



A Strategy to End Gender-Based Violence Inclusive of Alberta's Francophonie

Brief by the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta ("ACFA"), Coalition des femmes de l'Alberta ("CFA"), Comité FrancoQueer de l'Ouest ("CFQO"), Alliance Jeunesse-Famille de l'Alberta Society ("AFJAS"), Portail de l'Immigrant Association ("PIA"), and Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta ("AJEFA") as part of the Government of Alberta's public engagement to develop its 10-year strategic plan to end gender-based violence

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Introduction

[1] The Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta ("ACFA"), Coalition des femmes de l'Alberta ("CFA"), Comité FrancoQueer de l'Ouest ("CFQO"), Alliance Jeunesse-Famille de l'Alberta Society ("AFJAS"), Portail de l'Immigrant Association ("PIA"), and Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta ("AJEFA") present a brief to the Ministry of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women as part of the Government of Alberta's public engagement for the development of its 10-year strategic plan to end gender-based violence. The ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA wish to bring to the Ministry's attention considerations specific to Alberta's Francophonie on gender-based violence¹, so that it can develop a strategic plan that is inclusive of the entire Alberta population, including French-speaking Albertans.

[2] 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] Established in 2002, Coalition des femmes de l'Alberta is a provincial organization within Alberta's Francophonie dedicated to the cause of Francophone woman in the province. It was created to develop and manage diverse programs that respond to Francophone women's needs of recognition and organization. Its mandate is to contribute to the social, political, and economic advancement of French-speaking Albertan women, while advancing gender equality and equity.

[4] Incorporated in 2019, Comité FrancoQueer de l'Ouest is the resource organization for 2SLGBTQIA+ French-speaking people in Western Canada, including Alberta. CFQO's mission is to lead dialogues on sexual and gender diversity issues that impact members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities within the Francophonie.

[5] Alliance Jeunesse-Famille de l'Alberta Society is an organization with Alberta's Francophonie that has been working in the education and crime prevention sectors in Edmonton since 1999. AJFAS's main mission is to prevent crime among French-speaking immigrant youth and families, and to facilitate their integration into Alberta society. In particular, AJFAS offers programs aimed at preventing family violence.

[6] Portail de l'Immigrant Association was founded in 2008 to facilitate the integration of immigrants from ethnocultural communities in Calgary. The PIA offers a range of services and programs that meet the needs of Alberta's Francophonie in all of its diversity. The non-profit organization promotes and shares the richness of Francophone cultures with the general public in Alberta.

[7] Founded in 1990, Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta is the leading organization for the justice sector within Alberta's Francophonie. The organization's mission is to facilitate public access to legal services in French and to promote the use of the French language in the administration of justice in Alberta.

¹ ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA and AJEFA use the terms "gender-based violence", rather than "sex-based violence," to be more inclusive of victims from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community who are also victims of violence based on their gender identity.

[8] In this brief, ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA and AJEFA present the following elements:

- a) The **status of the French language in Alberta** by (1) drawing a demographic portrait of Alberta's Francophonie and (2) raising four legislative texts supporting the offer of services in French and the recognition of Alberta's Francophonie in the province;
- b) **Recommendations and considerations**, based primarily on existing literature, to ensure that the specificity and diversity of Alberta's Francophonie is considered in the development of the province's strategic plan.

Status of the French language in Alberta

Demographic Portrait

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

[10] 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.²

[11] Today, Alberta 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.³

[12] According to Statistics Canada's 2021 census, 79,965 (1.88%) Albertans have French as their first official language spoken, including 40,640 men+ (50.8%) and 39,325 women+ (49.2%); 88,005 (2.06%) report French as their mother tongue, including 43,590 men+ (49.5%) and 44,425 women+ (50.5%); and 261,435 (6.13%) report knowledge of French, including 121,055 men+ (46.3%) and 140,385 women+ (53.7%).⁴

[13] 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.⁵ 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.

[14] 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.⁶

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

² Government of Alberta. "Francophone heritage in Alberta." <https://www.alberta.ca/francophone-heritage>

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. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

[16] The number of Albertans with French as the first official language spoken increased by 35.9% over 20 years (2001-2021).⁷ The number of Albertans with knowledge of French increased by 54.6% over 30 years (1991-2021).⁸

[17] 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.⁹

[18] In fact, 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.¹⁰ 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.

[19] 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.¹¹

[20] 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).

[21] 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

[22] 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*.

