



2024 Pre-Budget Submission

**Presented to the House of Commons Standing
Committee on Finance**

August 4, 2023



Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Have the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2023-2028 (APOL)* **include an additional \$230 million in core funding for organizations** that serve francophone minority language communities to prevent them from being stretched beyond the breaking point.

Recommendation 2

Create a \$24-million strategic fund over five years within the Department of Foreign Affairs to support an effective strategy for internationalizing La Francophonie.

Recommendation 3

Provide the funding needed to implement the new official languages act (Bill C-13) so that federal departments and agencies and minority language communities receive adequate funding to meet the act's new requirements.

Recommendation 4

Ensure that amounts added to the latest APOL are made permanent to allow the sustainable and ongoing growth of minority language communities.



Avert a crisis within francophone organizations

Even though the APOL provides record-high funding levels, it has a number of weaknesses. The major problem concerns the absence of core funding for organizations representing Canada's Francophonie.

During your committee's last round of pre-budget consultations, we submitted evidence-based data on the **precarious situation our organizations are in**. You can consult the study [here](#).

Several hundred organizations and institutions work to serve 2.8 million French-speaking Canadians in nine provinces and territories. For minority-language communities, **these organizations are the lifeblood of the French language**: they make it possible to live life in French within francophone and Acadian communities.

To avert this crisis, we called for \$300 million over five years.

Unfortunately, the funding provided in the APOL to address this crisis is only \$70 million over 5 years, or 23% of the funding called for by the FCFA. This amount clearly falls short of the necessary funding.

This situation only aggravates the crisis we are facing.

French is declining in Canada. The force that gives life to French outside Quebec is growing weaker. The government can and must do better.

An FCFA study on the health of community organizations notes that:

- ❖ One out of every four organizations has one employee or less;
- ❖ 90% of organizations are forced to offer **average salaries that fall short of** the average salary for Canada;
- ❖ Two-thirds of organizations are **unable to recruit the staff** they need to carry out their mission;
- ❖ 63% of the organizations **lack sufficient financial means** to perform the work expected of them;
- ❖ One out of every six organizations has **a chronic deficit**; and
- ❖ The pandemic and the inflationary trend of the past few months have aggravated the situation.¹¹

¹ FCFA Canada, *Éviter le point de rupture : des organismes francophones en santé pour des communautés en santé*, October 2022, p. 6, <https://fcfa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/FCFA-Memoire-sur-la-sante-des-organismes-francophones-vf.pdf>.



This situation is forcing our organizations to:

1. Significantly scale back their objectives and the scope of their activities.
2. Overload their resources, which is creating fatigue within the organizations. Serious issues are at play, not only in relation to organizational health, but also, and more alarmingly, with respect to the mental health of teams operating under tremendous stress.

We need to reinforce the capacity of these organizations so that they can respond to the many consultations they can expect from federal institutions, which implement their new, more stringent obligations under Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*. This includes their capacity to engage, participate in consultations, gather evidence-based data, analyze public policies, and so on. Over 190 federal institutions are expected to call on our communities.

In other words, without a substantial increase to our core funding, we will not be able to adequately implement the new *Official Languages Act*.

Organizations are in urgent need of long-term stability, including the ability to offer competitive working conditions so they can hold onto their employees and retain their institutional knowledge and capacities as members of a network that plays an essential role in the vitality of Canada's official languages.



Stop the decline of French in Canada through long-term, comprehensive management

The government has two new tools for ensuring the survival of French in Canada: the new *Official Languages Act* (OLA) and the new Action Plan for Official Languages (APOL).

The current approach of each federal department and agency is to manage APOL funds like projects. For French to survive in Canada, this approach has to change. Accordingly, we need to take the following steps:

1. Channel funding into long-term programming.
2. Make funding stable and predictable to allow for long-term planning and growth.
3. Make temporary APOL funding (\$1.4 billion in new funds) permanent.
4. Take a “for and by” approach so that organizations can coordinate the distribution of resources within their communities using an intermediary, self-management approach. Ensure that funding leads to the long-term enablement and empowerment of our communities.
5. Ensure transparency and accountability for government investments. We must create a clear accountability framework for the APOL and document its overall impact, not simply the impact of each individual initiative.

As for the new legislative framework for the official languages, the government must ensure fast, effective implementation. This will require the government to:

1. Plan for and ensure the availability of funds for implementing this new act, bearing in mind that it just received royal assent in June 2023 and many of its upgrades will take effect immediately; and
2. Guarantee the availability of funds for major structural changes within Treasury Board, Immigration and Citizenship Canada, Canadian Heritage, and the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

The new act establishes new responsibilities and actions that are to take effect quickly. Without financial support, Parliament’s intention of reversing the decline of French will be severely undermined.



Internationalization of French as a development tool for our communities

In the last fiscal year, the FCFA worked with the Department of Foreign Affairs to develop an internationalization project for francophone organizations.

Unfortunately, the effort did not receive adequate support.

The new *Official Languages Act*, which received Royal Assent in June 2023, assigns the following new responsibility to the Department of Foreign Affairs:

42 (1) The Government of Canada is committed to advancing the use of English and French in the conduct of Canada's external affairs and to promoting French as part of Canada's diplomatic relations.

This new obligation requires the government to review its decision and reconsider the creation of a \$24-million strategic fund over five years in support of a participatory internationalization strategy for francophones living in minority communities.