



**Government of Alberta's 2024 Budget:**  
**Supporting Measures Essential to Implementing the *French***  
***Policy***

Brief submitted by the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA) to the Honourable Nate Horner, President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, as part of the Budget 2024 consultations

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## Introduction

[1] The Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (« ACFA ») thanks the Government of Alberta for the opportunity to present this brief as part of the Budget 2024 consultations. The ACFA wishes to bring to the government's attention specific investments for Alberta's Francophonie that it could include in its next budget to implement its *French Policy* and offer services and programs in French.

[2] Founded in 1926, nearly 100 years ago, the ACFA is the spokes organization for Alberta's Francophonie.<sup>1</sup> In 1964, the Alberta government formally recognized the ACFA and passed *The A.C.F.A Act* to incorporate the organization<sup>2</sup>. Since the adoption of the *French Policy* in 2017, the ACFA has also been identified as one of the stakeholders to be consulted by the Alberta government so it can determine its priorities<sup>3</sup>.

[3] The ACFA rallies key stakeholders to preserve 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.

[4] In this brief, the ACFA shares the following:

- a) The **status of the French language in Alberta** by (1) presenting a demographic portrait of Alberta's Francophonie and (2) highlighting four legislative texts that support the offer of services in French and the recognition of the Francophonie in the province;
- b) **Recommendations for investments** relating to the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028* and the mandate letters of the concerned ministries.

## 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 18<sup>th</sup> century, well over 200 years ago. French was the first European language spoken in the territory that became Alberta. As early as the 19<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ACFA. <https://acfa.ab.ca/en/acfa/>

<sup>2</sup> Province of Alberta. 1964. *An Act to Incorporate l'Association Canadienne Française de l'Alberta*. [https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/1964\\_ACFA-Act.pdf](https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/1964_ACFA-Act.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy : Enhancing Services in French to Support the Vitality of Alberta's French-speaking Communities*, P. 8. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/713b7d93-c164-496a-8da8-813a34066ec4/resource/e9a9be57-1625-4bb7-82fb-cdfdb84c83c2/download/cul-french-policy-2023-english.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

[8] According to Statistics Canada's 2021 census, 79,965 (1.88%) Albertans have 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.<sup>6</sup>

[9] 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.<sup>7</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> among mother tongues in Alberta, after English with ranks 1<sup>st</sup> (3,083,840), Tagalog 2<sup>nd</sup> (108,395), and Punjabi 3<sup>rd</sup> (91,070). However, French ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> behind English in terms of knowledge of the language.<sup>8</sup>

[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).<sup>9</sup> The number of Albertans with knowledge of French increased by 54.6% over 30 years (1991-2021).<sup>10</sup>

[13] Although many Francophones were born in Alberta, most came from all over Canada and the world. Among Albertans whose first official language spoken is French, some 25% were born in Alberta, 48% come from elsewhere in Canada (e.g. Quebec, New Brunswick, Ontario), and 28% from elsewhere in the world, mainly Africa.<sup>11</sup>

[14] A closer look at the 2021 Census data reveals that the percentage of Albertans who have an immigrant background within Alberta's Francophonie is higher than within Alberta's total population, which stands at 23.5%. What's more, 42% of this Francophone immigrant population arrived in Canada between 2011 and 2021, indicating that many immigrants are still newcomers.<sup>12</sup> Alberta's Francophonie also differs from other provinces in having a higher proportion of Francophones with an immigrant background. In Ontario, for example, 21% of the Francophone population has an immigrant background, while this proportion rises to 30% of the province's total population.

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<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

<sup>9</sup> 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*.

<sup>10</sup> 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*.

<sup>11</sup> Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. 2023. *The French Presence in Alberta*. <https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/sites/default/files/2023-11/ab-pres3.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

[15] Moreover, the French-speaking population is scattered throughout the province, as Francophone communities have historically been established across the province. 19 municipalities in Alberta have 15% or more of their population who speaks French.<sup>13</sup>

[16] 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).

[17] 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 Framework*

[18] Four main 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*, (3) the *French Policy*, and (4) *Alberta's Languages Act*.

