

Minister
of Immigration,
Refugees and Citizenship



Ministre
de l'Immigration,
des Réfugiés et de la Citoyenneté

Ottawa, Canada K1A 1L1

Received by the Clerk of the Senate
September 22, 2023 2:19 pm
Reçu par le greffier du Sénat
22 septembre 2023 14h19

Mr. Gérald Lafrenière
Interim Clerk of the Senate and Clerk of the Parliaments
Senate of Canada
2 Rideau Street, Room A-408
Ottawa ON K1A 0A4

September 22, 2023

Dear Mr. Lafrenière:

According to subsection 12-23(3) of the Rules of the Senate, and on behalf of the Government of Canada, it is my pleasure to submit to you for tabling in the Senate, the Government Response to the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages' Report titled *Francophone immigration to minority communities: towards a bold, strong and coordinated approach*.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

The Honourable Marc Miller, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Enclosures

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE STANDING SENATE COMMITTEE ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES'
SECOND REPORT TITLED
"Francophone immigration to minority communities: towards a bold, strong and coordinated approach"

INTRODUCTION

The Government of Canada thanks the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages (the Committee) for its report titled *Francophone immigration to minority communities: towards a bold, strong and coordinated approach* (the Report), which was submitted to the Senate on March 30, 2023. It would also like to thank the witnesses who gave their time and expertise regarding Francophone immigration to Francophone minority communities (FMC).

The government carefully examined the Committee's recommendations regarding Francophone immigration. It supports the recommendations in principle and confirms that they are taken into consideration, especially in the *Act for the Substantive Equality of Canada's Official Languages* (modernized OLA) which received royal sanction on June 20, 2023. With the modernized OLA, the government restates its commitment, by including a new obligation for the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (IRCC) to implement a Francophone Immigration Policy. Measures announced as part of the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2023-2028: Protection-Promotion-Collaboration* (2023-2028 Action Plan) have been added to the new provisions of the modernized OLA. As a reminder, the 2023-2028 Action Plan was unveiled on April 26, 2023.

Still under development, these various legislative and administrative measures to be implemented in the area of Francophone immigration address most of the recommendations in the Report. Under IRCC's leadership, these new measures will be complemented by those of other federal institutions such as Canadian Heritage, Global Affairs Canada and Statistics Canada. We have grouped the Committee's recommendations under four main strategic priorities:

Theme 1: Update the Francophone Immigration Strategy and adopt the new Francophone Immigration Policy without delay (response to recommendations 1 and 4)

As stakeholders pointed out, Francophone immigration is one of the essential pillars of the government's efforts to restore and increase the demographic weight of FMCs. However, increased Francophone immigration alone could not meet the challenge of demographic decline without being accompanied by a variety of measures carried out by different levels of jurisdiction, notably those supporting access to services in both official languages (notably in justice, health and education), access to affordable housing, the teaching of French as a second language across the country, the place of French as a business language and as a skill for the labour market.

Following recommendations 1 and 4 of the Report, we agree with the Committee on the importance of evaluating the parameters of the Francophone Immigration Strategy (the Strategy), which was implemented in 2019, and adopting as soon as possible, as prescribed by the modernized OLA, the new Francophone immigration policy, including its key strategic objectives, its targets and indicators, as well as the integration of an adapted Francophone lens into immigration programs.

First of all, it's fair to point out that the new provisions of the modernized OLA will make Francophone immigration outside Quebec a key and permanent priority for the government. The new provisions are as follows:

- The preamble to the modernized OLA reinforces the government's overall commitment to the development of FMCs by putting forward Francophone immigration as a key lever to support the common objective of ensuring that their demographic weight is restored and increased. The modernized OLA specifies that demographic recovery will be set at the level

it was at during the 1971 census of Canada's population conducted by Statistics Canada, which is 6.1% of the population outside Quebec.

