



## MEMO

To: University of Alberta Academic Restructuring Working Group (ARWG) and Service Excellence Transformation (SET) Steering Committee

Cc: Bill Flanagan, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Alberta  
Kate Chisholm, Chair of the Board of Governors  
Honourable Demetrios Nicolaidis, Minister of Advanced Education  
Honourable Leela Aheer, Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women and Minister responsible for the Francophone Secretariat  
Ms. Laila Goodridge, Parliamentary secretary responsible for Alberta's francophonie

From: Sheila Risbud, President of the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA) and Isabelle Laurin, Executive Director of the ACFA

### **Re: Proposal for a Renewed Campus Saint-Jean within the *U of A for Tomorrow* restructuring initiative**

1. Campus Saint-Jean (CSJ) is the only French-language post-secondary institution in Alberta. As the spokesperson for over 268 000 French-speaking Albertans, and as the assignee of contractual rights and interests regarding the CSJ, the ACFA is deeply invested in ensuring that the CSJ is positioned for success within the *U of A for Tomorrow* restructuring initiative.

2. The ACFA understands that the University of Alberta's *U of A for Tomorrow* restructuring initiative seeks to create cost efficiencies by various means, including by reducing duplication of services, promoting interdisciplinary teaching and research, and eventually moving towards a new revenue generation program focused on student and employer demand, while upholding the University's commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion. The ACFA understands that the *U of A for Tomorrow* restructuring initiative aims to reduce costs including by reducing the number of faculties and the University's footprint<sup>1</sup>, and is concerned about the reference at town hall meetings to examples of a university with as few as five faculties.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Service Excellence Transformation Town Hall of July 15, 2020, online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJgSy1wDyyw>.

<sup>2</sup> Academic Restructuring Town Hall of July 8, 2020, online: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qBwX\\_c97qk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qBwX_c97qk); see also "Presentation: U of A for Tomorrow with President-elect Bill Flanagan", Virtual Town Hall meeting of June 2, 2020 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyXfc30bRRI>.

3. Protecting and promoting the CSJ's autonomy and distinctiveness within the University of Alberta advances the objectives of *U of A for Tomorrow*, as well as responding to the unique objectives and needs of the French-speaking community of Alberta. **This memo (A)** explains the unique mandate of the CSJ and its role in response to the growing demand for a skilled bilingual workforce in Alberta, **(B)** explains the importance of protecting and promoting the CSJ's autonomy and distinctiveness to further its mandate and uphold the University of Alberta's contractual obligations, **(C)** explains the link between the CSJ's autonomy, its distinctiveness and cost-effectiveness, and **(D)** presents a proposal for protecting and promoting the CSJ's distinct status within the *U of A for Tomorrow* restructuring initiative.

**A. Campus Saint-Jean's Unique Contribution in the Face of Growing Demand from Students and Employers for a Skilled Bilingual Workforce in Alberta**

4. Founded in 1908 by the Oblate Order and established at its current site since 1911, Campus Saint-Jean became a faculty of the University of Alberta in 1977 following an agreement between the Province of Alberta, the University of Alberta and the Oblate Order ("the *1976 Agreement*", **Appendix A**), and a federal contribution. Its mandate is to serve the Francophone community of Alberta, as well as the significant number of students emerging from French Immersion programs. The CSJ offers a variety of French-language post-secondary programs, including in education, arts, sciences, business, nursing and engineering, in a unique, interdisciplinary and immersive francophone setting, thereby training a highly skilled bilingual workforce for Alberta.

5. The French-speaking community in Alberta has grown for years. According to the 2016 Census (which significantly underestimates the number of French speakers), the number of Albertans who declared French as their mother tongue increased by over 30% since 2001. The number of people able to conduct a conversation in French has increased by more than 50% since the 1990s. After Ontario and New Brunswick, Alberta has the largest French-speaking minority population in the country outside of Québec.