[19] At the federal level, Alberta's Francophonie is recognized as an official language community in Canada under the *Official Languages Act*. Adopted in 1969, and modernized in 2023, this federal law recognizes French as one of the country's two official languages and guarantees access to French-language services in federal institutions, many of which are located in Alberta.

[20] In addition, Alberta has constitutional obligations regarding the provision of French-language services, arising from sections 19 and 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*<sup>14</sup>. These respective sections guarantee (1) the right to communicate in French in federal courts, such as the Court of King's Bench, and (2) the right to Francophone education of equivalent quality to that offered to the Anglophone majority for all their children, including school governance<sup>15</sup>, to 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.

[21] At the provincial level, Alberta adopted its *French Policy* in 2017, which was revised in 2023, to develop its offer of French-language services and broaden its access to the federal government funds available for this purpose.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada. 2023. *Key facts of the French language in Alberta in 2021*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2023013-eng.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy: enhancing services in French to support the vitality of Alberta's French-speaking communities*, p. 5. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/713b7d93-c164-496a-8da8-813a34066ec4/resource/e9a9be57-1625-4bb7-82fb-cdfdb84c83c2/download/cul-french-policy-2023-english.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Government of Canada. "Section 23- Minority language education rights." <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccd1/check/art23.html>

<sup>16</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*.

[22] 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."<sup>17</sup>

[23] The *French Policy* "applies to all government of Alberta departments, agencies, boards and commissions, and to court services."<sup>18</sup>

[24] Alberta's *Languages Act* also allows Albertans to use French in the province's courts, and members of the Legislative Assembly to use French in the Legislature.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028***

[25] The *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie* ("Action Plan")<sup>20</sup> is the most ambitious initiative ever undertaken by Alberta's Francophonie to identify its priorities in terms of French-language services offered or funded by the provincial government.

[26] Elaborated by the ACFA, the *Action Plan* is a credible tool to help guide government, elected officials, public servants, and political parties toward the priorities, opportunities, and issues of Alberta's Francophonie for implementing the province's *French Policy*.

[27] The ACFA conducted a rigorous consultation process in 2021-2022. In all, 200 community leaders, representing over 40 community organizations and institutions, as well as 520 French-speaking Albertans participated in the consultations via interviews, focus groups, and a survey.

[28] The data collected was used to draft the *Action Plan's* final version, which was officially unveiled in October 2022. The *Action Plan* includes nearly 200 actions over five years period in eight targeted intervention sectors: (1) Government Institutions, (2) Arts, Culture, and Heritage, (3) Education Continuum, (4) Economic Development, (5) Immigration, (6) Justice, (7) Health and Physical Activity, and (8) Social Services. Many of these actions are directly linked to the Government of Alberta's priorities (e.g., business plans, action plans, mandate letters) and are achievable at a low cost.

[29] For this reason, the ACFA proposes below a series of recommendations for the 2024 Budget based on certain priorities identified in the *Action Plan*.

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<sup>17</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.6.

<sup>18</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.6.

<sup>19</sup> Government of Alberta, 2023. *French Policy*, p.5.

<sup>20</sup> ACFA. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*. [https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Version-officielle\\_Plan-daction-FRAB\\_EN.pdf](https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Version-officielle_Plan-daction-FRAB_EN.pdf)

## Recommendations

### #1 – Negotiate and improve the Canada-Alberta Agreement on French-language services.

*Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women*

[30] The Government of Alberta signed an agreement with the federal Department of Canadian Heritage specifically for developing French-language services within the province, the *Canada-Alberta Agreement on French-Language Services*.<sup>21</sup>

[31] Historically, the Government of Alberta has received funding through this agreement that does not reflect the demographic weight of Alberta's French-speaking population. Alberta receives the second lowest amount of funding while its French-speaking minority population is the third largest in Canada.

[32] Despite the adoption of the *French Policy* in 2017, one of the goals of which was to increase the Government of Alberta's ability to access more federal funding to develop provincial French-language services<sup>22</sup>, Alberta continues to receive an inadequate amount of funding under the agreement to meet the needs of a growing French-speaking population.

[33] The federal government has provided for increased transfers to provinces as part of the *Action Plan on Official Languages 2023-2028*. This could increase the funds received by the Government of Alberta under the *Canada-Alberta Agreement on French-Language Services* and therefore the funds available for implementing the *French Policy*.

