



ACFA



Fair Funding for Sport and Physical Activity in French for a Healthy and Active Francophonie

Brief submitted by the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA) and the Fédération du sport francophone de l'Alberta (FSFA) to the Ministry of Tourism and Sport as part of the implementation of the Government of Alberta's *French Policy*

Nathalie Lachance, President, ACFA
Isabelle Laurin, Executive Director, ACFA
Denis Fontaine, President, FSFA
Céline Dumay, Executive Director, FSFA

December 11, 2023

Introduction

[1] The Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta ("ACFA") and Fédération du sport francophone de l'Alberta ("FSFA") submit a brief to the Ministry of Tourism and Sport as part of the implementation of the Government of Alberta's *French Policy*. The ACFA and FSFA wish to bring to the Ministry's attention specific considerations for Alberta's Francophonie in developing its services and programs in French.

[2] Founded in 1926, the ACFA is the spokes organization for Alberta's Francophonie. The ACFA rallies key stakeholders to the accomplishments and enhance the vitality of Alberta's Francophonie, and improve its members' rights. Its mandate is to represent Alberta's French-speaking population; promote their physical, intellectual, economic, cultural, and social well-being; and encourage, facilitate, and promote French-language learning and Alberta's Francophonie at large. In addition, the ACFA fosters the inclusion of French speakers, whether they have French as their mother tongue or as a learned language, of all origins within a plural Francophone space.

[3] Founded in 1994, under the name *Société des Jeux*, the FSFA is the leader of the sport and physical activity sector within Alberta's Francophonie. The not-for-profit organization has five main mandates: (1) to promote sport and physical activity, (2) to design and offer events, programs, and services, (3) to develop the abilities and knowledge of sport stakeholders (e.g. athletes, coaches, managers), (4) to create and support partnerships with other organizations (e.g. schools, community organizations, sports organizations), (5) and to have a leadership role within Alberta's Francophonie.

[4] In this brief, the ACFA and FSFA present the following:

- a) The **status of the French language** in Alberta by presenting a demographic portrait of Alberta's Francophonie and identifying three legislative texts supporting the offer of services in French and the recognition of the Francophonie in the province;
- b) Several **factors to consider**, based on existing literature, to understand the principle of vitality of Alberta's Francophonie, as found in the *French Policy*;
- c) An **overview of the programs and services** offered in French by the FSFA in the sport and physical activity sector;
- d) **Recommendations** to ensure access to sports and physical activity funded by the Province of Alberta is available to French-speaking Albertans, and that it is of comparable quality to services available in English.

Status of the French language in Alberta

Demographic Portrait

[5] Alberta's Francophonie is well-established in the province due to its history, demographics, and institutions.

[6] The first Francophone presence in Alberta dates back to the 18th century, well over 200 years ago. French was the first European language spoken in the territory that became Alberta. As early as the 19th century, several Métis communities, Franco-Catholic missions, and Francophone villages were established. Four of these villages are now officially bilingual: Beaumont, Legal, Falher and Plamondon.¹

¹ Government of Alberta. "Francophone heritage in Alberta." <https://www.alberta.ca/francophone-heritage>

[7] Today, has the largest population with French as its first official language spoken and living in a minority setting in Canada after Ontario and New Brunswick.²

[8] According to Statistics Canada 2021 Census, 79,965 (1.88%) Albertans report French as their first official language spoken, 88,005 (2.06%) report French as their mother tongue, and 261,435 (6.13%) report knowledge of French.³

[9] Further, Alberta also has the second-largest population of children eligible for minority language education in the country (excluding Quebec). There are 67,140 children, aged 0 to 18, with at least one right-holder parent.⁴ Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* gives right-holders the right to have their children educated in the minority official language; in Alberta, this is French.

[10] French ranks 4th among mother tongues in Alberta, after English with ranks 1st (3,083,840), Tagalog 2nd (108,395), and Punjabi 3rd (91,070). However, French ranks 2nd behind English in terms of knowledge of the language.⁵

[11] Moreover, the French-speaking population has grown and become more diversified over the years.

[12] The number of Albertans with French as the first official language spoken increased by 35.9% over 20 years (2001-2021).⁶ The number of Albertans with knowledge of French increased by 54.6% over 30 years (1991-2021).⁷

[13] Although many Francophones were born in Alberta, most came from all over Canada and the world. Among Albertans with French as their mother tongue, about 25% were born in Alberta, 52% came from elsewhere in Canada (e.g. Quebec, New Brunswick, Ontario), and 23% from elsewhere in the world, mainly Africa.⁸

[14] Moreover, the French-speaking population is scattered throughout the province, as Francophone communities have historically been established across the province.

[15] About one-third of the French-speaking population lives in Calgary, one-third in Edmonton, and the remaining third is scattered among medium-sized cities (Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Red Deer, Lethbridge), towns with federal services such as national parks (Jasper, Banff, Canmore) and military bases (Wainwright, Cold Lake), more traditional rural communities (Peace River region, St. Paul, Bonnyville, Legal, Morinville, Beaumont, Plamondon), and newer communities (Edmonton and Calgary Metropolitan regions, Brooks).

² Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

³ Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

⁴ Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

⁵ Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

⁶ Statistics Canada. 2019. *The French Language in Alberta, 2001 to 2016: Facts and Figures*.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2019016-eng.pdf?st=pjEe95Zr>; Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

⁷ Statistics Canada. 2019. *The French Language in Alberta, 2001 to 2016*; Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*; Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 1991 Census of Population, Alberta*; Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 1996 Census of Population, Alberta*.