- As stated above, the modernized OLA also requires that the minister of IRCC to adopt a Francophone immigration policy, including objectives, targets and indicators, and reporting and accountability mechanisms (modernized OLA, subsections 44(1) and (2)). In addition, the new policy must include a note that the federal government recognizes that immigration is one of the factors that contributes to the maintenance or growth of the demographic weight of Francophone minorities and stresses its importance for economic development.
- The modernized OLA also revises Part VII of the OLA and clarifies the government's commitment to the development of official language minorities and the promotion of English and French by emphasizing the obligations of federal institutions and the obligation to implement positive measures, which may include any measure aiming to "support the creation and dissemination of information in French that contributes to the advancement of scientific knowledge in any discipline" (OLA, subparagraph 41(6)(c)(iii.1)). Among the potential measures cited as examples, we would also add those aiming to "support sectors that are essential to enhancing the vitality of English and French linguistic minority communities, including the culture, education — from early childhood to post-secondary education — health, justice, employment and immigration sectors, and protect and promote the presence of strong institutions serving those communities" (OLA, subparagraph 41(6)(c)(v)).

With a variety of administrative measures, the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2023-2028: Protection-Promotion-Collaboration* (2023-2028 Action Plan) aims to support the reform of Canada's official languages scheme and proposes to do better for FMCs. By positioning Francophone immigration strategically, the 2023-2028 Action Plan identifies IRCC as an essential vector for change and for the achievement of its objectives. Thus, new investments of \$137.5 million over five years (non-recurring) announced in the 2023 Budget are allocated to IRCC for the implementation and management of seven strategic measures.

The Francophone immigration policy: Towards a new, integrated approach (the Policy) is the centrepiece of IRCC's measures in the 2023-2028 Action Plan: new funds of \$13.4 million over five years will allow us to improve and strengthen overall governance of the file, revisit and implement new mechanisms for intra- and inter-ministerial consultation and collaboration, and mobilize stakeholders and intergovernmental partners. The new policy will be synergistic and ambitious, building on past and recent achievements of the Strategy launched in 2019.

The Policy will serve as a long-term strategic framework to guide the development and implementation of IRCC policies and programs to support Francophone immigration. The Policy will be accompanied by an implementation plan that will be regularly reviewed and updated, making it possible to align the department's programs with Francophone immigration objectives. The ultimate goal of the Policy will be to promote the development of FMCs, including by putting in place mechanisms that will help them to recover and increase their demographic weight. To develop it, the government has consulted its key government partners and Francophone stakeholders. The policy will cover the entire immigration continuum, from promotional activities in Canada and abroad, to selection mechanisms adapted to the candidacies of French-speaking immigrants, to settlement and integration services within FMCs.

Given the numerous factors that influence demographic weight, many of which go beyond the department's mandate, the Policy would also provide strategic direction on strengthening collaboration with all partners. Lastly, it would also be accompanied by accountability and progress reporting mechanisms.

Grafted onto the policy, so to speak, are six additional measures that were announced in the 2023-2028 Action Plan (see Theme 3 for details), which will consolidate the achievements of the previous five-year official language strategies, fill gaps and offer promising new avenues.

Theme 2: Identify evidence-based targets as quickly as possible for admissions of French-speaking permanent residents that take advantage of all immigration categories (response to recommendations 2, 3 and 5)

This renewed ambition in terms of Francophone immigration must be accompanied by clear, realistic and achievable objectives, that ideally take advantage of each immigration category. This is what is suggested by recommendations 2, 3 and 5 of the report, which reiterate the importance of setting a new target for the rate of French-speaking permanent residents settling outside Quebec, and of achieving the overall objective of re-establishing the demographic weight of the Francophone population.

Before setting future targets for French-speaking PRs (recommendation 2), the question of demographic weight must also be considered over time. The modernized OLA reiterates the government's intention to bring the demographic weight of the FMCs back to that of 1971, the year of the first census of the Canadian population following royal assent of the OLA in 1969. In the 1971 census, the proportion of people in Canada excluding Quebec with French as their first official language spoken (FOLS) stood at 6.1%. At each census since, this proportion has fallen, reaching 4.4% in 2001 and 3.5% in 2021.

The first government response to the demographic decline of FMCs only appeared in the early 2000s. As part of the Government of Canada's first five-year official languages strategy launched in 2003, IRCC and FMC stakeholders jointly published the *Strategic Framework to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities*, one objective of which is to increase the number of French-speaking immigrants outside Quebec, to help increase the demographic weight of FMCs. To achieve this objective, the Framework suggested that admissions of French-speaking immigrants outside Quebec be at least 4.4% in 2008. That target was established with reference to the demographic weight of Francophones outside Quebec in the 2001 census, which was 4.4%.

