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CANADA

ADULT LITERACY AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF THE EDUCATION CONTINUUM IN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages

The Honourable Denis Paradis, Chair

**APRIL 2018
42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF THE
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LANGUAGE MINORITY COMMUNITIES**

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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

NINTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(3)(f), the Committee has reviewed literacy and numeracy support programs in Canada and has agreed to report the following:

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LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada recognize that adult literacy and essential skills development is an integral part of Canada’s minority-language education continuum and allocate resources to it accordingly..... 11

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada’s adult literacy and essential skills development program architecture be designed to include family literacy, community literacy and employment skills development as strategic development priorities for official language minority communities..... 11

Recommendation 3

That the Governor in Council explore the possibility of assigning adult literacy and essential skills development, especially that of official language minority communities, to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and provide the Minister with the resources necessary to successfully manage these matters..... 12

Recommendation 4

That the Minister responsible for adult literacy and essential skills development establish a pan-Canadian strategy that is community-based and reflects the continuum of education and training in the minority language. This strategy must have components that are distinct from those intended for the majority in order to specifically address the needs of official language minority communities. 12

Recommendation 5

That the Minister responsible for adult literacy and essential skills development review the funding arrangements that concern official language minority communities to ensure that they are consistent with the purpose of and responsibilities arising from the *Official Languages Act*. 14

Recommendation 6

That the Minister responsible for adult literacy and essential skills development ensure that support programs meet the needs of official language minority communities:

- a) **by applying the principle of substantive equality when designing programs or making any changes; and**
- b) **by ensuring the programs are tailored to the specific needs of anglophones and francophones in minority communities. 15**

Recommendation 7

That, in the area of intergovernmental cooperation, the Minister responsible for adult literacy and essential skills development ensure the following:

- a) **that bilateral agreements with provinces and territories include binding clauses concerning official language minority communities (OLMCs), including clauses respecting consultations with community representatives (identifying the interlocutors and the frequency of consultations) and the accountability obligations of the two levels of government;**
- b) **that provincial and territorial action plans be public and clearly demonstrate how provincial and territorial governments will meet their respective commitments to OLMCs; and**
- c) **that the accountability provisions enable OLMCs to determine how much of the federal and provincial or territorial investments are allocated to them. 17**



ADULT LITERACY AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF THE EDUCATION CONTINUUM IN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE MINORITY COMMUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

In February 2018, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages (the Committee) undertook a study on adult literacy, numeracy and essential skills. The goal of the study was to understand the impact of changes made to Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) programs pertaining to the development of literacy and essential skills of adults in official language minority communities (OLMCs).

1. Summary of Changes to Employment and Social Development Canada Programs

1.1. Cancellation of core funding for national organizations and provincial coalitions

The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) is responsible for adult literacy and skills development at ESDC. In March 2013, it announced that it would no longer provide core funding to national organizations or provincial coalitions. This funding expired in June 2014.

According to ESDC officials, this decision was part of a general trend toward project-based funding across the entire federal government:

Over the past years, governments have been placing more and more emphasis on the delivery of results. As part of this increased focus on results, government in general, including Employment and Social Development, has moved numerous programs away from core funding towards project-based funding.¹

That is why, as of the fall of 2016, the Réseau pour le développement de l'alphabétisme et des compétences (RESDAC) was the only one of six national adult literacy and

1 House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages (LANG), *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 February 2018, 1645 (Monika Bertrand, Director General, Employment Program Policy and Design Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development).



essential skills development organizations still in existence in Canada.² The other national organizations and some provincial coalitions had to cease operations in 2014–2015 because of a lack of funding.

