appreciation of the extent of their constitutional obligations under section 23 of the Charter.⁸⁰ In other words, questions on sections 23(1)(b) and 23(2) of the Charter must be added to the next census.

The actual number of rights holders is therefore only a rough estimate, and this problem repeats from census to census because the number of exogamous families continues to grow.⁸¹ This is one of the reasons why, in 2006, a post-census survey was done. The survey included various modules on education and language of instruction. The findings showed that about 10% of rights holders are left out of the current census.⁸² A researcher recommended that another survey be conducted in anticipation of the 2021 census.⁸³ A Statistics Canada representative said that three years was needed to prepare such a survey, so by 2018.⁸⁴ Another survey would also require additional federal funding, as demonstrated by the 2006 survey.⁸⁵

According to figures from the *Conseil scolaire francophone* sent prior to the committee's trip to British Columbia, approximately 1,200 eligible children live in the catchment area of *École Rose-des-vents* in Vancouver, though its current capacity is only 200. At *École Victor-Brodeur* in Victoria, approximately 2,800 eligible children live in the school's catchment area, though its current capacity is only 540. In Richmond, *École des Navigateurs* has around 110 students, although there are at least 1,000 eligible rights holders in the school's catchment area, or 10 times more than the current capacity. The managing director of the *Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones* said more money is needed to conduct research to determine what is preventing francophone schools from attracting and retaining rights holders.⁸⁶ In short, we need to better estimate potential rights holders.

2.1.1.5 Studying in one's first language: a matter of choice

Testimony showed that learning French as a first language in British Columbia is a conscious but not always an easy choice. That is why witnesses asked that a national awareness campaign be launched to inform parents about how learning French has a positive impact on learning English, or what some call additive bilingualism.⁸⁷ The president of the *Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique* ("*Fédération des parents francophones*") described the situation as follows:

Well-informed parents who fully understand their rights and the impact of their decisions on the child in terms of language, identity, culture and sense of belonging will make wise choices. This is particularly true in British Columbia, where parents of children attending francophone schools are from mixed, or exogamous, couples in a proportion of 87 per cent.⁸⁸

Unfortunately, there are too many barriers blocking access to guarantee a space for all rights holders in the province's francophone school system. In many francophone schools, long travel times discourage some parents from enrolling their children. Opportunities to learn in French at the secondary level do not meet needs. For example, if you look at the number of potential students from Rose-des-vents and Anne-Hébert elementary schools in Vancouver, the number of potential high school students in this catchment area is more than 1,500. However, the current capacity of 350 at *École Secondaire Jules-Verne*, the only French high school in the area, limits potential students. The lack of opportunities to continue learning French at the post-secondary level is also discouraging.

Those who nevertheless enrol in francophone schools do so out of conviction. They believe in it, and they are prepared to make many compromises to exercise their right to a French-language education. However, the decision to pursue a secondary education in French is not the child's alone. Some young people whom the committee met during its visit to *École Secondaire Jules-Verne* acknowledged that this choice was mainly their parents, not theirs.



The Senate Committee said...

In its report released in June 2005, the Senate Committee asked the federal government to mount a national awareness campaign to promote the rights guaranteed by section 23 of the Charter as well as an information campaign directed at rights-holders to inform them about their rights to French-language education and the relevant case law. In its response, the government acknowledged that more could be done to meet the challenges of minority-language education. What the Committee heard during the current study confirms that more needs to be done to attract rights-holders to francophone schools.

2.1.2 Inadequate infrastructure: substantive equivalency in education

The *Conseil scolaire francophone* is struggling to meet infrastructure funding needs, which undermines the quality of French-language education in the province. Several witnesses in British Columbia criticized the poor quality of francophone school infrastructure. The committee was able to see some of these outdated facilities for itself. To put an end to this lack of equivalency in education, the francophone community has had to go to court. Its current needs relate to support for linguistic and cultural identity building and community development and the acquisition of federal lands to build new schools.

2.1.2.1 Court remedies

In 2010 francophones in British Columbia went to court to require the provincial government to recognize its constitutional obligations in French first-language education. The *Association des parents de l'école Rose-des-vents* brought a case before the Supreme Court of Canada on the substantive quality of instruction and school facilities offered to the linguistic minority and those offered to the linguistic majority. The judges of Canada's highest court unanimously concluded that Rose-des-vents' facilities are meaningfully inferior to those of the neighbouring English-language schools.⁸⁹ The remedial purpose of section 23 of the Charter was reaffirmed by the Court, as was the importance of taking measures to counter the assimilation of official language minorities. Commenting on the right to substantive equality, a legal counsel from Power Law noted the following:

That means that once the numbers warrant a program of instruction, once the numbers warrant a facility, the province or territory, in this case British Columbia, must provide the funds to enable substantive equivalence to be achieved.⁹⁰

Some aspects of the *École Rose-des-vents* case have again been brought before the courts in British Columbia as part of a megatrial for French-language education involving about 20 existing or future schools. The Supreme Court of British Columbia handed down a ruling in September 2016 regarding the extent of the government's obligations in terms of services to French-language students.⁹¹ The 1,600-page decision was issued a few days before the committee left for Vancouver and Victoria. The court's findings therefore affected discussions with the witnesses. The decision's announcement was met with a mix of joy and disappointment. Some progress has been made. For example:

- ▶ the Court required the province to improve certain francophone school infrastructure, including *École Rose-des-vents* in Vancouver;
- ▶ the Court recognized the province's responsibility to help the *Conseil scolaire francophone* acquire sites for its schools; and

- ▶ the Court ordered:
 - ▶ changes to the provincial *School Act* to improve the processing of funding applications from the *Conseil scolaire francophone* and to take into account the special needs of francophones for applications for the construction or renovation of their schools;
 - ▶ the creation of a special envelope to secure funding for francophone schools; and
 - ▶ the establishment of a policy to improve relations between the *Conseil scolaire francophone* and the Ministry of Education.

Some aspects of the Supreme Court of British Columbia's decision have been appealed, on both sides:

- ▶ the **province** challenged the Supreme Court of British Columbia judge's decision regarding the underfunding of school transportation services, which required it to pay the *Conseil scolaire francophone* \$6 million in damages, and the obligation to provide funding for deficient school infrastructure in Burnaby, Whistler and Squamish; and
- ▶ the ***Conseil scolaire francophone*** and the ***Fédération des parents francophones*** challenged the use of section 1 of the Charter to justify breaches of section 23 of the Charter, the breach of the principle of substantive equivalence and the judge's narrow view on the future of the francophone community in British Columbia and its inevitable assimilation.

Representatives of the francophone community and legal counsels who have worked on this file were generally disappointed with the judge's defeatist view of the inevitable assimilation of this community, which goes against the remedial purpose of section 23 of the Charter.⁹² The Commissioner of Official Languages found it unacceptable that francophone parents in British Columbia do not enjoy the same quality of education as their anglophone counterparts in the province or their francophone counterparts elsewhere in the country.⁹³ The *Conseil scolaire francophone* and the *Fédération des parents francophones* have developed a website arranged by topic and region to increase understanding of the Supreme Court of British Columbia's decision.⁹⁴

A parent from *École Rose-des-vents* expressed hope that the appeal would go all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada in order to have a clear decision on the application of the principle of substantive equivalence in education.⁹⁵ It must be acknowledged, however, that judicial proceedings are costly and time consuming. Funding for this case has been provided by the Language Rights Support Program, but it is only a small portion of the total amount spent to date.⁹⁶ The megatrial for French-language education is one of the most important cases heard in this province to date, and among the most expensive in the history of the recognition of language rights.

The witnesses highlighted the important role that the federal government can play in such a context. One legal counsel who has worked on this file pointed out that the Supreme Court of British Columbia judge, in paragraph 5005 of her decision, urged the *Conseil scolaire francophone* to knock on the door of the federal government for a specific remedy, which tends to confirm the perception of the federal government's role as the guardian of the francophone community.⁹⁷ In his view, the federal government has an obligation to set aside funds to ensure the implementation of services of equal quality, in education as elsewhere.⁹⁸

2.1.2.2 Support for linguistic and cultural identity building and community development

The committee's public hearings highlighted the importance of focusing on projects that support linguistic and cultural identity building and the creation of community spaces in schools. As the *Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique* stated in its brief:

For young francophones born in [another province] or abroad, having a community where their language is a daily reality is necessary to complete the identity-building process started in French-language schools.⁹⁹

Many francophone schools are too small and do not have adequate spaces to encourage student interactions in French. The lack of space is alarming and limits opportunities for the development of the francophone community. In a minority setting, the school not only acts as a learning ground for students but also a gathering place where the community can ensure its vitality in French. It helps students, and even parents, experience French language and culture. Francophone schools in British Columbia are obviously underfunded when it comes to supporting their mission of identity building and community development.¹⁰⁰

There are, however, examples of great successes, such as *École Victor-Brodeur*, where students in grades 11 and 12 benefit from a community kitchen where they gain work experience in a school setting.¹⁰¹ The Oak Bay Annex at the same school offers services in French from 0 to 18 years, organizes cultural and community activities in French and offers an enhanced exposure to French.¹⁰² That said, at an informal meeting, the *Société francophone de Victoria* stressed the need to increase French-speaking community spaces in this region and support francophone organizations in this regard.¹⁰³

The federal government has already helped build community spaces that would never have been funded otherwise under existing provincial standards.¹⁰⁴ This is the case of *École Secondaire Jules-Verne's* auditorium, where the committee held some of its informal meetings. Some organizations believe that building these spaces should be the primary aim of federal funding for minority-language education.¹⁰⁵

2.1.2.3 Acquisition of federal lands

An additional challenge facing francophone schools is the high cost of real estate in British Columbia. The amount spent on leasing or buying buildings is significant. The francophone community thus faces a double challenge: finding available land and having the funds needed to acquire it. One option that may be of use to the francophone community, to address these challenges, is the acquisition of federal lands.

At an informal meeting, the committee was told about a request from *École Rose-des-vents* parents for federal funding to acquire lands it owns under Canada Lands Company Ltd. ("Canada Lands") in order to build two new primary schools. The Secretary-Treasurer of the *Conseil scolaire francophone* made the same request in a public hearing.¹⁰⁶ In September 2016 the Supreme Court of British Columbia ruled that the province must help the *Conseil scolaire francophone* in its negotiations to acquire needed sites.¹⁰⁷ The province has been proactive and had discussions with the *Conseil scolaire francophone* and Canada Lands about this matter.¹⁰⁸

The committee felt it was appropriate to explore the issue of acquiring federal lands on its return to Ottawa. The executive director of *Collège Éducacentre* also mentioned the possibility of acquiring land formerly owned by the federal government to offer more services in French.¹⁰⁹ *École Rose-des-vents* parents were therefore invited to formally appear before the committee, as well as senior officials from Canada Lands and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, the Honourable Judy Foote.

The committee was told about the possibility of acquiring the Heather Street Lands, formerly occupied by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), which are near the existing *École Rose-des-vents*. The committee also heard about the possibility of acquiring land on the Jericho property, formerly held by the Department of National Defence, which is located in the Rose-des-vents catchment area.¹¹⁰ The intention is to build two new elementary schools that are larger and better suited to needs. These lands, formerly occupied by federal departments, were acquired by Canada Lands and First Nations (Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh) in 2014 in a 50-50 partnership. A public engagement process was initiated in the fall of 2016 and will continue until early 2018 to develop new ideas for these sites.¹¹¹ The engagement process is managed by the City of Vancouver. Appearing before the committee, senior officials from Canada Lands said that the city is solely responsible for the planning process underway.¹¹²

In the case of the Heather Street Lands, *École Rose-des-vents* parents are asking for access to a portion of the land's 21 acres, as the following excerpt explains:

Concerning that land in particular, which was a former RCMP site, there is a building, as I said earlier, that was used as a school in the past. For the moment, the building is for rent; there is a "For Rent" sign. The parents have tried to communicate with the Canada Lands Company, but they have been told no, with the explanation that a school is a long-term project, and they simply want to rent it short-term for three to five years. The company therefore did not want to discuss it any longer with ... them. I know that the school board has approached the Canada Lands Company, but nothing came of it. The result was the same; the Canada Lands Company recommended that they apply to the municipality when the proposed development takes place, because it wants to redevelop the land. It told them that they would be part of the process. That means that a school will not be built for a decade. That is not acceptable; we need land now. Before the development takes place, we would need to have part of it severed, three or four acres, to build a school, so the rest of the land would be part of the Canada Lands Company's development. So far, what I have understood from the [*Conseil scolaire francophone*] is that the Canada Lands Company is refusing to consider that proposal.¹¹³

Canada Lands officials said that the *Conseil scolaire francophone* is not alone in having an interest in these lands.¹¹⁴ They seconded the comments of *École Rose-des-vents* parents that the City of Vancouver has not shown any openness to date to re-zoning the lands in order to accommodate the needs of the *Conseil scolaire francophone*.¹¹⁵ A zoning change is usually an 18-month process.¹¹⁶

Two legal counsels from Power Law supported the request of *École Rose-des-vents* parents.¹¹⁷ In their brief, they recommended that the federal government “put in place regulations dealing with the transfer of real estate and other assets that would direct government agencies to take into consideration the interests and needs of official minority-language communities when disposing of these properties.”¹¹⁸ For example, they noted that *Ontario Regulation 444/98: Disposition of Surplus Real Property*, made under the province’s *Education Act*, requires Ontario school boards to offer their surplus properties to certain designated organizations, including francophone school boards, before selling or leasing them.¹¹⁹

The legislative and policy framework in place imposes language obligations on federal institutions when transferring federal lands. The *Directive on the Sale or Transfer of Surplus Real Property* ensures that sales or transfers of surplus real property provide for “consideration of the interests of communities, including official language minority communities, and other levels of government.”¹²⁰ Although this directive does not directly apply to Canada Lands, its provisions ensure that departments, in dealing with it, must consider communities’ interests.

