



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# **FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING PROGRAMS IN WESTERN CANADA: ENHANCING AVAILABILITY**

**Report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages**

**The Honourable Denis Paradis, Chair**

**OCTOBER 2018  
42<sup>nd</sup> PARLIAMENT, 1<sup>st</sup> SESSION**

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**Hon. Denis Paradis  
Chair**

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## **NOTICE TO READER**

### **Reports from committee presented to the House of Commons**

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

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# **THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

has the honour to present its

## **THIRTEENTH REPORT**

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(3)(f), the Committee has studied French and English as a second-language programs and has agreed to report the following:





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# LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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

## **Recommendation 1**

**That the Government of Canada ensure that subsequent federal-provincial/territorial agreements on second-language learning provide ongoing financial support to language development programs for teachers that keeps pace with growth in demand. .... 21**

## **Recommendation 2**

**That the Government of Canada ensure that the upcoming federal-provincial/territorial agreements on second-language learning support learners across the education continuum by expanding the availability of linguistic and cultural experiences in their second language..... 26**

## **Recommendation 3**

**That the Government of Canada ensure that the upcoming federal-provincial/territorial agreements on second-language learning include initiatives or programs for creating or adapting teaching material for second-language learning or immersion programs suited to the Canadian context..... 27**

## **Recommendation 4**

**That the Government of Canada ensure that the upcoming federal-provincial/territorial agreements on second-language learning include initiatives or programs to include and support students with learning disabilities in French immersion programs. .... 28**





# FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS IN WESTERN CANADA: ENHANCING AVAILABILITY

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## INTRODUCTION

Although minority-language education is constitutionally protected under section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, second-language learning is not.

Pursuant to subsection 41(1) of the *Official Languages Act*, the Government of Canada is committed to “enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada and supporting and assisting their development; and fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.”<sup>1</sup>

This commitment to official languages is reflected, among other things, in the provision of additional funding to provincial and territorial departments of education to promote second-language learning. These transfer payments are governed by a protocol for agreements signed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), and the Government of Canada.

In February and March 2018, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages (the Committee) travelled to Vancouver (British Columbia), Edmonton (Alberta) and Winnipeg (Manitoba) to study the availability of French as a second language (FSL) and French immersion programs. What the Committee found was that access to adequate FSL and immersion programs continues to be a problem,<sup>2</sup> particularly due to:

- limited access to FSL and French immersion programs;
- a shortage of qualified teachers; and
- a lack of up-to-date teaching material suited to the Canadian context.

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1 *Official Languages Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c. 31 (4th Supp.)).

2 The Committee had noted these issues in its 2014 report *Second Official Language Immersion Programs in Canada*.



The Committee hopes that this report’s findings and recommendations will help the Government of Canada find ways to improve the availability and quality of FSL and French immersion programs in the Western provinces and elsewhere in Canada.

The first section of the report examines the divergence in the availability of FSL and French immersion programs in the Western provinces. The second section addresses Government of Canada support for FSL learning. In the third section, the report highlights the issues raised by witnesses during the Committee’s public hearings regarding the recruitment of qualified FSL and French immersion teachers. Lastly, the fourth section deals with student experience.

## **1. AVAILABILITY OF FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AND FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS IN THE WESTERN PROVINCES**

Anglophone elementary and secondary public school students interested in learning French generally have three options:

- regular FSL (core French) programs;
- intensive programs;
- French immersion programs.

Provinces and territories are not required to offer FSL or French immersion programs, and it is up to school boards to decide whether to deliver such programs. Consequently, each Western province has a distinct profile when it comes to accessing FSL and French immersion programs.

### **1.1. British Columbia**

The British Columbia and Yukon Chapter of Canadian Parents for French (CPF) said that “core French is widely available” in British Columbia.<sup>3</sup> It is a compulsory subject for grades 5 to 8. CPF estimates that nearly a third of the province’s students are enrolled in these programs.<sup>4</sup>

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3 House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages (LANG), *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 28 February 2018, 1045 (Diane Tijman, President, Canadian Parents for French — British Columbia & Yukon).

4 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 28 February 2018, 1055 (Glyn Lewis, Executive Director, Canadian Parents for French — British Columbia & Yukon).

That said, it appears that British Columbia does not have “a standardized program for core French instruction.”<sup>5</sup> Gino Leblanc, Director of the Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs at Simon Fraser University, told the Committee that there are “huge variations from one school to the next and from one school board to the next.”<sup>6</sup> In addition, the core French program rarely produces bilingual students. Students need “added years of study to attain bilingualism.”<sup>7</sup>

Regarding the intensive French program, CPF British Columbia & Yukon said that it “is offered in only a handful of districts.”<sup>8</sup> While French immersion programs are available across the province, it seems that school boards intentionally restrict access to these programs:

enrolment is tightly controlled, with school boards placing artificial roadblocks such as enrolment caps, lotteries, and camp-outs, which prevent some children from getting into the program. Such impediments are, frankly, an insult to parents, but they do enable districts to keep a tight lid on enrolment in French.<sup>9</sup>

## 1.2. Alberta

As explained by Victoria Wishart, President of CPF — Alberta, “there is no provincial legislation requiring school districts to offer a second language.”<sup>10</sup> French as a second language is not a compulsory subject, and it is up to school boards to decide whether to provide FSL and French immersion programs.

According to the Alberta Chapter of CPF, “this puts our parents in the unique position of having to lobby community by community for a program that enables their children to become proficient in both official languages.”<sup>11</sup>

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5 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 28 February 2018, 1130 (Gino LeBlanc, Director, Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs, Simon Fraser University).

6 Ibid.

7 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 28 February 2018, 1045 (Diane Tijman).

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1440 (Victoria Wishart, President, Canadian Parents for French— Alberta).

11 Ibid.



Michael Tryon, Executive Director of CPF — Alberta, said that “there are 62 or 63 school boards in the province. Of those, 42 offer French classes, in addition to the French school boards.”<sup>12</sup>

As for intensive French, “only three or four school boards in the province offer [these] classes, and only as of grade 5 or 6.”<sup>13</sup>

Although French immersion is available, this type of program was not addressed by the witnesses.