⁸ Statistics Canada. *Key facts on the French language in Alberta in 2021*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2023013-eng.htm>

[16] This French-speaking population has access to, for example, 43 Francophone schools, four Francophone school boards, nearly 40 Francophone daycares and preschools, one French-language post-secondary institution, 215 schools that offer programs for French learners (e.g., French immersion), and more than 60 community organizations.

Legislative Frameworks

[17] Three pieces of legislation govern the provision of French-language services in Alberta and the recognition of Alberta's Francophonie: (1) the *Official Languages Act*, (2) the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and (3) the *French Policy*.

[18] At the federal level, Alberta's Francophonie is recognized as an official language community in Canada under the *Official Languages Act*. Adopted in 1969, this federal law recognizes French as one of the country's two official languages and guarantees access to French-language services in federal institutions.

[19] In addition, Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees Canadian citizens whose mother tongue is French, who received their primary school instruction in French in Canada, or one of their children received primary or secondary school instruction in French in Canada, the right to Francophone education of a quality that is equivalent to that offered to the Anglophone majority for all their children. It also guarantees these citizens the right to the management and control of provincially-funded Francophone schools. Section 23 is intended to protect the language and cultures of minority communities, and has a "remedial nature" to "correct, on a national scale, the progressive erosion of minority official language groups" and "fight assimilation."⁹

[20] At the provincial level, Alberta adopted its *French Policy* in 2017, which was revised in 2022, to develop its offer of French-language services and broaden its access to federal government funding available for this purpose¹⁰, notably through the *Canada-Alberta Agreement on French-Language Services*. This agreement with the federal government's Department of Canadian Heritage is specifically designed to develop French-language services in the province.¹¹

[21] Through the *French Policy*, the "Government of Alberta acknowledges the past, present and continued social, cultural and economic contributions of the province's significant and diverse French-speaking population. Through meaningful engagement, dialogue and collaboration, the government is committed to enhancing services in French to support the vitality of the Francophonie in Alberta in a targeted and sustainable manner as resources allow."¹²

[22] The *French Policy* "applies to all Government of Alberta departments, agencies, boards and commissions, and to court services."¹³

⁹ Government of Canada. "Section 23- Minority language education rights." <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-cddl/check/art23.html>

¹⁰ Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy: enhancing the services in French to support the vitality of Alberta's French-speaking communities*. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/713b7d93-c164-496a-8da8-813a34066ec4/resource/e9a9be57-1625-4bb7-82fb-cdfdb84c83c2/download/cul-french-policy-2023-english.pdf>

¹¹ Francophone Secretariat and the Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/f8a8b4ed-33e8-4b56-ac75-7aa991a19ce6/resource/e7ad6bd5-937c-4bd7-a9df-a84a9df5fe14/download/cmsw-2018-2019-canada-alberta-agreement-on-french-language-services-application-guidelines.pdf>

¹² Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p. 6.

¹³ Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p. 6.

Factors to consider: vitality of Alberta's Francophonie

[23] From the perspective of Alberta's Francophonie, a strong understanding of the concept of vitality of Francophone minority communities ("FMCs"), one of the guiding principles of the Government of Alberta's *French Policy* mentioned above, is fundamental to offering services in French that truly meet the needs of FMCs and are equivalent to those offered in English. By understanding what Alberta's Francophonie means by "vitality," the Ministry of Tourism and Sport will be able to better target its actions to implement the *French Policy*.

[24] This section presents numerous studies conducted by researchers on the subject of vitality of FMCs in Canada, and on the importance of institutions, programs, and services that are by and for Francophones in ensuring this vitality.

[25] The concept of a community's vitality is based on three "structural variables... (demographic, institutional and statutory) that ensure the group's maintenance or growth as a distinct entity."¹⁴ The statutory variable is defined as the socio-economic and historical status of a linguistic group.¹⁵ The demographic variable is defined as the distribution and number of people who identify with the language group.¹⁶ The previous section on the status of the French-language in Alberta, illustrated that the historical status is well established, that Alberta's Francophonie is scattered throughout the province, and the number of Albertans who have a knowledge of French has increased by 56.4% since 1991, all of which help to satisfy these two vitality variables.

[26] On the other hand, for Alberta's Francophonie, the institutional variable is the one that requires particular attention. This variable is the most dependent on the willingness and ability to develop institutions. Institutions are divided into two (2) categories: formal and informal.¹⁷ In Alberta, formal institutions, such as primary and secondary schools, are better developed, in part because of Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees rights and funding from the Government of Alberta. As for informal institutions, such as community organizations that offer programming and services for all other sectors, they are less developed, and some receive little to no funding from the Government of Alberta.

[27] Nonetheless, "the overall vitality of a linguistic community is the result of the interaction of these three variables."¹⁸ Consequently, when there are weaknesses within any of these three variables, the overall vitality of the community suffers.

Institutional completeness

[28] Given the importance of the institutional variable, combined with the challenges often encountered by FMCs in this area, several researchers have examined this variable by exploring the notion of "institutional completeness."

¹⁴ Rodrigue Landry. 2021. "Loi sur les langues officielles et vitalité des minorités : mission impossible ou œuvre inachevée?" *Minorités linguistiques et société/Linguistic Minorities and Society*, (17), p. 132. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1084703ar>. (Translated from French)

¹⁵ Jake Harwood, Howard Giles et Richard Y. Bourhis. 1994. "The genesis of vitality theory: historical patterns and discorsal dimensions." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, (108), 167-206. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.1994.108.167>

¹⁶ Jake Harwood, Howard Giles et Richard Y. Bourhis. 1994. "The genesis of vitality theory..."