In 2006, the *Strategic Plan to Foster Immigration to FMCs* sought to consolidate the approach launched a few years ago. To better understand the contribution of Francophone immigration to the vitality of FMCs, the Plan proposed a new nuanced definition of a "French-speaking immigrant" which, since 2003, only referred to someone with knowledge of French. More precisely, the Plan stated that a "French-speaking immigrant [is] an immigrant whose mother tongue is French, or whose first official language is French if the mother tongue is a language other than French or English". Unlike the 2003 definition, the 2006 definition was more restrictive, but considered more reliable at the time. The Plan also pointed out that, with the new definition, it would take 15 years to reach the annual target of 8,000 to 10,000 French-speaking immigrants in FMCs. The target date of 2023 derives from this statement in the Plan, which was co-signed by both the community sector and the government.

Further analysis carried out by IRCC in 2016 showed that depending on the definition of French-speaking immigrant that was used – the 2003 definition being too inclusive, while the 2006 definition was too restrictive – the government could either overestimate the proportion of Francophone immigrants (2003 definition) or underestimate it (2006 definition). The government has since rectified the situation with a new measure, revised in 2017 and formally introduced in 2019, which minimizes the aforementioned effects while tying it more closely to Canadian census data: that is, the first official language spoken (or FOLS). The government confirms that this new measure used to define French-speaking immigrants is fully integrated into immigration databases and application forms.

The government has also taken into account two recent studies on the 4.4% admissions target for French-speaking permanent residents, one by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages in November 2021 and the other by the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA) in April 2022.

Furthermore, in fall 2022, IRCC commissioned Statistics Canada to produce demographic projections based on the 2023-2025 Multi-Year Immigration Levels Plan. IRCC carried out this work by analyzing internal admissions projections based on historical inventory trends. In line with Recommendation 3, IRCC intends to continue its collaboration with Statistics Canada to support the ongoing development, implementation and monitoring of future targets for admissions of French-speaking permanent residents.

The government will also be able to build on recent achievements: in January 2023, it announced that it had reached its target of 4.4% admissions of French-speaking permanent residents outside Quebec by 2022 (with a historic high of over 16,300 admissions). IRCC remains committed to maintaining this target for 2023.

For the coming years, the government intends to adopt a transparent approach to developing admissions targets for French-speaking permanent residents, shifting from a reactive, aspirational approach to a proactive, planned approach. This step-by-step approach will result in ambitious targets that are realistic and achievable, based on evidence and informed by the views of third parties. The targets would be incorporated into the Multi-Year Levels Plan.

This approach would have three stages:

(1) Adopt new, higher annual targets for French-speaking permanent residents incorporated into the Multi-Year Levels Plan from 2024 and subsequent years, based on ministerial planning of immigration levels with projected short-, medium- and long-term results;

(2) Establish clear objectives based on a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing demographic weight, in particular through strategic research on the issue; and

(3) Defining and creating support for success: accountability measures, new strategies targeted on specific areas of action and improved tools, especially for selection.

The government will take on this vast undertaking in collaboration with all stakeholders, including provincial and territorial governments. In this regard, IRCC will be able to take advantage of the various governance tables of the Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration (FMRI), which it intends to consult in fall 2023 to review the approach to Francophone immigration with the provinces and territories.

The government reiterates its commitment to an ambitious, concerted and transparent approach, informed and supported by research and analysis of the evidence and demographic projections offered by Statistics Canada. To this end, and as stated in Recommendation 5, IRCC will do everything possible to leverage each immigration category in support of its Francophone immigration objectives.

Economic immigration categories are those for which IRCC has an effective hold. The department can therefore adopt a specific Francophone immigration target or objectives within the economic category programs, which may be dictated by the imperatives of the FMCs' demographic recovery. Statistically, economic immigration programs provide the highest number of Francophone admissions outside Quebec. In 2022, the main drivers of Francophone immigration were the programs for skilled workers managed by the Express Entry system (i.e., the Provincial Nominee Program and the Federal Skilled Worker Program) as well as the temporary resident–permanent resident pathways. Together, French-speaking permanent residents from economic programs accounted for 13,121 people, equivalent to just over 80% of all admissions of French-speaking permanent residents in 2022. In the same year, 81% of French-speaking permanent residents admitted to Canada outside Quebec were citizens of African countries (notably Cameroon, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) and 13% were citizens of European countries (in particular France).