⁷ 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*.

⁸ 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*.

⁹ 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>

¹⁰ Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

¹¹ 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>

[23] 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.

[24] 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*¹². 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 governance¹³, 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.

[25] 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.¹⁴

[26] 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."¹⁵

[27] The *French Policy* "applies to all government of Alberta departments, agencies, boards and commissions, and to court services."¹⁶

[28] 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.¹⁷

Recommendations and Considerations

Recommendation #1: The Government of Alberta's 10-year strategic plan and 5-year action plans should include a Francophone lens.

[29] The ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA understand that the governments of Canada and Alberta have signed a bilateral agreement as part of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*, and that the Government of Alberta plans to develop a made-in-Alberta 10-year strategic plan.

¹² 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>

¹³ Government of Canada. "Section 23- Minority language education rights." <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccd/check/art23.html>

¹⁴ Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*.

¹⁵ Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.6.

¹⁶ Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.6.

¹⁷ Government of Alberta, 2023. *French Policy*, p.5.

[30] The ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA appreciate the steps taken by the Government of Alberta to develop this 10-year strategic plan and recommend that the Francophone dimension be reflected in this strategic plan to consider the specific needs of Alberta's Francophonie.

[31] In particular, the ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA want to bring to the attention of the Ministry of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women a major gap in the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. The latter does not explicitly mention the Francophonie, thus excluding the Francophone fact.

[32] This action plan was inspired by the *Roadmap for the National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence ("Roadmap")*¹⁸, published on April 30, 2021, by Women's Shelter Canada, an umbrella organization of 14 provincial and territorial women's shelter networks.

[33] The *Roadmap* has only two references to the following keywords: Francophone, French, and Language. The *Roadmap* contains the following recommendation: "Ensure **Francophone**, deaf and hard of hearing and survivors speaking languages other than English can access culturally and linguistically appropriate services run **by and for** these communities, and ensure access to interpreters."¹⁹ It is even more surprising that, even with this recommendation, the federal government made no reference to the Francophonie in its *National Action Plan*.

[34] This is a significant omission on the part of the federal government, given the importance of the Francophonie in Canada, and the fact that the issue of gender-based violence impacts various Francophone populations, including in Alberta.

[35] In 2021 and 2022, the ACFA conducted a rigorous consultation process to produce the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*.²⁰ In all, 200 community leaders, representing more than 40 community organizations and institutions, as well as 520 French-speaking Albertans took part in engagements via interviews, focus groups, and a survey. The data collected was used to draft the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie*, which was officially unveiled in October 2022.

[36] The social services sector, including services and resources for victims of gender-based violence, has emerged as a top priority for Alberta's Francophonie and is included in the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie*.²¹

[37] The importance of this issue of access to French-language social services for Alberta's Francophonie was also recognized by the ACFA through an in-depth study of the needs in terms of French-language social services. In 2022-2023, the ACFA commissioned the consulting firm KPMG to conduct an inventory of available French-language services and identify priority needs for French-speaking Albertans. This exercise included services for victims of gender-based violence.

[38] In its report, KPMG identified eight (8) categories of social services in the province. In the category of services for victims of domestic violence, there are nine (9) entities offering services; six (6) are located at the provincial level and (3) at the national level. These services include one (1) English-language shelter in Cold Lake with bilingual staff, four (4) telephone and chat lines, one (1) online

¹⁸ Women's Shelters Canada. 2021. *A Report to Guide the Implementation of a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence*. <https://nationalactionplan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/NAP-Final-Report.pdf>

¹⁹ Women's Shelter Canada. 2021. *A Report to Guide...*

²⁰ ACFA. 2022. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*. https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Version-officielle_Plan-daction-FRAB_EN.pdf

²¹ ACFA. 2022. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*, p.31.

resource, and three (3) Francophone community organizations (CFA, PIA and AJFAS). KPMG also noted that having access to services for domestic violence is the third highest priority in terms of needs.

[39] In addition, access to justice in French has also emerged as a priority for Alberta's Francophonie and is also included in the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie*. This access is important for French-speaking victims of gender-based violence so that they can exercise their linguistic rights to demand a trial in French, if necessary.