### 1.3. Manitoba

The situation in Manitoba is completely different: school divisions generally offer French programs. Of the 37 school divisions, 23 provide French immersion and FSL programs.<sup>14</sup> FSL is normally compulsory from grades 4 to 8, and some school divisions offer French from kindergarten to Grade 3.<sup>15</sup> FSL is optional in secondary school.<sup>16</sup>

As for French immersion, Sandra Drzystek, FSL Liaison Officer with Manitoba Education and Training, told the Committee that “in 23 school divisions, all students who are interested in French immersion programs can register for them. We have the spaces we need.”<sup>17</sup> Ron Cadez, Principal of École Howden (Louis Riel School Division), added that “all students can register in an immersion program in their neighbourhood schools, if one is offered there. There is no lottery, or anything like that here.”<sup>18</sup>

According to Derrek Bentley, the province actively promotes FSL programs:

French is promoted to everyone as a living language. It is being done not only to the kids who have learned French at home but also to the kids learning it at school. In my

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12 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1530 (Michael Tryon, Executive Director, Canadian Parents for French - Alberta).

13 Ibid., 1510.

14 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 2 March 2018, 1110 (Sandra Drzystek, Liaison Officer, French as a Second Language, Manitoba Education and Training).

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 2 March 2018, 1110 (Ron Cadez, Principal, Louis Riel School Division, École Howden).



opinion, that is why there is an increase in the demand and the registrations for immersion programs.<sup>19</sup>

## **2. GOVERNMENT OF CANADA SUPPORT FOR FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

As mentioned above, the Government of Canada contributes to second-language learning through Canadian Heritage’s Official Languages Support Programs (OLSPs). Departmental expenditures on OLSPs are split between two broad sectors: the Development of Official-Language Communities Program (which, as the name suggests, supports official language minority communities or OLMCs) and the Enhancement of Official Languages Program (which promotes the use of English and French in Canadian society). Both programs support the objectives of subsection 41(1) of the *Official Languages Act*.

For the purposes of this report, we will only look into the Enhancement of Official Languages Program and its three components: Second-Language Learning, Promotion of Linguistic Duality and Support of Language Rights.<sup>20</sup>

### **2.1. “Second-Language Learning” Component**

The “Second-Language Learning” component has two sub-components: “Intergovernmental Cooperation” and “National Programs.”

Figure 1 below shows that funding for the “Second-Language Learning” component has remained stable since 2005–2006. Federal expenditures peaked at \$115.8 million in 2007–2008, the final year of the first *Action Plan for Official Languages, 2003–2008*.

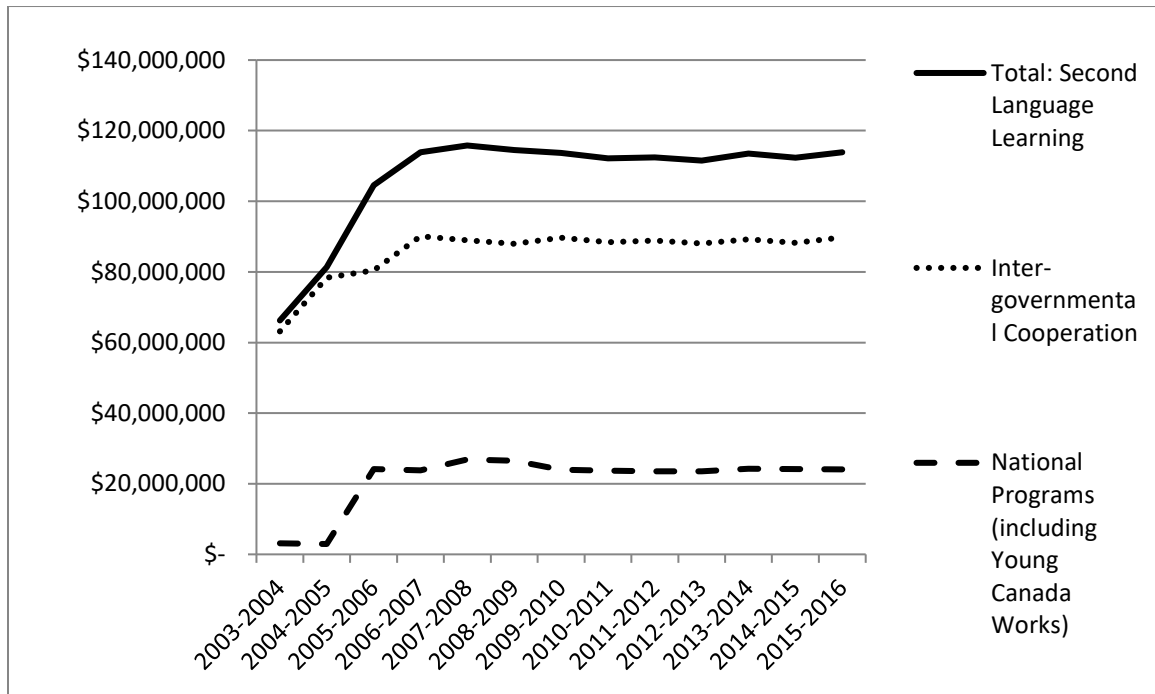
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19 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 2 March 2018, 1115 (Derrek Bentley, As an Individual).

20 Canadian Heritage, *Annual Report on Official Languages 2015–16*.



**Figure 1 — Expenditures by the Government of Canada, Canadian Heritage, Official Languages Support Programs (OLSPs), Enhancement of Official Languages Program, Second-Language Learning Component, Intergovernmental Cooperation and National Programs, 2003-2004 to 2015-2016 (current \$)**



Source: Figure prepared using data from Canadian Heritage annual reports on official languages, 2003–2004 to 2015–2016.

## 2.2. Intergovernmental Cooperation

As mentioned above, investment in the “Second-Language Learning” component is split between two sub-components: Intergovernmental Cooperation and National Programs. The Intergovernmental Cooperation sub-component will be addressed first.