According to the 2023-2025 levels plan, 18,040 French-speaking permanent residents will have to be admitted outside Quebec in 2023 to maintain the proportion of 4.4%. Some measures are already moving in this direction, such as the resumption of general rounds in Express Entry at the end of 2022, which had been temporarily suspended due to pandemic-related measures. The programs managed by the Express Entry system have represented a primary pathway for the immigration of French-speaking permanent residents outside Quebec since the introduction of bonus points for French language skills in 2017. As well, the launch of the category-based selection (packages) for Express Entry in June of 2023 make the overall system more responsive and provides a new tool for the department to respond in a more direct and targeted way to Canada's labour needs, including those of FMCs. On July 7, 2023, IRCC announced the first round of invitations for candidates in the Express Entry pool with "French Language Proficiency" as part of category-based selection and invited 6,900 candidates in this category in July and August 2023. While the selection of French-speaking candidates and,

consequently, the achievement of short-term targets will depend on the number of new French-speaking candidates who create profiles for the pool, this tool will support IRCC's efforts to promote the French language, address labour shortages in FMCs, and achieve its targets for French-speaking immigrant admissions.

In contrast, the department cannot exercise the same type of control over non-economic immigration categories. According to the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*: "A foreign national may be selected as a member of the family class on the basis of their relationship as the spouse, common-law partner, child, parent or other prescribed family member of a Canadian citizen or permanent resident". There is no language criterion (or any other related criterion). IRCC will seek to identify potential avenues to boost the contribution of the family class. However, IRCC is still obliged to process all requests within a reasonable time. The longer requests remain pending (and if the prioritization of requests from French-speaking candidates means that older requests are processed with lower priority), the greater the risk of success for mandamus requests.

IRCC also has only limited control over the resettlement program for refugees and persons protected on humanitarian grounds (which aims to protect the most vulnerable people), since it is the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and other organizations, in conjunction with private-sector respondents, that designate the refugees to be resettled. The reception of refugees therefore obeys the imperatives of the country's international obligations: while respecting these imperatives, IRCC will seek to identify available levers for support to advance these Francophone immigration objectives.

Theme 3: Put forward new measures and strengthen existing initiatives and programs across the immigration continuum, in particular through new investments in the 2023-2028 Action Plan (*responds to recommendations 6, 7, 8 and 11*)

in the area of Francophone immigration, IRCC has a total of \$84.3 million in historical funding provided through previous Government of Canada five-year official languages strategies and its renewal for the years 2023–2028. This recurrent funding allows it to carry out its day-to-day activities, mainly those associated with the Francophone Integration Pathway in place since 2018 with the addition of key initiatives such as the Welcoming Francophone Communities initiative and the National Francophone Settlement Advisory Committee (NFSAC) in 2020.

Since 2003, the available recurrent funding has also been used to support efforts to promote and support recruitment, particularly through the [Destination Canada Mobility Forum](#), which each year allows skilled French-speaking and bilingual candidates to learn more about Canada's diverse Francophone immigration programs and employment opportunities offered by Canadian employers. Thanks to this existing funding, these activities were continued and even strengthened during the pandemic by organizing virtual activities that reached a larger audience. The 18th edition of the Destination Canada Mobility Forum was held in Paris, France, and Rabat, Morocco. This was the first time the Forum was held in Africa, and exhibitors had online access to virtual meetings with candidates from around the globe. This sequential hybrid format was also a first. In total, 83,000 individuals from more than 150 countries applied to take part, and 15,000 were invited to attend the Forum in person or live online. Candidates were able to visit 63 display booths. Building on this momentum, the 19th edition of the Forum will be held in this year in Paris, France, on November 18 and 19, 2023; in Rabat, Morocco, from November 22 to 24, 2023; and virtually from December 4 to 6, 2023. Promotion efforts are also being made in Canada, in particular through the Liaison Tour organized jointly by the Economic Development and Employability Network (RDÉE Canada) and IRCC. The 2022 edition consisted of a series of three hybrid events representing three distinct regions of Canada—Ontario, New Brunswick and the Territories/Newfoundland and Labrador—and drew more than 240 registrations. Each region also offered the option of taking part virtually.

Similarly, IRCC's Research Program on Immigration in Official Language Minority Communities, launched under the *Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality, 2008–2013*, is still active and will continue its activities aimed at building our knowledge regarding the profile of Francophone immigrants who have settled outside Quebec and the effectiveness of our programs.