[40] The importance of adding language to a GBA+ analysis cannot be underestimated. For example, studies have shown that language is a determinant of health.²² Language also plays an important role in access to justice, particularly in emergency. The provision of French-language services in emergencies is essential to respecting the right to security of Canada's citizens.²³

[41] Thus, the ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA believe that the Alberta government could show exemplary leadership and **recommend that the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women seize this opportunity to go beyond the *National Action Plan* and develop a 10-year strategic plan that effectively reflects the identities and particularities of French-speaking Albertans, by including a Francophone lens.**

[42] Adding a Francophone lens to the development of the 10-year strategic plan and the implementation of the policies framed by this plan would also align with Alberta's government priorities. Indeed, this would allow the government to implement its *French Policy* and the following directive given by the Premier in the mandate letter of the Minister of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women and responsible for the Francophone Secretariat, the Honourable Tanya Fir: "Continue to support and engage with Alberta's Francophone and LBGTQ+ communities."²⁴

[43] The ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA also **recommend that the Ministry of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women take note of a report published by the Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne ("AFFC") entitled "Stratégie nationale et plan d'action pour contrer les violences faites aux femmes et filles vivant dans les communautés francophones et acadiennes". This report aims to fill the gap in the *National Action Plan* in terms of Francophonie to ensure that the federal, provincial and territorial governments consider the specificity of Francophone minority communities when dealing with gender-based violence.**²⁵ The CFA participated in the engagements that led to the development of the report.

²² Alexandra Ethier and Annie Carrier. 2022. "L'accessibilité des services sociaux et de santé chez les minorités de langue officielle du Canada et les facteurs influant sur leur accès : une étude de portée." *Minorités linguistiques et société/Linguistic Minorities and Society*, 18 :198-234. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1089185ar>; Health Canada. "Social determinants of health and health inequalities." <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/what-determines-health.html>

²³ Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. 2020. *A Matter of respect and Safety: The Impact of Emergency situations on Official Languages*. <https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/publications/studies-other-reports/2020/matter-respect-safety-impact-emergency-situations-official>

²⁴ Premier of Alberta. 2023. *Mandate Letter to the Minister of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women, the Honourable Tanya Fir*. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/bf7f9a42-a807-49b3-8ba3-451ae3bc2d2f/resource/3895039a-488c-4b49-ab12-8018f987ddce/download/acsw-mandate-letter-arts-culture-and-status-of-women-2023.pdf>

²⁵ Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne. 2023. *Stratégie nationale et plan d'action pour contrer les violences faites aux femmes et filles vivant dans les communautés francophones et acadiennes*. <https://affc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Strategie-nationale-et-plan-daction-1.pdf> (available in French only)

[44] The report presents two (2) major themes regarding the prevention of violence against Francophone women and girls. First, there are gaps in access to French-language services for victims and their families. Secondly, there are impacts on the health, safety, and well-being of victims and their families when there is a lack of access to French-language services. The report also highlights three priority areas for action: (1) prevention and education, (2) support for people dealing with violence and their families and loved ones, and (3) a responsive justice system.²⁶

[45] The findings presented in the report could be used by the Ministry of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women in the design of its 10-year strategic plan and to include a Francophone lens. It should be noted, however, that this report did not provide details on the specific needs of groups more likely than others to be victims of gender-based violence, such as members of the immigrant, 2SLGBTQIA+, and regional communities. The ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA are using the findings of this report to support the recommendations presented below, but are providing more information to reflect the specific needs of the diverse populations that make up Alberta's Francophonie.

Recommendation #2: The Government of Alberta's public policies and initiatives that will flow from the 10-year strategic plan and 5-year action plans should remove barriers and enhance the contribution of diverse Francophone communities and victims of gender-based violence to Alberta society.

Intersectional Francophone Lens

[46] To truly apply a Francophone lens that is representative of Alberta's Francophonie as a whole, it's important to understand that Alberta's Francophonie is intersectional and includes many groups. As explained in the demographic portrait presented above, Alberta's Francophonie encompasses a variety of communities, including various regional, immigrant, or 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, or communities with diverse gender identities. For a variety of reasons, these groups are more vulnerable and have distinct needs.

[47] Firstly, during engagements for the drafting of the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie*²⁷, survey data from 520 French-speaking Albertans showed that access to French-language social services was a higher priority for women than for men.

[48] Oftentimes, women find themselves in low-income situations, unable to afford long-distance travel or to flee violent situations for lack of resources.²⁸ Compared to the Anglophone majority, this situation is even more critical in French-speaking minority communities such as Alberta's Francophonie, where there is a higher percentage of low-income earners.²⁹

[49] In terms of regional communities, women of all languages living in rural areas are 3.5 times more likely to be victims of gender-based violence than women living in urban areas. The rate of serious crimes against women in rural areas is 56% higher than the national rate.³⁰

²⁶ Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne. *Stratégie nationale et plan d'action...*

²⁷ ACFA. 2022. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*, p.29.