6. This demographic growth has increased the demand for services in French, especially in the field of education. For example, enrollment in French-language schools in Alberta has doubled in the past 20 years and is predicted to double again by 2030. For the same period, the number of students in French immersion in Alberta increased by almost 60%. Currently, Alberta suffers from a severe shortage of French-speaking teachers and other education professionals. The dramatic rise in the number of students enrolled in French immersion in Alberta is also a reflection of the increasing demand from employers for a bilingual workforce. It therefore comes as no surprise that the CSJ's enrolment has increased by more than 40% since 2014 despite two increases to the required average for admission.

7. Unlike other University of Alberta faculties that compete with many other English-language post-secondary institutions in Western Canada for students, the CSJ is the only option available to students who wish to pursue their studies in French in the province and is therefore uniquely positioned to train the bilingual workforce that employers are seeking, thereby

contributing to Alberta's economic diversification. The CSJ also attracts students from across Western Canada that wish to pursue their post-secondary education in French. There were more than 800 students enrolled at the CSJ in 2019-2020, and the CSJ could easily admit twice as many students without sacrificing quality, and attract a significant number of fee-paying students from out of province, if given the proper autonomy and tools. Protecting and promoting the CSJ's unique status within the University of Alberta advances the *U of A for Tomorrow* restructuring initiative objectives of orienting its programs towards student and employer demand, promoting interdisciplinarity, as well as respecting equity, diversity and inclusion in relation to Alberta's French-speaking community.

## **B. Protecting and Promoting the CSJ's Autonomy and Distinctiveness is Critical to the CSJ's Mandate and Upholding the University of Alberta's Contractual Obligations to the CSJ**

8. In 1976, the Oblates agreed to transfer the CSJ, then known as the Collège St-Jean d'Edmonton, to the University of Alberta, subject to the terms of the *1976 Agreement*. The Oblates have since ceded their rights under the *1976 Agreement* to the ACFA to ensure its continued enforcement. The *1976 Agreement* is a valid and binding contract that governs the relationship between the University of Alberta, the Government of Alberta and the CSJ.

9. The *1976 Agreement* explicitly recognizes the importance of the CSJ's role in a context of "growing demand for teachers competent in the French language" and "growing number of positions in government, industry and other fields which require a working knowledge" of French and English.<sup>3</sup>

10. The University of Alberta committed to "use its best efforts to operate, maintain, improve and expand the College program, the buildings, equipment and supplies used in conjunction therewith as an integral part of the University of Alberta, all of the same to be located at the College site, and to refrain from establishing on the College site any program or facilities which may adversely affect the College program."<sup>4</sup>

11. The Province committed, for its part, to providing to the University "as and when required, funds by way of grant or otherwise in addition to funds now provided to the University as may be reasonably necessary to allow the University to perform its covenants herein".<sup>5</sup> The Province also committed to transferring federal funding for official language minority education to the University for the benefit of the CSJ, and to replace such funding should the federal government ever choose to withdraw it.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *1976 Agreement* (Appendix A), at p 4.

<sup>4</sup> *1976 Agreement* (Appendix A), clause 3.4, at p 9.

<sup>5</sup> *1976 Agreement* (Appendix A), clause 3.6, at p 10.

<sup>6</sup> *1976 Agreement* (Appendix A), clause 3.7 and 3.8, at p 11-12.

12. The parties to the *1976 Agreement* also recognized and committed to maintaining the immersive francophone environment at the Campus Saint-Jean as a distinct part of the University of Alberta. Indeed, the *1976 Agreement* described the College program as a post-secondary academic program “provided for students who chose to pursue their studies in French and to live or study in a predominantly French environment as a bilingual and bicultural (French and English) part of the University of Alberta”<sup>7</sup> The Province and the University of Alberta explicitly acknowledged “that the College program must be maintained in facilities separate from the main campus of the University of Alberta in order that it be operated in the French atmosphere required for its success”.<sup>8</sup>

