



## **Investing in the Leaders of Tomorrow: a Strong and Prosperous French-Speaking Youth**

Brief from the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (« ACFA ») and Francophonie Jeunesse de l'Alberta (« FJA ») submitted to the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women, as part of the implementation of the Government of Alberta's *French policy*

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## Introduction

[1] The Association canadienne française de l'Alberta ('ACFA') and Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta ('FJA') are submitting a brief to the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women as part of the implementation of the Government of Alberta's *French Policy*. The ACFA and FJA wish to bring to the Ministry's attention considerations specific to Alberta's Francophonie in developing its French-language services and programs for French-speaking youth.

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

[3] Founded in 1972, FJA is the organization that represents French-speaking youth in Alberta. FJA enables its members, aged 14 to 25, to carry out a number of projects and activities. FJA's vision is to ensure that French-speaking youth in Alberta can assert their leadership and express their pride in all aspects of their lives.

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

- a) **The status of French language in Alberta** by providing (1) a demographic portrait of Alberta's Francophonie and (2) an outline of five legislative texts supporting the provision of services in French and the recognition of the Francophonie in the province;
- b) **Key considerations**, mainly based on existing literature, to better understand the principle of vitality of Alberta's Francophonie found in the *French Policy* and how it applies to identity-building objectives among French-speaking youth.
- c) An overview of the **programs and services** offered by FJA for French-speaking youth in Alberta;
- d) **Recommendations** to ensure that FJA can effectively fulfil its mandate.

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<sup>1</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>2</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy: Enhancing Services in French to Support the Vitality of Alberta's French-Speaking Communities*, page 8. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/713b7d93-c164-496a-8da8-813a34066ec4/resource/e9a9be57-1625-4bb7-82fb-cdfdb84c83c2/download/cul-french-policy-2023-english.pdf>

## Status of French in Alberta

### *Demographic Portrait*

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

[6] The first Francophone presence in Alberta dates back to the 18th century, well over 200 years ago. French was the first European language spoken in the territory that became Alberta. As early as the 19th century, several Métis communities, Franco-Catholic missions, and Francophone villages were established. Four of these villages became officially bilingual: Beaumont, Legal, Falher, and Plamondon.<sup>3</sup>

[7] 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.<sup>4</sup>

[8] According to Statistics Canada 2021 Census of population, 79,010 (1.9%) Albertans report French as their first official language spoken; 85,290 (2%) report French as their mother tongue; and 260,415 (6.2%) report knowledge of French.<sup>5</sup>

[9] French ranks 4th among mother tongues in Alberta, after English which 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.<sup>6</sup>

[10] Among these people, Statistics Canada estimates that 119,690 are likely to require services in French, or 2.8% of Alberta's population.<sup>7</sup>

[11] The number of **young people aged 15 to 24** with French as their first official language spoken is estimated at around **7,450**.<sup>8</sup> If we look at the population in this age group with a knowledge of French, the figure rises to **42,365**.<sup>9</sup> Despite these figures, it is important to note that the median age of the Francophone population is 43, five years older than the median age of the provincial population as a whole, which is 38.

[12] Alberta also has the second-largest population of children eligible for minority official language education in the country (excluding Quebec). The 2021 Census shows that there are 67,154 children aged 0 to 18 with at least one right-holder parent under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, representing 6.9% of

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<sup>3</sup> Government of Alberta. "Francophone heritage in Alberta." <https://www.alberta.ca/francophone-heritage.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

<sup>5</sup> Sociopol. 2024. *Demographic Portrait of Alberta's Francophonie Provincial Profile*. <https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Alberta-Portrait-provincial-Traduction-EN.pdf>

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

<sup>7</sup> Sociopol 2024. *Demographic Portrait...* p.7

<sup>8</sup> Sociopol 2024. *Demographic Portrait...* p.21

<sup>9</sup> Sociopol 2024. *Demographic Portrait...* p.13

children in the Alberta population.<sup>10</sup> However, these figures have certain limitations, as they only consider families living in the same household. Some children may have been excluded from this count if one of their parents, brothers or sisters did not live in the same household. To overcome this limitation, Statistics Canada has produced a complementary study which now estimates the number of eligible children at 75,055.<sup>11</sup>

[13] Moreover, the French-speaking population has grown and diversified over the years. This has had a significant impact on the growth of Alberta's Francophonie and the demand for French-language services.

[14] The number of Albertans with French as their first official language spoken increased by 35.9% over 20 years (2001-2021).<sup>12</sup> The number of Albertans with knowledge of French increased by 54.6% over 30 years (1991-2021).<sup>13</sup>

[15] Although many Francophones were born in Alberta, the majority came from across Canada and around the world. Among Albertans whose first official language spoken is French, approximately 24% were born in Alberta, 44% came from elsewhere in Canada, and 32% from elsewhere in the world.<sup>14</sup>

[16] A closer look at the data from the 2021 Census shows that 3,120 (4%) Francophones identify themselves as Indigenous, mainly Métis (74%).<sup>15</sup>

[17] In terms of ethnocultural diversity, 22,935 (29%) Francophones belong to a visible minority group. Of these, 11,480 (15%) identify as Black, 4,340 (6%) as Asian, 3,845 (5%) as Arab, and 2,665 (3%) as Latin American.<sup>16</sup>

[18] The percentage of Albertans with an immigrant background within Alberta's Francophone population is higher than within Alberta's total population, which stands at 23%. Africa is the birthplace of 50% of this francophone immigrant population, a significant difference from Alberta's total immigrant population, 57% of whom come from Asia.<sup>17</sup>

[19] An important aspect of this immigration is the significant presence of young Francophones from immigrant backgrounds. In fact, **among the immigrants with French as their first official language spoken who arrived in Canada between 2001 and 2021, there are 4,305 young people aged 15 to 24, which represents**

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<sup>10</sup> Sociopol 2024. *Demographic Portrait...* p.42

<sup>11</sup> Statistics Canada. 2024. *Study on the Underclassification of Children Eligible for Instruction in the Minority Official Language in the 2021 Census*. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/98-26-0008/982600082021001-eng.cfm>

<sup>12</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>13</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>14</sup> Sociopol *Demographic Portrait...* p.26.

<sup>15</sup> Sociopol *Demographic Portrait...* p.31.

<sup>16</sup> Sociopol *Demographic Portrait...* p.32.

<sup>17</sup> Sociopol *Demographic Portrait...* p.26

**more than half (58%) of all young Francophones in the province.**<sup>18</sup> This phenomenon highlights the importance of immigration in the renewal and growth of Alberta's Francophonie.