²⁸ WomanAct. 2020. *Hidden in the Everyday: Financial Abuse as a Form of Intimate Partner Violence in the Toronto Area*. https://womanact.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/WomanACT_Hidden-in-the-everyday_Financial-Abuse-Report-1.pdf

²⁹ Alexandra Ethier and Annie Carrier. 2022. "L'accessibilité des services sociaux et de santé..."

³⁰ Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women and Children, Western University. 2021. *LearningNetwork: Mobilizing Knowledge to end gender-based violence*. https://gbvlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/issuebased_newsletters/issue-35/Issue-35.pdf

[50] Not surprisingly, access to French-language social services is a higher priority for rural French-speaking Albertans. Indeed, the survey conducted as part of the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie*³¹ also showed that the need for French-language social services was even more of a priority for people living in regional communities; access to French-language social services outside Edmonton and Calgary is limited. There are French-language service points in regional communities – 13 regional ACFA's – but unfortunately, they lack the human and financial resources to provide support to victims of gender-based violence.

[51] As far as immigrant communities are concerned, women's shelters in Alberta have a more diversified clientele: immigrants, refugees, and visible minorities. These people are more likely to experience financial hardship due to cultural and linguistic barriers, as well as discrimination. In second-stage shelters, 40% were immigrants and 10% were Africans.³²

[52] When it comes to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, members of this community are more likely to be victims of crime and violence. Since 2020, the rate of violence against the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in Canada has increased by 64%.³³ Studies of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth also show that they are more at risk of all forms of violence, particularly arising from romantic relationships and that unfortunately, 61% of young victims of violence have not sought help.³⁴ Indeed, violent acts against 2SLGBTQIA+ people constitute gender-based violence because they are based "on their factual or perceived sexual orientation, and/or gender identity. For that reason, violence against such people falls within the scope of gender-based violence."³⁵

[53] There has been an increase in discrimination against Francophone members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in Alberta. For example, an inclusive event organized by a Francophone community organization in Plamondon in the spring of 2023 received hate and homophobic reactions, due to the inclusion of a drag-queen performance.³⁶ A francophone mother also highlighted the discrimination her daughter experienced at school because her mothers are members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, in response to waves of protests in the fall of 2023.³⁷

[54] The 2SLGBTQIA+ community is also concerned about the impact on Alberta of a policy on the use of chosen first names and pronouns of students under the age of 16 adopted in Saskatchewan. As

³¹ ACFA. 2022. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*, p.29.

³² Irene Hoffart. 2014. *Alberta Council of Women's Shelters Second-stage Shelter Project: Transitioning from Domestic Violence to Stability*. <https://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Alberta-Revised-Second-stage-Shelter-Report-CWF.pdf>

³³ Egale. 2023. *Brief on Police-Reported Crime Statistics in Canada, 2021: Hate Crimes Targeting Sexual Orientation and Sex or Gender*. https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Brief-on-Police-Reported-Crime-Statistics-in-Canada-2021_updatedMarch2023.pdf

³⁴ Egale. 2022. *Speak Out: Addressing 2SLGBTQ Youth Dating Violence: Lessons on how to support 2SLGBTQ youth who face dating violence in Canada*. https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Speak-Out-Addressing-2SLGBTQ-Youth-Dating-Violence_report.pdf

³⁵ Council of Europe. 2020. *Gender identity, gender-based violence and human rights*, p. 17. <https://rm.coe.int/09000016809e1595>

³⁶ Flore Tamko Mbensi. "Dénonciations d'homophobie contre une soirée drag-queen prévue à Plamondon." *Radio-Canada*, June 14, 2023. <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1988082/opposition-soiree-drag-plamondon>

³⁷ Laurence Brisson Dubreuil. "Sentiment d'inquiétude croissant parmi les familles 2SLGBTQ+ albertaines." *Radio-Canada*, October 20, 2023. <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/2019897/canada-education-diversite-transgenre-identite>

CFQO expressed in a press release issued in September 2023, such a policy may have negative impacts on young people caught up in domestic violence.³⁸

[55] Young and not-so-young members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community need safe spaces to avoid becoming victims of violence, and this requires public policies that take these particular needs into account. For example, one study showed that over 78% of young people want access to resources and services tailored to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.³⁹ However, in Alberta, the CFQO lacks the human and financial resources to provide French-language supports to victims of gender-based violence.