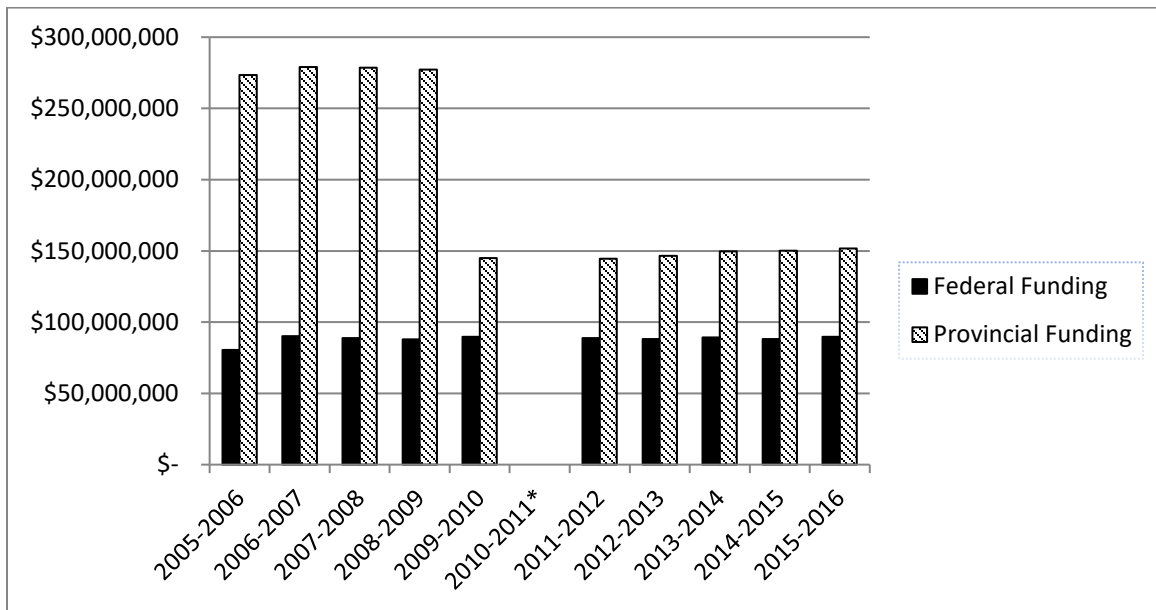
We have already established that the Government of Canada’s investments in second-language learning are governed by the Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction and the ensuing bilateral agreements. Each agreement includes:

- a strategic framework, which describes the Government of Canada’s areas of intervention for each linguistic objective (minority-language education and second-language instruction);
- a provincial/territorial action plan based on the provincial/territorial government’s priorities for both linguistic objectives.

The agreements also set out the financial contributions of both governments. The federal government’s contribution is linked to the provincial and territorial action plans.

Figure 2 below shows that federal expenditures on second-language learning through intergovernmental agreements have remained relatively stable. Overall, provincial/territorial expenditures fell in 2009-2010 and then remained steady.

**Figure 2 — Expenditures, Federal Funding and Provincial Funding, Official Languages Support Programs (OLSPs), Enhancement of Official Languages Program, “Second-Language Learning” Component, “Intergovernmental Cooperation” Sub-component, 2005-2006 to 2015-2016 (current \$)**



Note: \* data not available

Source: Figure prepared using data from Canadian Heritage annual reports on official languages from 2005–2006 to 2015–2016.

Expenditures under the “Second-Language Learning” component, “Intergovernmental Cooperation” sub-component, fall under six areas of intervention:



- Primary and Secondary
  - 1) student participation: “Recruitment and retention of students in second-language education programs up to secondary-school graduation.”<sup>21</sup>
  - 2) provision of programs: “Maintenance, development, enrichment and/or evaluation of programs and innovative teaching approaches for second-language learning.”<sup>22</sup>
  - 3) student performance: “Acquisition of measurable second-language skills by students.”<sup>23</sup>
  - 4) enriched school environment: “Enrichment of second-language learning through curricular and extracurricular initiatives.”<sup>24</sup>
- Postsecondary
  - 5) access to postsecondary education: “Maintenance, development and/or enrichment of programs or provision of courses in the second language or supporting second-language learning at the postsecondary level; Improved access for a wide range of student and adult clients to second-language postsecondary programs (e.g., technologies, language upgrading, partnerships between institutions, financial incentives and bursaries).”<sup>25</sup>
- Primary, Secondary and Postsecondary
  - 6) support for educational staff and research: “Development, provision and assessment of training (initial and continuous) and development programs for staff working in second-language instruction;

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21 *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction 2013–2014 to 2017–2018 between the Government of Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada*, p. 5.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*

25 *Ibid.*

Recruitment and retention of qualified staff; Research with an impact on second-language instruction and dissemination of knowledge.”<sup>26</sup>

The Government of Canada reserves the right to approve complementary contributions in addition to the amounts provided in the Protocol for Agreements. Priority is given to projects that reflect the needs of provincial/territorial governments, and both levels of government contribute financially to approved projects. With regard to second-language learning, complementary contributions may address:

- second-language intensive teaching and learning approaches;
- the provision of authentic second-language learning experiences for youth;
- the assessment of second-language proficiency skills.<sup>27</sup>

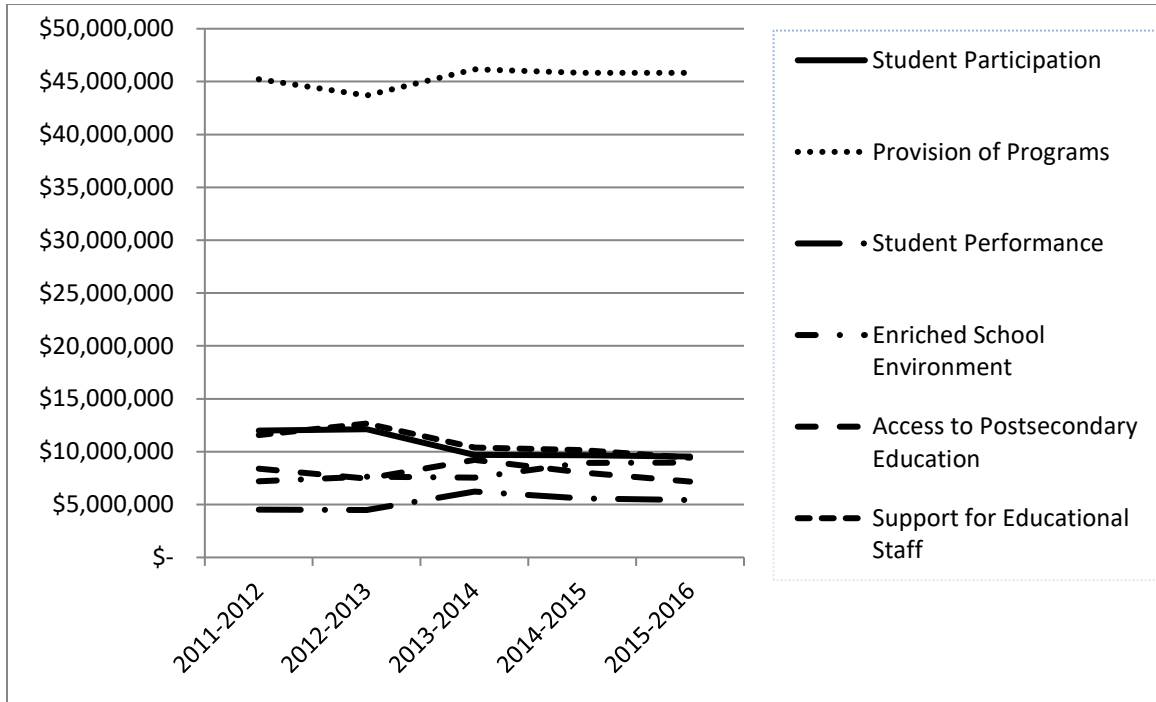
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26     ibid.