Testimony highlighted shortcomings in addressing these needs when the federal government transferred these lands to Canada Lands. In their brief, the legal counsels from Power Law noted that the lands were transferred without consulting the *Conseil scolaire francophone*, even though the federal government had been informed, back in 2007, of the need to build new francophone schools.¹²¹ In fact, the correspondence file sent to the committee in winter 2017 shows that the Commissioner of Official Languages conducted an investigation on this matter.¹²² *École Rose-des-vents* parents reported that funding for the construction of a school had already been set aside by the province, back in 2011.¹²³ In fact, the president and CEO of Canada Lands was advised of the situation at that time, when he was Assistant Deputy Minister in the Department of Public Works and Government Services.¹²⁴

Part VII of the OLA, which Canada Lands is subject to, provides that it must take “positive measures” to enhance the vitality of francophone minority communities and support their development. Canada Lands’ 2014–2015 annual review notes that the company has a poor understanding of its obligations under Part VII.¹²⁵ This view was confirmed in the committee’s public hearings. Nevertheless, senior Canada Lands officials said they were open to the idea of improving their performance in this area.¹²⁶ For example, they encourage the francophone community to participate in the consultations to be held by the City of Vancouver in the coming months. In general, however, they do not proactively or systematically take steps to consult the community in its language of choice or ensure its use of media is effective. That being said, the committee was informed that discussions were to be held between the *Conseil scolaire francophone* and Canada Lands in winter 2017 to move things forward.¹²⁷ The Minister of Public Services and Procurement said that her department would work with all stakeholders in finding a solution and participate in the ongoing discussions.¹²⁸

2.1.3 Lack of early childhood services in French

The lack of early childhood services in French is another challenge faced by francophones in British Columbia. In minority communities, it is recognized that taking action in early childhood contributes to language acquisition, identity building and community vitality. However, demographic trends do not seem to support the full development of children living in minority communities. The low transmission rate of French, exogamy, fragmented services, lack of resources, inadequate infrastructure and lack of awareness are all factors that hamper the development of services in French for preschoolers.

A study was released by the Commissioner of Official Languages at the same time that the committee visited British Columbia.¹²⁹ According to the Commissioner, early childhood is a crucial period for children's development and language acquisition, and the associated benefits depend on the quality and accessibility of the services offered. His study noted that:

Early childhood is a significant source of children who have the right to instruction in the language of the minority, and it is important to maintain this source as a means to support the demographic, linguistic, cultural, institutional, social and community vitality of Francophone communities.¹³⁰

A researcher from the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities made similar arguments to the committee.¹³¹ The Commissioner's study recognizes the important role of the federal government in supporting early childhood development in francophone communities. It deplores the lack of federal intervention in recent years. It recommends that the federal government provide adequate, stable and sustained funding for early childhood development in the next multi-year official languages plan. It also recommends that the government include a francophone component as part of the development of its national early learning and child care framework. The study also recommends setting up a national awareness initiative on early childhood development in francophone communities. Appearing before the committee, the Commissioner reiterated the obligation of federal institutions to take "positive measures."¹³²

Representatives of the *Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique* and the *Centre culturel francophone de Vancouver* touched on the issue of socialization in French starting in early childhood.¹³³ The president of the *Fédération des parents francophones* addressed the issue head on and called for:

- ▶ increased funding for French-language early childhood services;
- ▶ measures to ensure accessibility to early childhood services in francophone communities by increasing the number of francophone pre-school services and the number of spaces in these services;
- ▶ the inclusion of early childhood as a separate focus in the next multi-year official languages plan, accompanied by adequate, stable and sustained investment; and

- the development of a national strategy for early childhood, including a francophone component, in partnership with francophone parents' groups.¹³⁴

Witnesses talked about other initiatives that have been put in place here and there. For example, a program called Strong Start allows children aged 0 to 5 to participate in activities in French. However, it is not yet offered in all francophone schools.¹³⁵ The Commissioner of Official Languages made special mention of a pilot project to help 4-year-olds in British Columbia to learn French.¹³⁶ At present, four schools offer this program.¹³⁷ It should be noted that the province did not offer any support for its implementation, but the federal government did.¹³⁸ The committee also had the opportunity to speak with a representative from the *Garderie La Coccinelle* in an informal meeting about the challenges of recruitment in early childhood services and the lack of resources.¹³⁹ For its part, the *Société francophone de Victoria* offers socialization activities in French for 0- to 4-year-olds and their parents, but stressed the need to increase the availability of these services on Vancouver Island.¹⁴⁰

The Commissioner stressed the need for sustained and long-term support.¹⁴¹ As part of the appeal of the decision handed down in September 2016, francophone communities intend to argue that the province is required to fund early childhood programs in francophone schools.¹⁴² The president of the *Fédération des parents francophones* pointed out that there are currently only 450 spaces available in French-language child care centres and nurseries in British Columbia, while there are approximately 4,000 francophone children aged 4 and under.¹⁴³ Federal support seems crucial, as the province does not have a francophone component in its own programs.¹⁴⁴

In its 2015 Speech from the Throne and its 2016 budget, the federal government announced the establishment of a national early learning and child care framework, a commitment it also set out in the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development mandate letter.¹⁴⁵ There is no indication at this time whether the government plans to include a francophone component. In her appearance before the committee, the Minister of Canadian Heritage identified early childhood as one of the priorities of the next multi-year official languages plan, which will be announced on 1 April 2018.¹⁴⁶ However, she did not say whether the funding would be "adequate, stable and sustained," as the Commissioner recommended.



The Senate Committee said...

In its report released in June 2005, the Senate Committee recognized the importance of taking the needs of francophone parents into account when developing federal policies and programs for early childhood. In an October 2016 study, the Commissioner of Official Languages agreed, calling on the federal government to include a francophone lens in its next early learning and child care strategy.

2.1.4 Limited access to French-language services in the province

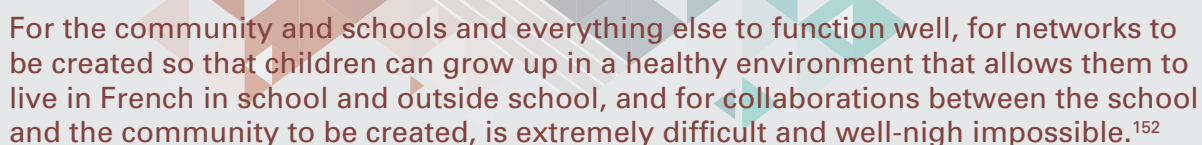
The limited access to French-language services in the province adds to the challenges faced by French-language communities in the education sector. The public hearings highlighted the need to further support linguistic and cultural identity building and create more community spaces in French in sectors other than education.

2.1.4.1 Linguistic and cultural identity building and community spaces in French

Support for intergovernmental collaboration in services has not increased in recent years, nor has support for the community sector. Organizations stated that the funding they receive from the federal government has not increased in more than 15 years.¹⁴⁷ According to testimony, the need for support for linguistic and cultural identity building and community spaces in French is critical, but government support is lacking. However, federal institutions have an obligation under Part VII of the OLA to enhance the vitality of francophone minorities and support their development. Community organizations are certainly willing to work together to achieve these goals.¹⁴⁸

Witnesses called for an increase in the activities and services offered to francophones and francophiles in all sectors affecting their development. Volunteers in francophone organizations are running out of steam.¹⁴⁹ Infrastructure is lacking, and chronic underfunding means needs are not met, particularly in the cultural sector.¹⁵⁰ Francophile organizations face many obstacles when it comes to transferring knowledge of French to everyday life. Infrastructure is lacking. Collaboration is difficult. In short, pieces of the puzzle are missing to facilitate day-to-day life in French. A continuum of services in French is therefore vital.¹⁵¹

On both sides, requests were made to increase extracurricular activities in French. The following remarks by a representative of the *Centre culturel francophone de Vancouver* sum up the situation well:



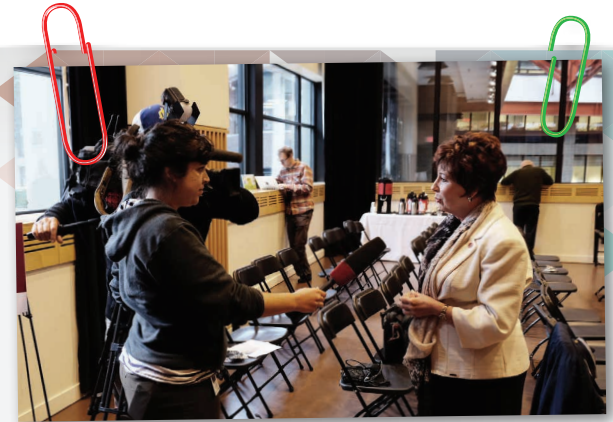
For the community and schools and everything else to function well, for networks to be created so that children can grow up in a healthy environment that allows them to live in French in school and outside school, and for collaborations between the school and the community to be created, is extremely difficult and well-nigh impossible.¹⁵²

We must therefore find ways to support francophone identity building, which is increasingly diverse. The identity building process happens not only in schools but through cultural referents and infrastructure that facilitates gatherings in French.¹⁵³ Young people would like to be more consulted about the solutions to be put in place.¹⁵⁴ Once community spaces have been set up, we must ensure that francophones and francophiles use them. To do this, organizations must have sufficient resources to facilitate access to these services and promote them.¹⁵⁵ At present, these services are scattered and poorly known.¹⁵⁶

Another barrier is limited access to federal and provincial services in French in areas where there are francophone schools or community centres. In Surrey, for example, no Service Canada office provides services in French, even though the city accounts for 9% of the province's francophone population.¹⁵⁷ Francophone immigrants who settle in Surrey have to go through anglophone organizations to obtain services.¹⁵⁸ Yet *École Gabrielle-Roy* has the highest number of francophone students in the province. As we will see later, demand for immersion programs is also seeing explosive growth in this region.

2.2 French immersion programs

British Columbia's French immersion programs face specific problems. There is a shortage of spaces in schools. Witnesses discussed the lack of access to French immersion programs in British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada as part of the study on best practices for language policies and second-language learning. This is not the first time that the committee has heard about problems with wait lists and lottery systems, the challenges created by the lack of nearby schools, and the fact that French immersion programs are often considered as programs of choice. The shortage of qualified teachers is one of the main problems, with shortcomings in basic teacher training and continuing education. Students are then unable to acquire a sufficient command of French because they do not have access to the resources they need.



The Senate Committee said...

In its report released in June 2015, the Senate Committee recommended that Canadian Heritage provide access to second-language programs everywhere and for everyone in Canada. That is why the Senate Committee was interested in studying the specific situation in British Columbia. Based on what the Committee heard, the provincial government needs to be encouraged to provide more support opportunities to learn French.

2.2.1 Waitlists and lottery systems

Given that the number of spaces in French immersion programs is limited, parents who want to enrol their children face certain obstacles. First, school boards do not apply the requirements for second language learning in the same way. Second, admission policies for French immersion programs vary greatly from school board to school board.¹⁵⁹

Some parents have to camp outside schools to enrol their child in French immersion programs — up to four days before enrolment opens — but they are not guaranteed a space for their child at a nearby school.¹⁶⁰ Spaces are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. At the *École Bilingue Elementary School*, which the committee visited while in Vancouver, student registration is done online, using specific criteria and deadlines, and spaces are allocated through a wait list and lottery.¹⁶¹ This is the case of another school the committee visited, this time in Victoria.¹⁶² In Surrey, some 230 students per year do not have access to French immersion programs due to a lack of spaces.¹⁶³ These different admission systems mean that access to programs is too often a game of chance.¹⁶⁴

There is a growing demand for more equitable access. At the Greater Victoria School District, steps have been taken to expand access to immersion programs, for example by allowing parents to choose another program outside their school catchment area.¹⁶⁵ That said, a representative from the school board asked for help to better examine applications based on the demography of the catchment area and to make projections for future enrolment.¹⁶⁶ He also recommended changes to federal funding to better meet the current demand for French immersion programs.¹⁶⁷ He also advocated broadening access to core French and intensive French programs in order to reduce the current pressure on immersion programs.¹⁶⁸ This argument was also made in informal meetings.

2.2.2 School proximity

The proximity of French immersion programs seems to be a determining factor for parents who choose to enrol their children. However, in several English-language schools offering such programs, responsibility for school transportation rests with parents.¹⁶⁹ This weakens interest in these programs and sometimes leads to students dropping out or challenges for parents who nevertheless enrol their children. The Surrey School Board noted that parents strongly prefer to enrol their children in immersion programs only if the school is nearby, which creates challenges in terms of filling spaces:

To illustrate, a new French Immersion program was introduced two years ago at a school with space to accommodate it. Despite personally contacting and offering a seat in the new program to the parents of all 220-plus students on the district-wide waiting list, the new program attracted only six students and initially could not proceed. A renewed effort to fill the seats a year later has resulted in 14 registrations and the program began this school year.¹⁷⁰

A Surrey mother noted that the need to accommodate students is growing, but the Surrey School Board is relocating immersion programs elsewhere because its policy makes choice programs optional and available only “where space permits.”¹⁷¹ This adds to families’ headaches, jeopardizes the retention of French-language teachers and increases attrition rates. A representative of the Greater Victoria School District noted that the catchment area for an immersion program covers eight English-speaking schools.¹⁷² It is therefore important for school boards to examine geographic and demographic factors so that access takes into account parents’ preferences.

2.2.3 Studying French in French immersion programs: a matter of choice

Given that their status is not constitutionally guaranteed, and considering the many difficulties associated with access, French immersion programs are often considered “programs of choice.”¹⁷³ In most cases, it is parents who put pressure on school boards to offer such programs. And, even when boards decide to offer such programs, parents are not guaranteed that the school will be nearby or that the program will continue, which leads to frustration. Enrolment in French immersion programs is often a decision

made by parents, not children, for whom this choice is not intrinsic.¹⁷⁴ This explains why many young people drop out of these programs once they reach high school. That said, the committee met with very enthusiastic students who made a deliberate choice to study in French. Later in this report we will look at the factors that motivated them to stay in these programs.

2.2.4 Shortage of qualified teachers

Among the main arguments behind the lack of access to French second-language programs in British Columbia is the shortage of qualified teachers. Testimony highlighted the need to further support both the basic training and continuing education of French-language teachers, as well as their language skills development.