[20] Moreover, the French-speaking population is scattered throughout the province, as Francophone communities have historically been established across the province. 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) 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] Here is a table summarizing the Francophone presence in these municipalities:<sup>19</sup>

<b>Municipalities</b>	<b>First Official Language Spoken (FOLS)</b>	<b>Knowledge of French</b>	<b>Potential Demand for services in French</b>	<b>Indigenous identity among FOLS</b>	<b>Ethnocultural diversity among FOLS</b>	<b>Individuals aged 15 to 24 among FOLS</b>
Airdrie	1 525 (2.1%)	5 410 (7.3%)	2 460 (3.3%)	40 (2.6%)	455 (29.8%)	<b>1 55 (10.1%)</b>
Banff	265 (3.9%)	880 (12.8%)	845 (10.2%)	0 (0%)	20 (7.5%)	<b>50 (22.7%)</b>
Beaumont	790 (3.8%)	2 030 (14.5%)	1 265 (6.15%)	40 (5%)	130 (16.5%)	<b>50 (9.2%)</b>
Bonnyville and area	865 (4.4%)	2 265 (11.6%)	1 380 (7%)	70 (8.1%)	10 (1.2%)	<b>55 (7.4%)</b>
Brooks	390 (2.7%)	540 (3.7%)	385 (2.6%)	0 (0%)	285 (73%)	<b>45 (11.5%)</b>
Calgary	23 590 (1.8%)	86 140 (6.7%)	34 640 (2.7%)	695 (2.9%)	8 370 (36%)	<b>2 560 (10.8%)</b>
Camrose and area	235 (0.8%)	1 035 (3.6%)	425 (1.5%)	15 (6.4%)	15 (6.4%)	<b>10 (4.2%)</b>
Canmore and area	920 (5.4%)	3 180 (18.6%)	1 395 (8%)	0 (0%)	40 (4.3%)	<b>70 (7.6%)</b>
Chestermere	300 (1.4%)	925 (4.2%)	390 (1.8%)	0 (0%)	100 (33.3%)	<b>20 (6.6%)</b>
Cochrane	790 (2.5%)	2 880 (9.2%)	1 150 (3.6%)	10 (1.2%)	25 (3.1%)	<b>45 (5.7%)</b>
Cold Lake	815 (5.3%)	1 930 (12.6%)	1 100 (7.1%)	50 (6.1%)	45 (5.5%)	<b>80 (9.8%)</b>
Crowsnest Pass and area	125 (1%)	500 (4.1%)	250 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	<b>5 (4%)</b>
Edmonton	23 205 (2.3%)	67 175 (6.7%)	33 165 (3.3%)	600 (2.6%)	10 750 (46.3%)	<b>2 615 (11.3%)</b>
Falher and area	1 240 (25.3%)	1 815 (37.1%)	1 610 (29.5%)	30 (2.4%)	20 (1.6%)	<b>80 (6.5%)</b>
Fort Saskatchewan	420 (1.6%)	1 495 (5.6%)	735 (2.7%)	0 (0%)	70 (16.9%)	<b>20 (4.8%)</b>
Grande Prairie	1 575 (2.5%)	4 890 (7.7%)	2 315 (3.6%)	150 (9.5%)	250 (15.9%)	<b>125 (7.9%)</b>

<sup>18</sup> Statistics Canada. *Table 98-10-0301-01. Languages spoken at home by mother tongue, immigrant status and period of immigration and first official language spoken: Canada, provinces and territories and census metropolitan areas with parts.* <https://doi.org/10.25318/9810030101-eng>

<sup>19</sup> Sociopol. *Demographic Portrait...*; Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, Census 2021, Alberta.*

Grande Prairie County and area	410 (1.4%)	1 470 (5%)	675 (2.3%)	35 (8.5%)	20 (4.8%)	<b>15 (3.7%)</b>
High Prairie, Slave Lake and area	365 (2.2%)	625 (3.7%)	675 (4%)	0 (0%)	35 (9.9%)	<b>10 (2.7%)</b>
Hinton, Edson and Yellowhead County	575 (2%)	1 825 (6.5%)	855 (3%)	55 (9.6%)	35 (6.3%)	<b>25 (4.3%)</b>
Jasper	175 (4.5%)	765 (19.5%)	465 (10%)	25 (13.9%)	10 (5.6%)	<b>35 (20%)</b>
Lac La Biche County and area	410 (5.4%)	895 (11.8%)	580 (7.7%)	35 (8.5%)	10 (2.4%)	<b>20 (4.9%)</b>
Lacombe and area	330 (0.9%)	1 530 (4%)	655 (1.7%)	15 (4.8%)	10 (3.1%)	<b>50 (15.2%)</b>
Leduc and area	990 (1.9%)	2 990 (5.7%)	1 395 (2.7%)	70 (7.3%)	100 (10.2%)	<b>40 (4%)</b>
Legal and area	1 400 (2.8%)	3 610 (7.3%)	2 245 (4.4%)	50 (3.6%)	35 (2.5%)	<b>100 (7.1%)</b>
Lethbridge	920 (1%)	5 060 (5.3%)	1 795 (1.8%)	15 (1.6%)	275 (29.9%)	<b>130 (14.1%)</b>
Lloydminster	185 (1%)	935 (4.9%)	345 (1.8%)	15 (8.1%)	30 (16.2%)	<b>15 (8.1%)</b>
Medicine Hat	475 (0.8%)	2 210 (3.6%)	1 035 (1.7%)	25 (5.3%)	60 (12.8%)	<b>40 (8.4%)</b>
Okotoks and area	1 120 (1.5%)	4 425 (6.1%)	1 685 (2.3%)	75 (6.8%)	65 (5.9%)	<b>85 (7.6%)</b>
Peace River and area	605 (4.6%)	1 365 (10.4%)	850 (6.5%)	25 (4.2%)	50 (8.3%)	<b>30 (5%)</b>
Red Deer	1 285 (1.3%)	5 315 (5.4%)	2 200 (2.2%)	60 (4.7%)	340 (26.5%)	<b>115 (8.9%)</b>
Red Deer County and area	500 (1%)	2 145 (4.4%)	840 (1.7%)	35 (6.8%)	10 (1.9%)	<b>30 (6%)</b>
Rocky View County	395 (1%)	2 805 (6.9%)	865 (2.1%)	15 (3.8%)	55 (13.9%)	<b>35 (8.9%)</b>
St.Albert	1 815 (2.7%)	7 115 (10.6%)	2 930 (4.3%)	75 (4.1%)	270 (14.8%)	<b>175 (9.6%)</b>
St. Paul and area	1 025 (7.8%)	2 145 (16.2%)	1 525 (11.4%)	55 (5.4%)	0 (0%)	<b>55 (5.4%)</b>
Stony Plain, Spruce Grove and area	1 250 (1.4%)	4 775 (5.4%)	2 400 (2.7%)	65 (5.2%)	145 (11.6%)	<b>80 (6.4%)</b>
Strathcona County (including Sherwood Park)	1 660 (1.7%)	6 725 (6.9%)	2 725 (2.8%)	60 (3.6%)	245 (14.8%)	<b>115 (6.9%)</b>
Wainwright	150 (2.4%)	340 (5.4%)	215 (3.4%)	30 (20%)	0 (0%)	<b>25 (16.7%)</b>
Wood Buffalo (including Fort McMurray)	1 650 (2.3%)	4 380 (6.1%)	2 485 (3.4%)	120 (7.3%)	385 (23.3%)	<b>100 (6.1%)</b>

[22] To serve this population, there are a number of organizations and institutions managed by Alberta's Francophonie. Four (4) Francophone school boards (Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord, Conseil scolaire FrancoSud, Conseil scolaire Centre-Est, and Conseil scolaire du Nord-Ouest) administer 45 elementary and secondary schools, serving a total of 9,550 students. As for early childhood education, there are more than fifty (50) daycare centres and preschools, many of which are integrated into Francophone schools.<sup>20</sup> There is also the ACFA and its 13 regional chapters, as well as over sixty (60) community organisations. Alberta's Francophone also benefits from a large number of private companies.

[23] Other organisations and institutions run by the Anglophone majority also offer services in French. These include one French-language post-secondary institution, the University of Alberta's Campus Saint-Jean, and more than 225 schools offering French immersion programs or French as a second language courses.

[24] Given that Alberta's Francophone population has access to services in French, it is also relevant to examine the occupations held by Francophones. The following table provides an overview of the main occupations held by the entire Francophone population with French as their first official language spoken, with a particular focus on young people aged 15 to 24<sup>21</sup>.