27     ibid., p. 11.



**Figure 3 — Government of Canada Expenditures, Canadian Heritage, Official Languages Support Programs (OLSPs), Enhancement of Official Languages Program, “Second-Language Learning” Component, “Intergovernmental Cooperation” Sub component, By Area of Intervention, 2011-2012 to 2015-2016 (current \$)**



Notes: The figure presents only Government of Canada expenditures under the “Second-Language Learning” component, “Intergovernmental Cooperation” sub-component. It is unclear whether the financial data in Canadian Heritage’s annual reports reflect complementary contributions.

Source: Figure prepared using data from Canadian Heritage annual reports on official languages from 2011–2012 to 2015–2016.

As shown in Figure 3, a large share of federal funding for second-language learning is provided under “Provision of Programs” (40.3% of the total “Second-Language Learning” component in 2015–2016).

### 2.3. National Programs

As previously mentioned, the “Second-Language Learning” component includes a second sub-component, “National Programs.” Investments are provided as follows:

- 1) Complementary Support for Language Learning:

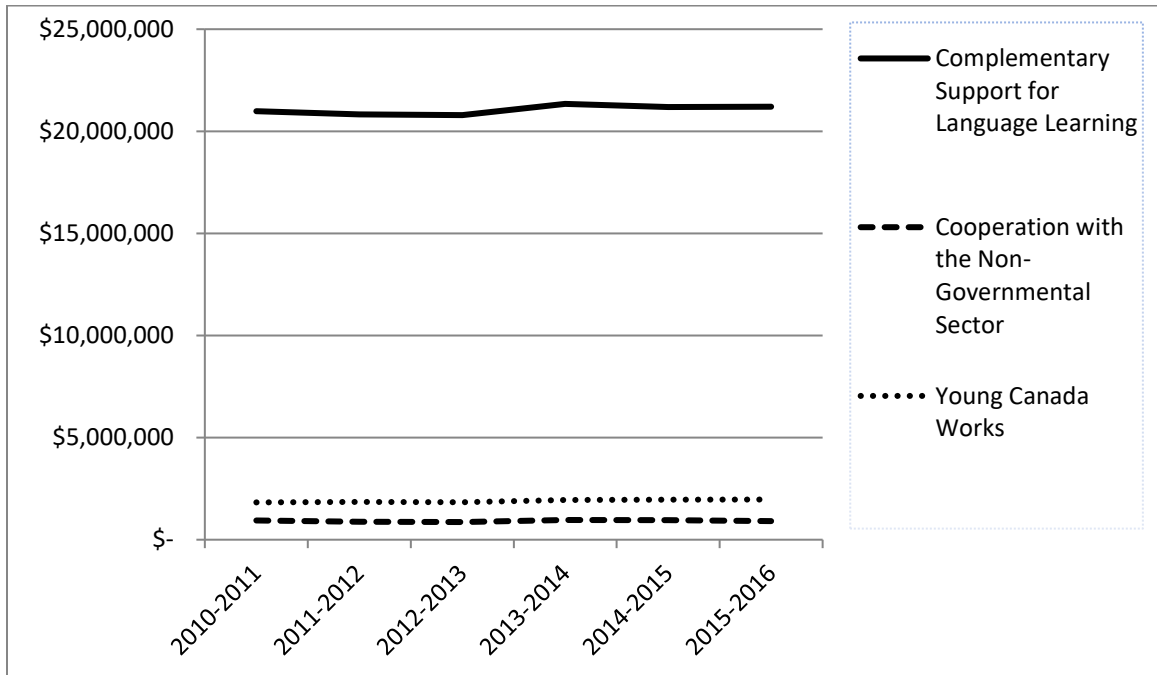
- Explore: an intensive language immersion bursary program; and
  - Odyssey: a bilingual, paid work experience that provides opportunities for postsecondary students to travel to another province or territory.
- 2) Cooperation with the Non-Governmental Sector — Support for education.
  - 3) Young Canada Works: Canadian Heritage funds the Young Canada Works in Both Official Languages component (work experience in Canada) and Young Canada Works at Building Careers in English and French component (work experience abroad).

Provinces and territories do not contribute financially to the above national programs.

As shown in Figure 4 below, funding for national programs has remained essentially the same in recent years.



**Figure 4 — Government of Canada Expenditures, Canadian Heritage, Official Languages Support Programs (OLSPs), Enhancement of Official Languages Program, “Second-Language Learning” Component, “National Programs” Sub-component, 2011–2012 to 2015–2016 (current \$)**



Note: Except for the Young Canada Works program, the figure presents only expenditures under the Enhancement of Official Languages component.

Source: Figure prepared using data from Canadian Heritage annual reports on official languages from 2011–2012 to 2015–2016.

Consequently, the offer of plans in these programs has also remained stable.



**Table 1 — Canadian Heritage, Official Languages Support Programs (OLSPs), Enhancement of Official Languages, Second-Language Learning Component, National Programs Subcomponent, Offers per Program, 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 (current \$)**

Program	Offers per Program			Total
	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	
Explore Bursary Program (Second Language)	7,625	7,625	7,425	<b>22,675</b>
Odyssey Monitor Program (second language only)	209	213	237	<b>659</b>
Young Canada Works in Both Official Languages	714	692	772	<b>2,178</b>
Young Canada Works at Building Careers in English and French	17	16	16	<b>49</b>

Source: Figure prepared using data from Canadian Heritage, Evaluation Services Directorate, *Evaluation of the Official Languages Support Programs*, 16 May 2017; data provided by Canadian Heritage.

## **2.4. The Action Plan for Official Languages – 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future**

Soon after the Committee visited three Western provinces, the Government of Canada released the *Action Plan for Official Languages – 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, its latest official languages investment strategy.

The government set a target with respect to bilingualism: it is aiming to increase the national bilingualism rate “from 17.9% to 20% by 2036.”<sup>28</sup> This target is achievable if the “bilingualism rate of English speakers outside Quebec [rises] from 6.8% to 9%.”<sup>29</sup>

To achieve a 20% national bilingualism rate by 2036, the Government of Canada has taken a series of measures. It has kept all initiatives from the previous Roadmap for Official Languages.