2.2.4.1 Basic training for teachers

According to a 2015 study done by Canadian Parents for French – British Columbia and Yukon Branch, 86% of school districts in British Columbia indicated that it is “very challenging” or “challenging” to find a sufficient number of qualified French immersion teachers.¹⁷⁵ As for core French programs, this problem was indicated by 64% of responding districts.¹⁷⁶ This same study also found that there is only one French immersion graduate in five each year in British Columbia, a ratio that far from meets needs.¹⁷⁷ This finding was noted by other witnesses.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, this situation creates additional obstacles when it comes to finding substitutes.¹⁷⁹

The post-secondary institutions that the committee met with are aware of the needs and wish to expand their programs. According to a professor at Simon Fraser University:

We believe that the variety of French-language programs has a direct impact on retention rates at high schools. The range of programs offered by [Simon Fraser University] is limited right now, but the university is prepared to develop new programs. Developing programs in various fields of study must, however, be done carefully. We can no longer rely on the traditional approach of simply creating opportunities, creating programs, and waiting for young people to enrol. Our approach must also include a needs analysis and surveys in order to understand young people’s academic interests.¹⁸⁰

Commenting on the shortage of qualified teachers, the Director of the Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs noted the following:

These qualified graduates are in such high demand that many receive full-time job offers before completing their teacher education program at [Simon Fraser University].¹⁸¹

This shows just how high needs are. Witnesses confirmed the need to train an adequate number of French-language teachers in British Columbia and the importance of promoting French-language teachers as a profession.¹⁸² Requests were made to create incentives, provide for interprovincial and interregional mobility, increase the recruitment of teachers from elsewhere, and offer scholarships, including mentoring programs.¹⁸³ The Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs is also working to find solutions to attract and retain teachers from outside British Columbia.¹⁸⁴ People the committee met with informally pointed out, however, that there are still barriers to the recognition of teachers' degrees from outside British Columbia and that this problem needs to be addressed. The Emeritus Director of the French Centre at the University of British Columbia spoke about the merits of bursaries for language development that are available to individuals with a teaching certificate.¹⁸⁵

School boards have taken steps to recruit teacher candidates, advertise positions, offer students contracts before they even graduate, and encourage the hiring of practicum students.¹⁸⁶ Others work closely with universities to promote teaching French as a career.¹⁸⁷ The Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs said it is very active in activities to connect with future students, and wants to do more.¹⁸⁸ In Victoria, distance creates an additional obstacle, and the school board must find ways to address the teacher shortage by using new technologies.¹⁸⁹

2.2.4.2 Continuing education

In addition to insisting on basic teacher training, witnesses talked about the importance of continuing education. The Vancouver School District discussed the possibility of offering intensive professional development to core French-language teachers or tuition rebates for teachers who commit to work in an immersion program for a number of years.¹⁹⁰ A representative of the BC Association of Teachers of Modern Languages repeated the idea of intensive courses and advocated networking activities among French second language teachers across Canada.¹⁹¹ The Director Emeritus of the French Centre at the University of British Columbia argued that continuing education is needed to maintain the quality of programs.¹⁹² He gave the example of the French Institute, which allows some 60 French-language teachers to immerse themselves in a predominantly francophone environment for three weeks.¹⁹³ Simon Fraser University also offers intensive programs and summer institutes.¹⁹⁴ Unfortunately, the budgets for teachers' professional development have remained unchanged for at least 10 years, an observation confirmed by the teachers the committee met with during the informal visits.¹⁹⁵ However, this type of experience improves teachers' skills and sense of self-confidence.¹⁹⁶

Post-secondary institutions have shown an openness to add in-service programs for teachers, especially to reach a larger range of teachers in all regions of British Columbia.¹⁹⁷ For example, the Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs offers a Professional Development Program in which practicums are a key component in order to give students practical experience.¹⁹⁸ The committee met with some of the students enrolled in this program and was delighted by their level of commitment to their future profession. Unfortunately, there is not enough funding for students to complete their practicums in the regions.¹⁹⁹

2.2.4.3 Teachers' language skills

The testimony, both in public hearings and during the onsite visits, showed that many French second-language teachers do not have the requisite skills to teach French to their students. This problem gets worse over time, especially in schools in the regions and in primary schools.²⁰⁰ According to a 2007 study by Wendy Carr, in core French programs, 78% of elementary school teachers and 71% of teachers in grades 6 to 8 felt uncomfortable speaking French.²⁰¹ It is not uncommon for French second language courses to be taught by regular English teachers or generalists.²⁰² This has the effect of undermining the self-confidence of teachers who do not feel qualified to perform their tasks.²⁰³ At the Vancouver School District, teachers are encouraged to improve their proficiency in French and have their language skills reassessed once they meet the required level.²⁰⁴

The issue of establishing common standards often came up in the testimony. There are no standards on the qualifications required of teachers in core French programs.²⁰⁵ This creates competition between school districts in hiring teachers.²⁰⁶ The Greater Victoria School District requires its future French immersion teachers to have a better command of French than elsewhere, which limits the pool of potential candidates.²⁰⁷ Many teachers apply for jobs elsewhere, where formal language requirements are less strict.²⁰⁸

This is why the representative of the Greater Victoria School District recommended establishing a common language threshold at the provincial level, standardizing requirements across provinces, and establishing an assessment practice to measure teachers' language skills.²⁰⁹

These recommendations are in line with the idea of setting up a common framework of reference. A representative of the BC Association of Teachers of Modern Languages spoke about the benefits of such a framework and asked the government to do more to enable teachers to improve their understanding and proficiency in French.²¹⁰ Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia already offer students enrolled in French language education programs the opportunity to take recognized tests to assess their language skills.²¹¹ A representative of the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia argued:



The Senate Committee said...

In its report released in June 2015, the Senate Committee recognized the importance of establishing a common framework of reference for official-language teaching, learning and evaluation. The government's June 2016 response referred to the establishment of a provincial and territorial discussion forum, under the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, to identify specific cooperative courses of action on French second-language instruction. The provinces and territories pledged to share their best practices for measuring language proficiency. The response also referred to measures taken by the western provinces to standardize second-language learning results. This was not mentioned by witnesses during the Senate Committee hearings.

The [common framework of reference] is not currently integrated into B.C.'s redesigned French K to 12 curriculums even though the framework offers the kind of flexibility we are seeing in that curriculum.²¹²

In addition to improving language skills, several witnesses argued that all French teachers should have to take a course on French as a second language teaching methodology.²¹³ The University of British Columbia offers such a course.²¹⁴ Other witnesses spoke of the importance for teachers to understand not only the French language but also the culture.²¹⁵ Still others praised the merits of certain federal programs, such as Explore or Odyssey, which serve as a launchpad for a French-language teaching career. On the other hand, the Director Emeritus of the French Centre at the University of British Columbia lamented that Explore is now offered at his university in English only.²¹⁶ In addition, at an informal meeting at *École Gabrielle-Roy*, the committee learned that Odyssey is no longer available to the school's grade 11 and 12 students.

2.2.5 Students' proficiency in French

Another of the challenges raised during the trip to Vancouver and Victoria was rendering students proficient in French. This may be because they have difficulty seeing a future in which French continues to be part of their day-to-day lives. It can also be explained by teaching materials that are often ill-suited to their needs. This is why many of the witnesses the committee met with argued that authentic experiences are needed to overcome these problems.

2.2.5.1 Students' language skills

Students enrolled in core French programs are not sufficiently exposed to French language and culture to develop real skills.²¹⁷ There are no standards for the length of French language instruction for students, which can range from 40 minutes to 120 minutes a week.²¹⁸ As to French immersion programs, expectations are higher for language acquisition, but students may not achieve the desired level of functional bilingualism. This is likely due to a lack of exposure to French outside the classroom. Moreover, the lack of language skills of some of their teachers inevitably has a detrimental effect on their own proficiency in French and on their motivation to remain engaged in a French second-language program.²¹⁹

A representative of the Vancouver School District proposed making presentations to students enrolled in French immersion to encourage them to continue their schooling in French at the secondary level.²²⁰ A spokesperson for the Greater Victoria School District suggested that the requirement for second language learning in British Columbia start in kindergarten, rather than in grade 5.²²¹ Teachers and parents made the same proposal, both in public hearings and in informal meetings.²²² A professor emeritus from the University of British Columbia stressed the importance of intensive exposure to language, as this increases students' performance in their other subjects.²²³

At an informal meeting, the principal of Macaulay Elementary School in Victoria recommended evaluating students' language skills.²²⁴ The president of the *Association provinciale des professeurs d'immersion et du programme francophone de la Colombie-Britannique* noted that not all immersion students who pursue teaching have the language and cultural skills needed to make them good immersion teachers.²²⁵ For these reasons, the representative of the BC Teachers' Federation spoke about the benefits of a common framework of reference to evaluate students' language skills.²²⁶

2.2.5.2 Lack of French teaching material

During school visits and in public hearings, several witnesses highlighted needs regarding access to suitable teaching materials. French immersion teachers do not always have the necessary resources, in French, to meet the requirements of the provincial curriculum. For example, the challenges associated with integrating Aboriginal perspectives into the classroom were raised by many, including during informal meetings.²²⁷ The Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs is committed to developing programs and workshops to meet the Ministry's teaching goals.²²⁸ In the meantime, teachers themselves sometimes have to translate resources that are available only in English from the Ministry.²²⁹ This leads some of them to quit.²³⁰

The lack of specialists able to provide services in French to students was also highlighted by many witnesses.²³¹ According to a representative of the BC Association of Teachers of Modern Languages, this leads students with learning difficulties to drop out.²³² A spokesperson for the Greater Victoria School District recommended that a web-based platform be developed to share French resources among teachers.²³³ Teachers believe that not only access to materials in French but resources that are appropriate to the specific context of British Columbia is needed.²³⁴ At present, libraries sadly lack books in French for students.²³⁵

2.2.5.3 Authentic experiences

For a student studying French as a second language, the ability to anchor their learning in a concrete reality determines both their level of interest and language ability in French. In its brief, Canadian Parents for French – British Columbia and Yukon Branch called for more exchanges to French-speaking communities, deeper links between francophone and francophile youth, and greater employment mobility between the country's English- and French-speaking regions.²³⁶ Speaking before the committee, the organization's representative said that opportunities to use French are vital for students "to be able to live, breathe and feel the language and the culture," which encourages them to continue with their studies through grade 12 and beyond.²³⁷

This echoes teachers' recommendations.²³⁸ One teacher called for increased federal funding for cultural activities.²³⁹ It is along these lines that the Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs wishes to put more emphasis on student mobility and exchange programs.²⁴⁰ The vast majority of students with whom the committee met spoke about the vital role of exchanges to francophone regions and extracurricular activities in French to increase their skills and interest in the French language.

2.3 Common challenges

The testimony identified a number of common challenges for francophone schools and French immersion programs in British Columbia. There is a clear lack of resources, both human and financial, on both sides. Opportunities for learning French at the post-secondary level are lacking, which prevents many young francophones and francophiles from pursuing their studies in French. There are obvious shortcomings in funding. And the same is true of accountability in the Protocol for Agreements on Education.

2.3.1 Lack of resources in elementary and secondary schools

The success of francophone schools and French immersion programs is constricted by the lack of federal and provincial resources. Support is clearly insufficient, and is an obstacle to their growth. Yet, teachers' dedication and young people's motivation remain strong. Testimony shows that support for elementary and secondary education in French must be strengthened.

2.3.1.1 Teachers' dedication

Behind the obstacles we have just described is an undeniable fact: the boundless commitment of teachers and their dedication to transmitting their love of French to students. Almost every young person the committee met with stressed the important role their teachers play in their decision to learn French. That said, teachers face many challenges related to their living conditions. In Vancouver, they face a high cost of living, which makes hiring a challenge.²⁴¹ In their school districts, their requests to have access to specialized teaching materials or specialists able to offer support to students having difficulty in French are from time to time rejected. From a professional point of view, they do not always have access to the training they need. For teachers in francophone schools, for example, access to courses adapted to minority communities is difficult.²⁴² The testimony was almost unanimous: the training of teachers in French in their communities and with courses tailored to their needs would encourage their retention in the province.

2.3.1.2 Young people's motivation

During its visit to Vancouver and Victoria, the committee was struck by the motivation of young people to pursue their studies and seek opportunities to live in French. At *École Secondaire Jules-Verne*, students gave a number of reasons for choosing to stay in the French-language program: dynamic teachers, smaller classes that foster more personalized instruction, a conscious choice to be able to express their own French identity and not lose their language, a strong sense of belonging to the francophonie, access to a specialized program like the International Baccalaureate, and the opportunities that learning French creates for their future careers.

The committee also visited Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School, where students enrolled in French immersion call themselves a "tight knit family." These students showed a strong attachment to Canada's linguistic duality. They talked about exchange programs in French-language communities and the importance these experiences had in continuing their education. They deplored that the percentage of subjects taught in French decreases through the grades. They would have liked to have access to more activities in French outside of school, perhaps even with students from neighbouring francophone schools.

They would also like to see more post-secondary programs in French. In short, they are committed young people, but lack the opportunities to fully live their love of French.