<b>Professions</b>	<b>All ages – 49 775</b>	<b>15 to 24 years old – 4 710</b>
Legislative and senior management occupations	530 (11%)	0 (0%)
Business, finance and administration	7 560 (15%)	480 (10%)
Natural and applied sciences and related fields	3 885 (8%)	105 (2%)
Health sector	3 525 (7%)	220 (5%)
Education, law and social, community and government services	8 165 (16%)	430 (9%)
Arts, culture, sports and leisure	1 255 (2.5%)	275 (6%)
<b>Sales and services</b>	<b>10 365 (21%)</b>	<b>2 260 (48%)</b>
Trades, transport, machinery and related fields	11 105 (22%)	585 (12%)
Natural resources, agriculture and related production	1 895 (4%)	240 (5%)
Manufacturing and utilities	1 470 (3%)	120 (3%)

[25] For the general population as a whole, the four most common occupations are (1) trades, transport, equipment operators and related fields, (2) sales and service, (3) teaching, law and social, community and government services, and (4) business, finance

<sup>20</sup> Learn Square Inc. 2023. *Analyse démographique et déserts de garderie : Portrait de la petite enfance francophone en Alberta*. <https://fpfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Analyse-demographique-et-deserts-de-garderie-Fevrier-2023.pdf>. (Available only in French)

<sup>21</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0367-01. <https://doi.org/10.25318/9810036701-fra>

and administration. **By contrast, among young people aged 15 to 24, almost half work in sales and service occupations.**

#### *Legislative framework*

[26] Five 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*, (4) the *Education Act*, and (5) Alberta's *Languages Act*.

[27] 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 for the last time in 2023, the *Official Languages Act* recognizes French as one of the country's two official languages, while highlighting its vulnerability and the need for specific measures to protect it. The *Official Languages Act* guarantees access to French-language services in federal institutions, many of which are located in Alberta.

[28] As part of its obligations under the *Official Languages Act*, the federal government makes a number of transfers to the province of Alberta concerning official languages. These include the *Canada-Alberta Agreement on French-Language Services*<sup>22</sup> and the *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction* ("OLEP")<sup>23</sup>.

[29] In addition, Alberta has constitutional obligations regarding the provision of French-language services under Sections 19 and 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.<sup>24</sup> These sections respectively guarantee (1) the right to communicate in French in federal courts, and (2) the right to a Francophone education of equivalent quality to that offered to the Anglophone majority for all children of 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, including school management.<sup>25</sup>

[30] 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>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Government of Canada. "Supporting access to French-language services in Alberta." <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2024/12/supporting-access-to-french-language-services-in-alberta.html>

<sup>23</sup> Government of Alberta. "Official Languages in Education Programs." <https://www.alberta.ca/official-languages-in-education-programs>

<sup>24</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy: enhancing services in French to support the vitality of Alberta's French-speaking communities*, page 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>25</sup> Government of Canada. "Section 23 –Minority Language Educational Rights." <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccdl/check/art23.html>

<sup>26</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*.



[31] 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>27</sup>

[32] The *French Policy* "applies to all government of Alberta departments, agencies, boards and commissions, and to court services."<sup>28</sup>

[33] To support the implementation of the *French Policy*, the Government of Alberta released its *French Policy: 2024-2028 Action Plan* in May 2024.<sup>29</sup> This is the province's third action plan since the adoption of the *French Policy*.

[34] In its Education Act, there is a section specifying who may access Francophone education in Alberta, in accordance with the principles of Section 23 of the *Charter*, as well as provisions for the establishment of Francophone school regions, including the appointment of Francophone school trustees.<sup>30</sup>

[35] Finally, 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>31</sup>

### **Key Considerations: Vitality of Alberta's Francophonie**

[36] From the perspective of Alberta's Francophonie, a strong understanding of the concept of vitality of Francophone minority communities ('FMCs'), one of the guiding principles of the Government of Alberta's *French Policy* mentioned above, is fundamental to offering services in French that truly meet the needs of FMCs and are equivalent to those offered in English.

[37] This section presents a number of studies carried out by researchers on the subject of the vitality of FMCs in Canada. The concept of a community's vitality is based on three "structural variables... (demographic, institutional and statutory) that ensure the group's maintenance or growth as a distinct entity."<sup>32</sup> Thus, when we think of the vitality of Alberta's Francophonie, it is dependent on "the interaction of these three groups of

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<sup>27</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.6.

<sup>28</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.6.

<sup>29</sup> Government of Alberta. 2024. *French Policy: 2024-2028 Action Plan*.

<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/2b40e62c-9c60-4cbf-adb8-d8b9ec6041e0/resource/ffe50331-5dde-47e3-b6b1-e8e9d210ca52/download/acsw-french-policy-action-plan-2024-2028.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Province of Alberta. *Education Act*. [https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=E00P3.cfm&leg\\_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779846450](https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=E00P3.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779846450)

<sup>31</sup> Government of Alberta, 2023. *French Policy*, p.5.

<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), p. 132. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1084703ar>. (Translated from French)

variables".<sup>33</sup> As a result, when there are weaknesses in one of these three variables, the community's overall vitality suffers.

[38] The statutory variable, which is defined as the socio-economic and historical status of a language group,<sup>34</sup> would be satisfied in Alberta. As we demonstrated in the previous section on the status of French, the historical and socio-economic status of Alberta's Francophonie is recognised, among other things, through the *French Policy*.

[39] However, as far as demographic and institutional variables are concerned, particularly in the case of French-speaking youth, these two variables require particular attention as there are several weaknesses at these levels.

#### *Demographic variable - the Challenges of the Brain Drain and the Ageing of the French-Speaking Population*

[40] The demographic variable is defined as the distribution and number of people who identify with the language group.<sup>35</sup> In other words, the greater the number of Francophones concentrated in a specific region, the greater the vitality of the Francophone community there.

[41] Alberta is home to a number of historically Francophone regions, the legacy of a Francophone presence dating back to the 18th century, the era of exploration and the fur trade. A number of French place names, such as Grande Prairie, bear witness to the Francophone presence even back then.<sup>36</sup>

[42] During the second half of the 19th century, several Métis communities and Franco-Catholic missions were established. These included the missions of Lac Sainte-Anne, Lac La Biche, Saint-Joachim (Edmonton), Grouard-Athabasca, Notre Dame de la Paix (Calgary), St-Augustin (Rivière-la-Paix), St.Albert, Saint-Paul-des-Métis (St.Paul) and Duhamel.<sup>37</sup>

[43] In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many settlers moved into the northeastern region and founded a number of villages, including Lafond, Foisy, Sainte-Lina, Thérien, Saint-Vincent, La Corey, Brièreville, Saint-Édouard, Mallaig, Saint-Paul, Plamondon, Bonnyville and Normandeau. In the centre and south of the province, French-speaking settlers established the villages of Legal, Lamoureux, Morinville, Beaumont, Rouleauville (now Calgary) and Trochu. In the north-west, the villages of

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<sup>33</sup> Anne Gilbert et al. 2005. "L'environnement et la vitalité communautaire des minorités francophones : vers un modèle conceptuel." *Francophonie d'Amérique*, (20), p. 52-53. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1005336ar> (Translated from French)

<sup>34</sup> Jake Harwood, Howard Giles and Richard Y. Bourhis. 1994. "The genesis of vitality theory: historical patterns and discursial dimensions." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, (108), 167-206. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.1994.108.167>

<sup>35</sup> Jake Harwood, Howard Giles and Richard Y. Bourhis. 1994. "The genesis of vitality theory..."

<sup>36</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. "The Francophonie in Alberta: strong and vibrant". <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/francophonie-in-alberta-strong-and-vibrant>; Heritage Community Foundation. "Alberta's Francophone Heritage". <https://wayback.archive-it.org/2217/20101208161909/http://www.abheritage.ca/francophone/en/background/introduction.html>

<sup>37</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. "The Francophonie in Alberta: strong and vibrant"; Heritage Community Foundation. "Alberta's Francophone Heritage".