[34] The ACFA recognizes that the Government of Alberta is currently working with the federal government to negotiate a new *Canada-Alberta Agreement on French-Language Services*. The ACFA thanks the Government of Alberta for seizing this opportunity to negotiate an enhanced agreement to ensure that it receives its fair share of available federal funding and that this funding reflects the demographic weight of Alberta's Francophonie within Canada.

[35] Furthermore, the ACFA believes that the development of French-language services, as identified in the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie*, would be facilitated by an enhanced agreement. This would allow the Government of Alberta and Alberta's French-speaking citizens to receive federal government funding they would not otherwise have obtained.

[36] Nevertheless, the terms of the *Canada-Alberta Agreement on French-Language Services* require the Alberta government to provide funding to match the portion provided by the federal government. Thus, all ministries would have to include specific funding for implementing the *French Policy* in their respective budgets to access this federal funding. The ACFA has had positive conversations with ministers responsible for the Francophone Secretariat over the past year, who have committed to a significant increase in Alberta's contribution, and we're delighted.

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<sup>21</sup> Francophone Secretariat and Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/4e09af7c-3a65-4a37-a682-85ba36f2da1c/resource/5efc91f5-23db-4e02-8f58-f950da3c8ca0/download/cmsw-2019-2020-entente-canada-alberta-sur-les-services-en-francais-lignes-directrices.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*.

**#2 – Negotiate with the federal government in the context of federal-provincial agreements to obtain its fair share of funding, and use these funds for projects that will help develop French-language services.**

Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women

Ministry of Education

Ministry of Advanced Education

Ministry of Children and Family Services

Ministry of Health

[37] In addition to the *Canada-Alberta Agreement on French-language services*, the Government of Alberta could obtain other federal funding for developing French-language services and supporting the implementation of the *French Policy* in various ministries; this would involve adding French-language clauses and projects to the negotiation of bilateral agreements to come in 2024.

[38] Under the *Official Languages Act*, the federal government generally proposes that provinces include provisions in bilateral agreements to improve the provision of services in French, while respecting provincial jurisdiction.<sup>23</sup> The Government of Alberta also makes explicit reference to its *French Policy* in several bilateral agreements.

[39] Par exemple, voici quelques accords bilatéraux signés entre le gouvernement provincial et le gouvernement fédéral qui contiennent des dispositions pour rehausser l'accès aux services en français en Alberta :

- Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction.<sup>24</sup>
- Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement – 2021 to 2025.<sup>25</sup>
- Canada-Alberta Agreement to Work Together to Improve Health Care for Canadians (2023-24 to 2025-26).<sup>26</sup>
- Canada-Alberta contribution agreement on crisis hotlines responding to gender based violence.<sup>27</sup>
- Canada-Alberta transfer payment agreement on the implementation of the National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence.<sup>28</sup>

[40] The ACFA congratulates the ministries that have taken the initiative of adding provisions to improve the offer of French-language services within these agreements. These language clauses provide access to additional federal funding to support implementing the *French Policy* and, ultimately, the provision of French-language services to Albertans.

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<sup>23</sup> Official Languages Act, Section 45. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/o-3.01/page-4.html>

<sup>24</sup> Government of Alberta. "Official Languages in Education Programs." <https://www.alberta.ca/official-languages-in-education-programs>

<sup>25</sup> Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories/alberta-2021.html>

<sup>26</sup> Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/corporate/transparency/health-agreements/shared-health-priorities/working-together-bilateral-agreements/alberta-improve-care.html>

<sup>27</sup> Government of Canada. <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-violence/intergovernmental-collaboration/agreements-crisis-hotlines/alberta.html>

<sup>28</sup> Government of Canada. <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-violence/intergovernmental-collaboration/bilateral-agreements/alberta-agreement.html>



[41] The ACFA recommends that the Government of Alberta continues to include language clauses in future bilateral agreements, for all ministries working in the eight intervention sectors identified as priorities by Alberta's Francophonie.

[42] The ACFA and several Francophone organizations also took advantage of the negotiations to submit evidence-based briefs to the ministries, proposing initiatives that would meet the needs of Alberta's Francophonie. Several of these proposals were accepted by the concerned ministries.