The committee was particularly impressed by the grade 11 and 12 students at *École Victor-Brodeur* who act as French-language mentors. They are both motivators and organizers for the younger students.²⁴³ This has a mirroring effect, as explained by the superintendent of the *Conseil scolaire francophone*:

If you put them in charge of the very young ones, because they come from the same place, from kindergarten, they understand their responsibilities. And you will find that they are the biggest defenders of the French language.²⁴⁴

Testimony showed the importance of retaining students at the end of elementary school. To avoid francophone students from switching to nearby English schools, *École Secondaire Jules-Verne* and *École Victor-Brodeur* began offering the International Baccalaureate program.²⁴⁵ The *Conseil scolaire francophone* also set up a virtual school that offers online courses in French to students in the province as well as vocational and trades training.²⁴⁶ In 2013, it identified the retention of secondary students as one of its priorities, and has seen a 24% increase at the secondary level over the past five years.²⁴⁷ Retention must also continue beyond secondary school, as noted by the Secretary-Treasurer of the *Conseil scolaire francophone*:

It would be good if [young people] were able to stay in British Columbia. These are proud children. We must invest in their pride in speaking French, in living in French in British Columbia.²⁴⁸

Witnesses also highlighted the importance of engaging youth through activities. The *Conseil scolaire francophone* and the *Conseil jeunesse francophone de la Colombie-Britannique* ("*Conseil jeunesse francophone*") are working together to organize events where young people can meet, forge links and develop a sense of belonging to the francophonie.²⁴⁹ It is often when they are engaged in these activities that young people develop this sense of belonging. The President of the *Conseil jeunesse francophone* remarked:

I think it's important to have strong ties between the schools and the francophone community so that French learning takes place outside the classroom as well. I want to see more solidarity among francophones to generate collective pride in our language and to give young people a greater sense of belonging to their community.²⁵⁰

The young francophones that the committee met with would have liked to be told earlier in their education of the possibility of working in French, living in French, and even falling in love in French.²⁵¹ Unfortunately, many young people in the province live in linguistic isolation and insecurity and as a result do not make this conscious choice.²⁵²

2.3.1.3 The butterfly effect: supporting French as a first language to ensure better access to French immersion programs

Witnesses suggested that providing better access to French as a first language education would automatically free up spaces in French immersion programs, since many rights holders enrol in these programs rather than take advantage of French first-language instruction to which they are entitled. Legal counsels from Power Law justified their remarks as follows:

By ensuring that schools in the French first language program are accessible and of high quality, the federal government will also respond to the challenges of French immersion programs: right holder parents will take advantage of the French first language program, which will free up spaces in French immersion programs with long waiting lists.²⁵³

It is critical to provide more French first-language instruction in British Columbia in order to encourage rights holders to enrol in the system that will ensure not only the transmission of their language but also their culture.²⁵⁴ Along the same lines, if measures are put in place to support the vitality of francophone communities, they will be able to launch initiatives to promote their language and culture among francophones and francophiles. It is in this sense that witnesses called for an increase in community spaces in French. In other words, it is possible to kill two birds with one stone.

2.3.1.4 Toward stronger support for elementary and secondary French education

Witnesses showed that better access to French first- and second-language education is needed in primary and secondary schools in the province. These schools need to be given more resources because notwithstanding teachers' dedication and students' motivation lie significant financial barriers. Support must take into account each stream's specific needs. Improvements to strategic planning are required to reduce attrition rates among students in French instruction programs.²⁵⁵ Ways must be found to push these young people to the next stage of pursuing college or university studies in French.²⁵⁶

A francophone immigration representative talked about the need to offer appropriate support to recently settled students and parents to increase access and retention in French education programs.²⁵⁷ In a province that welcomes francophone immigrants, it seems important that French-language services should extend to all areas. What is the point of attracting immigrants who speak French if the province is unable to integrate them into the school system in that language? On the other hand, integrating students from diverse backgrounds also poses challenges for schools, especially with respect to promoting their programs.²⁵⁸

According to witnesses, increased investment in French primary and secondary education will have a positive impact on the vitality of francophone communities, as well as on their retention in post-secondary institutions.

2.3.2 Limited opportunities to learn French at the post-secondary level

Witnesses highlighted the lack of opportunities to learn French at the post-secondary level. This discourages some young people from continuing their education in French. While there are university and college programs in French in British Columbia, they fall short in number and resources to provide a true education continuum. More needs to be done.

2.3.2.1 University and college programs in French

The public hearings in British Columbia could not have been clearer: there are too few opportunities to learn French at the post-secondary level and too few university and college programs in French. Needs are much greater than resources.

The committee met with *Collège Éducacentre*, the only francophone college in British Columbia, and toured its facilities. The college offers a diverse range of educational services to francophones, as well as language training and employment assistance to students, adults and immigrants. The committee saw firsthand the need for renovations during its site visit.²⁵⁹ The college's needs relate to expanding its programs and providing related programs, especially in remote areas.²⁶⁰ It also wishes to promote existing programs and remain competitive with English-language colleges, for example by improving its technological capabilities.²⁶¹ The college wants to promote college education in French as a viable option at the post-secondary level in British Columbia, for example by developing partnerships with other institutions.²⁶²

The committee also visited the Burnaby campus of Simon Fraser University, home to the Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs. The office, created in 2004, works with the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Education to provide French post-secondary education in British Columbia. It develops and maintains ties to francophone and francophile communities in British Columbia, Canada and the world.²⁶³ It hosts cultural activities to ensure the vitality of French. It trains teachers of French as a first and second language. It oversees the French Cohort Program, a multidisciplinary program in public administration and community services, which is taught primarily in French and helps create links between students and the francophone community in British Columbia.²⁶⁴ This program attracts students from around the world and includes a student mobility module.²⁶⁵ Students from Simon Fraser University, with whom the committee had the pleasure of meeting, spoke about the program's benefits and the need to provide additional learning opportunities in French. In its brief, the Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs reiterated the need for more resources to develop its programs.²⁶⁶

The committee also met with faculty members from the University of British Columbia. The university trains French-language teachers and provides courses on language and French literature. A similar, but more limited, range of courses is also offered at the University of Victoria. Although the committee did not meet with the latter, the *Société francophone de Victoria* deplored the lack of opportunities for students who finish grade

12 at *École Victor-Brodeur* or who are in French immersion programs to remain on Vancouver Island and continue their post-secondary studies in French.²⁶⁷ A representative of the Greater Victoria School District also called for stronger collaboration between the university and those responsible for French immersion programs in order to retain more teachers.²⁶⁸

A professor of the University of British Columbia, raised concerns about the absence of a department dedicated solely to the teaching of the French language.²⁶⁹ The university's francophone professors joined forces to create the French Centre, which promotes French on campus, but it receives little support from the administration.²⁷⁰ The centre would like to set up new courses in French to attract graduates from French first- and second-language programs in British Columbia.²⁷¹ The university offers core French teacher education programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as dual degree programs.²⁷²

Simon Fraser University and *Collège Éducacentre*, but not the University of British Columbia, are members of the *Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne*. Simon Fraser University is the only English-language university to be part of this association.²⁷³ Its membership supports student mobility as well as efforts to recruit French education teachers.²⁷⁴ A professor said he would like the University of British Columbia to follow in its footsteps.²⁷⁵

The 2013–2014 to 2017–2018 Canada–British Columbia Agreement contains commitments regarding the *Collège Éducacentre* and the Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs, but nothing specific about the University of British Columbia.²⁷⁶ Post-secondary institutions indicated they required higher funding adjusted for needs and for inflation.²⁷⁷ When negotiating the next bilateral agreement, the federal and provincial governments must take into account the strategic priorities identified by these institutions.²⁷⁸ The Minister of Canadian Heritage said she was open to the idea.²⁷⁹ Recommendations were also made for research to be done to develop new programs that meet needs.²⁸⁰ The representative of the BC Teachers' Federation criticized the lack of training for intensive French programs.²⁸¹ Partnering with other French-language post-secondary institutions was another option put forward.²⁸²

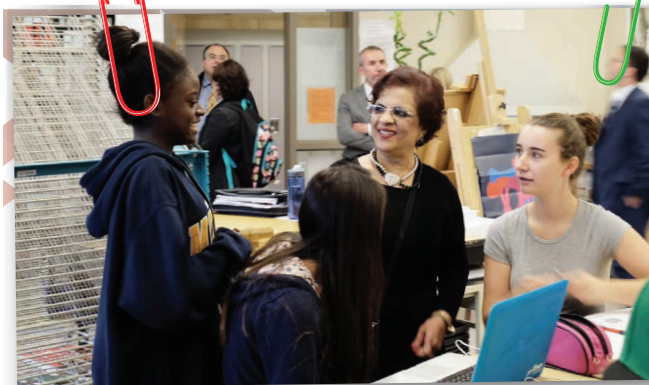


The Senate Committee said...

In its report released in June 2015, the Senate Committee recognized that Canada's French-language universities are a valuable asset in serving francophone students, whether they attended a French first-language program or a French second-language program. It recommended that Canadian Heritage provide them resources to further develop official language programs. In its response, the government recognized the important role of these institutions, but it did not commit to providing more resources. The colleges and universities in British Columbia reiterated these needs.

2.3.2.2 Toward the education continuum, from early childhood to post-secondary

This is not the first time the committee has heard about the importance of ensuring an education continuum, from early childhood to post-secondary. The same observations remain. While the federal government recognizes the importance of supporting an education continuum, the testimony heard in British Columbia shows that more needs to be done. The federal government's solutions are piecemeal and do not provide an overview of the obstacles to overcome. A report by the *Table nationale sur l'éducation* published in the spring of 2016 lists the measures to be taken for all stages of the education continuum.²⁸³ It stressed the importance of strengthening identity building, creating learning spaces where French language and culture flourishes, and encouraging the inclusion of a diverse francophonie.²⁸⁴ The Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs argued that existing programs must also be promoted to motivate young people to stay.²⁸⁵ As the OFFA said in its brief:



The Senate Committee said...

In its report released in June 2005, the Senate Committee presented the federal government with eight recommendations addressing the entire education continuum. One called for the development of a national policy covering all the stages in the education continuum, taking into account the special needs of francophone communities. The government response contained only partial commitments, with no overview of the solutions to the issues identified. Ten years later, the same issues keep appearing. The federal government continues to offer up partial solutions. That said, in its June 2016 response it acknowledged the importance of supporting the education continuum.

A stronger link between the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels provides also a solution to many of these pressing challenges by showing students first-hand that bilingualism is valued at the post-secondary level, in the labour market, and in the community at large.²⁸⁶

According to witnesses, implementing an education continuum, from early childhood to post-secondary, will strengthen students' commitment to the francophonie and promote both official languages.

2.3.3 Limits of the current system of funding

The committee has heard for years about shortfalls in the funding system for education. Across the country, official language minority communities, whether anglophone or francophone, have complained about a lack of resources for minority-language education and second-language instruction. They also want their school boards to have a say in how funding is allocated.

2.3.3.1 Inadequate funding

Most of the witnesses in this study called for increased funding, both for francophone schools and French immersion programs. It is clear that funding for programs is not increasing at the same rate as enrolment. Budgets for intergovernmental collaboration in education have not increased in recent years.

In September 2016, the *Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada*, the *Commission nationale des parents francophones* and the *Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones* issued a brief setting out the need to modernize education funding.²⁸⁷ These organizations believe that the Protocol for Agreements on Education, the bilateral agreements that accompany its implementation and the additional funds allocated to education in the *Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013–2018* have three fundamental shortcomings:

- ▶ provinces and territories unilaterally determine the education needs of the minority, which contravenes section 23 of the Charter. There is no requirement that the communities be consulted about their needs or their implementation;
- ▶ neither the Department of Canadian Heritage nor the school boards require effective accountability on the part of the Ministries of Education to determine the purposes for which the funds are used; and
- ▶ funds earmarked for French first-language elementary and secondary education (outside Quebec) are too often used to finance the core costs of that education and not the truly additional costs of that education.²⁸⁸

These three organizations appeared before the committee on 26 September 2016. The Executive Director of the *Conseil scolaire francophone* addressed the challenges associated with budgetary and strategic planning resulting from the current funding system.²⁸⁹ The Secretary-Treasurer of the *Conseil scolaire francophone* made the same remarks.²⁹⁰ Also in September, the Supreme Court of British Columbia recognized systemic problems with the funding of French first-language education.²⁹¹ The current process for supporting infrastructure in British Columbia falls short. The Court ordered the province to create a separate budget envelope and amend the provincial school legislation to meet the infrastructure needs of francophone schools and improve the processing of funding applications. The resulting structural changes will certainly make it possible to better meet needs.²⁹²

To address the pressing needs of francophone schools, the federal government could use special agreements.²⁹³ For example, in 1997, the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia signed such an agreement to establish a collaborative framework between the two governments to implement a governance structure for francophone schools pursuant to section 23 of the Charter.²⁹⁴ This resulted from the court's recognition of the *Conseil scolaire francophone's* right to school governance. The special agreement required the provincial government to take steps to implement the decision, thereby encouraging it not to appeal.²⁹⁵ The parallel with the current situation, once again opposing the *Conseil scolaire francophone* and the province, is striking. Appearing before the committee, the Minister of Canadian Heritage recognized that the federal government could do more to support the development of school infrastructure.²⁹⁶

As to immersion programs, the provincial and federal governments have repeatedly been called on to improve their funding formulas to encourage school boards to develop new programs, but nothing has happened.²⁹⁷ In its brief, the Canadian Parents for French – British Columbia and Yukon Branch made a recommendation to “create and lock in funding for growth.”²⁹⁸ A parent member of this organization called for a “per-pupil formula that is adjusted yearly.”²⁹⁹ Post-secondary institutions have also called for changes to the current funding structure, including the creation of a contingency fund to meet needs as they arise and that cannot be predicted.³⁰⁰

2.3.3.2 Toward greater involvement of francophone school boards

Increasingly, there are calls for a modernization of how federal funds are directed to French education. The brief submitted by the three francophone organizations in September 2016 suggested the adoption of a separate tripartite protocol that would exclusively cover additional costs for primary and secondary education in French in minority communities in order to:

- ▶ provide a voice to communities in managing federal funding and identifying priorities for French first-language education, including clear obligations to consult these communities and the direct participation of school boards in its negotiation;
- ▶ ensure greater accountability and transparency as current mechanisms do not determine the purposes for which the funds are used; and
- ▶ bring current government practices in line with section 23 of the Charter by better responding to the needs of francophone communities and excluding the costs incurred by provinces and territories in meeting their constitutional obligations.³⁰¹



The Senate Committee said...

In its report released in June 2005, the Senate Committee recommended that the federal government review the process for negotiating the Protocol for Agreements on Education, directly involve school boards in discussions, and consider negotiating minority-language education and second-language instruction provisions separately. The federal government did not act on the recommendation, stating that current public accountability practices were adequate and that involving school boards in the negotiation process was not advisable. The Senate Committee's June 2005 recommendations are similar to what three francophone organizations called for in fall 2016.