Falher, Donnelly, Guy, Girouxville, Tangent, Dréau, Marie-Reine and Saint-Isidore were founded in response to requests from Francophones.<sup>38</sup>

[44] The majority of these historically French-speaking communities are located outside the two main urban centres, Edmonton and Calgary, particularly in the north-west and north-east of the province. Even today, several of these regions still have a high density of Francophones, such as Falher with 42% of its total population, the Municipal District of Smoky River with 36%, and Girouxville with 32%.<sup>39</sup>

[45] However, the distribution of French-speaking youth in Alberta reveals a brain drain, accentuated by an ageing population. This dynamic poses challenges for the vitality of Francophone communities, particularly in rural areas.

[46] The rural exodus is a major challenge for young people, especially those aged 15 to 19, who are more likely to leave their municipality of origin.<sup>40</sup> For many, this move is seen as an opportunity to improve their socio-economic situation. By leaving rural areas, young people hope to gain access to a better education, find more diversified and better-paid jobs, and benefit from more developed social services. The lack of employment opportunities in rural areas is driving young people to migrate to urban centres, in the hope of achieving greater success in the labour market.<sup>41</sup>

[47] This migration to urban centres is not without consequences. The departure of young people often results in an ageing population in rural areas, putting a brake on the economic and social development of these regions. This phenomenon also leads to a shortage of local labour, which weakens economic activities, posing a crucial challenge for the sustainability of rural communities.<sup>42</sup>

[48] This phenomenon has an even greater impact on the French-speaking population, which is already facing significant ageing in several historically Francophone communities. The following table shows that there are significant gaps, of up to 30 years, between the median age of the Francophone population and that of the total population in these communities<sup>43</sup>.

<b>Municipality/County/ Municipal District</b>	<b>Median age of the total population</b>	<b>Median age of the Francophone population</b>	<b>Gap</b>
Lac La Biche County, including Plamondon	42 years	64 years	22 years
County of St. Paul	46 years	58 years	12 years
St. Paul	37 years	66 years	29 years

<sup>38</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. "The Francophonie in Alberta: strong and vibrant"; Heritage Community Foundation. "Alberta's Francophone Heritage".

<sup>39</sup> ACFA. 2024. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*, page 39, [https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Version-mise-a-jour-2024\\_Plan-daction-FRAB\\_EN.pdf](https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Version-mise-a-jour-2024_Plan-daction-FRAB_EN.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> Yujiro Sano et al. 2020. "Youth Migration in the Context of Rural Brain Drain: Longitudinal Evidence from Canada". *Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 15(4), 100-119. <https://journals.brandonu.ca/jrcd/article/view/1850>

<sup>41</sup> Yujiro Sano et al. 2020. "Youth Migration..."

<sup>42</sup> Yujiro Sano et al. 2020. "Youth migration" ... p.112.

<sup>43</sup> Sociopol. *Demographic Portrait...*

Municipal District of Bonnyville	40 years	54 years	14 years
Bonnyville	36 years	65 years	29 years
Falher	45 years	58 years	13 years
Girouxville	37 years	66 years	29 years
Municipal District of Smoky River	45 years	56 years	11 years

[49] In addition to this rural exodus and an ageing population, Alberta's Francophonie is also facing a provincial exodus of its young people. **French-speaking young people are leaving Alberta in search of a more diversified cultural offering, post-secondary programs in French that are not available in the province, and better employment opportunities in French, which are often limited in Alberta.**<sup>44</sup>

[50] As we saw earlier, many young people who speak French come from immigrant backgrounds. However, in rural areas, the presence of Francophones from immigrant backgrounds remains very low, representing 2% or less of the population in some communities such as St. Paul, Plamondon, and Bonnyville, and even non-existent in Falher, Donnelly, Girouxville, and McLennan. On the other hand, semi-urban centres benefit from a certain renewal of their French-speaking population thanks to migration. For example, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has 380 French-speaking immigrants (23%), Red Deer 275 (21%), Lethbridge 260 (28%), and Grande Prairie 195 (12%).<sup>45</sup>

[51] It is, therefore, becoming increasingly crucial to implement initiatives that will promote the retention of young French-speaking immigrants within Alberta's Francophonie, particularly in semi-urban centres. Without such measures, these Francophone immigrants risk leaving these regions, thereby compromising the renewal of the Francophone population outside Edmonton and Calgary.<sup>46</sup> A *Conference Board of Canada* report has shown that the rate of onward migration, i.e. the proportion of French-speaking immigrants leaving Canada within 25 years of their arrival, has increased more rapidly than that of English-speaking and allophone immigrants. Moreover, the first two years in Canada are particularly decisive for French-speaking immigrants, as it is during this period that the greatest number of departures occur.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Chloé Liberge. "Les jeunes francophones quittent eux aussi l'Alberta". *Le Franco*, April 28, 2022. <https://lefranco.ab.ca/provincial/2022/04/28/jeunes-francophones-quittent-alberta-etudes-ne-fait-plus-rever-travail/>; La Croisée. "L'Alberta a du mal à retenir ses jeunes". *Radio-Canada*, November 22, 2021. <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/ohdio/premiere/emissions/la-croisee/segments/entrevue/381288/migration-interprovinciale-jeunesse-economie-politique> (only available in French)

<sup>45</sup> Sociopol Demographic Portrait...

<sup>46</sup> Conference Board of Canada, 2024. *The Leaky Bucket 2024 A Closer Look at Immigrant Onward Migration in Canada*. <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/the-leaky-bucket-2024.pdf>, p.18

<sup>47</sup> Conference Board of Canada. *The Leaky Bucket*...

*Institutional variable - Challenges of Institutional Completeness and the Impact on Assimilation of French-Speaking Youth*

[52] Regarding the institutional variable, research distinguishes between two types of institutions (e.g. schools, cultural centres, hospitals, community organisations, etc.): formal and informal.<sup>48</sup> In Alberta, formal institutions such as primary and secondary schools are better developed, thanks in part to Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees rights and funding from the provincial government. Informal institutions, such as community organisations offering programmes and services in other sectors, are less developed and some receive little funding from the Alberta government.

[53] In light of the demographic challenges affecting young people, it is all the more important that the institutional variable of vitality be solid. Weakness in this area would only worsen the situation and accelerate the assimilation of young French speakers.

[54] Assimilation is defined as a process whereby a person or group is absorbed into the dominant culture. In other words, assimilation involves the abandonment of a minority language or culture in favour of that of the dominant majority.<sup>49</sup> For Francophones, this assimilation may be the result of the lack of Francophone spaces where French can be used, practised and preserved.<sup>50</sup>

[55] Researchers believe that there are two elements that contribute to the creation of francophone spaces in minority situations: (1) institutional completeness and (2) identity-building and linguistic transmission.

[56] Institutional completeness is the notion that institutions are "seen as a condition that contributes to the flourishing of minorities."<sup>51</sup> In other words, institutional completeness is the ability of FMCs to "own institutions" and for these institutions to be "managed by and for" the community.<sup>52</sup>

[57] The federal government has recognized the importance of institutional completeness and has emphasized the role that provinces must also play: "Provincial and

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<sup>48</sup> Jake Harwood, Howard Giles et Richard Y. Bourhis. 1994. "The genesis of vitality theory..."

<sup>49</sup> Michael O'Keefe. 2021. *Francophone Minorities: assimilation and community vitality*. Ottawa, ON: Heritage Canada. P.6 <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.571942/publication.html>

<sup>50</sup> O'Keefe, Michael. 2001. *Francophone minorities...*, p.13.