13. In keeping with these commitments, the *1976 Agreement* provides that the University of Alberta may only conduct administrative and academic reorganizations that do not “detract from the University’s covenant to maintain, improve and expand the College program at the College site”.<sup>9</sup>

14. Maintaining the unique, immersive francophone environment at the CSJ requires more than just French-language instructors in classrooms. It requires a strong French-speaking leadership with the decision-making authority to tailor educational services to the needs of Alberta’s booming educational sectors (French immersion and French-language education) and bilingual economy, as well as a full range of French-language services, including administrative services. The CSJ’s programs, all offered at the CSJ site in an immersive, interdisciplinary environment, are interdependent, and must be managed as a whole under the direction of an autonomous, French-speaking leadership to ensure success. Maintaining the CSJ in distinct facilities at the Campus Saint-Jean site, which is at the heart of Edmonton’s French Quarter, a City of Edmonton’s Business Improvement Area (BIA), in close proximity to *l’École Gabrielle-Roy*, *l’École Michaëlle-Jean*, *l’École Sainte-Jeanne d’Arc* and *l’École Maurice-Lavallée*, as well as *La Cité francophone*, a hub for Edmonton’s French-language community organizations and businesses, is essential to maintaining the immersive francophone environment necessary to the transmission of language and culture. The CSJ also acts as a community centre where the promotion and preservation of the francophone culture can occur; indeed, francophone community organizations regularly use the CSJ facilities for their activities.<sup>10</sup> Moving the CSJ away from its current location would harm the CSJ as well as the vitality of Edmonton’s French-speaking community.<sup>11</sup> As such, autonomy and distinctiveness are critical to maintaining the francophone character of the CSJ and fulfilling its cultural and linguistic mandate.

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<sup>7</sup> *1976 Agreement* (Appendix A), at p 3.

<sup>8</sup> *1976 Agreement* (Appendix A), at p 5.

<sup>9</sup> *1976 Agreement* (Appendix A), clause 3.3.

<sup>10</sup> *Mahe v Alberta*, [1990] 1 SCR 342 at 363.

<sup>11</sup> See for example, University of Alberta’s own political scientist, Professor Edmund Auger on the concept of institutional completeness: Edmund Auger, « Espérance de vie : diagnostics et pronostics concernant l’avenir des communautés francophones en Amérique » (2008) 26 *Francophonies d’Amérique* 251; Edmund A Auger, “Profil des institutions francophones” in Anne Gilbert, dir, *Territoires francophones: Études géographiques sur la vitalité des Communautés francophones du Canada* (Québec:

15. In keeping with the *U of A for Tomorrow* restructuring initiative objective of promoting equity, diversity and inclusion, and the *1976 Agreement*, the Campus Saint-Jean's autonomy and distinctiveness within the administrative and academic structure of the University of Alberta must at least be maintained, if not improved.

**C. Protecting and Promoting the CSJ's Autonomy and Distinctiveness is Consistent with the Objective of Cost Effectiveness**

16. The CSJ has been chronically underfunded. The CSJ's quota of Full Load Equivalent students for the purposes of calculating its share of the Campus Alberta Grant has not tracked enrolment. Further, federal *Official Languages in Education Protocol* funding has been frozen since at least 2009. In 2013-2014, the CSJ was obliged to lay off over 40% of its support staff. The CSJ relies very heavily on contractual instructors to deliver courses (over 60%), and resorted to laying off contractual instructing staff for four months per year from 2015 to 2018 to create a vital reserve of carry-over funds to meet its basic operational expenses. In response to recent budget cuts, the CSJ has already laid off employees and not renewed contracts, including more than 12% of permanent faculty positions and 20 sessional lecturers. Despite these measures, the CSJ's financial situation remains precarious. The CSJ has reduced its course offerings for 2020-2021 by 19% and will need to further reduce its course offerings for 2021-2022. Simply put, there are no cost efficiencies to be made by attempting additional cuts in French-language administrative positions and services (which are essential since central administrative services cannot serve the needs of CSJ in French), and certainly not without further breaching the *1976 Agreement*.