This is not the first time the committee has heard such a suggestion. The managing director of the *Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones* asked the committee to update its June 2005 recommendations.³⁰² Legal counsels from Power Law argued that the proposal of the three francophone organizations was legally viable, as the federal government has already negotiated such an agreement with the First Nations, and have also asked the committee to reiterate its 2005 recommendations.³⁰³ The Commissioner of Official Languages, on the other hand, did not wish to take a position.³⁰⁴

In Vancouver, the *Conseil scolaire francophone* also called for the implementation of a tripartite protocol.³⁰⁵ In its brief, it stated:

Although the Board was “consulted” by the Ministry of Education on the development of the Ministry’s action plan, the Board did not approve it and believes that certain federally funded programs should be covered by the Province, thereby freeing up federal funding to implement new, innovative educational programs.³⁰⁶

Regarding the obligation to consult, the president of the *Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada* said:

In my view, when the federal government transfers money to the provinces and territories, it also transfers its obligations. Furthermore, the obligation to consult the francophone minority communities is clearly established in Part VII of the *Official Languages Act* ... Experience also shows us that the communities are best equipped to offer solutions that meet the needs of francophones.³⁰⁷

Section 10.2 of the Canada–British Columbia agreement on education states that British Columbia “agrees to consult interested groups and associations, in particular representatives of the school boards ... [w]hen deemed necessary.”³⁰⁸ This provision is by no means binding. The *Conseil scolaire francophone* therefore demands to have a say on French first-language education investment priorities and wants a commitment by the province to fund the essential expenses for these programs without going through the federal government. In other words, federal funds should only be used to fund the additional costs of delivering these programs, such as the creation of a start-up fund for new francophone schools, specialized high school programs, early childhood or adult programs, or transportation system improvements.³⁰⁹

A representative of the *Syndicat des enseignantes et enseignants du programme francophone de la Colombie-Britannique* went so far as to call for a quadripartite agreement, bringing together the federal government, the provincial government, the *Conseil scolaire francophone* and the francophone teachers’ union.³¹⁰ In the union’s view, the most pressing needs are for teachers’ basic and ongoing training as well as for

support for staff such as librarians and resource teachers.³¹¹ This suggestion echoes those of other teachers who want to have more control and autonomy in the management and use of federal funds for French and to be consulted about the allocation of these funds.³¹² In some school boards, there are no resource persons dedicated to French immersion programs, which presents challenges in terms of transparency.³¹³ According to some witnesses, there is a lack of understanding about how federal money should be spent.³¹⁴

According to witnesses, fuller participation by school boards will ensure that the education needs of francophone communities are taken into account.

2.3.4 Inadequate reporting system

In addition to the limits of the current system of funding, accountability is also lacking. This is not the first time that the committee has been made aware of the lack of transparency in the Protocol for Agreements on Education. Testimony highlighted the need for better tracking of spending transferred from the federal government to the provinces.

2.3.4.1 Lack of transparency

The lack of transparency in the use of funding provided by the federal government for French education was a recurring theme during the public hearings and the informal meetings in Vancouver and Victoria, for both francophone schools and French immersion programs, as well as post-secondary institutions.³¹⁵

British Columbia's Ministry of Education posts data on its website on funding under the Canada–British Columbia education agreement, a practice that should be followed by others and that the committee noted in its report of June 2015.³¹⁶ However, the public hearings showed that these efforts are not enough to address the systemic gaps in transparency in the Protocol for Agreements on Education. What is missing are the details. Communities, teachers and the public are not able to determine if the money is invested wisely or whether it meets the needs on the ground. The managing director of the *Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones* explained his efforts:

We hired experts and researchers to analyze the reports. I even examined them myself. The reports are quite voluminous and provide a lot of general information. There are areas and priorities. Authorities claim they have spent \$10 million here and there, but we can find no details. The school boards try to obtain details on expenditures, but they are not provided to them.³¹⁷

Requests for access to information must be made, even though the Protocol for Agreements on Education states that governments agree on the following principles: transparency, accountability and clarity.³¹⁸ The Canada–British Columbia education agreement reflects the same principles in section 8.1.³¹⁹

2.3.4.2 Toward better tracking of federal funding transfers

Francophone and francophile organizations have called for improved accountability practices for French first- and second-language education. Although the response provided by the government in June 2016 suggests that the mechanisms in place are sufficient, taking into account provincial/territorial jurisdictions, witnesses called for changes to the way things are done:

... the government has an obligation under Part VII of the *Official Languages Act* to take positive measures, and accountability is the way to make sure that the measures are genuinely positive. At present, they may not be as positive as the government might believe, and therein lies the rub. Reforming the way funds are distributed would improve this aspect.³²⁰

In October 2016, the Commissioner of Official Languages published a follow-up to the horizontal audit of accountability for official languages transfer payments to provinces.³²¹ He noted that Canadian Heritage does not perform field verifications as regards the funds that are transferred to them. The Commissioner said he was only partially satisfied with the measures taken by Canadian Heritage in this regard. He committed to pursuing his efforts with the department to ensure that the funds are used to enhance the vitality and support the development of official language minority communities.

It was not long ago that the committee heard about instances where, for example, money for minority language education was invested in second-language instruction. The brief submitted by three francophone organizations in September 2016 is filled with rather troubling examples.³²² These examples were again raised by the executive director of the *Commission nationale des parents francophones* when he appeared before the committee.³²³ The Commissioner of Official Languages also told the committee about some questionable cases.³²⁴ During a site visit in Vancouver, representatives of the school community implied that the funds promised for immersion programs may not have been used for such purposes.

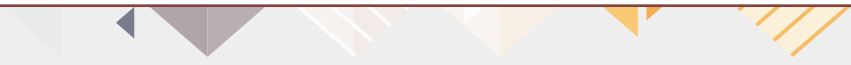


The Senate Committee said...

In its report released in June 2005, the Senate Committee recommended that effective reporting mechanisms be implemented to ensure that the allocation of federal funds corresponds to the objectives of the federal government and the expectations of communities. In another report released 10 years later, the Senate Committee urged Canadian Heritage to improve its accountability practices to ensure that the funds invested are used wisely. In its June 2016 response, the government did not consider the situation a problem. It did not propose any concrete solutions to concerns brought up again and again over the years.

The President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Canadian Heritage were questioned by the committee on current accountability practices. The Minister of Canadian Heritage said that the issue of transparency has been one of the dominant themes of the official languages consultations she has undertaken, and she committed to follow this matter closely.³²⁵ The Commissioner of Official Languages said he has only so much power with respect to auditing expenditures.³²⁶ Official language minority communities unanimously call for better monitoring of federal transfers for education.³²⁷

According to witnesses, improvements to current accountability practices will ensure that federal government spending on education will be used for proper purposes.



“The only place where I saw roses growing at Rose-des-vents school was in the hearts of the children and the will of the teachers...”

The Honourable Ghislain Maltais, *Evidence*, 17 October 2016, p. 31.

“Rather than lamenting the stagnant rate of bilingualism, the government could work to break down barriers.”

Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages, *Evidence*, 21 November 2016, p. 30.





CHAPTER 3

Acting to Promote French Learning Opportunities in British Columbia

This third chapter proposes a series of recommendations to the federal government to promote French learning opportunities. It targets four areas where action is needed: improving access to francophone schools, increasing bilingualism among young people, reviewing the funding mechanism and improving reporting, and supporting the vitality of French-language communities. These actions must form the basis for the next Protocol for Agreements on Education and the next multi-year official languages plan.

3.1 Improving access to francophone schools

The committee focuses on four types of measures to improve access to francophone schools. First, support must be given to the French-language community in British Columbia to acquire land to build new schools and meet its school infrastructure needs. Second, the federal government must ensure full respect for constitutional rights in education and promote them. Third, the federal government must take the lead in fostering a true education continuum, from early childhood to the post-secondary level. Fourth, there is a need to rethink the way census data on language is collected.

3.1.1 Helping the francophone community acquire federal lands

The first place where the federal government must act is by facilitating the efforts of the local francophone community to acquire land to improve French education services. According to the Supreme Court of British Columbia, the province has an obligation to assist the *Conseil scolaire francophone* in acquiring sites to meet its school infrastructure needs. The provincial government has shown good cooperation on this issue so far.

The committee believes that the federal government also has obligations in this area. First and foremost, Canada Lands Company Ltd. must fully comply with its language obligations. It has an obligation to take into account the needs of the francophone community in its decisions. However, it has been slow to take action, claiming that it is the City of Vancouver that is responsible for the current planning process. Yet, as part of its partnership with First Nations, Canada Lands Company Ltd. holds 50% of

the decision-making power. **It can use this weight to convince its other partners of the importance of ensuring full compliance with the obligations set out in section 23 of the Charter and Part VII of the OLA.** But Canada Lands has not been proactive to date. The committee believes it is doing the bare minimum, noting, however, a recent change in attitude and hoping current discussions with the *Conseil scolaire francophone* and other stakeholders will be productive.

The Minister responsible for Canada Lands Company Ltd., the Honourable Judy Foote, was invited to comment on this issue. The committee would like to thank the minister for her recent efforts in bringing stakeholders together and convincing Canada Lands to meet its official languages responsibilities. Based on testimony, the committee urges prompt intervention with Canada Lands Company Ltd. to facilitate the acquisition by the francophone community of a parcel of lands to build two new schools. Action is needed now, as the problems in this respect have been unresolved for far too long and the next steps in the planning process are fast approaching. *École Rose-des-vents* students, crammed into a space far too small for their needs, cannot wait until 2020 to see their situation improve — the date construction is currently projected to begin on the Heather Street Lands. Moreover, the committee believes that a long-term solution should be considered, through the adoption of regulations requiring the needs of official language minority schools to be taken into account in similar situations.

Therefore, the committee recommends:

Recommendation

1

That the Minister of Public Services and Procurement:

- (a) intervene with Canada Lands Company Ltd., engaging with British Columbia's Ministry of Education and the City of Vancouver, to advocate for the need of the *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique* in Vancouver, west of Main Street, to promptly acquire lands that are currently 50% owned by Canada Lands Company Ltd. to build two schools that will meet the needs of Vancouver's francophone community; and
- (b) adopt regulations requiring federal institutions to take into account the interests and needs of official language minority schools in the sale or transfer of real and personal property, by 2018.

3.1.2 Increasing support for francophone school infrastructure

Testimony shows that, in francophone schools, more money needs to go toward building new infrastructure and renovating existing infrastructure. The needs are urgent. The courts have recognized that the constitutional rights of the francophone community in British Columbia have been violated. The main challenge in British Columbia is clear: ensuring equal quality of school infrastructure for members of the francophone minority.

In light of the legal situation in British Columbia, the committee calls on the Minister of Canadian Heritage to act promptly to guarantee the recognition of its rights under section 23 of the Charter and Part VII of the OLA. The committee calls on the minister to consider establishing a special agreement to address the most pressing needs of British Columbia's francophone community as they relate to school infrastructure.

The federal government did this previously in a similar context in 1997 by signing a special agreement with British Columbia's Ministry of Education. The agreement explicitly provided for funds to implement a Supreme Court of Canada ruling on the implementation of section 23 of the Charter and support the purchase, construction and renovation of school infrastructure.

Therefore, the committee recommends:

Recommendation

2

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in negotiating the new Protocol for Agreements on Education and the next multi-year official languages plan, conclude a special agreement with British Columbia's Ministry of Education to respond to the pressing infrastructure needs of the francophone community and guarantee the recognition of its rights under section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*.

3.1.3 Promoting respect for Charter rights

For many years, francophone communities have been calling for a broader interpretation by the courts of section 23 of the Charter to include the offer of preschool programs in French. There is currently no consensus on this issue.³²⁸ In September 2016, the Supreme Court of British Columbia did not recognize the obligation to provide early childhood services in French under section 23 of the Charter.³²⁹ The committee agrees with witnesses who see the judgment as a restrictive interpretation of language rights.

The right to management *by* and *for* the minority was granted more than 25 years ago³³⁰. A broad and generous interpretation of the rights guaranteed by the Charter is required by the Supreme Court of Canada.³³¹ The remedial nature of language rights has been repeatedly reaffirmed.³³² The Supreme Court of Canada even goes so far as to say that equal access to quality education in the minority language is an essential factor of development for minority communities.³³³ The Court has recognized some of these principles to an extent. However, it referenced section 1 of the Charter to justify the province's inaction and the subsequent breaches of section 23 of the Charter. It referred to the inevitable assimilation of the francophone community in British Columbia.

Despite advances in judicial recognition, it is clear that francophone communities must still fight for their guaranteed rights. The committee believes that the *Conseil scolaire francophone* should have the right to apply the provisions of its admission policy that it suspended because of a legal challenge, as long as the criteria respect the francophone character of schools. It does not make sense that, on the one hand, the provincial and territorial governments are talking about setting a target of 5% for francophone immigration across the country and that, on the other hand, we are preventing francophone schools from admitting francophone immigrants or refugees. What makes sense is ensuring a continuum of French-language services to immigrants.

The committee also believes that the interpretation of minority-language educational rights guaranteed by the Charter must be broadened to include the entire education continuum, from early childhood to post-secondary, and that these rights must be actively promoted across the country among the general public. Only by applying an inclusive and comprehensive vision can we reverse the wrongs of the past and enhance the vitality of francophone communities. We must empower these communities to take concrete steps to reverse assimilation and take control of their future. Steps must also be taken so that francophone schools stop losing students because of the growing number of exogamous families.

Therefore, the committee recommends:

A graphic for Recommendation 3. It features a dark grey rectangular box on the left containing the word "Recommendation" in white and a large white number "3". To the right of this box is a horizontal band with a geometric pattern of triangles in shades of grey, orange, and teal. Below this band, the text of the recommendation is presented in a light grey box.

Recommendation
3

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage launch, by 2018, a national public awareness and promotion campaign on both the merits of a French education and an education continuum, from early childhood through post-secondary, building on the full respect of rights guaranteed by section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

3.1.4 Supporting the education continuum

Witnesses agreed that the federal government has an important role to play in ensuring the province, school boards, parents and students have access to francophone schools. The provincial government falls short as evidenced by the fact that the francophone community must continue to use the courts to enforce its rights. The testimony heard in British Columbia called for increased leadership by the federal government to encourage the provincial government to meet its obligations respecting French education.

The committee calls on the federal government to reconsider its recommendations made in June 2005. These recommendations, made more than 10 years ago, are still relevant today. They call for the establishment of a genuine continuum in education and for increased collaboration between the partners responsible for its implementation, from early childhood to post-secondary. Support for building a French linguistic and cultural identity—and the stronger sense of belonging to the francophonie that results—as well as for retaining students in the French education system arose as key issues in the committee’s public hearings. The Minister of Canadian Heritage needs to take steps to support these objectives to ensure the vitality of British Columbia’s francophone community.