<sup>51</sup> Linda Cardinal and Rémi Léger. 2017. "La complétude institutionnelle en perspective". *Politiques et Sociétés*, (36), 3-14. Page 3. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1042233ar> (Translated from French)

<sup>52</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>; Linda Cardinal and Rémi Léger. 2017. "La complétude institutionnelle en perspective".

territorial governments themselves have linguistic obligations towards their minorities, and this involves supporting and protecting their institutions.”<sup>53</sup>

[58] Other provincial authorities have also stressed the importance of ensuring the survival of FMC institutions. For example, the Ontario Divisional Court in *Lalonde v. Ontario (Commission de restructuration des services de santé)* (“Montfort case »), indicated that: “institutions are vital to the survival of cultural communities. They are much more than providers of services. They are linguistic and cultural milieus which provide individuals with the means of affirming and expressing their cultural identity, and which by extension permit them to reaffirm their cultural adherence to a community. The individual and the family alone are incapable of maintaining the linguistic and cultural identity of a community. Thus, these institutions must exist in as wide a range of spheres of social activities as possible in order to permit the minority community to develop and maintain its vitality.”<sup>54</sup>

[59] Therefore, having access to spaces within the English-speaking majority, where services integrate Francophone language and cultures, is not a viable option for achieving institutional completeness and ensuring the vitality of Alberta’s Francophonie. The community achieves institutional completeness only when it has the institutions necessary to maintain interpersonal relationships,<sup>55</sup> i.e. members have most of their personal relationships within their language group.<sup>56</sup>

[60] Researchers also explain that Francophone institutions “can ensure the transmission of language, heritage and culture, as well as identity building.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, community organizations within FMCs have a “dual mission”, unlike organizations in the English-speaking majority. In addition to fulfilling their *raison d’être* by contributing to identity building and language transmission among French-speaking Albertans.

[61] The social context in which a person finds themselves (i.e., family, school, community) plays a vital role in how they identify themselves. As explained in the Montfort case, family alone is simply not enough to ensure that a person can identify as a member of his or her community. Community organizations must offer programs and ways of interacting with the community to ensure that this person can firmly identify with their community.<sup>58</sup> The role that community organizations and institutions play in the identity building of a Francophone cannot be dismissed.

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<sup>53</sup> Gouvernement of Canada, 2021. *English and French: Towards a substantive equality of official languages in Canada*, p. 16. <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/corporate/publications/general-publications/equality-official-languages.html>

<sup>54</sup> *Lalonde v. Ontario (Commission de restructuration des services de santé)*, 1999 CanLII 19910 (ON SCDC), <https://canlii.ca/t/g1grn>

<sup>55</sup> Raymond Breton. “Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants.” *American Journal of Sociology* 70, no. 2 (1964): 193-205.

<sup>56</sup> Linda Cardinal and Rémi Léger. 2017. “La complétude institutionnelle en perspective”, page 5.

<sup>57</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>

<sup>58</sup> Association canadienne d’éducation de langue française (ACELF). 2022. *Comprendre la construction identitaire*. [https://acelf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CCI-F1-4\\_ressource-1.pdf](https://acelf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CCI-F1-4_ressource-1.pdf)

[62] Moreover, the link between community institutions is important, since it ensures that “children’s and youth’s identity building will take place with less fluctuation, disarray and anxiety.”<sup>59</sup> This link explains why community organizations within Alberta’s Francophonie are often called upon by Francophone schools to offer programs and services in French. Alberta’s Ministry of Education states that Francophones schools are mandated to offer a program that enables “French language proficiency and identity development.”<sup>60</sup> Thus, programs and services offered by community organizations also become essential to the full implementation of Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

[63] The role of community organizations in ensuring language transmission also involves schools with French immersion programs. French immersion programs in Alberta are designed for children to learn French and use extracurricular activities in French as a way to “develop language skills and cultural appreciation.”<sup>61</sup>

[64] Additionally, having access to activities that enable French-language learners and Francophones, both young and older, to speak French in everyday life helps counter the phenomenon of linguistic insecurity. Linguistic insecurity has been defined “as a sense of unease, discomfort or anxiety experienced when using or attempting to use one’s first language or second language”<sup>62</sup> or “a perception that one’s accent, choice of words or grammar fail to align with standardized language norms.”<sup>63</sup> For French-language learners, linguistic insecurity can also mean that they don’t believe they can truly identify as bilingual.<sup>64</sup>

[65] Institutional completeness can counter the phenomenon of linguistic insecurity, since “linguistic security also depends on access to a range of social settings that normalize the use of French.”<sup>65</sup> Canadian Parents for French has also emphasized the importance of “immersive occasions in francophone settings” for French-language learners “to keep their levels of linguistic proficiency and security strong.”<sup>66</sup>

[66] FJA is also aware of the need to integrate young people whose mother tongue is not French, but who want to get involved in Alberta’s Francophonie. As participants in

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<sup>59</sup> ACELF. 2022. *Comprendre la construction identitaire*, ch. 3 p. 5.

<sup>60</sup> Government of Alberta, “Francophone Education.” <https://www.alberta.ca/education-guide-francophone-education>

<sup>61</sup> Gouvernement of Alberta. “Le français langue seconde-immersion.” <https://education.alberta.ca/%C3%A9ducation-en-fran%C3%A7ais-en-alberta/immersion-fran%C3%A7aise/?searchMode=3>. Translated from French

<sup>62</sup> Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. 2021. *Linguistic (In)security at work*. <https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/publications/studies-other-reports/2021/linguistic-insecurity-work-exploratory-survey-official>

<sup>63</sup> Canadian Parents for French. 2020. *Building Linguistic Security: Be Brave, Speak French!*, p. 1. [https://cpf.ca/wp-content/uploads/CPF\\_2020\\_LinguisticSecurityBrief\\_EN\\_v9\\_EMAIL-1.pdf](https://cpf.ca/wp-content/uploads/CPF_2020_LinguisticSecurityBrief_EN_v9_EMAIL-1.pdf)

<sup>64</sup> Canadian Parents for French. 2020. *Building Linguistic Security...*

<sup>65</sup> Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française. 2020. *Stratégie nationale pour la sécurité linguistique*, p. 17. [https://snsl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FJCF\\_2020\\_SNSL\\_Document\\_FR\\_RGB.pdf](https://snsl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FJCF_2020_SNSL_Document_FR_RGB.pdf). Translated from French.

<sup>66</sup> Canadian Parents for French. 2020. *Building Linguistic Security...* p. 10.



one study stated: "We need to open up our horizons and welcome other people without judgement and, above all, stop being afraid. That way, we can work together to increase the level of proficiency in French and even the number of people who can express themselves in French."<sup>67</sup> A participant involved with FJA in the early 2000s already emphasised this desire for inclusiveness among youth: "I think there was a recognition among youth that if someone had a thirst to participate and contribute to the community, why not include them?"<sup>68</sup>

[67] Identity-building and language transmission therefore play central roles in the retention of French-speaking youth in rural areas and in Alberta. Researchers explain that when young people feel deeply connected to their communities, they are more inclined to stay or return, not only for economic reasons, but also to participate in the vitality of their communities.<sup>69</sup>

[68] When the exodus and assimilation of French-speaking youth becomes too great within a Francophone community, it makes it difficult to organise activities in French. Yet these activities are essential to slowing down assimilation and limiting the departure of youth, thus creating a vicious circle. As some researchers have explained: "Organising such activities in the minority language proves difficult, if not impossible, in contexts where minorities are scattered and few in number. In such situations, it is to be expected that children from the linguistic minority will join groups of children from the linguistic majority in their region, with known negative consequences for the minority language."<sup>70</sup> In fact, a number of academic writings have emphasized the importance of these activities organized by community organizations in young people's identity building, passing on the language and strengthening Alberta's Francophonie.<sup>71</sup>

[69] If identity-building and language transmission are to contribute effectively to the vitality of Francophone communities and help combat the brain drain and assimilation among French-speaking youth, they must be accompanied by concrete cultural, educational, and economic opportunities.