- Modernizing Alberta's Primary Health Care System: Services that Consider Alberta Francophonie's Language and Cultures as Determinants of Health.<sup>29</sup>
- Child Care Services that Consider the Needs of Alberta's Francophonie.<sup>30</sup>
- A Strategy to End Gender-Based Violence Inclusive of Alberta's Francophonie.<sup>31</sup>

[43] Thanks to a collaborative effort between organizations from Alberta's Francophonie and government ministries, service agreements tailored to the needs of Alberta's Francophonie have been signed. Alberta's Francophonie favours this adaptation, since our communities have specific needs and an organizational structure that differs from the English-speaking majority to ensure the vitality of the French-speaking minority.<sup>32</sup> For example, the Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta ("FPFA")<sup>33</sup> was able to sign an agreement with the Ministry of Children and Family Services as part of the Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement - 2021 to 2025; this agreement cited the *French Policy* to recognize the specific needs and foster the vitality of the Francophonie.

[44] Thus, the ACFA recommends that all ministries work directly with the ACFA and organizations from Alberta's Francophonie to identify project proposals to include in action plans for the implementation of bilateral agreements, so initiatives meet the real needs of Alberta's Francophonie.

### **#3 – Provide operational funding to the ACFA to support the French Policy's implementation.** *Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women*

[45] The Government of Alberta has explicitly identified the ACFA, as one of two stakeholders, to be consulted in identifying priorities for implementing the *French Policy*, given its role as the spokes organization for Alberta's Francophonie.

[46] The ACFA is solicited by dozens of Government of Alberta ministries to obtain information on the priorities of Alberta's Francophonie and to establish meaningful dialogue and collaboration. These requests take the form of regular meetings with government officials, invitations to engagement sessions, requests to disseminate information within our networks, invitations to sit on multi-stakeholder committees, the solicitation of evidence-based data, or collaboration for organizing some activities.

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<sup>29</sup> ACFA and Réseau santé Alberta. 2022. [https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/20221221\\_Memoire\\_ACFA-RSA\\_MAPS\\_EN\\_compressed.pdf](https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/20221221_Memoire_ACFA-RSA_MAPS_EN_compressed.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> ACFA and Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta. 2023. [https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/20230418\\_Memoire\\_Entente-gardereries-federal-provincial\\_FPFA-ACFA\\_EN.pdf](https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/20230418_Memoire_Entente-gardereries-federal-provincial_FPFA-ACFA_EN.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> ACFA et al. 2023. [https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/20231214\\_Memoire-conjoint\\_ACFA-CFA-CFQO-AJFAS-PIA-AJEFA\\_VFG\\_EN.pdf](https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/20231214_Memoire-conjoint_ACFA-CFA-CFQO-AJFAS-PIA-AJEFA_VFG_EN.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> 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), 126-161. Page 132. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1084703ar>

<sup>33</sup> Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta. <https://fpfa.ab.ca/en/about/mission/>



[47] Since 2020, the ACFA has responded to requests from the Government of Alberta by investing hundreds of thousands of dollars to support the *French Policy's* implementation. The ACFA also supports Francophone organizations when they are consulted by the public service, so to enhance organizations' capacity to develop effective public policy.

[48] Despite these investments, the ACFA's small team struggles to meet all of the Government of Alberta's demands, given the *French Policy's* broad scope as it "applies to all government of Alberta departments, agencies, boards and commissions, and to court services."<sup>34</sup>

[49] The ACFA receives no financial support from the Government of Alberta to carry out this work of determining the priorities for Alberta's Francophonie.

[50] As the *French Policy* is relatively new, all implementation mechanisms have recently been put in place and continue to be put in place. The ACFA believes that the Government of Alberta could replicate a practice already in place within the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women and under the *French Policy*. The Ministry has designated Provincial Heritage Organization ("PHO") and Provincial Arts Service Organization ("PASO") within Alberta's Francophonie, which are regularly consulted by the Government of Alberta on the delivery of its programs and services, and receive operational funding to support their efforts.