According to Linda Shohet, an expert in adult literacy and essential skills development, the withdrawal of core funding hit OLMCs hard: “The impact of these changes has been particularly hard felt by the minority language communities, because so much of their funding either came federally or through federal transfers.”³

The elimination of core funding also had the effect of taking away funds normally provided to organizations run “by and for” OLMCs, to the benefit of majority-language organizations. The Committee examined this issue in its December 2016 report entitled *Toward a New Action Plan for Official Languages and Building New Momentum for Immigration in Francophone Minority Communities*.⁴ Although some majority-language organizations claimed to be bilingual, they did not necessarily have the desire or the capacity to provide services in the minority language. Ms. Shohet explained the situation as follows:

in the last years of the previous government, and I don't know how much has changed since then, a lot of the monies that used to be designated *pour et par* started to be disbursed to other groups and were no longer coming to the minority groups and minority organizations.

The government said, “Oh, we didn't say it had to go to those groups; we said that they had to be serving the minority language population.” So if a group from somewhere else came in and said that 10% of what they were going to do in their project would serve the minority language group, they took some of the monies that were designated for minority language group projects and put it into the pot that went to that project.

There has been a subtle erosion of the funds.⁵

In addition, ESDC proposed social finance as a model for funding OLMC adult literacy and essential skills development initiatives. As Michel Robillard, Chief Executive Officer of the Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes and a director of RESDAC, explained, social finance is “the principle under which organizations partner with the

2 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 25 October 2016, 0905 (Donald DesRoches, President, RESDAC).

3 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 February 2018, 1535 (Linda Shohet, As an individual).

4 LANG, *Toward a New Action Plan for Official Languages and Building New Momentum for Immigration in Francophone Minority Communities*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, December 2016, pp. 9–10.

5 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 February 2018, 1625 (Linda Shohet, As an individual).

private sector to reap significant benefits, and the results they achieve determine the type of funding they receive.”⁶

Currently, the OLES supports certain adult literacy and essential skills development initiatives, but funding is allocated on a project basis. According to ESDC officials, about 15 projects are currently underway, including two intended for OLMCs.⁷

1.2. Changes in the government’s priorities

At the same time as the decision was made to no longer provide core funding to national networks and provincial coalitions, the OLES changed its programming. It stopped supporting family literacy and community literacy initiatives and limited itself to employment skills development initiatives.

Ms. Shohet told the Committee that the Government of Canada’s original vision was much broader:

When literacy first came onto the federal agenda at the end of the 1980s, when the National Literacy Secretariat was founded, there was a very broad vision of adult literacy and adult learning that tied it to citizenship, participation in society, participation in one’s family, and participation in the workplace, so it was a very broadly focused vision.⁸

Gabrielle Lopez, previously the Acting Director General of RESDAC, offered the following comments on the department’s decision:

... [T]he office has realigned its services so as to meet only labour market needs. However, when we talk about literacy and skills development, we are also talking about families, communities, citizen participation and about parents, who have the skills that enable them to support their children’s development, and so on. We are also talking about work, but that’s not all. The office currently really has a different approach that we don’t fully understand. It operates sort of like a private business that wants to choose its partners and operate solely on the basis of developing the labour market.⁹

As Ms. Shohet explained, restricting government support to employment skills development contributed to the implosion of the national networks:

6 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 February 2018, 1535 (Michel Robillard, Chief Executive Officer, Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes; Director, RESDAC).

7 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 February 2018, 1705 (Eric Perreault, Manager, Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, Department of Employment and Social Development).

8 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 February 2018, 1530 (Linda Shohet, As an individual).

9 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 25 October 2016, 0930 (Gabrielle Lopez, Acting Director General, RESDAC).