¹⁷ Jake Harwood, Howard Giles et Richard Y. Bourhis. 1994. "The genesis of vitality theory..."

¹⁸ Anne Gilbert et al. 2005. "L'environnement et la vitalité communautaire des minorités francophones : vers un modèle conceptuel." *Francophonie d'Amérique*, (20), p. 52-53. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1005336ar>. Translated from French

[29] Institutional completeness is the notion that institutions (e.g. schools, places of worship, hospitals, community organizations, etc.) are “seen as a condition that contributes to the flourishing of minorities.”¹⁹ In other words, institutional completeness is the ability of FMCs to “own institutions” and for these institutions to be “managed by and for” the community.²⁰

[30] The federal government has recognized the importance of institutional completeness and has emphasized the role that provinces must also play: “Provincial and territorial governments themselves have linguistic obligations towards their minorities, and this involves supporting and protecting their institutions.”²¹

[31] Other provincial authorities have also stressed the importance of ensuring the survival of FMC institutions. For example, the Ontario Divisional Court in *Lalonde v. Ontario (Commission de restructuration des services de santé)* (“Montfort case »), indicated that: “institutions are vital to the survival of cultural communities. They are much more than providers of services. They are linguistic and cultural milieus which provide individuals with the means of affirming and expressing their cultural identity, and which by extension permit them to reaffirm their cultural adherence to a community. The individual and the family alone are incapable of maintaining the linguistic and cultural identity of a community. Thus, these institutions must exist in as wide a range of spheres of social activities as possible in order to permit the minority community to develop and maintain its vitality.”²²

[32] Therefore, having access to spaces within the English-speaking majority, where services integrate Francophone language and cultures, is not a viable option for achieving institutional completeness and ensuring the vitality of Alberta’s Francophonie. The community achieves institutional completeness only when it has the institutions necessary to maintain interpersonal relationships²³, i.e., when members have most of their relationships within their linguistic group.²⁴

[33] As such, FMCs often refer to the “by and for” approach, which “gives communities the opportunity to determine their own needs and priorities, and to recommend where government investments aimed at their development should go.”²⁵

Identity building and language transmission

[34] Researchers also explain that Francophone institutions “can ensure the transmission of language, heritage and culture, as well as identity building.”²⁶ Thus, community organizations within

¹⁹ Linda Cardinal et Rémi Léger. 2017. “La complétude institutionnelle en perspective.” *Politiques et Sociétés*, (36), p. 3. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1042233ar> Translated from French

²⁰ Éric Forgues et al. 2020. “La construction d’espaces francophones comme projet de société en milieu minoritaire.” *Minorités linguistiques et société / Linguistic Minorities and Society*, (13), 29-48. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1070389ar>. Translated from French; Linda Cardinal et Rémi Léger. 2017. “La complétude institutionnelle en perspective.”

²¹ Gouvernement of Canada, 2021. *English and French: Towards a substantive equality of official languages in Canada*, p. 16.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/corporate/publications/general-publications/equality-official-languages.html>

²² *Lalonde v. Ontario (Commission de restructuration des services de santé)*, 1999 CanLII 19910 (ON SCDC),

<https://canlii.ca/t/glgrn>

²³ Raymond Breton. “Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants.” *American Journal of Sociology* 70, no. 2 (1964): 193-205.

²⁴ Linda Cardinal et Rémi Léger. 2017. « La complétude institutionnelle en perspective. » *Politique et Sociétés* 36, no 3 : p. 5.

<https://doi.org/10.7202/1042233ar>

²⁵ Fédération des communautés francophone et acadienne du Canada. 2017. *Des impacts durables par et pour les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire*, p. 2. (Translated from French)

²⁶ Éric Forgues et al. 2020. « La construction d’espaces francophones comme projet de société en milieu minoritaire. » *Minorités linguistiques et société / Linguistic Minorities and Society*, (13), 29-48. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1070389ar>

FMCs have a “dual mission”, unlike organizations in the English-speaking majority. In addition to fulfilling their raison d’être by contributing to identity building and language transmission among French-speaking Albertans.

[35] The social context in which a person finds themselves (i.e., family, school, community) plays a vital role in how they identify themselves. As explained in the Montfort case, family alone is simply not enough to ensure that a person can identify as a member of his or her community. Community organizations must offer programs and ways of interacting with the community to ensure that this person can firmly identify with their community.²⁷ The role that community organizations and institutions play in the identity building of a Francophone cannot be dismissed.

[36] Moreover, the link between community institutions is important, since it ensures that “children’s and youth’s identity building will take place with less fluctuation, disarray and anxiety.”²⁸ This link explains why community organizations within Alberta’s Francophonie are often called upon by Francophone schools to offer programs and services in French. Alberta’s Ministry of Education states that Francophones schools are mandated to offer a program that enables “French language proficiency and identity development.”²⁹ Thus, programs and services offered by community organizations also become essential to the full implementation of Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

[37] The role of community organizations in ensuring language transmission also involves schools with French immersion programs. French immersion programs in Alberta are designed for children to learn French and use extracurricular activities in French as a way to “develop language skills and cultural appreciation.”³⁰

[38] Additionally, having access to activities that enable French-language learners and Francophones, both young and older, to speak French in everyday life helps counter the phenomenon of linguistic insecurity. Linguistic insecurity has been defined “as a sense of unease, discomfort or anxiety experienced when using or attempting to use one’s first language or second language”³¹ or “a perception that one’s accent, choice of words or grammar fail to align with standardized language norms.”³² For French-language learners, linguistic insecurity can also mean that they don’t believe they can truly identify as bilingual.³³

[39] Institutional completeness can counter the phenomenon of linguistic insecurity, since “linguistic security also depends on access to a range of social settings that normalize the use of French.”³⁴ Canadian Parents for French has also emphasized the importance of “immersive occasions in

²⁷ Association canadienne d’éducation de langue française (ACELF). 2022. *Comprendre la construction identitaire*. https://acelf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CCI-F1-4_ressource-1.pdf

²⁸ ACELF. 2022. *Comprendre la construction identitaire*, ch. 3 p. 5.