The Action Plan hints that federal-provincial/territorial agreements for second-language learning will be enhanced; the Action Plan provides \$448 million over five years, while the 2013–2018 protocol for agreements provided just over \$434 million over five years. The Committee eagerly awaits the release of the new protocol for agreements to crosscheck this information.

28 Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages – 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Ottawa, 2018, p. 41.

29 Ibid.



The Government of Canada has also increased its support for second-language learning by providing an additional \$100 million (over five years) for initiatives and programs aimed at promoting a bilingual Canada:

- Creating and launching a free mobile application and website for second-language learning (\$16.50 million);
- Investing in strategies to recruit French immersion and FSL teachers (\$31.29 million);
- Expanding language and cultural exchange opportunities for young people: Explore and Odyssey programs (\$38.51 million);
- Providing bursaries to encourage anglophone students to pursue postsecondary education in French (\$12.60 million);
- Reinvesting in the Young Canada Works in Both Official Languages program (\$1.20 million announced in 2017 for 2018-2019).<sup>30</sup>

The Action Plan has also increased core funding for organizations that promote and support French second-language learning.<sup>31</sup>

### **3. KEY ISSUES REGARDING FRENCH AS SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Each year, a growing number of Western Canadian families would like their children to learn French as a second language, but as explained by Kate Peters, CPF National Board Member, “whether it be lack of places in immersion programs, insufficient core French instruction, or the need for additional post-secondary language programs, as my colleagues have spoken to, access to FSL programs currently does not allow all Canadians to meet their language learning goals.”<sup>32</sup>

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30 Ibid., p. 50.

31 Ibid., p. 44.

32 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1435 (Kate Peters, National Board Member, Canadian Parents for French).

During the Committee’s public hearings, witnesses brought up the main obstacles to accessing FSL and French immersion programs, particularly the ability to train and retain qualified teachers.

### 3.1. Enhancing the Capacity of Postsecondary Institutions to Train French as a Second Language Teachers

The availability of FSL and French immersion programs requires a pool of qualified teachers to deliver them. However, Martine Cavanagh, Professor at Campus Saint-Jean with the University of Alberta, told the Committee that Canada is seeing a “severe shortage of qualified teachers to work in those two educational contexts, especially in the western provinces.”<sup>33</sup> Ms. Wishart of CPF — Alberta agreed, saying that “we believe that the teacher shortage is now the number one reason that school districts [in Alberta] find themselves unable to expand existing programs or to create new French immersion programs.”<sup>34</sup>

The reason for this shortage is that faculties of education in Canadian postsecondary institutions are unable to train a sufficient number of teachers to meet demand from school boards.<sup>35</sup> For example, the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary graduates about 20 students per year, and 90% of them are immediately hired by local English school boards and the Conseil scolaire FrancoSud.<sup>36</sup> Campus Saint-Jean of the University of Alberta produces about 75 graduates per year. Sarah Fedoration, Assistant Principal of Grandin Catholic Elementary School in Edmonton, believes that this is not enough to staff all positions, even in Edmonton.<sup>37</sup>

As a result, school boards are turning to “the eastern provinces, and recently to foreign countries, countries like France, to find qualified teachers.”<sup>38</sup>

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33 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1410 (Martine Cavanagh, Professor, Campus Saint-Jean, University of Alberta, as an individual).

34 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1440 (Victoria Wishart).

35 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1410 (Martine Cavanagh).

36 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1415 (Katherine Mueller, Instructor, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary).

37 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1445 (Sarah Fedoration, Assistant Principal, Grandin Catholic Elementary School, Edmonton Catholic Schools).

38 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1410 (Martine Cavanagh).



### 3.2. Training Teachers with the Required Language Skills

Nobody becomes a French immersion or FSL teacher overnight, a fact pointed out by several witnesses; they stressed the importance of ensuring that educators have the teaching and language skills to provide high-quality instruction.

Steven Urquhart, Chair of the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Lethbridge, said that he was “concerned with the competency level of non-native French-speaking teachers graduating French students in FLS and immersion programs.”<sup>39</sup> He said that he felt “they transmit errors of all sorts to elementary and high school students.”<sup>40</sup>

Ms. Fedoration acknowledged that “the severe shortage of French as a second language teachers has often meant that we have had to sacrifice language quality just to put a teacher in each class.”<sup>41</sup>

Rural communities appear to be most often disadvantaged. Jeff Anderson, Principal of Guyot School in Manitoba, told the Committee that school boards are “sometimes forced to hire other people whose French may be a little rusty. That often happens in isolated, rural areas...”<sup>42</sup> Patrick Witwicki, Executive Director of the Association des francophones et francophiles du Nord-Ouest (British Columbia), believes that “school boards in rural communities should be given additional support to find teachers who speak French to teach French as a second language.”<sup>43</sup>

Ms. Cavanagh highlighted one of the underlying causes of the qualified teacher shortage. At Campus Saint-Jean’s department of education, a growing number of students in the Bachelor of Education program come from immersion programs and the francophone African diaspora. She said that in addition to the training challenge that all education faculties face,<sup>44</sup> Campus Saint-Jean must also come up with ways to “guarantee the linguistic competency of our students from immersion and French as a

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39 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1420 (Steven Urquhart, Associate Professor of French and Chair of the Department of Modern Languages, University of Lethbridge, as an individual).

40 Ibid.

41 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1445 (Sarah Fedoration).

42 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 2 March 2018, 1110 (Jeff Anderson, Principal, Guyot School, Louis Riel School Division).

43 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 28 February 2018, 1045 (Patrick Witwicki, Executive Director, Association des francophones et francophiles du Nord-Ouest).

44 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1410 (Martine Cavanagh).

second language programs”<sup>45</sup> and “guarantee the cultural competency of ... African immigrants.”<sup>46</sup> The faculty is aware that it must adapt its training programs to reflect these realities, but implementing such measures obviously requires financial resources. According to the Campus Saint-Jean representatives, resources are shrinking despite growing challenges:

As an example, the budget of the practice service, which manages the placements of our student teachers, has gone from \$600,000 in 2012 to \$200,000 in 2017. This drop means that we cannot go forward with the bridging program, the support and guidance programs; this particularly impacts immigrant women, who see their chances of having access to an educator’s job dwindle.<sup>47</sup>

As Sarah Fedoration explained, “if we want to keep immersion programming accessible to everyone, it is paramount that post-secondary institutions be given the financial support and long-term commitment they need to train more future second language teachers.”<sup>48</sup>

The allocation of financial resources needs to allow faculties of education to graduate a greater number of qualified teachers each year. This includes funding for training programs that reflect the reality and needs of student teachers.