The federal government was pushing organizations to say that they had to be addressing jobs and employability in order to get literacy funding. All of the organizations, whether it was part of their mission or a mandate or not, began to insert that into their proposals that came in, and then after three or four years, people at the federal government said, “Well, you all look like you're doing the same thing.”¹⁰

Furthermore, it appears that ESDC advised francophone organizations to focus their efforts on learners who could quickly attain level 3, the level of literacy needed to fully participate in Canadian society. This departmental directive had an impact on learners: “People in literacy organizations on the ground will tell you that this was excluding people in the greatest need. That is, people who had the most needs, the most gaps, and who needed the most intervention, couldn't be served because they weren't going to meet that criterion.”¹¹

2. Intervention of the Commissioner of Official Languages

In 2015, RESDAC filed a complaint with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages that condemned ESDC’s cancellation of core funding, “a lack of consultation and many changes in decision-making approaches and processes.”¹²

On 12 October 2017, the Interim Commissioner of Official Languages, Ghislaine Saikaley, presented her final investigation report to the complainant and ESDC. She found that, from 2013 to October 2017, ESDC had violated Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*. As a result, she recommended that the department do the following:

- re-evaluate its orientation and its eligibility criteria for the funding available for literacy and the acquisition of essential skills in order to address the particular needs and priorities of OLMCs; and
- evaluate the impact of removing core funding from RESDAC and from its provincial and territorial network, and take appropriate measures to redress any negative impacts.¹³

ESDC received Ms. Saikaley’s final report on 12 October 2017 and had until January 2018 to implement the report’s recommendations. ESDC recently received an extension from

10 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 February 2018, 1610 (Linda Shohet, As an individual).

11 Ibid., 1625.

12 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 February 2018, 1555 (Michel Robillard, Chief Executive Officer, Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes; Director, RESDAC).

13 Ibid., 1535.

the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages: it now has until 18 May 2018 to follow up on the recommendations in the Interim Commissioner's final report.

3. Consequences of Dismantling the National Networks

Although national organizations, such as RESDAC and Literacy Quebec, and provincial coalitions would sometimes provide services for pilot projects on a one-time basis, they did not deliver services to the public. Instead, national organizations provided the following services to their members:

- representation at the national level;
- research and dissemination of findings;
- project development and coordination; and
- a discussion forum in which members could share best practices.

Mr. Robillard remarked on the role RESDAC plays in coordinating and supporting its members' research:

We did a study on the skills needs of employers and employees. We realized that the skills needed were not only related to reading, writing and counting, but also to problem solving, communicating, and so on. So not only essential skills, but also generic skills were needed. This is the sort of study that RESDAC helped us develop. As a result, in our provinces, we are able to direct our efforts toward the specific skills we want to develop with employers. I'm thinking of problem-solving training for our employees, for example.¹⁴

Margo Legault, Executive Director of Literacy Quebec (based in Montreal), explained that networks like the Centre for Literacy (which was based in Montreal) enabled organizations on the ground to escape their isolation and place their work in a broader context: "When the Centre for Literacy closed, it was a very huge loss. There was an infrastructure there that allowed for looking at the field of literacy in a much broader scope. We're very much focused on community-based literacy."¹⁵

All told, the national organizations and provincial coalitions were important contributors to adult literacy and essential skills development in Canada.

14 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 February 2018, 1610 (Michel Robillard, Chief Executive Officer, Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes; Director, RESDAC).

15 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 February 2018, 1555 (Margo Legault, Executive Director, Literacy Quebec).



4. The Government of Canada's Recent Commitments

It is important to note that ESDC and other departments took positive steps even before the Interim Commissioner released the findings of her investigation.

In December 2016, the Department of Canadian Heritage awarded \$90,000 to RESDAC to support a project to reposition the issue of adult literacy and essential skills development. The “Impact collectif” project brings together the following six national organizations that work closely with the literacy sector:

- the Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne;
- the Commission nationale des parents francophones;
- the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada;
- the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones;
- the Réseau de développement économique et d’employabilité (RDÉE-Canada); and
- the Société Santé en français.

The goal of the Impact collectif project is to enable RESDAC to work more closely with these partners. The project was scheduled to run from January 2017 to March 2018.