²⁹ Government of Alberta, “Francophone Education.” <https://www.alberta.ca/education-guide-francophone-education>

³⁰ Gouvernement de l’Alberta. “Le français langue seconde-immersion.” <https://education.alberta.ca/%C3%A9ducation-en-fran%C3%A7ais-en-alberta/immersion-fran%C3%A7aise/?searchMode=3>. Translated from French

³¹ Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. 2021. *Linguistic (In)security at work*. <https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/publications/studies-other-reports/2021/linguistic-insecurity-work-exploratory-survey-official>

³² Canadian Parents for French. 2020. *Building Linguistic Security: Be Brave, Speak French!*, p. 1. https://cpf.ca/wp-content/uploads/CPF_2020_LinguisticSecurityBrief_EN_v9_EMAIL-1.pdf

³³ Canadian Parents for French. 2020. *Building Linguistic Security...*

³⁴ Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française. 2020. *Stratégie nationale pour la sécurité linguistique*, p. 17. https://snsl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FJCF_2020_SNSL_Document_FR_RGB.pdf. Translated from French.

francophone settings” for French-language learners “to keep their levels of linguistic proficiency and security strong.”³⁵

Fédération du sport francophone d’Alberta : An Institution of Alberta’s Francophonie

[40] When the above information is put into practice, the FSFA is considered an institution of Alberta’s Francophonie. The organization is owned and managed by French-speaking Albertans and offers programs and services in French for the French-speaking population. This section introduces the FSFA and its programs and services to understand their fundamental role in ensuring the vitality of Alberta’s Francophonie.

[41] It was on April 8th, 1994, that Alberta’s Francophonie founded the *Société des Jeux*. At the time, the organization had a dual mandate: (1) to promote culture through sports for youth, and (2) to organize the Alberta Francophone Games, an annual provincial sporting event. In 2003, following a growing demand for programs and services in the area of sport and physical activity for French-speaking Albertans of all ages, the *Société des Jeux’s* vocation broadened and the organization became the FSFA.

[42] Today, programs and services offered by the FSFA fall into three categories in line with its mandate: (1) sporting events, (2) awareness campaigns and workshops to promote well-being and physical activity, and (3) training and equipment loans to build the capacity of other organizations and individuals involved in the sports.

[43] Firstly, the FSFA organizes several sporting events, including the Alberta Francophone Games, a Bowling Night, a Curling Night and a virtual race. These events continue to be successful, either by selling out or by ever-increasing registrations, demonstrating the popularity of sporting events among French-speaking Albertans.

[44] The Alberta Francophone Games (“AFG”) is the FSFA’s flagship event. Presented for the first time in 1992, the event will celebrate its 30th edition in 2024. Each year, the AFG bring together in a host community (the 2023 edition was held in Sylvan Lake and the 2024 edition will be held in Lac La Biche) between 500 and 600 youth enrolled in Francophone schools and French immersion programs from grades 7 to 12 from across the province as well as some 100 volunteers, many with skills in specialized sports such as coaches, referees and stewards. Participants come together for a weekend of sports and arts competitions, but also take part in social activities to celebrate the French language and Francophone cultures, and to meet other French-speaking Albertans.

[45] Thus, the AFG are a provincial multi-sport and multi-disciplinary event, the equivalent within Alberta’s Francophonie to the Alberta Winter Games and the Alberta Summer Games. Like the Alberta Games, the AFG showcase host communities, engages volunteers, showcases and celebrates participants’ talents and achievements, and has reached thousands of Albertans over the years.³⁶

[46] However, unlike the Alberta Games, which are an initiative of the Government of Alberta, the AFG are community-driven. The AFG are also held entirely in French; the Alberta Games don’t offer an opportunity for French-speaking Albertans to connect through sport in French.

³⁵ Canadian Parents for French. 2020. *Building Linguistic Security...* p. 10.

³⁶ Gouvernement of Alberta. “Alberta Games.” <https://albertasport.ca/alberta-games/>

[47] The AFG are a major event with an ever-increasing demand. Since its first edition, when almost 150 participants gathered in Edmonton, registrations for the AFG have increased by 300%, and the FSFA has turned down registrations due to its limited financial capacity.

[48] The AFG have been the subject of academic research, providing data and evidence that illustrate the real impact of this event on identity building and language transmission among participants and on strengthening Alberta's Francophonie.³⁷

[49] When the AFG were created, the founders conceived the event as a means of promoting Alberta's Francophonie: "They believed that sport conducted in French and under francophone auspices would be an effective medium to attract young people into the francophone community."³⁸ The goal in creating the AFG was "to contribute to the vitality of institutions available to francophone youths."³⁹ For many of the organizers and volunteers, the Francophone aspect of the AFG was the main reason they chose to participate in the AFG rather than the Alberta Summer Games.⁴⁰

[50] For participants from Francophone schools, the AFG help with identity building. During research interviews, Francophone school boards emphasized that "the Games not only take on an educational component, they also become an opportunity to develop the "community" dimension of francophone schools."⁴¹ The importance of having leisure activities in informal spaces is that they are "key site in which young people make friends, forge values, and develop identities."⁴²

[51] For participants from schools with French immersion programs, the AFG allow them to experience a weekend in French. During research interviews, English school boards with French immersion programs explain that they "are interested in the linguistic experience the AFG offer for students to 'practice' French."⁴³ As mentioned above, linguistic insecurity is a genuine concern for French-language learners, and the AFG can be used to address this phenomenon.