[56] Thus, the ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA **recommend that public policies and programs adopted by the Government of Alberta do not further stigmatize marginalized people who are more vulnerable to violence, such as women, immigrants and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and take their specific needs into account.**

Support for people experiencing violence and their families and loved ones

[57] Support for people experiencing violence and their families has been identified by AFFC as a priority to ensure that those involved in a violent situation can get the support they need. These supports must be adapted to the cultural and demographic realities of Alberta's Francophonie.

[58] As mentioned above, the KPMG report was able to identify only nine (9) entities offering services for victims of domestic and family violence. Three (3) Francophone community organizations, including CFA, offer some support, but their programming is only funded by the federal government.

[59] As for the availability of shelter services for Francophone women, there is only one (1) Anglophone shelter in Cold Lake with bilingual staff capable of offering services in French. However, Alberta's Francophonie has no shelters by and for the Francophonie that can offer services adapted to the specific needs of this clientele.

[60] An overview of women's shelters in Alberta conducted by CFA showed that 44% of shelters in Alberta have difficulty meeting the diverse needs of victims.⁴⁰ Currently, there are almost no French-language services for these survivors, either in French or English, aimed at offering immediate or long-term support to combat this violence. The 55 shelters in Alberta offer limited or no French-language services, often with only one interpreter, which does not consider the importance of being served holistically.

[61] A study carried out in Ontario to develop a French-language shelter pointed out that the "absence of FLS (French-Language services) has serious consequences for women fleeing violence and their children."⁴¹ As explained, when women use the services of an Anglophone shelter, "They will certainly appreciate the sense of security and the warm welcome that they will find, but because they

³⁸ Comité FrancoQueer de l'Ouest. 2023. "Le CFQO demande la révision de la politique sur l'utilisation des prénoms et pronoms choisis des élèves de moins de 16 ans en Saskatchewan."

https://cfqobackup.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/4/5/124503980/cp_decisionsaskatchewan.docx.pdf

³⁹ Egale. 2022. *Speak Out: Addressing 2SLGBTQ Youth Dating Violence: Lessons on how to support 2SLGBTQ youth who face dating violence in Canada*. https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Speak-Out-Addressing-2SLGBTQ-Youth-Dating-Violence_report.pdf

⁴⁰ Statistics Canada. "Table 11 - Top challenges facing residential facilities for victims of abuse, by type of facility and region, Canada, 2020/2021." <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00006/tbl/tbl11-fra.htm>

⁴¹ Convergence. 2006. *Needs Assessment Study: Shelter Services in the Toronto Region for Francophone Women and Their Children Who are Fleeing a Violence Relationship*, p.9. <https://actionontarienne.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Ressources-publications-besoins-mdH-femmes-To-ENG.pdf>

are not able to communicate, they will feel the burden of isolation and exclusion, as well as powerlessness and frustration because they are not equipped to take action, to begin the healing process and to move forward in their lives."⁴² Without an active offer of services in French, these women are at risk of remaining in the grip of domestic violence.⁴³

[62] Many Francophones in Alberta can indeed speak English, but when it comes to obtaining social services, for example, research shows that "we cannot... assume that a bilingual person who can converse in a second language can express themselves at the same level as a person whose first language is that language."⁴⁴

[63] In addition, Alberta's Francophonie favours a "by and for" approach to the provision of French-language services, since it "allows communities to determine their own needs and priorities and to recommend where government investments aimed at their development should go."⁴⁵

[64] This "by and for" approach ensures the vitality of Alberta's Francophonie, as many researchers have demonstrated.⁴⁶ In fact, supporting the "vitality of the Francophonie in Alberta in a targeted and sustainable manner"⁴⁷ is one of the principles of the *French Policy*.

[65] To this end, ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA **recommend that the Government of Alberta dedicate specific funding for a Francophone women's shelter, managed by a Francophone organization.**

[66] Furthermore, in 2022, Alberta and the federal government signed the *Canada-Alberta Contribution Agreement on Crisis hotlines responding to gender based violence*, providing funding until 2025-2026. This agreement states that the federal government will provide funding to Alberta to support a network of gender-based violence hotlines, and that "Alberta will take into consideration the needs of official language minority communities within the Province of Alberta, as provided under Alberta's French Policy."⁴⁸

[67] Engagements for the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie* identified the need to "Improve the service in French provided by domestic violence and abuse hotlines (e.g., limit wait times) by adding more French-speaking human resources,"⁴⁹ as a priority for Alberta's Francophonie.