According to Mr. Robillard, ESDC is listening.¹⁶ The discussions that have taken place so far as part of the Impact collectif project have been about aligning RESDAC’s and the government’s objectives: “One of the things we have talked a lot about is trying to ensure that we are well in tune with the priorities of various departments, such as Canadian Heritage and Employment and Social Development Canada.”¹⁷

Mr. Robillard further stated that the exercise is consistent with the principle that “the services [be] provided by and for those most involved.”¹⁸ The participants have studied a variety of solutions, including the creation of a consortium of service providers to

16 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 February 2018, 1615 (Michel Robillard, Chief Executive Officer, Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes; Director, RESDAC).

17 Ibid., 1550.

18 Ibid., 1535.

replace the former structure. Some believe this may be a good idea because there are other consortiums active in Canada's francophone communities.¹⁹

It remains to be seen whether the consortium model can be adapted to the field of adult literacy and essential skills development.²⁰ It is worth noting that the national organizations and provincial coalitions had begun similar restructuring work before their core funding was eliminated.

The Committee was also told that ESDC and some community stakeholders are working together to adapt the social finance model to the realities of OLMCs:

We have colleagues ... who are working on a new definition with Employment and Social Development Canada. Various stakeholders in areas like early childhood, seniors, youth, and women have come together in a social finance project. They are trying to expand the definition a little more to better adapt it to our situations.²¹

The department has also launched other initiatives. In March 2017, ESDC engaged the University of Ottawa's Research Chair in Canadian Francophonie and Public Policies to do the following:

- conduct research on adult literacy and essential skills needs in OLMCs;
- create an inventory of skills development programs and policies; and
- conduct a gap analysis comparing programs offered to OLMCs with those offered to the majority-language community.

ESDC officials confirmed that the final report on this project should be available in the coming months.²²

Since the final report of the Interim Commissioner of Official Languages was tabled, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, the Honourable Patricia Hajdu, has committed to "consult with official language minority communities to assess viable solutions in order to better address the literacy and essential skills

19 Ibid., 1550.

20 Ibid.

21 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 February 2018, 1555 (Gabrielle Lopez, Representative, RESDAC).

22 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 February 2018, 1650 (Monika Bertrand, Director General, Employment Program Policy and Design Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development).



challenges they face.”²³ [Translation] This consultation, attended by 29 representatives of OLMC organizations, was held on 19 and 20 March 2018.

5. Comments and Recommendations

5.1. Placing adult literacy and essential skills development in the education and training continuum

The Committee believes that the Government of Canada must include OLMC adult literacy and essential skills development in Canada’s minority-language education and training continuum.

In general, the continuum of education and training in Canada is no longer limited to primary and secondary levels. In April 2008, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, released *Learn Canada 2020*, which outlines the four pillars of lifelong learning: early childhood learning and development, elementary to high school systems, postsecondary education and adult learning and skills development.²⁴ The ministers identified eight specific activity areas within these four pillars of lifelong learning, including: “*Official Languages*: Promote and implement support programs for minority-language education and second-language programs that are among the most comprehensive in the world.”²⁵

In 2009, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada committed to literacy, recognizing that “literacy is a key foundation of **lifelong** learning” [our emphasis].²⁶

Of course, section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees instruction in the minority language in primary and secondary schools only. Nevertheless, based on the principle of substantive equality, OLMCs should have access to services of similar quality. OLMCs are therefore calling for increased government support to improve the offer of services in the minority language in early childhood education, postsecondary education and adult training.

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

23 Paul Gaboury, “Ottawa n’offre pas d’aide d’urgence pour sauver le RESDAC,” *Le Droit*, 9 November 2017. [Available in French only]

24 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, *Learn Canada 2020*, 2008, p. 1.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

26 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada), *Literacy: More than Words. Progress Report on Literacy 2009, Commitment on Literacy*, p. 4.

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada recognize that adult literacy and essential skills development is an integral part of Canada’s minority-language education continuum and allocate resources to it accordingly.