[52] Today, youth from Francophone schools account for 60% to 70% of participants, while those from French immersion programs represent about 30% to 40%. In recent years, however, the number of participants from French immersion programs has steadily increased.

[53] Furthermore, the AFG are a stepping stone to other national Francophone sporting events, including the *Jeux franco-canadiens de l'Ouest et du Nord* and the *Jeux de la francophonie canadienne*. For example, the *Jeux francophonie canadienne* are a major event held every three years, featuring dozens of disciplines and events, and bringing together in one host province nearly 1,000 participants, 250 coaches, and hundreds of volunteers from across Canada⁴⁴. Many of Team Alberta's participants at

³⁷ Christine Dallaire et David Whitson. 1998. "Growing up in L'Archipel: Youth Identities in the Context of the Alberta Francophone Games." *Canadian Issues/Thèmes Canadiens*, vol 20: 91-102; Christine Dallaire. 1999. "The Alberta Francophone Games: A Question of Identity." Thesis. https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk1/tape7/PQDD_0032/NQ46825.pdf; Christine Dallaire. 2003. "Sport's impact on the Francophones of the Alberta Francophone Games (AFG)." *Language and Culture/Langue et Culture*. (25), 33-58. <https://doi.org/10.7202/008047ar>

³⁸ Christine Dallaire. 2003. "Sport's impact on the Francophones...", p. 33.

³⁹ Christine Dallaire. 1999. "The Alberta Francophone Games...", p. 60.

⁴⁰ Christine Dallaire. 1999. "The Alberta Francophone Games...", p. 59.

⁴¹ Christine Dallaire. 1999. "The Alberta Francophone Games...", p. 85-86

⁴² Christine Dallaire and David Whitson. 1998. "Growing up in L'Archipel..." p. 8.

⁴³ Christine Dallaire. 1999. "The Alberta Francophone Games...", p. 85

⁴⁴ Éric Forgues, Michelle Thompson, Christine Dallaire and Éric Mathieu Doucet. 2018. "Les Jeux de la francophonie canadienne. Épanouissement, identité et engagement de la jeunesse d'expression française au Canada : Rapport." <https://fjcf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/RAPPORT-FINAL-1.pdf>

those events are recruited at the AFG and given the chance to showcase their talents on the national stage. The FSFA coordinates the sports delegation for Team Alberta.

[54] As for other events, the Bowling Night was held for the fourth time in 2022. Held annually in Edmonton, the Bowling Night brings together over 150 participants to enjoy a French-language sport and community event. Participants from across the province also have the opportunity to financially support French-language sports in Alberta, as the event is also a fundraiser for the AFG. In 2022, over 5,000\$ was raised during the event.

[55] Since 2006, the FSFA, in collaboration with the *ACFA régionale d'Edmonton*, has organized a Curling night. Held at the Shamrock Curling Club in Edmonton, this event has become a must for adult curlers within Alberta's Francophonie, selling out almost every year and bringing together more than 16 teams representing 64 participants.

[56] More recently, the FSFA has added a province-wide virtual race to its series of sporting events. The race, held in June, is open to the entire French-speaking population of Alberta, scattered across the province and of all ages, who commit to walking or running 1 km, 5km, 10km or more during a 10-day race. In 2022, the race had over 190 participants; in 2023, the registrations more than doubled to 406.

[57] Secondly, the FSFA conducts awareness campaigns and workshops presented by its sports facilitators, to improve French-speaking Albertans' physical health and well-being, as well as promote physical literacy. These campaigns and workshops are one-time initiatives, usually targeting specific population groups or sectors with the greatest needs or more at-risk (e.g. workplaces, women, newcomers, teen girls, schools or seniors).

[58] The projects led by the FSFA for these types of programs and services are similar to those of several English-speaking community organizations, such as In Motion Network and Ever Active Schools, which collaborate and receive funding from the Ministry of Tourism and Sport. The FSFA is the equivalent organization within Alberta's Francophonie. The paragraphs below present a few examples of projects carried out in recent years.

[59] For the workplace, the FSFA is raising awareness about workplace wellness in collaboration with Edmonton's Association la Girandole and Réseau santé Alberta, two Francophone organizations. The FSFA has created pamphlets and a web page that promote physical activity and inform about the risks of being sedentary in the workplace. The FSFA also created a campaign to encourage the use of stairs, instead of elevators, for all those who visit and work at Edmonton's La Cité Francophone, a community hub home to several Francophone organizations and hundreds of French-speaking workers.

[60] For women, the FSFA collaborated, in 2019, with the Coalition des femmes de l'Alberta, a Francophone women's organization, to create the bilingual "#ELLEBOUGE/#SHEMOVES" awareness campaign. Inspired by the campaign, *This Girl Can*, created in England by Sport England, the FSFA innovated by presenting one of the very first campaign of its kind anywhere in Canada and in French. The campaign profiled 24 French-speaking women from Alberta, of different sizes, ages, backgrounds, and sporting skills, to raise awareness of physical activity and its benefits for women and girls, given that the number of women participating in sport in Canada is less than 20%. The campaign included a website, a travelling exhibit, presentations at events such as Canada's 2021 Sport for Life Summit, and billboard advertising in several cities throughout Alberta.