⁴² Convergence. 2006. Needs Assessment Study..., p.62.

⁴³ Convergence. 2006. Needs Assessment Study..., p. 62.

⁴⁴ Marie Drolet et al. 2017. "Enjeux de l'accessibilité et de l'offre active des services sociaux et de santé au sein de la francophonie canadienne en situation minoritaire." In *Santé et services sociaux en contexte linguistique minoritaire*, edited by Marie Drolet, Pier Bouchard and Jacinthe Savard, University of Ottawa Press, pages 14-32. *Translated from French*.

⁴⁵ 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*

⁴⁶ Linda Cardinal and Rémi Léger. 2017. "La complétude institutionnelle en perspective." *Politiques et Sociétés*, (36), p.3. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1042233ar>; 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>

⁴⁷ Government of Alberta, 2023. *French Policy*, p.6

⁴⁸ Women and Gender Equality Canada. 2022. *Canada-Alberta Contribution agreement on crisis hotlines responding to gender based violence*. <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-violence/intergovernmental-collaboration/agreements-crisis-hotlines/alberta.html>

⁴⁹ ACFA. 2022. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*, p. 26.

[68] The ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA also **recommend that the Government of Alberta continue to dedicate funding for telephone and chat lines that offer French-language services.**

Prevention and Education

[69] Education has been identified by AFFC and the federal government as a priority area for intervention to prevent gender-based violence. Education can greatly contribute to the structural, cultural, and institutional changes required to prevent gender-based violence.⁵⁰ Public awareness of the realities of gender-based violence must be raised in schools, but also in informal spaces through community organizations.

[70] As far as schools are concerned, Francophone education is a right protected by Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Government of Alberta has an obligation to provide an education equivalent to that of the Anglophone majority.⁵¹

[71] The *French Policy* states that "Government of Alberta ministries will consult with Alberta Education when developing and distributing any print or digital materials intended for school-aged children and youth."⁵²

[72] The development of potential resources to be distributed to the province's schools should be done in consultation with the Francophone school boards to consider the specificities of Alberta's Francophonie. Simply translating resources into French would not be adequate.

[73] As such, the ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA **recommend that the Government of Alberta provide funding for creating French-language educational resources that are adapted to the realities of Alberta's Francophonie and comply with the requirements of Section 23 of the Charter.**

[74] In terms of education in informal spaces, several Francophone community organizations, including AJFAS, CFQO, PIA, and CFA, already offer workshops and resources to raise awareness of gender-based violence among members of Alberta's Francophonie. However, their programming only receives financial support from the federal government.

[75] CFQO offers an introductory workshop on the origins of Pink Shirt Day, as well as strategies to combat bullying experienced by 2SLGBTQAI+ people, including gender-based violence.⁵³

[76] As for AJFAS, the organization offers a variety of programs aimed at reducing domestic and family violence among French-speaking African immigrant populations. AJFAS informs members of immigrant communities about Canadian standards and laws to prevent crime, reduce family and domestic violence, and keep children out of the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Services.⁵⁴

[77] For example, AJFAS and Radio-Canada created a series of radio programs to combat violence against women and explain the realities of French-speaking African women in Alberta. The program,

⁵⁰ Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne. 2023. *Stratégie nationale et plan d'action...*, p. 22.

⁵¹ Supreme Court of Canada. Supreme Court Judgments. *Conseil Scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique v. British Columbia*. <https://decisions.scc-csc.ca/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/18390/index.do>

⁵² Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.9.

⁵³ Conseil FrancoQueer de l'Ouest. "Services." <https://cfqo.ca/services/>

⁵⁴ Camille Martel. "Des Africains francophones veulent freiner la violence conjugale." *Radio-Canada*, June 17, 2017. <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1040327/femmes-afrique-alberta-violence-conjuguale-discussion>

entitled "Maman Rita", tackled taboo subjects such as the dowry, married life, and traditional gender roles in French-speaking African cultures.⁵⁵

[78] More recently, thanks to financial support from Women and Gender Equality Canada, AJFAS has embarked on a project entitled "Honneur et Respect" (Honour and Respect), which aims to set up an education model to help women of African descent and victims of gender-based violence break their silence. At the same time, the project will identify male allies of African descent, so that they can be part of solutions to end the scourge of gender-based violence. AJFAS also plans to hold workshops and translate resources for the general public on strategies to counter gender-based violence. This project is being carried out in collaboration with Sagesse, an organization in Calgary's Anglophone majority.