5.2. Changing the program architecture

The changes to ESDC support programs resulted in stakeholders concentrating their efforts on employment skills development. Yet adult literacy and essential skills development covers much more than that. One need only think about the needs of seniors who want to acquire digital literacy skills, such as the ability to use a computer and the Internet.²⁷

The Committee is of the opinion that the Government of Canada needs to expand the development priorities of the support programs for adult literacy and essential skills development to include family literacy and community literacy. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada’s adult literacy and essential skills development program architecture be designed to include family literacy, community literacy and employment skills development as strategic development priorities for official language minority communities.

5.3. Assigning responsibility to the appropriate federal authority

ESDC is headed by three ministers: Families, Children and Social Development; Science and Sport and Persons with Disabilities; and Employment, Workforce Development and Labour.

As mentioned above, adult literacy and skills development is managed by the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES). The Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour is responsible for OLES.

Interestingly, Canadian Heritage was responsible for adult literacy and essential skills development before it was transferred to ESDC in the 1990s.²⁸ Canadian Heritage, which

27 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 February 2018, 1545 (Michel Robillard, Chief Executive Officer, Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes; Director, RESDAC).

28 *Ibid.*, 1535.



is in charge of implementing Part VII of the *Official Languages Act* across the federal government, continues to be involved in this matter. The representatives of RESDAC now insist that Canadian Heritage officials be present when they meet with ESDC officials.²⁹

The Committee believes that ESDC can remain responsible for literacy and essential skills development, but that these matters should be the responsibility of the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. This change would encourage the implementation of recommendation 2, which would expand the support programs' scope so as to restore family literacy and community literacy as strategic development priorities for OLMCs. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 3

That the Governor in Council explore the possibility of assigning adult literacy and essential skills development, especially that of official language minority communities, to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and provide the Minister with the resources necessary to successfully manage these matters.

5.4. Taking a coordinated approach

In its report of December 2016 entitled *Toward a New Action Plan for Official Languages and Building New Momentum for Immigration in Francophone Minority Communities*, the Committee recommended that ESDC develop a pan-Canadian literacy and skills development strategy that is community-based and reflects the continuum of education and training in the minority language. The Committee specified that this strategy must include components that are distinct from those intended for the majority in order to specifically address the needs of OLMCs and immigrants.³⁰ The department has yet to respond to this recommendation directly. The Committee would like to reiterate this recommendation, in slightly amended form:

Recommendation 4

That the Minister responsible for adult literacy and essential skills development establish a pan-Canadian strategy that is community-based and reflects the continuum of education and training in the minority language. This strategy must have components that are distinct from those intended for the majority in order to specifically address the needs of official language minority communities.

29 Ibid., 1550.

30 LANG, *Toward a New Action Plan for Official Languages and Building New Momentum for Immigration in Francophone Minority Communities*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, December 2016, p. 50.

5.5. Adopting a funding arrangement that is appropriate for official language minority communities

According to ESDC, the project-based funding approach provides various benefits, including improved transparency owing to clear objectives and performance indicators.³¹ That said, adult literacy and essential skills development is a field in which results are not always quantifiable, at least in objective terms. Ms. Legault of Literacy Quebec offered the following explanation:

we work with very vulnerable populations where the positive impact that is felt by the people we reach cannot always be measured by graduation levels and employment placement. It can be difficult to quantify the profound effect we can have on an individual's situation. I'm talking about breaking their isolation; empowerment; self-esteem; and the ability to manage one's health, balance a budget, navigate one's surroundings, and even vote.³²

As for the use of social finance, some witnesses expressed doubt that this funding model is appropriate for OLMCs:

Social finance works in some areas and provides wonderful results when there is a critical mass. With our colleague Ronald Bisson, we conducted a study on social finance in small francophone communities.... [L]arge corporations like Bombardier that can fund social finance projects to increase essential skills are not at all in the same situation as organizations from small communities in the Yukon, Nunavut or British Columbia. In may not be a viable approach for us. We do not criticize the approach by saying that it is not viable. However, in small communities, it is perhaps not the best solution.³³