### 3.3. Providing Teachers with Access to Continuing Language Training

Witnesses also pointed out that teachers need opportunities to improve their language skills throughout their careers.

For Ms. Fedoration, the “quality and continuity” of programs hinge on “the importance teachers place on their ongoing French-language education.”<sup>49</sup> She believes that offering teachers “more learning opportunities, such as exchanges and summer programs, and [creating] programs that build more purposeful ties between francophone communities and immersion schools ... might help teachers continue their language education.”<sup>50</sup>

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45      Ibid.

46      Ibid.

47      Ibid., 1415.

48      LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1445 (Sarah Fedoration).

49      Ibid.

50      Ibid.



Diane Tijman, President of Canadian Parents for French — British Columbia and Yukon, concurs:

But I ask that the government work with our ministry of education on specific targets, including ... expansion for specialist training for teachers and educational assistants to support inclusion and learning assistance in French; provision of mentoring programs for beginning teachers, and continued professional development in French, including immersion francophone intensive and core French; and expansion of professional development funds to allow teachers to further develop their language skills in pedagogy, as well as cultural understanding.<sup>51</sup>

### 3.4. Investments

As mentioned earlier, the *Action Plan for Official Languages – 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future* provides an investment of over \$30 million starting in 2019–2020 “toward strategies to recruit more immersion and French as a second language teachers.”<sup>52</sup> According to Canadian Heritage, it will “engage possible partners like provinces, territories and education stakeholders to develop an approach to allocate these funds.”<sup>53</sup>

In the *2013–2018 Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction*, “support for educational staff and research” was one of the six areas of intervention where the Government of Canada could invest. It included “Development, provision and assessment of staff training (initial and continuous) and development programs adapted to the minority milieu; Recruitment and retention of qualified and specialized staff; Research with an impact on minority-language education and dissemination of knowledge.”<sup>54</sup> Mr. Anderson said that the Government of Canada contributed to programs such as the French Immersion for Teachers (FIT) program at the University of Saint-Boniface.<sup>55</sup>

As the government has not yet released the new Protocol for Agreements, it is not known at this time whether teacher language training will continue to be funded.

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51 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 28 February 2018, 1045 (Diane Tijman).

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

53 Ibid.

54 *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction 2013–2014 to 2017–2018 between the Government of Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada*, p. 5.

55 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 2 March 2018, 1125 (Jeff Anderson).

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends:

#### **Recommendation 1**

**That the Government of Canada ensure that subsequent federal-provincial/territorial agreements on second-language learning provide ongoing financial support to language development programs for teachers that keeps pace with growth in demand.**

### **4. IMPROVING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

The availability of FSL and French immersion programs continues to be an issue. But what about the experiences of students enrolled in these programs? The Committee found that certain factors can negatively affect student retention in FSL and French immersion programs.

#### **4.1. Cost of School Transportation**

Some witnesses pointed out that the cost of transportation was a factor that could affect a student's opportunity to begin or continue learning French as a second language.

Katherine Mueller, Instructor with the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary, discussed the consequences of a recent Calgary Board of Education decision to cancel funding for bussing students to French immersion programs:

A recent situation has been distressing for French immersion educators and administrators in Calgary. French immersion and other programs have been designated as alternative programs by the Calgary Board of Education due to the high cost of providing transportation to children who have chosen a program outside of their neighbourhood.

As a result, busing is not available to French immersion students in that board, forcing parents to put their children on public transit or to arrange alternate transportation if they wish their children to receive French immersion education. I'm aware that there has been some attrition in the French immersion program at the Calgary Board of Education as a result of this decision. It is distressing that financial constraints cause schools to relegate French programming to alternate status or to dispense with it altogether.<sup>56</sup>

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56 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1415 (Katherine Mueller).

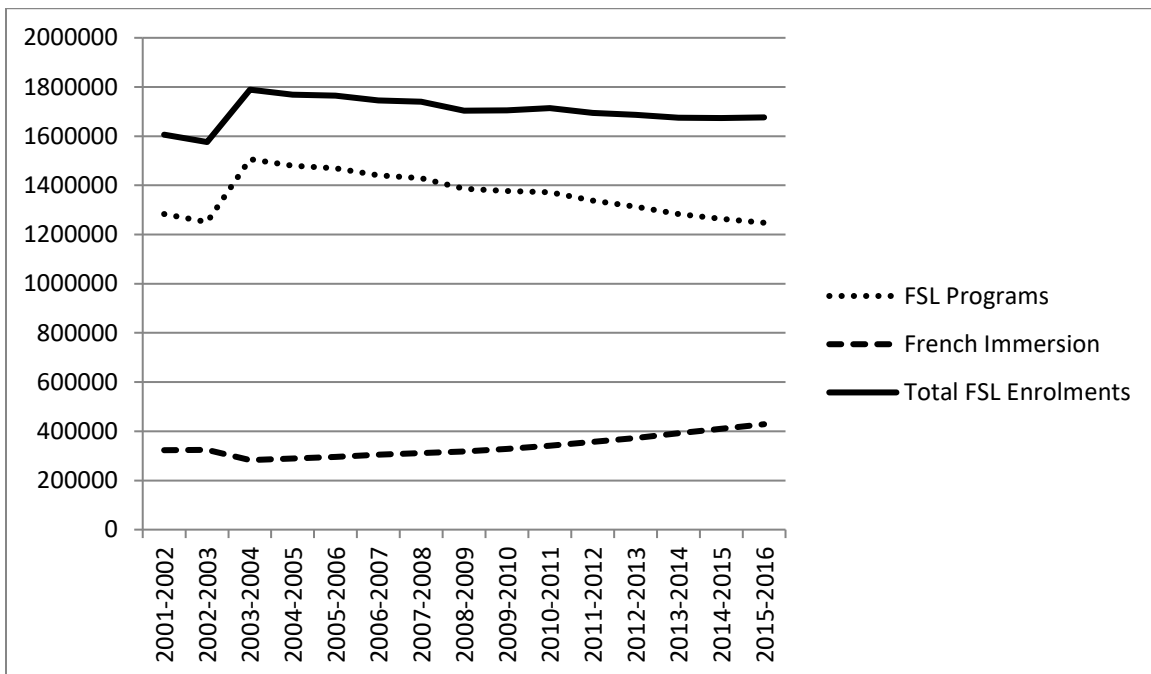


## 4.2. Improving Core French Classes

Regarding quality, most of the witnesses agreed that improvements to programs, particularly core French, are urgently needed.