[51] The ACFA is doing similar, and even much more extensive, work with ten ministries to date and all organizations within Alberta's Francophonie, for implementing the *French Policy*. The government could dedicate operational funds to the ACFA to support its work; the ACFA has sent a formal proposal to the Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women, who is responsible for the Francophone Secretariat.

#### **#4 – Improve funding for the Francophone Secretariat and revisit its positioning within the government.**

*Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women*

[52] On the government's side, the Francophone Secretariat is essential to the *French Policy*. It "coordinates the implementation of the French Policy."<sup>35</sup> Among other things, this involves providing support to the various ministries, managing the Alberta Advisory Council on the Francophonie and a committee of assistant deputy ministers, developing an action plan for implementing the *French Policy*, and translating documentation. The Francophone Secretariat also works closely with the ACFA to obtain information on priorities identified by Alberta's Francophonie.

[53] For the Francophone Secretariat to fully exercise its role within government, it should receive adequate funding. This funding would be used to improve its structure and access financial resources to fulfill its responsibilities to the entire government apparatus. For example, the Francophone Secretariat's team of seven (7) employees is too small to fulfill its mandate, and needs to be increased.

[54] The Francophone Secretariat is also headed by an Executive Director, but would benefit from this position being raised to Assistant Deputy Minister level; the Francophone Secretariat has to deal

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<sup>34</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Government of Alberta. "Francophone Secretariat." <https://www.alberta.ca/francophone-secretariat>

with Assistant Deputy Ministers designated by each ministry to assist and advise them on implementing the French Policy.

[55] The Francophone Secretariat would also benefit from being relocated within the government apparatus to a more strategic and cross-departmental location, considering its coordinating role for the French Policy's implementation applies to all Government of Alberta ministries, agencies, boards, and commissions.

**#5 – Consider the specific needs of – and give priority to the offer of services by and for – Alberta's Francophonie during calls for proposal, in order to develop an active offer of services in French.**

*All ministries*

[56] When the Government of Alberta launches calls for proposals to award new contracts, particularly ministries in the eight intervention sectors prioritized by Alberta's Francophonie, it should consider the specific needs of Alberta's Francophonie to ensure the vitality of Francophone communities. The concept of "vitality" is one of the *French Policy's* guiding principles.

[57] However, it is fundamental for government officials to fully grasp what is meant by "vitality" to be able to offer services in French that truly meet the needs of Alberta's Francophonie, and that are equivalent to those offered in English.

[58] Studies show that 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."<sup>36</sup> Thus, the institutional variable is very important; institutions (e.g. schools, places of worship, hospitals, community organizations, etc.) are "seen as a condition that contributes to the flourishing of minorities."<sup>37</sup> In other words, Francophone communities in minority situations must be able to "own institutions" and for these institutions to be "managed by and for" the community.<sup>38</sup>

[59] The federal government has recognized the importance of institutions for the development of Francophone minority communities and has emphasized the role that provinces can also play in this regard: "Provincial and territorial governments themselves have linguistic obligations towards their minorities, and this involves supporting and protecting their institutions."<sup>39</sup>

[60] Therefore, having access to programs or services provided by the English-speaking majority, where bilingual services are offered, but Francophone language and cultures are not integrated, is not a viable option for ensuring the vitality of Alberta's Francophonie. Francophone community members must be able to institutions necessary to have most of their interpersonal relationships within their linguistic group.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Rodrigue Landry. 2021. "Loi sur les langues officielles et vitalité des minorités..." p. 132. Translated from French

<sup>37</sup> 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

<sup>38</sup> 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."

<sup>39</sup> Government 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>

<sup>40</sup> Linda Cardinal et Rémi Léger. 2017. "La complétude institutionnelle en perspective." p. 5.

[61] We highlight two examples where organizations within Alberta's Francophonie submitted proposals to government ministries to offer services in French to Francophone communities, but these were turned down in favour of Anglophone-majority institutions offering bilingual services.

[62] First, Alberta's Francophonie had an employment service center by and for the community in Calgary before 2020 (Connexion Carrière) and lost this service offering after a new call for proposals awarded contracts to three Anglophone-majority organizations that now offer bilingual services. The ACFA lobbied the province to preserve the service that was offered by and for Alberta's Francophonie, but to no avail. The new services no longer make the connection between job seekers, who are often newcomers to Alberta, and Francophone communities (e.g., Francophone organizations, Francophone schools, other French-language services), which is detrimental to the vitality of Alberta's Francophonie in Calgary.