Therefore, the committee recommends:

A graphic for Recommendation 4. It features a dark grey rectangular box on the left with the word "Recommendation" in white and a large white number "4". To the right of this box is a horizontal band with a geometric pattern of triangles in shades of grey, orange, and white. Below this band, the text of the recommendation is displayed on a light grey background.

Recommendation
4

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage take steps to support the education continuum as regards:

- (a) support for linguistic and cultural identity building for francophone students; and
- (b) retention of students in the francophone school system, throughout their education.

In British Columbia, testimony showed a dire need for French services for young francophones from early childhood forward. The federal government needs to increase access to early childhood services in French, in British Columbia as elsewhere. The Minister of Families, Children and Social Development is working on a national framework on early learning and child care, but there is no indication that the needs of official language minority communities will be taken into account. It is important that the framework include a francophone vision developed in partnership with francophone organizations and implemented with the province's help. Increased funding is also needed to meet these needs.

Therefore, the committee recommends:

A graphic for Recommendation 5. It features a dark grey rectangular box on the left with the word "Recommendation" in white and a large white number "5". To the right of this box is a horizontal band with a geometric pattern of triangles in shades of grey, orange, and white. Below this band, the text of the recommendation is displayed on a light grey background.

Recommendation
5

5.1 That the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, in collaboration with British Columbia's Ministry of Children and Family Development and in consultation with the francophone community:

- (a) include a francophone vision in its national framework on early learning and child care; and
- (b) commit to increasing access and funding to early childhood services in French, by 2018.

5.2 That the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development take similar steps with corresponding ministries in all provinces and territories with similar situations.

Testimony clearly showed that French-language learning opportunities in British Columbia, for both francophones and francophiles, are limited by the lack of opportunities to continue their French-language education beyond the secondary level. The committee wishes to note the significant efforts of Simon Fraser University, particularly its Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs, in offering French-language education programs in British Columbia. French-language programs in the province's post-secondary institutions deserve to be expanded to meet the needs of a growing young francophone and francophile population. Increased funding is also needed to meet these needs.

Therefore, the committee recommends:

A graphic titled "Recommendation 6" with a decorative header featuring geometric shapes in teal, orange, and grey. The number "6" is prominently displayed in a large, white, stylized font on a dark grey background. Below the header, two numbered recommendations are listed in a light grey box.

Recommendation
6

6.1 That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in collaboration with the Ministry of Advanced Education and in consultation with post-secondary institutions, commit to increasing access and funding to additional French-language programs in post-secondary institutions, by 2018.

6.2 That the Minister of Canadian Heritage take similar steps with corresponding ministries in all provinces and territories with similar situations.

3.1.5 Adding questions to the next population census

Testimony showed that the actual number of rights holders is not known. At present, the *Conseil scolaire francophone* does not have adequate estimates to determine the number of students eligible for its schools. This limits its ability to take appropriate measures to attract potential rights holders and retain them in the francophone system throughout their academic career. Public consultations are underway, and the testing for the next national census will take place in 2018. It is therefore not too late to act. The committee strongly encourages francophone communities and school boards to participate in the Statistics Canada consultations to make their needs and suggestions known.

The committee calls on the federal government to take the situation seriously and to take appropriate action by the time of the next census in 2021. Two scenarios are possible. First, Statistics Canada could review its methods for gathering data on rights holders by including new questions targeting school attendance in minority schools in the next census. Specifically, questions on sections 23(1)(b) and 23(2) of the Charter regarding the language of instruction received by the parents or siblings need to be included. These questions must first be presented to stakeholders, then tested to validate the quality of the data, and then reviewed by the Governor in Council, who has the authority under the *Statistics Act* to prescribe the questions to be asked in the next census. Second,

the federal government could consider a new post-census survey that would allow all stakeholders to obtain detailed and useful information to meet their needs. As part of the preparations for the next multi-year official languages plan, such a commitment would certainly be a positive step for these communities.

Therefore, the committee recommends:

A graphic for Recommendation 7. It features a dark grey rectangular box on the left with the word "Recommendation" in white and a large white number "7". To the right of this box is a horizontal band with a geometric pattern of triangles in shades of orange, red, and grey. Below this band, the text of the recommendation is presented in a light grey box with a subtle geometric pattern.

Recommendation
7

That the federal government, in consultation with official language minority communities:

- (a) strongly encourage Statistics Canada to design and test new questions on school attendance in preparation for the 2021 census which would allow for the full implementation of minority language educational rights guaranteed in section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*; and
- (b) provide the necessary resources to Statistics Canada to conduct a new survey on the vitality of official-language minorities as part of its next multi-year official languages plan.

3.2 Increasing bilingualism among young people

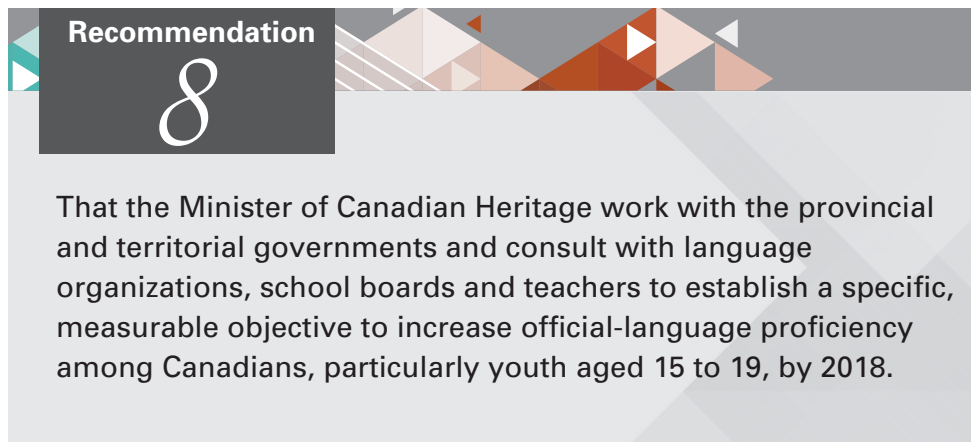
Despite the measures put in place for French first- and second-language education, and despite the funds invested by governments to encourage this type of education, bilingualism is stagnating. The government response tabled in June 2016 indicates that the government shares the committee's commitment to increase the bilingualism of young Canadians.³³⁴ Yet, no concrete commitment was made to set a target to increase bilingualism among young people. The federal government must do more to promote the advantages of bilingualism nationwide and ensure the full recognition and use of French in British Columbia. In addition, testimony shows that more needs to be done to adopt a common Canadian framework of reference and provide opportunities for young people to learn French as one of Canada's official languages.

3.2.1 Setting a target to increase bilingualism among young people

The committee continues to believe that the establishment of a specific, measurable objective to increase official language proficiency among Canadians, particularly youth aged 15 to 19, is needed. The government has yet to make such a commitment, despite a recommendation to that effect in its June 2015 report.³³⁵ In the coming months, the federal government will draft a new multi-year official languages plan. It will also establish a free, online service for learning and retaining both official languages.³³⁶

Bilingualism among young people aged 15 to 19 changes constantly in British Columbia, and testimony shows that action must be taken to reverse this trend, especially among young anglophones. The committee reiterates the importance of setting a target in this area. The young people the committee met with are filled with hope and have demonstrated the will to preserve a value at the core of the Canadian identity: bilingualism. In light of the above, the committee wishes to reiterate the recommendation it made in its June 2015 report. It is important that the Minister of Canadian Heritage make clear and measurable commitments in promoting Canada's two official languages.

Therefore, the committee recommends:

A graphic for Recommendation 8. It features a dark grey box on the left with the word "Recommendation" in white and a large white number "8". To the right of this box is a decorative header with a pattern of overlapping triangles in shades of grey, orange, and teal. Below the header, the text of the recommendation is displayed in a light grey box.

Recommendation
8

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage work with the provincial and territorial governments and consult with language organizations, school boards and teachers to establish a specific, measurable objective to increase official-language proficiency among Canadians, particularly youth aged 15 to 19, by 2018.

3.2.2 Promoting the use of both official languages

The testimony clearly shows that the federal government must do more to promote the use of French in British Columbia. The obligations under Part VII of the OLA are clear: the Minister of Canadian Heritage must enhance opportunities to learn French, foster an acceptance and appreciation of French by members of the public, and assist the provincial government in achieving its objectives. Learning French as one of Canada's official languages must be supported and valued. The committee firmly believes that the advantages of bilingualism need to be actively promoted to all Canadians through a public national awareness and promotion campaign. The government's response in June 2016 mentioned the possibility of local promotional campaigns only.³³⁷

Therefore, the committee recommends:

A graphic for Recommendation 9. It features a dark grey box on the left with the word "Recommendation" in white and a large white number "9". To the right of this box is a decorative header with a pattern of overlapping triangles in shades of grey, orange, and teal. Below the header, the text of the recommendation is displayed in a light grey box.

Recommendation
9

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage launch, by 2018, a public national awareness and promotion campaign on the merits of bilingualism that builds on the full respect of obligations in Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*.

3.2.3 Facilitating buy-in to a common Canadian framework of reference

Clearly, there are still gaps in language skills assessment. Several of the witnesses we met with in British Columbia raised concerns about this. Many teachers of French as a second language in this province face challenges teaching French to their students and requested increased access to basic training and continuing education, particularly as regards French as a second language teaching methodology. In its June 2015 report, the committee recognized that adopting a common Canadian framework of reference would create common reference levels for teaching, learning and evaluating language proficiency in Canada and would allow students and teachers to use their language skills throughout Canada by facilitating the adoption of a tool that is recognized and used by all.³³⁸ The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, has developed a guide for working with such a framework in the Canadian context.³³⁹ Since the committee did not have the opportunity to meet with provincial representatives from British Columbia, it is difficult to determine what changes to current practices are needed to implement a common framework. Testimony shows that more needs to be done. In light of the above, the committee wishes to reiterate the recommendation made in its June 2015 report.

Therefore, the committee recommends:



3.2.4 Giving young people opportunities to learn French as a second language

As the committee has already recognized, it is important to ensure access to French second-language programs everywhere and for everyone, throughout British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada. Witnesses in British Columbia highlighted the urgent need to invest in training French teachers and to take steps to increase access to French immersion programs, for example with regard to student retention, throughout their education. This is consistent with the recommendations in its June 2015 report. The Minister of Canadian Heritage indicated to the committee that the federal government can be a catalyst for overcoming these challenges.³⁴⁰ The committee insists that the Minister take action to meet the growing demand for immersion programs in British Columbia. The allocation of spaces based on lottery systems undermines the principle of promoting Canada's two official languages. The federal government, in collaboration with the provincial government, must ensure access everywhere and for everyone to French immersion programs. Increased and sustained funding is also needed to meet these needs.

Therefore, the committee recommends:

Recommendation

11

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in collaboration with British Columbia's Ministry of Education:

- (a) ensure access everywhere and for everyone to French immersion programs throughout British Columbia;
- (b) commit to increased and sustained funding for these programs; and
- (c) meet growing demand by retaining students, throughout their education.

One of the challenges related to access to French-language learning opportunities in British Columbia concerns the admission of an increasingly diverse francophone and francophile population. Many francophone immigrants have settled in the province and want to give their children the opportunity to learn one of Canada's two official languages. However, testimony showed that there are gaps in the promotion of available French language educational programs. Often, the reception and integration services offered to immigrants are not available in French. Many of them are therefore unaware of the opportunities to have their children educated in French. The federal government, in collaboration with the provincial government, must take measures to provide appropriate support to francophone immigrants in order to facilitate their access to French-language education in the province.

Therefore, the committee recommends:

Recommendation

12

- 12.1 That the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship in collaboration with British Columbia's Minister of Education ensure that French-speaking immigrants are well informed on the opportunities to access French-language education in the province.
- 12.2 That the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship take similar steps with corresponding ministries in all provinces and territories with similar situations.

3.3 Reviewing the funding mechanism and improving reporting

The committee again reiterates the urgent need to review the funding mechanism for education. Amendments to the Protocol for Agreements on Education are needed and expenditures must be more closely monitored. Intergovernmental collaboration needs to be improved in terms of reporting practices, and federal government support needs to be strengthened.

3.3.1 Amending the Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education

The brief submitted by three francophone organizations in September 2016 outlines the systemic deficiencies of the Protocol for Agreements on Education.³⁴¹ For more than a decade the committee has been aware of these shortcomings and has been waiting for the federal government to make changes to its practices. The committee can only reiterate the recommendations it made in its June 2005 report.³⁴² The House of Commons official languages committee also endorsed the findings of the francophone organizations in a report tabled in December 2016.³⁴³

The Protocol for Agreements on Education will soon expire. The Minister of Canadian Heritage has already announced that education will be a priority in its next multi-year plan.³⁴⁴ The committee believes that solutions must be found to ensure that the use of funds is consistent with federal government objectives and community expectations. Clearly, measures taken in recent years have fallen short. They do not conform to the jurisprudence on language rights in education. It's time to act. Communities must have a say in how their funds are managed. The committee therefore wishes to reiterate its support for a separate tripartite protocol on minority-language education.

Therefore, the committee recommends:

Recommendation

13

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in negotiating the next Protocol for Agreements on Education, enter into a separate tripartite protocol on minority-language education that:

- (a) gives a voice to francophone communities, through their school boards, in the management of funds allocated for French first-language education; and
- (b) brings federal government practices in line with section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*.

3.3.2 Tracking spending more closely and improving intergovernmental cooperation

Official language minority communities are concerned about the federal government's practices in managing its agreements with the provinces and territories, particularly with respect to reporting and transparency. These communities continue to call for improvements in this area, which was again brought to the committee's attention during its visit to British Columbia. Communities, school boards and teachers are working together to obtain more information about spending. This concern was raised by both francophone and francophile organizations. Concrete actions to fix the situation are long overdue.