Recommendation 6 of the Committee Report states that new investment will be necessary to increase funding for Francophone immigration and update the Strategy. With the official announcement of the 2023–2028 Action Plan, the government will enhance current activities, such as those mentioned above, and propose new projects. In addition to historical funding, the envelope of \$137.2 million over five years announced in Budget 2023 will support the implementation of seven complementary measures described above. In response to recommendations 7, 8 and 11 of the Committee, all these funds (existing and new), totalling \$221.5 million over five years, will make it possible to strengthen existing programs and explore new avenues across the entire continuum in order to respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse clientele.

With the additional funding from the 2023–2028 Action Plan, IRCC will continue to consolidate its work across the Francophone immigration continuum through six initiatives in support of the key objectives of its future Francophone immigration policy:

- Targeted expansion of promotion and recruitment support: \$18.5 million over 5 years to increase promotion and support efforts for recruitment in Canada as well as abroad, such as in Africa, Europe, Middle East and the Americas, to attract more workers and students who speak French or are bilingual in Canada.
- Corridor for the selection and retention of French teachers in Canada: \$16.3 million over 5 years to support a series of interconnected targeted initiatives that aim to grow the number and retention of French-speaking French teachers, at the primary and secondary level, recruited abroad to reduce the teacher shortage.
- Reinforced integration program: \$50 million over 5 years to continue consolidating the Francophone Integration Pathway, which aims to facilitate the settlement and integration of newcomers to Canada, and to strengthen the reception capacities of Francophone minority communities, while responding to an increasingly diverse clientele, including immigrant women.
- Francophone immigration innovation centre: \$25 million over 5 years for the creation of a new Francophone immigration innovation centre with a grants and contributions program, enabling the participation of Francophone communities in the promotion, identification, support and recruitment of French-speaking and bilingual candidates.
- Francophone lens integrated into economic immigration programs – improved selection mechanisms for francophone and bilingual immigrants: \$3.5 million over 5 years to evaluate and adapt existing economic programs to make them more effective in terms of selecting French-speaking and bilingual immigrants, and ultimately to contribute to increasing the levels of French-speaking immigrants.
- French and/or English training for new arrivals: \$10.5 million over 5 years for subsidies and contributions to extend the geographical scope and improve the quality of language training in French and/or English for Francophone newcomers and allophones.

With its ongoing focus on maintaining the public's confidence, the government is endeavouring to improve client service and program integrity. On September 28, 2022, it published its response to the eighth Report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, entitled *Differential Treatment in Recruitment and Acceptance Rates of Foreign Students in Quebec and the Rest of Canada*. This response highlights a series of actions to improve its visa processing capacity; ensure greater equity in file processing; make it easier for international students, particularly students from Africa, to come to Canada; and strengthen mechanisms for communicating with applicants. Like the new investments to strengthen promotional efforts in all countries of the international Francophonie, these actions are in keeping with those suggested in Recommendation 7 of the Report of the Committee on Promotion and Recruitment Activities.

This portrait alone does not summarize all the efforts made by other federal institutions to support official languages. Every day, federal institutions take numerous actions to support the vitality of official language minority communities, and these actions also indirectly support

Francophone immigration. For example, the 2023–2028 Action Plan announced new investments of \$15.2 million over five years to renew the strategy led by Canadian Heritage to strengthen the recruitment and retention of teachers for French-language minority schools. IRCC will be able to build on these longstanding efforts with the addition of a specific corridor for facilitating the selection and retention of French teachers in Canada.

In the Committee Report, the department of Global Affairs Canada (GAC) is involved on a number of occasions, notably regarding promoting post-secondary education in Canada abroad (Recommendation 7) and developing a Francophone diplomatic strategy (Recommendation 8). Canada will continue to increase its efforts to strengthen the place of French not only among its staff but also within international organizations, and to promote its two official languages in its foreign relations. In particular, proficiency in French is an asset in all diplomatic and advocacy initiatives, foreign relations and representation on the governing bodies of international institutions. Subsection 42(1) of the amended OLA revised that the federal government [TRANSLATION] “is committed to advancing the use of English and French in the conduct of Canada’s external affairs and to promoting French as part of Canada’s diplomatic relations”.