[61] For teen girls, the FSFA has been organizing since 2018 the annual event "Let's Go Girls," in collaboration with the Coalition des femmes de l'Alberta and In Motion Network. This event gives girls

aged 13 to 18 the opportunity to try new sports and take part in discussions to better understand their realities regarding physical activity. The most recent event, held in 2022, brought together 70 teen girls to Red Deer. In addition, given the great success of the “#ELLEBOUGE/#SHEMOVES” awareness campaign, the FSFA replicated the initiative as part of the bilingual “#ELLEBOUGEADO/TEENGIRLSMOVE” campaign. The campaign profiled 12 French-speaking teen girls from Alberta. Through videos and photos, the campaign showcased these teen girls who overcame their fear and found their way to be physically active. The campaign also travelled to several Francophone schools in the province, allowing the FSFA to offer workshops to teen girls.

[62] For schools in general, the FSFA is regularly called upon to offer sports workshops for students in Francophone schools or enrolled in French immersion programs, or present inspirational talks by renowned athletes. Most recently, in December 2022, the FSFA organized a virtual conference in French featuring Randy Chevrier, a former member of the Calgary Stampeders of the Canadian Football League, during which themes of resilience and leadership were discussed. The conference attracted over 1,000 participants from Francophone and French immersion schools. Past conferences have also included Kim St-Pierre, former Olympic Champion in women’s ice hockey, and Bruny Surin, Olympic champion in Track and Field, to name a few.

[63] The FSFA also undertook a more substantial project from 2014 to 2017, working closely with the four (4) Francophone school boards to implement “Healthy Schools Communities.” The project allowed Francophone school communities to align their schools with the Government of Alberta’s priority of developing healthy school communities, outlined in the *Developing Healthy School Communities Handbook* (“*Handbook*”).⁴⁵ Other initiatives existed in English led by Ever Active Schools and Be Fit for Life, but Francophone school boards needed an initiative by and for Alberta’s Francophonie. The project was funded by the *Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund* and the FSFA was appointed to lead it. The FSFA established several partnerships and committees to develop resources and tools focusing on the Handbook’s three priorities: (1) healthy eating, (2) active living, and (3) positive social environments.

[64] For seniors, the FSFA regularly collaborates with the Fédération des aînés franco-albertains, an organization within Alberta’s Francophonie, to present initiatives to French-speaking seniors aged 50 and over. Over the years, the FSFA delivered three (3) training courses: “Moving for Fun,” “Moving Without Looking Like it,” and “Walking Towards the Future”. Since 2010, the FSFA offers sports workshops as part of the “Jeux Franco+” (“Franco-Games+”), an event presented by the Fédération des aînés franco-albertains. In 2020 and 2021, the FSFA also presented the “Seniors in Action” awareness campaign, featuring ten (10) portraits of seniors. The aim was to tackle different physical activities and themes to remind seniors of the importance of staying active, regardless of age.

[65] Thirdly, the FSFA offers skills development training for teachers in primary schools, coaches, and anyone who wants to improve their knowledge of physical activity, physical literacy, and sports. In addition, the FSFA offers a sports equipment borrowing service (i.e., flags, whistles, balls, jerseys, nets, etc.) for organizations and schools that don’t have access to the necessary materials. The FSFA also awards several grants to reduce barriers that prevent people from accessing sports and physical activity.

⁴⁵ University of Alberta- Centre for Health Promotion Studies. 2011 “Developing Healthy School Communities Handbook”. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/509cc46f-b716-4eaf-b36b-3ca522b2f6b0/resource/9b19188f-d4ec-4ad0-9720-3ef7a1f0c801/download/2011-11-developing-healthy-communities-handbook.pdf>

[66] To fund all these initiatives, the FSFA receives grants from the following: Canadian Heritage, Young Canada Works, Canada Summer Jobs, and the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC). The FSFA occasionally receives grants from other sources, such as the Government of Alberta's Community Initiatives Program, but applications must be made annually and on a project basis; these grants are not guaranteed.

Recommendations

[67] In light of the information presented above, it is clear that the FSFA is an organization that meets many of the needs of Alberta's French-speaking population of all ages for physical activity and sports, as well as improving well-being and physical literacy skills. The FSFA's services and programs support the principle of vitality found in the Government of Alberta's *French Policy*. However, the organization receives little one-time funding and no operational funding from the Government of Alberta, which undermines the stability of this institution and the vitality of Alberta's Francophonie as a whole.

[68] However, the Government of Alberta has set a specific objective regarding the FSFA in its *French Policy 2020-23 Action Plan*: "Facilitate integration of the Fédération du sport francophone de l'Alberta (FSFA) into the sports and physical activity networks and programs."⁴⁶ The FSFA has been asking to be integrated into the network for over 6 years, with no success.

[69] It's no surprise that this objective is also reflected in the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*, developed by the ACFA.⁴⁷ In 2022, Alberta's Francophonie adopted this new *Action Plan*, which aims to guide the government on the opportunities and needs of Alberta's Francophonie in terms of government services to implement the *French Policy*. The ACFA led a rigorous engagement process that included interviews and focus groups with 200 leaders of organizations within Alberta's Francophonie and a survey to which over 500 members of Alberta's Francophonie answered. The *Action Plan* includes over 200 actions grouped into eight (8) targeted intervention sectors.