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<sup>67</sup> Anne Robineau et al. 2022. *Étude d'impact de la philosophie du « Par et Pour » et son application au sein du réseau jeunesse de la francophonie canadienne sur le développement personnel et professionnel des jeunes d'expression française*. Institut canadien de recherche sur les minorités linguistiques, p. 156. [https://fjcf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/RAPPORT-FINAL\\_Par-et-Pour\\_Octobre\\_2022.pdf](https://fjcf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/RAPPORT-FINAL_Par-et-Pour_Octobre_2022.pdf) (Translated from French)

<sup>68</sup> Anne Robineau et al. 2022. *Étude d'impact de la philosophie du « Par et Pour »*..., p. 158. (Translated from French)

<sup>69</sup> Yujiro Sano et al. 2020. "Youth migration..." p.113

<sup>70</sup> Rodrigue Landry. 2014. "Les enfants des CLOSM du Canada et les langues officielles" Dans *La vie dans une langue officielle minoritaire au Canada*, edited by Rodrigue Landry, pages 23-70. (Translated from French)

<sup>71</sup> Christine Dallaire and David Whitson. 1998. "Growing up in L'Archipel: Youth Identities in the Context of the Alberta Francophone Games." *Canadian Issues/Thèmes Canadiens*, vol 2054: 91-102; Christine Dallaire. 1999. *The Alberta Francophone Games: A Question of Identity*. Thesis. [https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk1/tape7/PQDD\\_0032/NQ46825.pdf](https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk1/tape7/PQDD_0032/NQ46825.pdf); Christine Dallaire. 2003. "Sport's impact on the Francophoness of the Alberta Francophone Games (AFG)." *Language and Culture/Langue et Culture*. (25), 33-58. <https://doi.org/10.7202/008047ar>



## Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta: An Institution of Alberta's Francophonie

[70] The information presented above positions FJA as a key institution within Alberta's Francophonie and highlights its essential role in countering the vitality challenges facing French-speaking youth. Created and run by and for young people who speak French, FJA offers a variety of programs and services for the province's Francophone youth.

[71] In 1972, four young Francophones brought together representatives from several Francophone regions of Alberta to create FJA.<sup>72</sup> Until then, no provincial organization had brought together Francophone youth, although Francophone youth groups had existed in Alberta since 1913.<sup>73</sup>

[72] Throughout its more than 50 years of operation, FJA has consistently played a leading role in identity building of Francophone youth, with a number of achievements that have had a lasting impact on Alberta's Francophonie.<sup>74</sup>

[73] Since 1973, FJA has supported a number of youth groups across the province, including the *Anti-coquilles de Bonnyville*, the *Franc-parleurs de Saint-Paul*, le *Rouet de Falher*, and a group from Collège Saint-Jean. FJA also supported the *Ukrainian French-Canadian Organization*, enabling it to organise a major event that drew more than 2,000 spectators to the *Edmonton Jubilee Auditorium*.<sup>75</sup>

[74] FJA has also mobilised youth to promote the Francophone presence in Alberta to the Anglophone majority. In 1981, the organization launched a competition to create a Franco-Albertan flag. The winning emblem, designed by the young Jean-Pierre Grenier, was unveiled to the Francophone community at the ACFA's annual conference on March 6, 1982. Thanks to this initiative, Alberta's Francophonie now has a distinctive symbol, officially recognised in 2017 as the first emblem of distinction under Alberta's Emblems Act.<sup>76</sup>

[75] On April 9, 1987, following the Piquette affair<sup>77</sup>, where Franco-Albertan MLA Léo Piquette was denied the right to speak in French at the Alberta Legislative Assembly, FJA

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<sup>72</sup> Library and Archives Canada. "Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta : Ligne de temps." [https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/fja/francais/his\\_temps.html](https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/fja/francais/his_temps.html)

<sup>73</sup> Library and Archives Canada. "Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta : Historique, regroupements jeunesse." <https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/fja/francais/historique.html>

<sup>74</sup> Sébastien Tanguay. "Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta : jeune depuis 45 ans." *Radio-Canada*, 3 décembre 2017. <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1070957/francophonie-jeunesse-alberta-fete>

<sup>75</sup> Library and Archives Canada. "Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta..."

<sup>76</sup> ACFA. "Symboles : Le drapeau franco-albertain." <https://acfa.ab.ca/la-francophonie-albertaine/symboles/#:~:text=Le%20drapeau%20franco%2Dalbertain%20est,blanc%20symbolise%20la%20communaut%C3%A9%20francophone>

<sup>77</sup> Aujourd'hui l'histoire. "L'affaire Léo Piquette, déclenchée par une simple question posée en français." *Radio-Canada*, may 15 2024. <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/ohdio/premiere/emissions/aujourd'hui-l-histoire/segments/rattrapage/501048/affaire-leo-piquette-alberta-francais>

organised a demonstration at the Legislative Assembly in Edmonton. More than 500 people turned out to show their support for Léo Piquette and demand recognition of language rights.<sup>78</sup>

[76] Thanks to the visionary spirit of French-speaking youth, FJA has also put in place provincial initiatives that have been so successful that they have led to the creation of three new Francophone organizations: (1) Fête franco-albertaine, (2) Fédération du sport francophone de l'Alberta, and (3) Comité FrancoQueer de l'Ouest.

[77] In 1981, FJA organised the first edition of "Clac au lac", an annual summer gathering. This event was the precursor to the organisation of the first family camping event in 1989, which brought together 75 Francophones at Skeleton Lake.<sup>79</sup> Following this success, FJA approached the ACFA to launch an annual Franco-Albertan festival, the Fête franco-albertaine, to celebrate Francophone culture. The first edition was held at Lac Miquelon in August 1990. Since then, the Fête franco-albertaine has attracted more than 500 Francophones each year, and will celebrate its 35th anniversary in 2025.<sup>80</sup>

[78] In 1992, FJA organised the first Alberta Francophone Games in Edmonton, bringing together 150 young people aged 12 to 17 from six regions of the province. After two editions of this multi-sport and multi-disciplinary event, FJA decided in 1994 to incorporate a new organization, the Société des Jeux, which became the Fédération du sport francophone de l'Alberta in 2003. Today, the Alberta Francophone Games bring together between 500 and 600 young people from across the province, enrolled in Francophone schools and French immersion programs from grades 7 to 12. The event also mobilises around a hundred volunteers and takes place in a different host community each year. For Alberta's Francophonie, these Games are the equivalent of the Alberta Winter Games and the Alberta Summer Games.<sup>81</sup>

[79] In 2015, at FJA's annual general meeting, it was expressed as a wish that "FJA will do everything in its power to support the 2SLGBTQAI+ cause". The following year, FJA set up a Gay-Straight Alliance ("GSA") project for Francophone and French-immersion schools, as well as developing resources in French. The project evolved to become the Comité FrancoQueer de l'Ouest and was incorporated as an independent organization in 2019.<sup>82</sup>

[80] As well as contributing to these successes in mobilising youth and launching promising initiatives, FJA has also set up flagship activities that are still as popular as ever in its programming. Today, FJA's activities fall into three main categories: (1) organizing provincial events, (2) mobilizing Alberta delegations to regional and national events, and (3) providing services to schools offering French-language programs in the province.