[79] PIA offers programs for women, including support and tools for dealing with potential cases of violence and abuse, as well as short-term support services provided by social workers. These social workers can provide information in difficult circumstances, such as cases of violence. In terms of prevention, PIA is planning a campaign and awareness-raising activities for men and young boys through its "Men Like Me" project, as well as strengthening care services.

[80] Combating violence against women and girls is one of the pillars of CFA's strategic plan. CFA has set up several programs and projects to raise awareness and educate about violence against women and girls. Among these, violence prevention workshops have been offered to young people in grades 7 to 12 in several Francophone schools across the province, as well as in some rural communities. The "Plus en Sécurité & Plus Fortes Ensemble / Safer & Stronger Together" forum aims to address the problem of violence and discrimination against women and girls, especially in the context of the pandemic caused by COVID-19.

[81] For the past two years, thanks to funding from Justice Canada, CFA has also organized activities during *Victims and Survivors of Crime Week*, focusing on the experience of French-speaking victims and survivors of violence against women and girls. CFA also participates annually in the *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence* campaign and is currently working on a project to open a space dedicated to francophone women.

[82] Finally, CFA collaborates with a French-language family resource center (FRN), Institut Guy-Lacombe de la famille, and an Anglophone majority organization, *Multicultural Health Brokers*, to organize discussion groups entitled "Entre nous mamans" (Between Us Moms). These discussion groups are opportunities for mothers to share their experiences with family life, including gender-based violence.

[83] The ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA and AJEFA **recommend that the Government of Alberta provide funding to Francophone community organizations so that they can continue to offer and enhance their educational programs aimed at countering gender-based violence, and so that the government can effectively reach Alberta's Francophonie in its awareness strategies.**

⁵⁵ Radio-Canada. "'Maman Rita', une voix pour les femmes africaines francophones." <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/communication/160/maman-rita>

Responsive Judicial System

[84] AFFC has identified the need for an efficient and equitable justice system to deal with cases of violence against French-speaking women in minority situations. The justice system is highly complex, and many people need help to navigate it effectively.

[85] Alberta's Francophonie has access to justice in French, which is a constitutional right, thanks to the work of AJEFA. The organization offers many services and collaborates with the provincial government to improve access to justice in French in Alberta. The *French Policy* also applies to judicial services.⁵⁶

[86] The organization currently has 133 bilingual lawyers and 58 bilingual law students. Of these, 27 practice in family law and 13 in criminal law, including cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence.

[87] Since 2015, AJEFA has administered the Centre albertain d'information juridique, which provides legal information to French-speaking Albertans. On average, the center carries out 1,500 consultations a year, with an average of 75 consultations on gender-based violence cases.

[88] The Centre albertain d'information juridique has developed and delivered several legal information workshops on topics related to gender-based violence, including domestic and family violence, consent and sexual harassment, and the rights of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

[89] In collaboration with the Centre for Public Legal Education, AJEFA has also translated 22 resources on sexual violence. These resources are available online on both organizations' websites, and printed copies are also distributed to the public. Since 2021, AJEFA has distributed 1,442 printed resources.

[90] Since 2020, AJEFA is also sitting on a sexual harassment in the workplace committee with several Anglophone majority organizations, including Alberta Sexual Assault Services, the Workers Resource Centre, the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, and the Centre for Public Legal Education. The committee has created a resource portal, which includes French-language resources.⁵⁷

[91] To ensure that the justice system in Alberta meets the needs of French-speaking victims of gender-based violence, the ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA **recommend that the Government of Alberta provide AJEFA with funding to support the development of resources and services of the Centre albertain d'information juridique.**

[92] Furthermore, during engagements for the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie*⁵⁸, Alberta's Francophonie identified the translation of documents and legislation as a priority, including Clare's Law, which allows people who believe they are at risk of domestic violence to obtain the criminal record (with regard to violence against women) of their partners. Currently, only the Clare's Law web page is translated; many related links are only available in English, including the application form.

[93] The ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA **recommend that the Government of Alberta translate the Clare Act and the disclosure form into French.**

⁵⁶ Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.6.