[63] Second, in 2021, the Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta ("CDÉA") submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Education to offer a financial literacy program in Francophone high schools. The Ministry opted to award contracts to two Anglophone-majority organizations capable of offering services to all schools in the province; CDÉA's proposal did not involve offering its program to all schools, focusing only on Francophone schools. Instead of being able to benefit from a program by and for Alberta's Francophonie, led by a local Francophone organization with extensive knowledge of Francophone communities and supported by Francophone school boards, Francophone schools had access to a bilingual program developed elsewhere in Canada.

[64] These examples demonstrate two instances where the Government of Alberta had indeed planned to offer services in French, but this offer did not meet the needs of Alberta's Francophonie and did not support the vitality of Alberta's Francophone communities.

[65] The ACFA recommends that the Government of Alberta work with organizations within Alberta's Francophonie to design service agreements adapted to the needs of Alberta's Francophonie when new budget initiatives are launched in 2024. This would help the government better meet the "vitality" principle set out in the *French Policy*.

## **#6 – Octroyer un financement opérationnel à la Fédération du sport francophone de l'Alberta comme organisme chef de file dans le secteur du sport et des saines habitudes de vie en français.**

*Ministère du Tourisme et du Sport*

[66] The Fédération du sport francophone de l'Alberta (« FSFA »)<sup>41</sup> is the leading organization within Alberta's Francophonie for the sports and healthy living sector, designed as such by the ACFA since 2006. The organization 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.

[67] 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.

[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

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<sup>41</sup> Fédération du sport francophone de l'Alberta. <https://lafsfca.ca/apropos/mandat/>

l'Alberta (FSFA) into the sports and physical activity networks and programs."<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> 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."<sup>44</sup>

[70] That is why the ACFA and the FSFA plan on submitting a brief to the Ministry of Tourism and Sport, recommending that it provide predictable financial support to the FSFA, so the Government of Alberta can implement the *French Policy*.

### **#7 – Ensure true equivalency for Francophone education, as set out by Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.**

#### *Ministry of Education*

[71] Francophone education is the cornerstone of Francophone communities. Schools are not only spaces where young Francophones learn basic subjects, but they also ensure linguistic and cultural learning as a way to ensure identity formation among future generations.<sup>45</sup>

[72] Since the *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique v. British Columbia*<sup>46</sup> decision in June 2020, the Supreme Court of Canada has upheld true equivalency in education.

[73] The impact of this ruling is to ensure that rights-holders (i.e., those who have the right to education in the minority official language for their children) have access to all educational goods of the same quality and equivalent to those of majority-language students. In addition, the ruling has the effect of creating remedial obligations concerning capital deficiencies, programming, and parental choice.

[74] As mentioned earlier, Census data published by Statistics Canada shows that 67,140 children are eligible for Francophone education under Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.<sup>47</sup> Currently, there are 9,238 students in the Francophone system.

[75] Since 2017, the ACFA and the Fédération des conseils scolaires francophones de l'Alberta ("FCSFA") have invested considerable effort in obtaining this data on rights-holders under Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. As a result of this work, we now have the data needed to

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<sup>42</sup> 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>

<sup>43</sup> ACFA. 2022. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*.

<sup>44</sup> ACFA. 2022. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*. P.24

<sup>45</sup> Marilyne Gauvreau. 2017. "Comprendre la construction identitaire à l'école de la minorité francophone sous l'angle de la reconnaissance." *Cahiers franco-canadiens de l'Ouest*, 29(1), 157-183. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1041201ar>; Rodrigue Landry. 2008. "Au-delà de l'école : le projet politique de l'autonomie culturelle." *Francophonie d'Amérique*, (26), 149-183. <https://doi.org/10.7202/037980ar>

<sup>46</sup> Supreme Court of Canada. 2020. *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique v. British Columbia*. <https://decisions.scc-csc.ca/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/18390/index.do>

<sup>47</sup> Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

better estimate the potential demand for Francophone schools and plan for equivalent infrastructure and programming.