Canadian Heritage invests millions of dollars every year without knowing whether these funds actually serve established objectives. The Commissioner of Official Languages believes that the department should conduct field validations. The reporting provisions in the next Protocol for Agreements on Education could also be strengthened. **The federal government has the power — and the duty — to demand greater transparency from the provinces and territories. The committee expects Canadian Heritage to provide lasting solutions in the negotiations on the next Protocol for Agreements on Education.**

Therefore, the committee recommends:

A graphic for Recommendation 14. It features a dark grey box on the left with the word "Recommendation" in white and the number "14" in a large, stylized white font. To the right of this box is a horizontal band with a geometric pattern of triangles in shades of orange, red, and grey. Below this band, the text of the recommendation is presented in a light grey box with a subtle geometric pattern. The text is in a dark grey font.

Recommendation
14

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in negotiating the next Protocol for Agreements on Education:

- (a) undertake to include more stringent provisions on money invested in federal–provincial/territorial agreements; and
- (b) undertake field validations to follow up on the activity and financial reports received from the Ministries of Education in the provinces and territories, as recommended by the Commissioner of Official Languages.

3.3.3 Increasing the Canadian Heritage envelope for Intergovernmental Cooperation on Education

Although education is an area of provincial jurisdiction under the Constitution, since the early 1970s, the federal government has provided additional contributions to provincial and territorial governments for minority-language education and second-language instruction in public schools. The Canada–British Columbia Agreement on Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction 2013–2014 to 2017–2018 provides a financial commitment of \$80.5 million over five years from the federal government. About one third of the funds go to first-language education, with the remaining

two-thirds to second-language education. This amount may be supplemented by additional contributions to the province at the discretion of the Government of Canada, as well as funding for the Explore, Destination Clic and Odyssey programs. Under the terms of the agreement, the Government of British Columbia committed to investing the same amount as the federal government, or \$80.5 million over five years. The financial commitment of the two levels of government has remained the same since 2009–2010.

Testimony shows that, in francophone schools, more money needs to go toward building new infrastructure, renovating existing infrastructure, and school transportation. For immersion programs, more money is needed to train (basic and continuing) French teachers, adapt teaching materials and provide authentic experiences. Both systems need additional funding to offer more French programs at post-secondary institutions. Federal and provincial funding is stagnant while demand soars.

In preparing for its trip, the committee had asked for a meeting with the Minister of Education, the Honourable Mike Bernier, and his Deputy Minister, but the request was declined at the last minute. Given the testimony that was heard in Vancouver and Victoria, the committee approached them again, but again its request was denied. Needless to say, the committee is disappointed with the province's lack of cooperation.

The committee urges the federal government to take action to support urgent education needs in British Columbia. Inaction and stagnant funding over a 10-year period, when needs are both clear and growing, is counter-productive. Moreover, it violates the federal government's obligations under Part VII of the OLA and section 23 of the Charter. The committee believes that the federal government is not showing the proper commitment to assuring that the two official languages have equal status in a province where interest in these two languages is clear.

The committee recognizes, of course, that jurisdiction over education rests primarily with the provincial government. However, it wishes to point out that the federal government can — and must — exercise greater leadership to ensure that the next multi-year plan and Protocol for Agreements on Education address, in terms of additional financial investments, actual needs in French first- and second-language education. The committee therefore calls on the Minister of Canadian Heritage to commit to improving the envelope for Intergovernmental Cooperation on Education by 2018.

Therefore, the committee recommends:

Recommendation

15

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in negotiating the new Protocol for Agreements on Education and the next multi-year official languages plan, commit to increasing the envelope for Intergovernmental Cooperation on Education, for example by providing:

- (a) support for school infrastructure and school transportation in francophone schools;
- (b) support for post-secondary institutions to provide basic training and continuing education for French teachers; and
- (c) language and cultural exchanges and authentic experiences for students enrolled in French first-language and French second-language education, as well as for teachers.

3.4 Supporting the vitality of francophone communities

All of the above measures will work only if the government is committed to supporting the vitality of francophone communities in other areas that affect their development. First, a sufficient level of services in French must be provided. Second, support must be enhanced through existing collaborative arrangements with communities and the provinces and territories.

3.4.1 Delivering federal services in French

The committee has a hard time understanding the lack of continuity in the services provided to francophone communities in British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada. The federal government funds francophone schools, francophone associations and immersion programs, but does not ensure its own services in French to the public. It sets targets to attract more francophone immigrants, but does not provide them with a continuum of services in French. The case from Surrey, discussed in Chapter 2, supports this finding. As Canada is celebrating the 150th anniversary of Confederation this year, the federal government must resoundingly restate its commitment to promoting Canada's two official languages, which are at the core of the Canadian identity, and ensure services are provided to the public in the language of their choice.

3.4.2 Increasing the Canadian Heritage envelope for Cooperation with the Community Sector

The federal government supports organizations that represent the interests of official language minority communities to ensure their development and strengthen their ability to act. This commitment has existed in British Columbia since 1996. The most recent cooperation agreement between the *Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique* and the Government of Canada dates back to 2011.³⁴⁵ Community development priorities are set out in the community's overall development plan.³⁴⁶ Francophone community organizations receive some \$2.7 million in combined annual funding, with 80% allocated to programming and 20% to projects.

Many witnesses said that francophone communities are suffering because they have not seen increases in funding in years. The Minister of Canadian Heritage has already announced that supporting the vitality of communities will be a priority in its next multi-year plan.³⁴⁷ The committee believes that the Minister should consult the community sector to update the cooperation agreement and ensure that the agreement continues to meet its needs. For example, could early childhood support not be part of this agreement? Does it address young people's needs? The committee notes that the last such review was done in 2011. It calls on the Minister of Canadian Heritage to commit to increasing, in the next multi-year official languages plan, the envelope for Cooperation with the Community Sector. The testimony heard in British Columbia clearly shows that more investment is needed to develop community spaces in French so that people can live in French and affirm their belonging to the French community on a daily basis.

Therefore, the committee recommends:

Recommendation

16

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in the next multi-year official languages plan:

- (a) commit to increasing the envelope for Cooperation with the Community Sector, especially with regard to support for community spaces in French; and
- (b) consult the francophone community in British Columbia, including organizations representing francophone youth and early childhood, to determine whether changes to cooperation arrangements are needed to meet their needs.

3.4.3 Increasing the Canadian Heritage envelope for Intergovernmental Cooperation on Services

The federal government supports provincial and territorial governments in providing services in the minority language, including municipal services, in areas as varied as justice, health, youth, economic development, arts and culture, and communications. The Canada–British Columbia Official Languages Agreement on French-Language Services 2013–2014 to 2017–2018 sets out a federal funding commitment of \$700,000 per year over five years. In addition to this annual funding, the Government of Canada may, at its discretion, provide complementary contributions to the province. The agreement excludes education.

Testimony showed the need to strengthen the promotion of French as an official language in the provinces and territories. The problem is especially evident in British Columbia, where support from the provincial government seems to be lacking. In preparing for its trip, the committee had asked for a meeting with the Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs, the Honourable Norm Letnick, and his Deputy Minister, but the request was declined.


The Minister of Canadian Heritage has already announced that support for French-language services and provincial/territorial partnership will be a priority in its next multi-year plan.³⁴⁸ As part of the consultations with the provinces and territories to update the agreements on minority language services, the committee calls on the Minister to stress the importance of ensuring institutional completeness. By ensuring a real continuum of services in French, both at the federal and provincial levels, the vitality of francophone communities throughout the country will be truly enhanced. The committee calls on the Minister of Canadian Heritage to commit to increasing, in the next multi-year official languages plan, the envelope for Intergovernmental Cooperation on Services.

Therefore, the committee recommends:

Recommendation

17

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in negotiating the new federal–provincial/territorial agreements on minority language services and the next multi-year official languages plan, commit to increasing the envelope for Intergovernmental Cooperation on Services.



“The work of the Committee will enhance the thinking process for future approaches to the preparation of a new official-languages plan. With respect to the next intergovernmental collaborative cycle regarding the teaching of official languages, the approaches identified will also be included in future discussions with provincial and territorial governments so that progress can be made towards the major objective of increasing bilingualism in Canada.”

**Government Response to the Report of the Standing Senate Committee
on Official Languages Entitled *Aiming Higher:
Increasing Bilingualism of our Canadian Youth*, June 2016, p. 9.**



This year Canada is celebrating the 150th anniversary of Confederation and 2019 will mark the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the *Official Languages Act*. The federal government has made various commitments, ensuring the offer of services in line with the Act and launching its next multi-year official languages plan, scheduled for 1 April 2018. It is currently preparing to renegotiate the Protocol for Agreements on Education with the provinces and territories. **In this context, the commitment to promoting Canada's two official languages, which are at the core of the Canadian identity, must be resoundingly restated.**

The committee has frequently heard in recent years about the lack of access to French first- and second-language learning opportunities in British Columbia. These comments motivated this study and trip to British Columbia to examine first hand where the needs and challenges lie.

Francophone schools resort to the courts to seek remedies, arguing that current funding does not provide an equal level of services to French-language students as students in English-language schools. Although progress has been made, it is clear the fight for substantive equality in education continues in British Columbia. On the other hand, interest is growing, shown **by the 75% increase in enrolment in francophone schools between 1997 and 2014.**

For years, French immersion programs have dealt with a lack of spaces, qualified teachers and resources. Due to the existence of the lottery system in some districts, parents do not even have a guarantee that their children will be enrolled. Access remains insurmountable to many. However, interest and enrolment in **French immersion programs** continues to grow, shown by **the 65% increase in enrolment between 1997 and 2014.**

In core French programs, there are not enough properly qualified teachers to ensure French proficiency among students and meet needs. Despite a 30% decrease in enrolment in core French programs between 1997 and 1994, French is very much a language of choice for second language instruction in British Columbia, despite the availability of other second language programs.

Many students drop out of the programs in high school or university because of inadequate infrastructure or the lack of post-secondary programs in French. Also, many students do not often have the opportunity to use their knowledge of French outside the classroom. As a result, the rate of bilingualism among youth in British Columbia shows little growth and is actually falling among anglophone youth. Unfortunately, governments have not taken concrete action or set targets to reverse this trend.

Federal funding has stagnated for years. Provincial funding is clearly inadequate in some areas, such as infrastructure support and French teacher training. Current reporting practices do not identify whether government support truly serves French first- and second-language education. Improvements will only be possible if governments review their practices and increase resources for French-language learning. The status quo is not a solution.

Improvements are also required in support of the vitality of British Columbia's francophone community. Otherwise, efforts in the education sector will have limited impact. The education continuum must apply to a continuum of services in French. The momentum created by the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Olympics, when federal, provincial and municipal governments joined forces in supporting French-language services, seems to have disappeared. **Support for substantive equality of Canada's two official languages should be a long-term commitment, not a temporary one.**

What the committee retains first and foremost from its experience in British Columbia is the stars in the eyes of young francophones and francophiles who want to maintain their French, remain immersed in French culture and see it grow. Many parents make the bold choice to educate their child in French. Teachers and francophone and francophile leaders are passionate about transmitting their love of French to the younger generation and seeing it flourish. This determination for full recognition of French must supersede problems of access and resources.

This is a good time to make changes to current practices which have been demanded for so long by those on the ground. The stage is set for strong support of French-language learning for all British Columbians. Horizon 2018 is on our doorstep. **The time has now come to strengthen learning opportunities in French, one of Canada's two official languages, in British Columbia.**

APPENDIX A – WITNESSES

Name of Organization and Spokesperson	Date
<i>Public Hearings in Ottawa</i>	
<i>Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne</i> Lynn Brouillette, Acting Director General	09.05.2016
Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities Rodrigue Landry, Associate Researcher	06.06.2016
<i>Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada</i> Sylviane Lanthier, President Suzanne Bossé, Director General <i>Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones</i> Melinda Chartrand, President Roger Paul, Managing Director <i>Commission nationale des parents francophones</i> Jean-Luc Racine, Executive Director	26.09.2016
Power Law Mark Power, Lawyer Marc-André Roy, Lawyer	17.10.2016
<i>Association des parents de l'école Rose-des-vents</i> Nour Enayeh, President Joseph Pagé, Member	
Canadian Heritage The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Canadian Heritage Jean-Pierre C. Gauthier, Director General, Official Languages Branch, Citizenship, Heritage and Regions Hubert Lussier, Assistant Deputy Minister, Citizenship, Heritage and Regions	24.10.2016
Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages Mary Donaghy, Assistant Commissioner, Policy and Communications Branch Christine Ruest Norrena, Senior Counsel & Assistant Director	21.11.2016

Name of Organization and Spokesperson	Date
Canada Lands Company Limited John McBain, President and Chief Executive Officer Deana Grinnell, Senior Director of Real Estate Robert A. Howald, Executive Vice President, Real Estate	05.12.2016
Statistics Canada Jean-Pierre Corbeil, Assistant Director, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division	
Public Services and Procurement Canada The Honourable Judy Foote, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada Adam Gibson, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Translation Bureau Marie Lemay, Deputy Minister	07.02.2017
Canada Lands Company Limited Manon Lapensée, Director, Corporate Communications	
Public Hearings in Vancouver	
Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique Padminée Chundunsing, President of the Board Pascaline Nsekera, Immigration Program Manager Centre culturel francophone de Vancouver Pierre Rivard, Executive and Artistic Director	04.10.2016
Canadian Parents for French – British Columbia and Yukon Branch Glyn Lewis, Executive Director	
Greater Victoria School District (#61) Simon Burgers, District Principal, Languages and Multicultural Programs, Learning Team Surrey School District Catherine Berron, School Principal, Dual Track Elementary School	

Name of Organization and Spokesperson	Date
<p><i>Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique</i> Bertrand Dupain, Superintendent Sylvain Allison, Secretary-Treasurer Johanne Asselin, Principal, École Anne-Hébert Michel Tardif, School District 93 Chapter President, Principal of <i>École La Passerelle</i> (Whistler) and <i>École La Vallée</i> (Pemberton)</p>	
<p><i>Association provinciale des professeurs d’immersion et du programme francophone de la Colombie-Britannique</i> Sophie Bergeron, President BC Francophone Teachers’ Union (Local 93) Sylvie Liechtele, President BC Teachers’ Federation Teri Mooring, First Vice-President BC Association of Teachers of Modern Languages Trish Kolber, French Teacher Representative</p>	05.10.2016
<p><i>Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique</i> Marie-Pierre Lavoie, President Marie-Andrée Asselin, Executive Director Canadian Parents for French Cendra Beaton, President, Sooke District Chapter Mary-Em Waddington, President, Surrey Chapter</p>	
<p>Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs, Simon Fraser University Claire Trépanier, Director Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University Diane Dagenais, Full Professor Cécile Sabatier, Associate Professor Collège Éducacentre Yvon Laberge, Executive Director</p>	