⁵⁷ HereForHelp.ca: Alberta's Sexual Harassment Resource Hub. <https://www.hereforhelp.ca/>

⁵⁸ ACFA. 2022. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*, p.20.

Recommendation #3: To gain a better understanding of the potential need for French-language services, the Government of Alberta should develop strategies to collect linguistic data on gender-based violence.

[94] Organizations working with victims of gender-based violence and wishing to offer French-language services are faced with the problem of a lack of linguistic data, i.e. statistics on potential needs. This issue was raised by KPMG in their research and engagements for their report on French-language social services in Alberta.

[95] This is an important issue since "the question of numbers remains a concern for funders, program administrators and government policies."⁵⁹

[96] The difficulty of accessing these statistics on potential needs stems from the fact that data collection is difficult in this sector. Indeed, the AFFC report points out that data collection is a "provincial responsibility," and that for many service providers (e.g., shelters, social services, call and support lines), language spoken is rarely included in the statistics they collect from the people who use their services.⁶⁰

[97] What's more, the Francophone lens is not, or very rarely, part of studies and analyses conducted by many Anglophone majority organizations working in the sector of gender-based violence. These Anglophone majority organizations do not solicit the participation of Francophone minority organizations when conducting these studies and analyses.

[98] For example, we see this observation in the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters ("ACSW") annual report entitled *On the Front Lines: Striving to End Domestic Violence and Abuse Together*.⁶¹ The spoken language of victims is referred to only once as a barrier, but no statistics on the language of the person are provided in support of this assertion in the annual report. This example is not intended to diminish the work done by ACSW, but to highlight the fact that gathering statistics on language is rarely part of the objective of Anglophone majority organizations.

[99] The same challenge exists for Francophone organizations. When CFA began a study to establish a shelter for Francophone women in Alberta, the organization encountered difficulties in gathering statistics illustrating the needs of Francophone women. CFA was able to obtain statistics to put together a demographic profile of shelter residents (e.g., ethnicity, age, marital status, dependency, employment status) and to understand the prevalence of violence and homicide in Alberta, but was unable to identify language as the data was not available.

[100] As a result, it remains difficult for Francophone organizations, but also for government and other service providers, to determine the extent of this gender-based violence crisis in Alberta's Francophonie. This lack of information hinders the development and delivery of adequate French-language services in Alberta. In particular, failure to collect linguistic data reduces the ability to actively offer French-language services and to develop a quality comparable to that of the Anglophone majority, principles of the *French Policy*.⁶²

⁵⁹ Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne. 2023. *Stratégie nationale et plan d'action...*, p. 13. Translated from French

⁶⁰ Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne. 2023. *Stratégie nationale et plan d'action...*, p. 13.

⁶¹ Alberta Council of Women's Shelters. 2023. *On the Front Lines: Striving to End Domestic Violence and Abuse Together*. https://acws.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ACWS-DataRelease2023_FINAL.pdf

⁶² Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.8.

[101] And yet, data collection has been a best practice in the fight against gender-based violence for many years. In 1980, Canada signed the United Nations (UN) *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, and in 1993 adopted the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*. Article 4 (k) of the UN Declaration states, "Promote research, collect data and compile statistics, especially concerning domestic violence, relating to the prevalence of different forms of violence against women and encourage research on the causes, nature, seriousness and consequences of violence against women and on the effectiveness of measures implemented to prevent and redress violence against women; those statistics and findings of the research will be made public."⁶³

[102] The ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA **recommend that the Government of Alberta includes the collection of linguistic data (e.g. language spoken by people who access services) as a requirement when funding service providers to deliver services related to gender-based violence.** This practice is already in place at the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services for employment service providers, who are required to submit the language spoken by their clients in their reports to the ministry, both for providers offering services in French and those offering services in English.

[103] Furthermore, as there is a lack of significant evidence at this time, the ACFA, CFA, CFQO, AJFAS, PIA, and AJEFA **recommend that the Ministry of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women provide funding to a Francophone organization to conduct a formal study within Alberta's Francophonie that would serve to better inform the Government of Alberta's future decisions and strategies on gender-based violence.** This study would provide a more complete demographic profile of the people who need to access services, as well as their specific needs. Currently, Francophone organizations do not have the human or financial resources⁶⁴ to conduct such a study without financial support from the government.

⁶³ United Nations. 1993. *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-elimination-violence-against-women>

⁶⁴ Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne. 2023. *Stratégie nationale et plan d'action...*, p. 13.