According to Ms. Peters of CPF, the quality of FSL programs can be measured in part by student retention rates.<sup>57</sup> If that is the case, it appears that regular FSL (or core French) programs are not popular with young people. Figure 5 below shows that the total number of students enrolled in an FSL program other than French immersion declined steadily between 2003-2004 and 2015-2016.

**Figure 5 — Anglophone Students in the Majority Public System Learning French as a Second Language (FSL) (Canada Outside Quebec), Primary and Secondary, 2001-2002 to 2015-2016**



Source: Figure prepared using data from Canadian Heritage annual reports on official languages, 2003-2004 to 2015-2016, and Statistics Canada, Table 37-10-0009-01: Enrolments in official languages programs offered in public elementary and secondary schools, by type of program, grade and sex.

57 LANG, Evidence, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1435 (Kate Peters).



In Western Canada, only Manitoba and British Columbia saw increased enrolments in regular FSL programs between 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 as well as in French immersion programs.

**Table 2 — Enrolments in Official Languages Programs Offered in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, By Type of Program, Western Provinces, 2013-2014 to 2015-2016**

Province	Type of program	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016
Manitoba	Regular second language programs (or core language programs)	58,917	58,005	58,014
	French immersion programs	22,107	22,725	23,547
	Sub-total Manitoba	81,024	80,730	81,561
Saskatchewan	Regular second language programs (or core language programs)	37,518	36,285	34,821
	French immersion programs	12,447	13,008	13,869
	Sub-total Saskatchewan	49,965	49,293	48,690
Alberta	Regular second language programs (or core language programs)	142,971	144,792	142,893
	French immersion programs	38,496	40,461	41,631
	Sub-total Alberta	181,467	185,253	184,524
British Columbia	Regular second language programs (or core language programs)	175,371	171,750	173,013
	French immersion programs	49,446	50,301	52,536
	Sub-total British Columbia	224,817	222,051	225,549

Source: Table prepared using Statistics Canada data, Table 37-10-0009-01: Enrolments in official languages programs offered in public elementary and secondary schools, by type of program, grade and sex.

According to Ms. Drzystek, core French programs are failing because they do not meet young people’s expectations of achieving a certain level of bilingualism by the end of elementary school. She said that she has seen “huge reductions in enrolment in the high schools.”<sup>58</sup>

Glyn Lewis, Executive Director of CPF British Columbia and Yukon, sees the weakness of the core French program as a concern. He highlighted what he believes are the four key reasons for the program’s decline:

58 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 2 March 2018, 1045 (Sandra Drzystek).



The bigger problems, in terms of the drop that you see in that line, have to do with the quality of instruction, the teachers feeling confident to teach the language, the teachers feeling confident to help inspire those kids to stay in the classroom, and then all of the extracurricular things that might complement that.<sup>59</sup>

### 4.2.1. Extracurricular Activities: A Key Part of French Second-Language Learning

All the witnesses said that French immersion and FSL students, especially those in core French programs, do not have enough opportunities to speak French outside the classroom. This could have an impact on students' desire to continue studying French. Ms. Peters said that many students "become discouraged and disinterested by the lack of opportunity to communicate in an authentic language context."<sup>60</sup>

A number of witnesses, including Ms. Fedoration, believe it is essential for students and educators alike to be able to discover "the richness of the French language and culture through new experiences, ones that will help them see the world through their new language lens."<sup>61</sup> She believes that these kinds of experiences "could encourage more young people to [...] use French, not just as a tool for communication, but also as a living language in their day-to-day lives."<sup>62</sup>

Several witnesses would like the Government of Canada to contribute more to providing authentic experiences, namely cultural activities that would bring learners into contact with French language and culture. Professor Urquhart believes that these experiences could take a variety of forms:

Paid immersion stays, city and school twinnings, trips, exchanges, and correspondences with schools in Quebec and elsewhere, such as in Acadia, would be great for immersion students and universities. Facilitating and formalizing such relationships is imperative to the survival, prosperity, and quality of French in southern Alberta in my opinion.<sup>63</sup>

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59 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 28 February 2018, 1125 (Glyn Lewis).

60 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1435 (Kate Peters).

61 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1450 (Sarah Fedoration).

62 Ibid.

63 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1420 (Steven Urquhart).

Professor Urquhart also said that “jobs also need to be created to establish such connections. This cannot be asked of teachers, who already have onerous teaching duties. We need someone to organize these things.”<sup>64</sup>

In Winnipeg, as in several other provincial capitals, it is relatively easy to have rewarding experiences in French given the number and proximity of cultural institutions. This is not the case outside major centres. Mr. Anderson said that “children enrolled in immersion programs in Brandon, Dauphin, and Thompson don’t have access to so many resources.”<sup>65</sup> He believes that “the federal government could improve things just by continuing to fund the development of such programs, but also by subsidizing travel costs to help children in more remote regions get to Winnipeg so they can take advantage of these programs.”<sup>66</sup> This suggestion is obviously applicable to all provinces.

Most of the witnesses said that the success of extracurricular programs hinges in large part on effective cooperation among school boards—which are responsible for FSL and French immersion programs—and francophone communities. As pointed out by Mr. LeBlanc of Simon Fraser University’s Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs, this presupposes that there are “living francophone communities in British Columbia, Western Canada, Acadia and elsewhere.”<sup>67</sup>

Interesting partnerships seem to have already formed. For instance, the Association canadienne-française de l’Alberta (ACFA) “concluded an agreement with Canadian Parents for French of Alberta in order to develop closer links and promote the French language and the advantages of official bilingualism.”<sup>68</sup> Professor Urquhart told the Committee that francophone schools and organizations are working more closely on projects for learners of French as a second language. He also said that federal funding provided to the University of Lethbridge’s French Language Centre “has helped promote French on the campus, attract and retain students, and rally those interested in French in the city and the immediate region.”<sup>69</sup> However, he did say that there is still “a disconnect between the university, the French-speaking community, and school

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64 Ibid.

65 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 2 March 2018, 1125 (Jeff Anderson).

66 Ibid.

67 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 28 February 2018, 1100 (Gino LeBlanc).

68 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1430 (Albert Nolette, Vice-President, Association canadienne-française de l’Alberta).

69 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1420 (Steven Urquhart).



boards.”<sup>70</sup> Based on one of Professor Urquhart’s suggestions, administrators could facilitate this type of relationship with francophone communities.

#### 4.2.1.1. Investments

The Government of Canada already funds a range of programs that provide young people with authentic linguistic and cultural experiences. We already mentioned the national programs Explore and Odyssey. The new Action Plan for Official Languages allocates an additional \$38.51 million. As well, Young Canada Works will see a \$1.2 million increase in 2018-2019.