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<sup>78</sup> France Levasseur-Ouimet. 2006. "Léo Piquette : a struggle for Francophone rights in Alberta : remembering l'affaire Piquette" Les Éditions Gid

<sup>79</sup> Sébastien Tanguay. "Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta : jeune depuis 45 ans."

<sup>80</sup> Fête franco-albertaine. "À propos : Historique." <https://fete francoalbertaine.ca/a-propos/historique/>

<sup>81</sup> Fédération du sport francophone de l'Alberta. "À propos : Historique." <https://lafsfa.ca/apropos/historique/>

<sup>82</sup> Comité FrancoQueer de l'Ouest. "À propos de nous." <https://cfqo.ca/a-propos-de-nous/>

[81] Firstly, when it comes to organizing provincial events, FJA's events include the **Parlement jeunesse de l'Alberta (Alberta Youth Parliament)**, **RaJe**, and **GoAGA**.

[82] The **Parlement jeunesse de l'Alberta ("PJA")** is FJA's longest running activity, dating back to 1992. It is a parliamentary simulation designed for young people aged 16 to 25, enabling them to develop fictitious bills and debate them in the Alberta Legislature. The initiative aims to deepen their understanding of Alberta's parliamentary system while developing their communication and argumentation skills. The PJA has three components, each highlighting a different aspect of politics: (1) MLAs, (2) media, and (3) lobbyists. It is also an opportunity for young people to strengthen their leadership skills. FJA is one of only two groups in the province to be granted permission by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly to use the premises of the Legislature, a privilege of which the organisation is particularly proud. For its 32<sup>e</sup> edition in 2024, the PJA brought together 119 participants and 26 chaperones.

[83] Throughout its history, FJA has always organized gathering activities to enable young people from across the province to get together and build connections with one another. However, it was in 1999 that FJA first organized its first RaJe (Youth Gathering). This major annual event celebrated its 25th edition in 2024. The RaJe brings together around 600 young people from Francophone schools across the province for a day of workshops, sporting and artistic activities, as well as networking and performances in French. The RaJe offers a unique opportunity for young people to meet their peers from other regions, strengthen their connections, celebrate their French language and culture, and proudly assert themselves as Francophones. During the 2023 edition, aimed at students in grades 9 and 10, 28 schools from the four Francophone school boards took part, bringing together a total of 650 young people, 49 chaperones, and 55 volunteers. For the 2024 edition, which targeted grade 9 students, 410 participants took part in the event.

[84] Finally, GoAGA is another opportunity to bring together French-speaking youth in Alberta. This event allows members and interested young people to take part in a series of activities and discussions on topics that concern them. It is also during the GoAGA that young leaders are elected to the organization's board of directors, reinforcing their civic and community involvement. In 2024, 38 young people from different regions of the province came together to take part in the activities and elect a new board of directors. For the 2025 edition, to be held from 7 to 9 March, the number of participants has risen to 53.

[85] Secondly, FJA facilitates the participation of delegations from Alberta in major regional and national events such as the **Parlement franco-canadien du Nord et de l'Ouest**, the **Parlement jeunesse pancanadien**, the **Forum jeunesse pancanadien** and the **Jeux de la francophonie canadienne**. These events allow French-speaking youth to discover the Francophonie outside Alberta's borders and to forge ties with French-speaking youth from across Canada.

[86] Since 1991, FJA has contributed to the Parlement franco-canadien du Nord et de l'Ouest ("PFCNO") by facilitating the participation of delegations from Alberta or by hosting and organising the event in Alberta. Like the PJA, the PFCNO is a parliamentary simulation, but on a regional scale. The event brings together youth from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, and Yukon. FJA has hosted and coordinated this event in Alberta in 1991, 1996, 2002, 2005, 2009, 2013, and most recently in 2018.<sup>83</sup>

[87] FJA is a member of the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française ("FJCF"), a federation of provincial and territorial organizations representing French-speaking minority youth. The FJCF lobbies federal government authorities and organizes national and international events such as the Parlement jeunesse pancanadien, the Forum jeunesse pancanadien and the Jeux de la francophonie canadienne ("JeuxFC").<sup>84</sup> As a member, FJA organizes delegations to take part in these events.

[88] In particular, the JeuxFC represent a major commitment for FJA. Organised every three years since 1999, this event has seen FJA take part in eight editions, including the 2008 edition, which was held in Alberta. The JeuxFC offer a multitude of disciplines and events, bringing together nearly 1,000 participants, 250 coaches and hundreds of volunteers from across Canada in one host province.<sup>85</sup> With more than a year to go before the event, FJA has to put together Team Alberta, made up of 96 young people aged 14 to 18 from across the province, accompanied by 20 coaches and 5 members of the mission team responsible for coordinating activities. FJA is organising selection camps, training sessions, and a kick-off rally. The next edition of the JeuxFC, in which Team Alberta will participate, will take place from July 15 to 19, 2025 in Laval, Quebec.

[89] A study conducted with participants from Team Alberta revealed that "there is a desire to develop Francophone pride in Alberta and to become more involved with future JeuxFC. These participants tend to get involved in their Francophone community through activities such as the youth parliament, youth organisations and events, and cultural and sporting events. The goal is to get together with other French-speaking Albertans."<sup>86</sup> The study also revealed that "87.1% of participants in Alberta identified themselves entirely or very much with the term corresponding to their provincial Francophone community (Franco-Albertan)."<sup>87</sup>

[90] Finally, FJA provides services to Alberta schools with French-language programs to support identity building and language transmission. In the case of Francophone schools, FJA works with the Fédération des conseils scolaires francophones de l'Alberta ("FCSFA") to offer educational and extracurricular programs in the 33 Francophone schools with more than 2,800 students enrolled in grades 7 to 12. This collaboration aims

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<sup>83</sup> PFCNO. <https://www.pfcno.com/>

<sup>84</sup> Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française. <https://fjcf.ca/la-fjcf/>

<sup>85</sup> Éric Forgues et al. 2018. *Les Jeux de la francophonie canadienne. Épanouissement, identité et engagement de la jeunesse d'expression française au Canada : Rapport*. <https://fjcf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/RAPPORT-FINAL-1.pdf>

<sup>86</sup> Éric Forgues et al. 2018. *Les Jeux de la francophonie canadienne...*p.37. (Translated from French)

<sup>87</sup> Éric Forgues et al. 2018. *Les Jeux de la francophonie canadienne...*p.57. (Translated from French)

to strengthen Francophone education while supporting the personal and community development of youth, central elements of the curriculum and the identity building mandate of Francophone schools.

[91] One of the focal points of this collaboration with FCSFA is FJA's *Bureau d'animation en leadership* ("BAL"). Since 2008, the BAL has made it possible to offer leadership courses credited by the Ministry of Education, to students in Francophone schools. These courses enable students in Grades 10 to 12 to acquire essential skills in leadership, communication, and project management.

[92] Over the past 17 years, these courses have been a turning point for more than 1,000 young people, with an average of 65 to 70 participants per year. Many of these young leaders are now investing their passion and energy in the development of Alberta's Francophonie at various levels: within the federal and provincial governments, in schools offering French-language programs, within provincial and regional organizations, on Boards of Directors, and in Alberta and Canadian society. Some travel the world to support the international Francophonie, while others pursue promising careers in fields they are passionate about.

[93] In addition to the leadership courses, FJA and FCSFA work together to offer extracurricular opportunities such as training for student councils. These student councils are opportunities for young people to get involved in the student life of their school and learn how to manage projects. The student council training modules ("CéFORT") cover topics such as event management, effective communication, and the use of social media to increase young people's participation in student council initiatives. For the 2023-2024 academic year, around a hundred young people took part in CéFORTs.