Run by GAC, EduCanada is the Canadian government’s official source of information on studying in Canada for international students and researchers. Launching in 2019, EduCanada’s annual advertising campaign directly promotes Francophone institutions in a minority context. Marketing studies in Canada and providing information on a wider choice of available programs, the International Education Strategy (2019-2024) targets a growing number of students in new source countries, some of which have a strong potential for Francophone immigration, such as France, Morocco, Vietnam and Mexico (Mexico is an observer country within the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie).

Given the considerable strategic influence of the Francophonie on all five continents, and particularly in Africa, Canada recognizes the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie as a key international forum for promoting its values, advancing its foreign policy and international aid objectives, and promoting Canada’s own Francophone cultures. It will therefore continue to work with the organization and its members in the areas of gender equality, democracy and human rights, education and training, sustainable development, as well as the promotion of the French language, including in the digital space, and to support its organizational improvement to ensure the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and accountability of its actions.

In general, the government favours a targeted and strategic approach, as with Canada’s Indo-Pacific strategy. Launched by GAC in 2022, it targets countries such as Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, home to 1.3 million French speakers. This strategy supports the government’s increased efforts to promote and raise awareness of the various opportunities for exchange with Canada, including those relating to Francophone immigration. Recently launched, the regional strategy for Africa aims in particular to increase immigration levels from African countries, while respecting Canada’s commitment to promoting Francophone immigration. African nationals represented 30% of all immigration to Canada in 2021. They are also a major source of Francophone immigration to Canada and, in 2021, more than half of all Francophone immigrants to Canada outside Quebec came from African countries. While respecting its international obligations, the government will want to make the most of these various strategic approaches.

Recognizing the growing importance of temporary residents in sustaining the immigration rates required to meet the country’s immigration targets, the new investments in the 2023-2028 action plan will support the department in its work to facilitate the transition of French-speaking foreign workers and students to permanent residence, as suggested in Recommendation 11. Already, in June 2023, IRCC announced a two-year pilot project that expands the scope and simplifies the process of the Francophone mobility component of international mobility programs. This will be done in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, in consultation with FMCs. The department will study the feasibility of certain proposed measures, including the possibility of offering certain services to temporary residents.

Theme 4: Foster innovative guiding principles and practices that will support actions of IRCC and its collaborators in the area of Francophone immigration (*responds to recommendations 9, 10 and 12*)

With the new Policy and implementation plan, the government will be able to review its practices and operating procedures, propose solutions (where appropriate) and keep abreast of new trends and options for promising future measures to support not only the actions of IRCC, but also those of its collaborators and partners in Francophone immigration. Ultimately, the policy will serve as a catalyst for other initiatives carried out by its collaborators across the immigration continuum, while respecting the shared jurisdiction over immigration matters with provincial and territorial governments and the diversity of their linguistic regimes, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the federal institutions involved.

Given the many cross-cutting strategic issues that impact the success of Francophone immigration, ongoing, concerted collaboration between the various federal institutions, the different levels of government (Federal, Provincial-Territorial (FPT)), as well as with community stakeholders, is essential. Interdepartmental official languages tables already exist and are key mechanisms for strengthening information sharing and linking the various Federal initiatives for FMCs. From a FPT relations perspective, the FPT Strategic Plan for Immigration (SPI), covering the period from 2020 to 2023, was renewed by the FMRI in July 2022, and will build on the achievements of the FPT Action Plan for Increasing Francophone Immigration Outside of Quebec signed in 2018. The SPI and FPT action plan frame FPT collaboration on Francophone immigration. The FPT action plan recognized the diversity of FMCs as well as the needs and priorities of jurisdictions across the country, and has been developed as a menu of actions to help identify activities that jurisdictions can implement. As the action plan was approved in 2018 by Canada's immigration and Francophonie ministers, IRCC will work in collaboration with the provinces and territories, notably through the FMRI and FMC governance tables, to review it and determine next steps. These various consultative mechanisms will be maximized through the new policy to better coordinate strategic efforts in Francophone immigration, notably through FMRI, FMCs and the Council of Ministers of Education (Canada).