Under the former Protocol for Agreements, the Government of Canada also contributed to the “enrichment of second-language learning through curricular and extracurricular activities” as well as the “participation of youths in authentic second-language learning experiences.” We currently do not know whether these areas of intervention will be included in the next Protocol for Agreements.

The Committee believes that the Government of Canada must also look at experiences for elementary students, as they are not eligible for the national programs Explore, Odyssey and Young Canada Works.

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends:

#### Recommendation 2

**That the Government of Canada ensure that the upcoming federal-provincial/territorial agreements on second-language learning support learners across the education continuum by expanding the availability of linguistic and cultural experiences in their second language.**

### 4.3. Improving Teaching Material

It appears that the availability and quality of materials for teaching and learning French as a second language is an issue. The Committee heard the following from Tammie Beattie, French program coordinator for the Edmonton Public School Board:

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70      Ibid.

educational materials in French are often more expensive than those in English, and can even cost twice as much. In addition, the educational materials are often translated and not adapted, which is an important consideration for second language learners.<sup>71</sup>

Ms. Mueller said that many teachers “create their own resources or use resources created for francophones.”<sup>72</sup> She believes that this is unacceptable from an educational perspective:

It is crucial that we recognize that French immersion or FSL pedagogical approaches differ greatly from the francophone first language context, and it’s important that teachers of both French as a second language and French immersion have the means to access specialized materials and resources to support their programs.<sup>73</sup>

Ms. Mueller added that it is important to “ensure that pedagogical materials are being developed for the Canadian context.”<sup>74</sup>

At first glance, the Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023 does not appear to propose any program or initiative to improve the availability or quality of teaching materials for FSL and French immersion programs. It remains to be seen whether the upcoming Protocol for Agreements on second-language learning will include something for the creation of teaching material. In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends:

### **Recommendation 3**

**That the Government of Canada ensure that the upcoming federal-provincial/territorial agreements on second-language learning include initiatives or programs for creating or adapting teaching material for second-language learning or immersion programs suited to the Canadian context.**

## **4.4. Providing Equitable Access to French Immersion Programs for Young People with Learning Disabilities**

There appears to be a persistent myth that French immersion programs are reserved for the top students. In the past, some schools counselled “students out of the program

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71 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1520 (Tamie Beattie, French Program Coordinator, Edmonton Public School Board).

72 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1415 (Katherine Mueller).

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.



when they encounter difficulty.”<sup>75</sup> Some parents came to believe that if their child had a learning disability, they were ineligible for immersion. However, as Mr. Anderson explained, this is a misconception: “research shows that, when they can receive adequate support, children with learning disabilities may be successful in the immersion program.”<sup>76</sup> Marie Commanche-Shulko, French Immersion Consultant with the Edmonton Public School Board, told the Committee that “all our students are diverse learners, and we need to find the best practices and resources to support them in their learning.”<sup>77</sup>

According to CPF, not all school boards are able to provide “equitable access to appropriate academic support, especially for academically challenged students and new Canadians.”<sup>78</sup> To improve access to programs, CPF is calling on both levels of government to address this by providing “funding for additional classroom support, or by addressing the lack of pre- and in-service professional development opportunities.”<sup>79</sup>

In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends the following:

#### **Recommendation 4**

**That the Government of Canada ensure that the upcoming federal-provincial/territorial agreements on second-language learning include initiatives or programs to include and support students with learning disabilities in French immersion programs.**

## **CONCLUSION**

The new Action Plan for Official Languages includes initiatives and programs to improve access to programs for learning French as a second language. At first glance, it appears to address many of the needs and challenges brought up by the witnesses. The Committee will closely monitor the implementation of the Action Plan and eagerly awaits the new Protocol for Agreements to review the details of the Government of Canada’s investments in second-language learning.

As we stated in the introduction, there is no guaranteed access in Canada to second-language learning. Currently, FSL and French immersion programs are largely

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75 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 0925 (Marie Commanche-Shulko, French Immersion Consultant, Edmonton Public School Board).

76 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 2 March 2018, 1100 (Jeff Anderson).

77 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 0925 (Marie Commanche-Shulko).

78 LANG, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1435 (Kate Peters).

79 Ibid.

optional and are available only at the discretion of school boards. Not only is this unfair to young people interested in learning French, but it is also contrary to one of the objectives of Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*, which is to foster the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.

Many witnesses wish to see FSL learning programs be considered separate and inclusive and, in particular, be officially recognized by the provinces, territories and the Government of Canada. The invaluable contribution of francophiles to Canada's linguistic duality deserves to be recognized. Modernization of the *Official Languages Act*, responsibility for which was recently given to the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, could lead to a dialogue on the possibility of entrenching into law the right to learn one's second official language.





## APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p><b>Alliance française de Vancouver</b> Damien Hubert, Director</p> <p><b>Association des francophones et francophiles du Nord-Ouest</b> Danielle Dalton, President Patrick Witwicki, Executive Director</p> <p><b>Canadian Parents for French - British Columbia &amp; Yukon</b> Glyn Lewis, Executive Director Diane Tijman, President</p> <p><b>Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs</b> Gino LeBlanc, Director Simon Fraser University</p>	2018/02/28	91
<p><b>As individuals</b> Martine Cavanagh, Professor Campus Saint-Jean, University of Alberta Katherine Mueller, Instructor Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary Claudette Tardif Steven Urquhart, Associate Professor of French and Chair of the Department of Modern Languages University of Lethbridge</p> <p><b>Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta</b> Albert Nolette, Vice-President</p> <p><b>Canadian Parents for French</b> Kate Peters, National Board Member</p> <p><b>Canadian Parents for French - Alberta</b> Michael Tryon, Executive Director Victoria Wishart, President</p>	2018/03/01	92

<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>Edmonton Catholic Schools</b> Sarah Fedoration, Assistant Principal Grandin Catholic Elementary School	2018/03/01	92
<b>Edmonton Public School Board</b> Tamie Beattie, French Program Coordinator		
<b>As an individual</b> Derrek Bentley	2018/03/02	93
<b>École Guyot</b> Jeff Anderson, Principal Louis Riel School Division		
<b>École Howden</b> Ron Cadez, Principal Louis Riel School Division		
<b>Manitoba Education and Training</b> Sandra Drzystek, Liaison Officer French as a Second Language		

## **APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS**

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### **Organizations and Individuals**

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**Carr, Wendy**

**Wernicke, Meike**

**Association des francophones et francophiles du Nord-Ouest**



# REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 91, 92, 93, 112 and 113](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Denis Paradis, PC, MP  
Chair