In its report entitled *Toward a New Action Plan for Official Languages and Building New Momentum for Immigration in Francophone Minority Communities*, the Committee examined the issue of funding arrangements and made a recommendation regarding the need to tailor them to OLMCs.³⁴ The Committee wishes to reiterate that recommendation, in slightly amended form:

31 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 February 2018, 1645 (Monika Bertrand, Director General, Employment Program Policy and Design Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development).

32 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 February 2018, 1535 (Margo Legault, Executive Director, Literacy Quebec).

33 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 February 2018, 1555 (Michel Robillard, Chief Executive Officer, Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes; Director, RESDAC).

34 LANG, *Toward a New Action Plan for Official Languages and Building New Momentum for Immigration in Francophone Minority Communities*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, December 2016, p. 49.



Recommendation 5

That the Minister responsible for adult literacy and essential skills development review the funding arrangements that concern official language minority communities to ensure that they are consistent with the purpose of and responsibilities arising from the *Official Languages Act*.

5.6. Providing sufficient funding to meet the needs of official language minority communities

5.6.1. Offering tailor-made programs

The 2013 results of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) show that OLMCs – and francophone communities in particular – have serious deficiencies in literacy, numeracy and essential skills. ESDC reported that 52% of francophones living outside Quebec “have level 2 or below in literacy.”³⁵ Level 2 literacy “is the minimum desirable for learning and working.”³⁶

Although anglophones in Quebec usually obtain better PIAAC results than francophones in minority communities, the needs of anglophone communities are no less significant. Ms. Shohet gave the following explanation: “That doesn't translate into better access to jobs or better access to any of the opportunities that are normally tied to PIAAC scores. The fact that we did better on PIAAC doesn't mean we're doing better overall.”³⁷ In general, “the literacy and essential skills needs faced by the anglophone community in Quebec are not currently being well met by the services that are there.”³⁸

While some organizations in Quebec receive core funding from the province, their future is by no means assured. Ms. Shohet reported that the core funding provided by the province is “too small to really allow the groups to reach capacity or to serve the populations that they have to serve.”³⁹ At present, there are 13 anglophone community organizations in all of Quebec. Each one is responsible for one region, but each region is vast. Given the geographical area involved, the scattered locations of anglophone communities and the average number of staff in each organization – 1.5 employees –

35 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 February 2018, 1645 (Monika Bertrand, Director General, Employment Program Policy and Design Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development).

36 Ibid., 1640.

37 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 February 2018, 1535 (Linda Shohet, As an individual).

38 Ibid., 1530.

39 Ibid.

the organizations have to “prioritize and target their interventions” and “restrict the number of hours they’re open throughout the week.”⁴⁰

The level of skills that individuals possess has major repercussions for both them and their community:

Mastery of essential skills is a vehicle for economic, social and community development. The impact is clear. We earn more money and our health improves. Our children do better in school. Our local businesses are more productive and our social confidence increases. We participate more fully in the life of our communities. Our language and our culture are passed from one generation to the next. Finally, we feel less insecure about our language. In other words, mastering essential skills means that our communities will live on.⁴¹

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 6

That the Minister responsible for adult literacy and essential skills development ensure that support programs meet the needs of official language minority communities:

- a) by applying the principle of substantive equality when designing programs or making any changes; and**
- b) by ensuring the programs are tailored to the specific needs of anglophones and francophones in minority communities.**

5.6.2. Reaching bilateral agreements that serve communities

ESDC supports provincial and territorial adult literacy and essential skills development programs through bilateral agreements. Departmental officials reported that ESDC invests “almost \$3 billion in provincial and territorial programs. Over the next six years, we will be investing about \$20 billion in provincial and territorial programs and services.”⁴² These transfers are through the Canada Job Fund, Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities and Labour Market Development Agreements.