[76] In light of this data, the ACFA estimates that at the current rate of two new infrastructures per year, which seems to be the norm in recent years, it would take close to 140 years to close the gap between the current capacity of Francophone schools and the potential demand that exists.

[77] As such, the ACFA encourages the Ministry of Education to continue to work with Francophone school boards to review programming financial support and develop a capital plan that reduces the gap between potential demand and current Francophone school capacity over a generation. The ACFA expects the 2024 Budget to include a significant amount of new Francophone school capital projects to reduce this gap.

[78] In addition, to support Francophone education and its special role in the identity formation of young Francophones, the Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta ("FPFA") supports school councils made up of Francophone parents through a service agreement with the Ministry of Education.

[79] The Government of Alberta should continue to provide and increase funding to the FPFA so that it can pursue its mandate, despite the directive received by the Minister in his mandate letter to "review the role of parent school councils."<sup>48</sup> Francophone parent councils are fundamental to the unique mandate of Francophone schools, and require a different approach from the English-speaking majority.

## **#8 – Fund a Francophone education continuum through to post-secondary education to address the shortage of bilingual workers capable of offering services in French in Alberta.**

*Ministry of Advanced Education*

[80] Addressing the labour shortage is one of the most important factors in contributing to Alberta's economic growth and recovery, but also in having the necessary workforce to offer services in French to the French-speaking population and implement the *French Policy*. The labour shortage affects Alberta's Francophonie in almost every sector and region of the province; post-secondary education can help address this shortage.

[81] Campus Saint-Jean is the only French-language post-secondary institution west of Manitoba. It serves not only Alberta's French-speaking population, but also those from across Canada and around the world. The institution welcomes several hundreds of students.

[82] Campus Saint-Jean is also recognized as one of the best French-language post-secondary institutions in the West for studies in education and nursing. Campus Saint-Jean is also home to the Centre collégial de l'Alberta, the only French-language college in Alberta. Its programs are market-driven and offered in collaboration with industry partners<sup>49</sup>. The Early Childhood Education, Health Care Worker and Business Administration programs are areas of high demand throughout the province.

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<sup>48</sup> Premier of Alberta. 2023. Mandate Letter to the Minister of Education, Honourable Demetrios Nicolaides. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/bf7f9a42-a807-49b3-8ba3-451ae3bc2d2f/resource/Oad63305-f39c-4d9a-a2a4-7c1970d2f720/download/educ-mandate-letter-education-2023.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> University of Alberta, Campus Saint-Jean. <https://www.ualberta.ca/campus-saint-jean/programs/college/index.html>

[83] Investing in Campus Saint-Jean is one of the best ways to address the significant labour shortages in education, early childhood, and health care, as well as in government and community services. Increasing the number of spaces, modernizing facilities, and ensuring the institution's sustainability are just a few examples of how we're working to ensure that Campus Saint-Jean remains a destination of choice for students from across Canada and around the world.

**#9 – Support an offering of social and mental health services in French, once the ACFA presents a plan to the government.**

*Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction*

*Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services*

*Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women*

[84] When the ACFA consulted stakeholders within Alberta's Francophonie in 2021-2022, in preparation for drafting the Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie, it was clear that there were enormous needs in terms of social and mental health services. However, participants had difficulty identifying priorities, despite the numerous needs, given that there was no inventory of services or programs offered in French for the sector.

[85] Thus, in December 2021, the ACFA's provincial Board of Directors identified the social services sector as one priority for its 2021-2023 mandate. The ACFA secured funding from the Calgary Foundation, the Edmonton Community Foundation and the Fondation franco-albertaine to carry out a major two-year community project.

[86] Year 1, which took place in 2022-2023, enabled the ACFA, with the support of KPMG, to draft an overview of the services already available in French and identify priority needs. Year 2, which is currently being finalized, will develop a vision statement and a long-term strategic plan to fill the gaps for Alberta's Francophonie in the areas of mental health and social services, identify potential partners (governmental and non-governmental), and develop an implementation plan.

[87] The ACFA hopes to sit down with the Government of Alberta in the coming year to discuss options for addressing these needs, based on the work that has been done.