[70] Results of the engagement process showed that having a greater offer of services in French in the health and physical activity sector is a priority for Alberta's Francophonie. One of the actions identified in the *Action Plan* is: "Integrate the FSFA into the sport and physical activity network and programs (e.g., Physical Activity and Recreation Operating Grant Program), so that the organization can position itself as a leader in French-language sport, alongside the English-speaking majority, and access provincial funding."⁴⁸

[71] For this reason, the **ACFA and FSFA recommend that the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Tourism and Sport provide predictable financial support to the FSFA** to implement the *French Policy*. In our view, predictable funding could be provided in two ways and could be integrated into the programs and services already offered by the Ministry of Tourism and Sport. It would also align with several objectives and priorities of the Government of Alberta.

⁴⁶ Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and the Status of Women, Government of Alberta. 2020. *French Policy 2020-23 Action Plan*. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/96f8b5e5-7bf3-433b-832b-285dff9da82/resource/cf497bed-18e4-4c14-a7b1-346063c92a51/download/cmsw-french-policy-action-plan-2020-23.pdf>

⁴⁷ ACFA. 2022. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*.

⁴⁸ ACFA. 2022. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*. P.24

Option #1: Operational Funding

[72] Firstly, operational funding could be provided by the Ministry of Tourism and Sport by increasing the Physical Activity and Recreation Operating Grant Program envelope to include the FSFA, without penalizing English-speaking organizations that receive funding from this envelope. As presented above, the FSFA's programs and services promote physical activity and literacy among French-speaking Albertans, which is directly in line with "the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation (SPAR) branch's goal of making Albertans more active, more often, through recreation and physical activity."⁴⁹ It is our understanding, following discussions several government officials, that this program is currently closed to new applicants. As a result, the program does not fund any services or programs by and for Alberta's Francophonie, thus failing to meet the *French Policy's* vitality principle.

[73] The option of integrating the FSFA into this program would also be compatible with a practice already in place in the Ministry of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women. The Ministry has integrated organizations within Alberta's Francophonie into its operational funding programs. These include the *Société historique francophone de l'Alberta*, which has been designated a Provincial Heritage Organization (PHO), and the *Regroupement artistique francophone de l'Alberta*, which has been designated a Provincial Arts Service Organization (PASO). Both organizations are recognized leaders within Alberta's Francophonie respectively for the heritage and arts sectors. Like these organizations, the FSFA is a recognized leader in Alberta's Francophonie for the sport and healthy living sector.

[74] This operational funding would also align with the Government of Alberta's *Going the Distance: The Alberta Sport Plan 2014-2024* ("*Sport Plan*"). The *Sport Plan* aims to align the Government of Alberta's *Active Alberta 2011-2021* sport policy⁵⁰ and the Canadian Sport Policy 2012.⁵¹

[75] As mentioned above, the federal government has linguistic obligations towards Francophone minority communities. The Canadian Sport Policy 2012 states that the federal government is "committed to: ensuring access to services in English and French."⁵² However, it also refers to provincial governments' commitment "to enhancing access for traditionally underrepresented and/or marginalized populations."⁵³ We believe that these populations include Alberta's Francophonie communities, given its minority status and the fact that its population includes several marginalized groups.

[76] As for the province's sport policy and *Sport Plan*, it focuses on several actions that the provincial government must take to ensure that sport in Alberta is well supported and meets the needs of Albertans. The *Sport Plan* includes several themes: (1) Promotion, (2) Alignment and Collaboration, (3) Capacity Building, (4) Creative solutions, and (5) Accountability⁵⁴; the FSFA's work is already aligned with these themes.

[77] As explained above, the FSFA has done quite the amount of work to promote sport and physical literacy through its events and programs, as well as its awareness campaigns. The FSFA has also shown

⁴⁹ Government of Alberta, *Physical Activity and Recreation operating grant program*, <https://www.alberta.ca/physical-activity-and-recreation-grants>.

⁵⁰ Government of Alberta. *Active Alberta 2011-2021*. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/b9c193cf-9dc3-4e15-8ed9-8c8961e9ad21/resource/e22bfd29-f397-4e34-8306-796526397ee8/download/5641678-2012-activealbertapolicy.pdf>

⁵¹ Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Government of Alberta. 2014. *Going the Distance: the Alberta Sport Plan 2014-2024*. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/7c63a91d-94d9-4f4a-9769-cdfde1d774ee/resource/1422f696-078b-4dc0-8f7b-ee27d06912b/download/atpr-sportplan.pdf>

⁵² Canadian Sport Policy.2012. Page 17 https://sirc.ca/wp-content/uploads/files/content/docs/Document/csp2012_en.pdf

⁵³ Canadian Sport Policy.2012. Page 17. https://sirc.ca/wp-content/uploads/files/content/docs/Document/csp2012_en.pdf

⁵⁴ Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Government of Alberta. 2014. *Going the Distance...*

collaboration by working with various schools throughout the province and organizations, whether it is other sports organizations offering programs and services in English or organizations of various sectors within Alberta's Francophonie.

[78] When it comes to capacity building, the goal is to ensure that organizations have the capacity and training to meet the current needs of sport in Alberta.⁵⁵ The development of community leaders is one of the objectives of the *Sport Plan*.⁵⁶ As mentioned above, the FSFA, through the AFG, allows participants to gain valuable leadership experience. Leadership development also takes the form of training courses offered by the FSFA to support French-speaking stakeholders working in the sports and physical activity sector. The *Sport Plan* also identifies the support needed to improve organizations' programs and services. The FSFA has been working for a long time with Government of Alberta public servants to try and get more financial resources its programming, with very little success.