40 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 12 February 2018, 1535 (Margo Legault, Executive Director, Literacy Quebec).

41 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 February 2018, 1535 (Michel Robillard, Chief Executive Officer, Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes; Director, RESDAC).

42 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 February 2018, 1715 (Monika Bertrand, Director General, Employment Program Policy and Design Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development).



The officials also said that the department works to protect the interests of OLMCs in these agreements:

... [I]n each agreement that we have, there are official language provisions, and the official language provisions in these agreements stipulate that a province or a territory will, in an area of significant demand, provide services in the chosen language of the client. We meet with the provinces and territories twice a year, and we ask these questions: “Do you know what the needs of your official language minority communities are? How are you addressing those needs of the official language minority communities?”⁴³

In the Job Fund bilateral agreements, in place since 2014, provinces and territories agree to “take into account the needs of official language minority communities.” The agreements also contain a paragraph in which provinces and territories agree to “undertake a formal process to engage employers and other stakeholders, including...representatives of the French language minority communities...to determine priorities for the Eligible Programs...” Lastly, provinces and territories must “provide to Canada an annual report...which shall include a description of the employer and stakeholder (including Official Language minority communities) consultation processes undertaken during the Fiscal Year and associated priorities for Eligible Programs...”

As to the Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities, provinces and territories agree to “take into account the needs of the official language minority communities.” There are no provisions on OLMC consultations or accountability.

In the Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs), provinces and territories agree to provide services in the minority language in “areas of significant demand.” It should be noted that the agreements specify that “areas of significant demand will be determined in consultation with representatives of the minority language community in each locality.” ESDC states that “[t]hrough the current round of amendments to the LMDAs commitments are being included for provinces and territories to engage with OLMCs as part of annual planning processes.”⁴⁴

In a written response to the Committee, ESDC noted, “[w]hile Canada provides funding under the LMDAs, the design and delivery of employment programs and services are the

43 Ibid.

44 Employment and Social Development Canada, *Follow-up to the Appearance of ESDC Officials at the LANG Committee regarding the study of the review of literacy and numeracy support programs in Canada* – February 7, 2018.

responsibility of the P/T governments, and they have the flexibility to develop labour market programming best suited to their specific needs.”⁴⁵

The Committee believes that the department should review its bilateral agreements to strengthen their OLMC provisions. While federal institutions are required to respect the prerogatives of the provinces and territories, they must above all protect and promote the rights and entitlements of linguistic minorities. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 7

That, in the area of intergovernmental cooperation, the Minister responsible for adult literacy and essential skills development ensure the following:

- a) that bilateral agreements with provinces and territories include binding clauses concerning official language minority communities (OLMCs), including clauses respecting consultations with community representatives (identifying the interlocutors and the frequency of consultations) and the accountability obligations of the two levels of government;**
- b) that provincial and territorial action plans be public and clearly demonstrate how provincial and territorial governments will meet their respective commitments to OLMCs; and**
- c) that the accountability provisions enable OLMCs to determine how much of the federal and provincial or territorial investments are allocated to them.**

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Committee would like to thank all of the witnesses who took part in this study, as well as the stakeholders and many volunteers who, through their dedication to adult literacy and essential skills development, help enrich the education continuum in OLMCs and across Canada.

45 Ibid.

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes Michel Robillard, Chief Executive Officer	2018/02/05	88
Réseau pour le développement de l'alphabétisme et des compétences Gabrielle Lopez, Representative		
Department of Employment and Social Development Monika Bertrand, Director General Employment Program Policy and Design Directorate Éric Perreault, Manager Office of Literacy and Essential Skills	2018/02/07	89
As an individual Linda Shohet	2018/02/12	90
Literacy Quebec Margo Legault, Executive Director		

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. 88 to 90, 94, and 97](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Denis Paradis
Chair