17. The CSJ's unique mandate nevertheless offers distinct revenue generating avenues for the University of Alberta, ones that are not available to other faculties. Indeed, the Province has a contractual obligation under the *1976 Agreement* to provide the University of Alberta with funds to operate, maintain, improve and expand the CSJ's programs and infrastructures. The federal government also provides *Official Languages in Education Protocol* funding, which the Province has a contractual obligation to replace should it ever be withdrawn. More fundamentally, in the context of a serious shortage of French-speaking teachers and educational staff for constitutionally protected French-language schools in Alberta, the Province has a positive obligation under section 23 of the *Charter* to take measures to rectify the shortage, including by adequately funding the CSJ.<sup>12</sup>

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Septentrion, 2010) 56. See also Anne Gilbert & André Langlois, « Organisation spatiale et vitalité des communautés francophones des métropoles à forte dominance anglaise du Canada » (2006) 21 Francophonie d'Amérique 105.

<sup>12</sup> See *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique et al v British Columbia*, 2020 SCC 13 at para 115, where the Supreme Court states that "a school whose teachers are not properly trained cannot provide a substantively equivalent educational experience" as required by s. 23 of the *Charter*.

18. The ACFA is currently in discussions with the University of Alberta, the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada to implement short-term and long-term solutions to underfunding, based on the *1976 Agreement* and s. 23 of the *Charter*, including a request to both the University of Alberta and the Province to revise current student quotas for the purposes of the Campus Alberta Grant so that funding matches the actual number of Full Load Equivalent students, and a request that the federal government increase its *Official Languages in Education Protocol* funding.

19. These avenues provide significant opportunities for the University of Alberta to generate additional revenues by leveraging the CSJ as an autonomous and distinct faculty. To be sure, the University of Alberta will maximize its revenue generation avenues by providing the CSJ with greater autonomy to develop and capitalize on more direct relationships with the Province and the Government of Canada (which for instance provides funding for the CSJ through the *Official Languages in Education Protocol* and Health Canada), and to develop its own revenue-generating programs, such as continuing education programs.

#### **D. Proposal for a Renewed Campus Saint-Jean within the *U of A for Tomorrow***

20. A strong, autonomous and distinct CSJ advances the *U of A for Tomorrow* initiative objectives of cost effectiveness, interdisciplinarity, responding to student and employer demand, as well as equity, diversity and inclusion, while staying true to the cultural and linguistic mandate of the CSJ and the *1976 Agreement*.

21. The ACFA proposes to work with the University of Alberta and the Government of Alberta, in consultation with the French-speaking community of Alberta, to develop a federated model of governance for the Campus Saint-Jean.

22. A federated model of governance would maximize the University of Alberta's revenue generation avenues by providing the CSJ with greater autonomy to develop and capitalize on more direct relationships with funding partners and develop its own revenue-generating programs. A federated model offering greater autonomy at the administrative and academic level would enable the CSJ pursue its mandate of providing quality French-language post-secondary education in an immersive francophone setting, while maintaining mutually beneficial connections and stability for students and staff. By reinforcing the status of the CSJ as a strong, competitive French-language post-secondary institution, a federated CSJ would position the University of Alberta for greater opportunities to expand its reach with funding partners and prospective students both nationally and internationally.

23. A variety of such federated models exist in Canada, including Laurentian University, Université de Hearst, Saint-Paul University, the First Nations University of Canada (a federated college of the University of Regina) and the University of Toronto's three federated university colleges (University of St. Michael's College, Trinity College, Victoria University). The ACFA looks

forward to working with the University of Alberta and the Government of Alberta to develop a federated model that responds to the needs of the francophone community and the University of Alberta community.

The ACFA looks forward to hearing from you.

**Attachment:** Appendix A – Agreement of 1976 with the Oblate Order, the University of Alberta, and the Government of Alberta