[79] Creative solutions are to ensure that the sports sector can better respond to changing sociological and technological trends.⁵⁷ As mentioned above, the FSFA's programs and services include social media awareness campaigns including the bilingual campaigns #ELLEBOUGE/#SHEMOVES and #ELLEBOUGEADOS/#TEENGIRLSMOVE, workshops and virtual events, such as the virtual race and inspirational conferences. During the pandemic, the FSFA also offered a series of videos on social media to keep people active while in isolation. The initiative received a great deal of attention, and the ACFA awarded the FSFA the 2021 Provincial Impact Award in recognition of its success.

[80] Sport Support and Sport Delivery are also a part of the *Sport Plan*. Sport Support refers to the fundamental aspects that Alberta's sport system needs to function.⁵⁸ The *Sport Plan* recognizes the need to consider the diversity of geographic and demographic communities. As explained above, Alberta's Francophonie is a community with geographic and demographic specificities. Alberta's Francophonie is a minority language community that contributes to Alberta's cultural mosaic and must be supported by the Government of Alberta. The FSFA has a provincial mandate to serve Alberta's Francophonie and offers its programs throughout the province, as well as reaching a diversity of audiences.

[81] As for Sport Delivery, it represents the direct provision of sports opportunities for Albertans.⁵⁹ The *Sport Plan's* recognition that schools play an important role in the development of athletes is consistent with the FSFA's strong presence in schools, whether Francophone or with French immersion programs, when recruiting for the AFG or offering workshops. The Sports Plan also recognizes the importance of local and provincial sporting events. The FSFA organizes many provincial and local sporting events that bring together French-speaking Albertans, as presented above. In addition, the importance of multi-disciplinary games is recognized in the Sport Plan. The AFG are the multidisciplinary games of Alberta's Francophonie, and are a community-led initiative and not the responsibility of the provincial government, unlike the Alberta Games.

[82] The Government of Alberta should also take advantage of the fact that the *Sport Plan* will expire in 2024 to consult with the FSFA in its development, so that the perspective of Alberta's Francophonie is considered, and to integrate it into the network of organizations already consulted and funded by the

⁵⁵ Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Government of Alberta. 2014. *Going the Distance...*

⁵⁶ Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Government of Alberta. 2014. *Going the Distance...*

⁵⁷ Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Government of Alberta. 2014. *Going the Distance...*

⁵⁸ Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Government of Alberta. 2014. *Going the Distance...*

⁵⁹ Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Government of Alberta. 2014. *Going the Distance...*

Ministry of Tourism and Sport. Alberta's Francophonie raised the importance of this *Sport Plan* in the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*, by inserting the following action: "Ensure that the next Alberta Sport Plan is available in French and that stakeholders in Alberta's Francophonie are consulted."⁶⁰

Option #2: Specific funding for the Alberta Francophone Games ("AFG")

[83] Secondly, the Ministry of Tourism and Sport could consider providing specific funding to support the AFG by exploring federal funds that support the provision of French-language services. This specific funding would address the challenges created by inflation, compensate for the fact that the Alberta Summer Games and the Alberta Winter Games offer no programming in French, and respond to the identity building and language transmission needs of Francophone schools and French immersion programs.

[84] The AFG account for a large portion of the FSFA's funding – 39,6% of the budget – given its size, but is facing major financial challenges due to exponential inflation for more than a year. This inflation greatly reduces the organization's financial capacity and threatens its other programs and services, which are necessary to ensure the vitality of Alberta's Francophonie.

[85] For the AFG's 2022 edition, the FSFA had budgeted \$168,000, which was usually sufficient based on the participation rate of previous years, while the total cost amounted to \$191,958, creating a deficit of almost \$24,000. Although participation was no greater than in previous years, transportation costs for participants rose by almost \$20,000, while meal costs increased by \$16,000; some changes were also made to the event to minimize this deficit.

[86] Furthermore, the Government of Alberta's programs do not provide development opportunities in French for Francophone athletes. Providing operational funding to the FSFA, so that it can continue to offer the AFG, would be one way for the Government of Alberta to ensure that its sports services are of the same quality as those available in English. Demand for the AFG is so great that the FSFA must refuse registrations, which weakens institutional completeness and jeopardizes the vitality of Alberta's Francophonie.

[87] The AFG receive no major support from the province. Furthermore, only *Provincial Sport Organizations* ("PSO") recognized by the province are eligible to partner in the Alberta Summer Games and Alberta Winter Games. Since the FSFA is not a recognized PSO, it can't contribute to the Games, even if it wanted to.

[88] The Ministry could explore, along with the Francophone Secretariat, the possibility of allocating specific funds to the AFG. There is the *Canada-Alberta Agreement on French-language Services*, a provincial-federal agreement that ensures Alberta's Francophonie has access to quality services comparable to those of the English-speaking majority.

[89] For the *Canada-Alberta Agreement on French-Language Services*, Alberta currently receives the second-lowest amount of any province, despite having the third-largest Francophone population of any province outside of Quebec. Since 2013, Alberta has received \$650,000 per year, well below the median amount of \$1.4 million received by other provinces outside of Quebec. Negotiations between the federal and provincial governments are ongoing. The federal government has recently earmarked

⁶⁰ ACFA. 2022. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*. P.24

additional funds under these agreements for the next five years, a portion of which could be distributed to Alberta, providing additional funds to support the provision of French-language services.

[90] In conclusion, the FSFA's demands for predictable funding are not new and are unequivocally aligned with the Government of Alberta's priorities. The urgency to act has increased, as inflation has caused a significant financial problem since the pandemic. The FSFA is the only organization in Alberta that can offer French-language programs and services in the sport and physical activity sector that meet the needs of Alberta's Francophonie and that will enable the Ministry of Tourism and Sport to truly fulfill the vitality principle contained in the *French Policy*.