Name of Organization and Spokesperson	Date
<p>University of British Columbia</p> <p>Francis R. Andrew, Program Director Emeritus, French Centre, Continuing Studies</p> <p>Monique Bournot-Trites, Associate Professor</p> <p>Wendy Carr, Associate Dean, Teacher Education, Faculty of Education</p> <p>Meike Wernicke, Coordinator, French Programs, Faculty of Education-Language & Literacy Education</p> <p>Kenneth Reeder, Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Education-Language & Literacy Education</p>	05.10.2016
<p><i>Conseil jeunesse francophone de la Colombie-Britannique</i></p> <p>Sophie Brassard, President</p> <p>Rémi Marien, Executive Director</p> <p>Noah Rondeau, Administrator – 19–25</p>	

APPENDIX B – VISITS AND INFORMAL MEETINGS

Name of Organization and Spokesperson	Date
<i>Visits and Informal Meetings in Vancouver</i>	
<p>École Rose-des-vents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bertrand Dupain, Superintendent, <i>Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique</i> (CSF) • Sylvain Allison, Secretary-Treasurer, CSF • Trish Kolber, School Board Trustee, CSF • Pascale Cyr, Public Relations Coordinator, CSF • Ali Belhis, Principal, <i>École Rose-des-vents</i> • Joseph Pagé, Member, <i>Association des parents de l'école Rose-des-vents</i> • Nour Enayeh, President, <i>Association des parents de l'école Rose-des-vents</i> • Yanick St-André, Teacher, Music • Adele Anctil, Teacher, Grade 3 • Estelle Pimenta, Teacher, Kindergarten • Mylène Boulanger, Teacher, Grade 6 and Physical Education • Hélène Roy, Library Clerk • Samantha Gati Marshall, Teacher, Grade 4 	03.10.2016
<p>École Secondaire Jules-Verne</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bertrand Dupain, Superintendent, CSF • Sylvain Allison, Secretary-Treasurer, CSF • Trish Kolber, School Board Trustee, CSF • Pascale Cyr, Public Relations Coordinator, CSF • Claude Martin, Principal, <i>École Secondaire Jules-Verne</i> • Luc Morin, Member, <i>Association des parents de l'école secondaire Jules-Verne</i> • Gerry O'Neil, Member, <i>Association des parents de l'école secondaire Jules-Verne</i> • Jean-Pierre Gauthier, Member, <i>Association des parents de l'école secondaire Jules-Verne</i> • Sandrine Legay, Teacher, History, Grade 11, International Baccalaureate (IB) • Josée Hémond, Teacher, Visual Arts, Grade 10, IB 	

Name of Organization and Spokesperson	Date
<p><i>Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bertrand Dupain, Superintendent • Sylvain Allison, Secretary-Treasurer • Pascale Cyr, Public Relations Coordinator • Marie-France Lapierre, President of the Board • Trish Kolber, School Board Trustee • Robert Joncas, School Board Trustee • Roger Hébert, School Board Trustee 	
<p>École Bilingue Elementary School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adrian Keough, District Principal, Specialty Programs, Vancouver School Board (VSB) • Burt Frenzell, Principal, École Bilingue Elementary School, VSB • Valérie Carrière, Vice Principal • Stacey Sveistrup, Educational Counsellor • Gabriela Novotny, Teacher • Rémi Lacroix, Teacher • Olivier Salvas, Teacher • Dominique Langevin, Teacher • Louise Maltais, Teacher • Daniel Bélanger, Vice Principal, Douglas Annex, VSB • Ciara Truong, Student • Ethan Kwong, Student 	03.10.2016
<p>Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adrian Keough, District Principal, Specialty Programs, VSB • Trish Kolber, Teacher, Ideal Mini School, VSB • Kevin Land, Principal, Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School, VSB • Pauline Tinka, Teacher and Immersion Department Head • Ben Cougny, Teacher • Lucy Mattu, Teacher 	

Name of Organization and Spokesperson	Date
Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School (cont'd) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keith Milne, Modern Languages Department Head • April Salter, Teacher • Matthew Cheesman, Student • Caitlin Wong, Student • Olivia Penhall, Student • Arsh Hayer, Student • Louis-David Poisson, Student • Kaylin Xu, Student • Victoria Porter, Student • Fiona King, Student 	03.10.2016
Association francophone de Surrey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • France Vachon, Executive Director • Sonya Marcinkowska, President of the Board • Sébastien Pigeon, Secretary of the Board • Roland Rahoerson, Member of the Board • Mahen Roykoomar, Member of the Board • Cynthia Spaniol, Administrative Assistant • Alexandra Delange, Member of the Board, <i>Garderie La Coccinelle</i> 	
Collège Éducacentre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yvon Laberge, Executive Director • Mélanie Hotte, Students' Advisor • Rajeetha Samala, LINC Program Coordinator • Elizabeth Morisset, Administrative Assistant • Colette Barabé, Health training and CNFS Coordinator • Charlotte Caron, Job Developer • Jamal Nawri, Coordinator – OASIS – French Installation Program • Solange Desrochers, Continuing Education Coordinator • Yasmin Martinez, Human Resources Coordinator • Michel Turmel, Treasurer of the Board • Gérald Fallon, Vice-President of the Board 	04.10.2016

Name of Organization and Spokesperson	Date
<p>Simon Fraser University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claire Trépanier, Director, Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs (OFFA) • Hélène Lalancette, Associate Director, OFFA • Anne-Marie Gagné, Coordinator - Communications, Marketing & Student Recruitment, OFFA • Sandie Lafleur, Student Recruiter, OFFA • Ivana Tasić-Nikolić, French Cohort Program (FCP) Student Advisor & Administrator, OFFA • Betty Chin, Program Assistant, Faculty of Education, OFFA • Cécile Sabatier, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education • Erin Cullingworth, Educational Associate, Professional Programs (PP), Faculty of Education • Claude Dionne, Coordinator PP, Faculty of Education • Jérémie Cornut, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science • Rémi Léger, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science • Catherine Blancard, Teaching Assistant, Department of French • Jessi Morassut, Student, PP • Teagan Plett, Student, PP • Anne-Marie Simard, Student, PP • Émilie Perron, Student, PP • Frederick Szostak, Student, PP • François Heuillard, Student, PP • Ed Gillis, Student, PP • Shannon Thue-Pigott, Student, PP • Mélie De Longe, Student, PP • Keiran Gowans, Student, FCP • Shoji Janzen, Student, FCP • Cassidy Corbett, Student, FCP • Mariessa Pinto, Student, FCP • Cyan Abbey, Student, FCP • Jozsef Varga, Student, FCP • Sophie Clausius, Student, FCP • Hannah Dalton, Student, FCP • Anli Qi, Student, FCP • Tressa Ford, Student, FCP 	<p>04.10.2016</p>

Name of Organization and Spokesperson	Date
Simon Fraser University (cont'd) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julia Pokropp-Motschko, Student, FCP • Vanessa Washington, Student, FCP • Kaitlyn Angelozzi, Student, FCP • Sandra Hipsz, Student, FCP • Marina Bishana, Student, FCP • Shelby Spreeuw, Student, FCP • Hamish Clinton, Student, FCP • Eileen Bui, Student, FCP • Linda Forcier, Student, FCP • Hannah Christensen, Student, FCP • Emmalene Joyce, Student, FCP • Tamara Connor, Student, FCP • Emily Della Mattia, Student, FCP • Briana Herfort, Student, FCP • Kasia Przystupa, Student, FCP • Ara Receveur, Student, FCP • Tannis Jensen, Student, FCP • Lucie Ferring, Student, FCP • Célia Saunier, Student, FCP • Nadia Dale, Student, FCP • Micayla Bobsien, Student, FCP • Daniel Seeburger, Student, FCP • Kia Mansoor, Student, FCP • Yvonne Webb, Student, FCP • Lindsay Gesner, Student, FCP • Katrina Berry, Student, FCP • Thi Tran, Student, FCP • Diana Kabantsov, Student, FCP • Helen Luo, Student, FCP • Claire Qiu, Student, FCP • Emmanuel Sfiligoi, Visiting Student (University of Sherbrooke) 	04.10.2016

Name of Organization and Spokesperson	Date
<i>Visits and Informal Meetings in Victoria</i>	
<i>Société francophone de Victoria</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul-André Mongeau, Executive Director • Pauline Gobeil, President of the Board • Richard Bouchard, Secretary of the Board • Marie-Nicole Dubois, co-appellant parent in the CSF's court case against the province, and member of the Provincial Consultative Committee, <i>Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique</i> 	06.10.2016
<i>École Victor-Brodeur</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bertrand Dupain, Superintendent, CSF • Pascale Cyr, Public Relations Coordinator, CSF • Pascale Bernier, Principal, <i>École Victor-Brodeur</i> • Marie-Pierre Lavoie, President, <i>Association des parents de l'école Victor-Brodeur</i> • Maude Leduc, Teacher, Grade 6 • Émilie Saucier, Library Clerk • Dylan Régnier, Student, Grade 10 • Deanna Senko, Student, Grade 10 • Frederika Ionescu, Student, Grade 11 • Marianne Kobenter, Student, Grade 12 • Numa Starck, Student, Grade 12 	
<i>École Macaulay Elementary School</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom Thorson, Principal, École Macaulay Elementary School, Greater Victoria School District (#61) 	

APPENDIX C – BRIEFS, PRESENTATIONS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

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133. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 4 October 2016, p. 38 (Padminée Chundunsing, President of the Board, FFCB); OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 4 October 2016, p. 39 (Pascaline Nsekera, Program Manager, Francophone Immigration, FFCB); OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 4 October 2016, p. 48 (Pierre Rivard, Executive and Artistic Director, *Centre culturel francophone de Vancouver*).
134. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, pp. 129–130 (Marie-Pierre Lavoie, President, FPFCB).
135. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, p. 137 (Marie-Andrée Asselin, Executive Director, FPFCB).
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150. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 4 October 2016, p. 43 (Pierre Rivard, Executive and Artistic Director, *Centre culturel francophone de Vancouver*).
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179. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, p. 104 (Sophie Bergeron, President, *Association provinciale des professeurs d'immersion et du programme francophone de la Colombie-Britannique*).
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242. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, pp. 107 and 116 (Sylvie Liechtele, President, BC Francophone Teachers' Union (Local 93)).
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257. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 4 October 2016, p. 41 (Pascaline Nsekera, Program Manager, Francophone Immigration, FFCB).
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274. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, p. 154 (Diane Dagenais, Full Professor, Faculty of Education, SFU); OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, p. 163 (Claire Trépanier, Director, OFFA, SFU).
275. Francis R. Andrew, UBC (5 October 2016); OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, pp. 173 and 183 (Francis R. Andrew, Director Emeritus, French Centre, Continuing Studies, UBC).
276. Canada–British Columbia Agreement on Minority Language Education and Second Official-language Instruction 2013–2014 to 2017–2018, Made between the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia, 7 March 2014.
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279. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 7](#), 24 October 2016, pp. 44–45 (The Honourable Mélanie Joly, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Heritage).
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281. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, p. 109 (Teri Mooring, First Vice-President, BC Teachers' Federation).
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283. *Table nationale sur l'éducation, Continuum d'études en langue française, accès et transition aux études postsecondaires*, Report of discussion groups held in Edmonton, Moncton and Toronto in the spring of 2016, p. 4. [AVAILABLE IN FRENCH ONLY]
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285. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, p. 157 (Claire Trépanier, Director, OFFA, SFU).
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287. CNPF, FCFA and FNCSF (September 2016).
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289. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 26 September 2016, p. 16 (Jean-Luc Racine, Executive Director, CNPF).
290. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, p. 98 (Sylvain Allison, Secretary-Treasurer, CSF).
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292. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 7](#), 17 October 2016, p. 8 (Mark Power, lawyer, Power Law).
293. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 7](#), 17 October 2016, p. 7 (Mark Power, lawyer, Power Law); Mark Power and Marc-André Roy, Power Law (17 October 2016), para. 36.
294. Canada–British Columbia Special Agreement for the Implementation of Francophone School Governance, made between the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia, 19 March 1997.
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296. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 7](#), 24 October 2016, p. 43 (The Honourable Mélanie Joly, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Heritage).
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300. OFFA, SFU (September 2016), paras. 158–160.
301. CNPF, FCFA and FNCSF (September 2016).
302. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 26 September 2016, pp. 10–11, 22 and 31 (Roger Paul, Managing Director, FNCSF).
303. Mark Power and Marc-André Roy, Power Law (17 October 2016), para. 58; OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 7](#), 17 October 2016, p. 19 (Mark Power, lawyer, Power Law).
304. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 8](#), 21 November 2016, p. 41 (Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages, OCOL).
305. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, pp. 97–98 (Sylvain Allison, Secretary-Treasurer, CSF).
306. CSF (5 October 2016), para. 22.
307. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 26 September 2016, p. 14 (Sylviane Lanthier, President, FCFA).
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310. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, p. 108 (Sylvie Liechtele, President, BC Francophone Teachers' Union (Local 93)).
311. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, p. 121 (Sylvie Liechtele, President, BC Francophone Teachers' Union (Local 93)).
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314. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, p. 110 (Teri Mooring, First Vice-President, BC Teachers' Federation).
315. OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 4 October 2016, p. 56 (Pierre Rivard, Executive and Artistic Director, *Centre culturel francophone de Vancouver*); BCATML (5 October 2016), p. 5; OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, p. 114 (Trish Kolber, French Teacher Representative, BCATML); OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 4](#), 9 May 2016, p. 32 (Lynn Brouillette, Acting Director General, *Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne*); OLLO, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, [Issue No. 6](#), 5 October 2016, pp. 111 and 118 (Teri Mooring, First Vice-President, BC Teachers' Federation).
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