As suggested in Recommendation 9, IRCC offers a pre-departure training session for diplomatic staff sent to missions abroad. This training raises staff awareness of the realities facing FMCs, covering IRCC's entire mandate through a Francophone immigration perspective. Once trained and sufficiently informed, mission staff can then pass on what they have learned about the diverse sociocultural and linguistic realities of the country to international partners and other subcontractors. As alluded to in the Committee's Recommendation 9, the government will ensure that the new Policy is consistent with the government's values and ethics and guided by principles such as respect for diversity and inclusion, the substantive equality of English and French (as prescribed in the modernized OLA) and community empowerment and consultation. To be truly effective and sustainable over time, the Policy will also have to be supported by practices that streamline administrative processes and limit barriers to welcoming newcomers and recruiting abroad.

In addition, to address the multiple barriers faced by newcomers, who experience all forms of discrimination, IRCC plans to fund equity-diversity-inclusion projects as part of the next national call for proposals for the settlement program, to be launched in the fall of 2023. These projects will aim to strengthen the ability of organizations to meet the needs of diverse populations and foster their successful integration into Canadian society.

Immigration is a key mechanism for supporting the socioeconomic development and long-term prosperity of Canada. However, Canada's regions and FMCs in general do not enjoy their fair share of the benefits of immigration. A better regional distribution of immigration, particularly between large urban centres and smaller, rural and Northern towns is crucial to the vitality of FMCs. To this end, IRCC will capitalize on programs aimed at promoting immigration in the regions to enhance the vitality of FMCs, such as the Atlantic Immigration Program and the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot.

The experience and expertise of FMCs should be put to good use, as they are best placed to identify their priorities and needs. Successful Francophone immigration therefore requires the development of immigration policies and programs that take into account the

particular interests and needs of FMCs and, as far as possible, in a spirit of [TRANSLATION] “by and for” Francophones. The government will therefore continue to rely on the IRCC-FMC Committee, which brings together community and government representatives and which has had since 2003 a positive influence on the development of Francophone immigration policies and programs. In addition, through the new program to support Francophone immigration, IRCC will support community participation in efforts to promote the Francophonie and support recruitment abroad.

Successful Francophone immigration must above all recognize and meet the aspirations, needs and priorities of French-speaking newcomers to Canada. To do so, it must foster policy and program design and service delivery based on intersectional, inclusive and anti-racist approaches, as outlined in [IRCC’s Anti-Racism Strategy Action Plan 2021-2024](#), and according to the principles of Gender-based Analysis Plus. Thus, through the 2023-2028 Action Plan, several measures can be put forward to respond more adequately to these needs. This is particularly the case with the continued consolidation of the Francophone integration pathway, a measure of which includes raising awareness among IRCC agents of the importance of the pathway.

In response to Recommendation 10, and pursuant to its mandate, IRCC is committed to supporting Employment and Social Development (ESDC) as federal lead to “*continue to work with provinces, territories and regulatory bodies to improve foreign credential recognition.*” We would like to reassure the Committee by pointing out that the new Corridor for the Selection and Retention of French Teachers in Canada, one of the key measures in the 2023–2028 Action Plan, will be developed and implemented.

Francophone foreign students have the potential to contribute to the vitality of Francophone minority communities and are an excellent pool of candidates to help achieve future Francophone immigration goals. As part of its review of the foreign student program, IRCC is working to remove barriers in order to improve equitable access to the program and increase diversification.

IRCC agrees with the recommendations made by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship (CIMM) in its Report on [Recruitment and Acceptance Rates of Foreign Students in Quebec and the rest of Canada \(May 31, 2022\)](#) and is examining how foreign students can better support Francophone immigration objectives.

Under the current leadership of the Assistant Deputy Minister of the settlement and integration sector, who coordinates the file at IRCC (reference to Recommendation 12), the policy will serve as a strategic framework to guide the development and implementation of all IRCC measures and programs. Under the leadership of the Francophone Immigration Branch (which is part of this departmental sector), new internal governance structures will be put forward to ensure the implementation of the Francophone immigration policy.

To keep Canadians informed of the work accomplished, and with a view to continual improvement, reporting on the Policy will be of vital importance. This dimension will ensure the sustainability of the Policy, its parameters and the relevance of related measures. The government is committed to communicating the impact of these measures in a more effective and regular manner, in particular by publishing research or dashboards on the results achieved under the individual pillars of the continuum, including admission targets for French-speaking immigrants

The government reaffirms its commitment to restoring and increasing the demographic weight of Francophones outside Quebec and providing comprehensive support for the vitality of FMCs in Canada. Through its Francophone Immigration Policy, it intends to foster a new approach that will be ambitious, sustainable and fruitful.