[94] As for the activities offered to students enrolled in French immersion programs, many of them have been participating in a few FJA activities for several years. However, FJA's Board of Directors wanted to "offer more activities to make young people more comfortable in French."<sup>88</sup> With this in mind, FJA has adopted a more targeted approach to young people learning French. The organization has developed a project for students in French immersion programs, aimed at increasing their access to youth activities in French and fostering their integration into Alberta's Francophonie. In 2025, FJA launched *Projet Horizon*, a pilot project in partnership with Canadian parents for French - Alberta. This initiative aims to bring together 15 to 20 grade 10 to 12 students from French immersion programs for three weekends of engaging and unifying activities in French. Across the province, more than 66,000 students in grades 7 to 12 are enrolled in French-second-language programs.

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<sup>88</sup> Anne Robineau et al. 2022. *Étude d'impact de la philosophie du « Par et Pour »*... p. 156. (Translated from French)

[95] All these activities, which are an integral part of FJA's programming, are more than just entertainment. They play a crucial role in strengthening youth's identity and sense of belonging to the Francophonie, at the provincial, regional, and national levels.<sup>89</sup>

[96] More specifically, for participants from Francophone schools, these gatherings support identity building. During interviews for a study specifically on the Alberta Francophone Games ("AFG"), Francophone school boards emphasized that they "value the larger role AFG are seen to fulfill. In fact, the Games not only take on an educational component, they also become an opportunity to develop the 'community' dimension of Francophone schools."<sup>90</sup> The importance of recreational activities in informal spaces are a "key site in which young people make friends, forge values, and develop identities."<sup>91</sup>

[97] For participants from schools offering a French immersion program, the gatherings give them the opportunity to have immersive experiences in French outside the classroom context. In interviews for the AFG study, English school boards with French immersion programs explained that they "are interested in the linguistic experience the AFG offer for students to 'practice' French."<sup>92</sup> As mentioned above, language insecurity is a real issue for learners of French, and gatherings like those organised by FJA can help to counter this phenomenon.

[98] A study on the impact of youth networks like FJA on young people's personal and professional development showed that in Alberta, since young people are scattered across the province, the activities organized by FJA "become unifying elements that allow young people to discover different regions and create relationships with other young people elsewhere in the province or even the country. Their time at FJA is often a springboard to the future. Many of these young people now hold key positions in government and in various organisations."<sup>93</sup>

[99] This study also highlighted the lasting positive impacts of youth engagement in their Francophone community. By participating in FJA activities and its national network, they acquire leadership, management and interpersonal skills. These experiences often influence their career and study choices, helping to shape their professional paths.<sup>94</sup>

[100] To fund all of its initiatives, FJA receives funding from several funding bodies, including Canadian Heritage, Young Canada Works, Service Canada, and the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC). FJA also receives occasional funding from other sources, such as the Government of Alberta's Community Initiatives Program and the Government of Quebec's Program to Support the Canadian Francophonie. However, these funds are not guaranteed, as they must be applied for annually and are allocated based on specific projects.

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<sup>89</sup> Éric Forgues et al. 2018. *Les Jeux de la francophonie canadienne...*

<sup>90</sup> Christine Dallaire. 1999. "The Alberta Francophone Games..." p.85.

<sup>91</sup> Christine Dallaire and David Whitson. 1998. "Growing up in L'Archipel..." p.8.

<sup>92</sup> Christine Dallaire. 1999. "The Alberta Francophone Games..." p.85.

<sup>93</sup> Anne Robineau et al. 2022. *Étude d'impact de la philosophie du « Par et Pour »* ... p. 154. (Translated from French)

<sup>94</sup> Anne Robineau et al. 2022. *Étude d'impact de la philosophie du « Par et Pour »* ...

[101] Part of the funding for FJA's school programs comes from funds allocated by the FCSFA, which provides an annual contribution of \$7,000. However, this amount is negotiated each year and is not guaranteed. For its part, the FCSFA receives funding from the Official Languages in Education Protocol (OLEP), a national agreement between the federal and provincial governments aimed at promoting and supporting French-language education in Francophone minority communities across Canada, including Alberta. This agreement aims to ensure young Francophones have access to quality French-language education, while strengthening the capacity of educational institutions and their cultural offerings.

## Recommendations

[102] In light of the information presented above, it is clear that FJA is an organization that meets many of the needs of French-speaking youth in Alberta. FJA's services and programs support the principle of vitality set out in the Government of Alberta's *French Policy*.

[103] The Government of Alberta identified FJA as a stakeholder in its *French Policy: 2024-2028 Action Plan*. However, this plan does not include any specific measures to support youth groups outside of the school setting. Currently, FJA receives only limited one-time funding from the province to support certain youth gathering projects, such as Team Alberta at the JeuxFC and the RaJe, as well as limited funding from school boards to support school programs only. FJA receives no operational funding, which compromises the stability of this institution and, by extension, the vitality of Alberta's Francophonie.

[104] Therefore, the ACFA and FJA **recommend that the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women provide predictable financial support to FJA to implement the *French Policy***. This funding would, among other things, support FJA's current programming, but also enable the implementation of a new strategy to energize Francophone youth in rural and semi-urban areas.

[105] As we have seen previously, the vitality of Alberta's Francophone communities depends on increased support for youth. This support is essential in a context where the Francophone population is ageing, and even more so in certain Francophone communities in the northwest and northeast of the province compared to the Anglophone population. This support would also support Francophone communities in semi-urban areas, where more and more people with an immigrant background are settling, but where the range of activities for French-speaking youth remains limited.

[106] Currently, FJA's funding does not allow it to offer activities in all regions of the province on a regular basis. The FJA office is located in Edmonton and many of the gathering activities are organized in a central location to reduce the costs of hosting participants. Transportation costs to bring young people from rural and semi-urban areas to these activities are very high in Alberta. This reality creates a certain inequity between

regions, a reality well perceived by young Francophones. **In fact, young people have expressed to FJA that they would like to have access to activities by and for young people offered in French in their region.** This was also a wish expressed by participants at the last GoAGA in 2024. A national survey conducted with French-speaking youth across the country, including in Alberta, also identified that the primary barrier to accessing activities in French was the fact that they are not offered in their community.<sup>95</sup>

[107] In addition to the provincial gathering opportunities already organized by FJA, Francophone youth would benefit from having access to a program of extracurricular activities on a regular basis. This programming could, for example, be offered by the establishment and maintenance of youth centers in collaboration with regional ACFAs and family resource networks (FRNs). FJA's contribution to these organizations that offer local programming would also be essential to bring a vision "by and for young people"; a fundamental element for youth to consider the activities attractive. As one study shows, "community organizations are structured in such a way that their population (youth) is not always consulted when the time comes to make decisions for the entire community."<sup>96</sup>

[108] New local initiatives would encourage the engagement of young Francophones, strengthening their sense of belonging to their local community to reduce the risk of brain drain. As we have seen, access to attractive local activities in French is an essential element in increasing young people's desire to remain in their regions or return to settle there after their studies.

[109] Furthermore, the Ministry of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women has as priorities stated in its business plan (1) "promote and support non-profit organizations and the importance of volunteerism in Alberta's communities." and (2) "champion the ongoing development and vitality of Alberta's francophone communities".<sup>97</sup> Thus, providing operational funding for FJA would align with these priorities and would allow the ministry to achieve its objectives, particularly for youth within Alberta's Francophonie.

[110] In addition to financial support, the ACFA and FJA **recommend that the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women, through the Francophone Secretariat, act as a catalyst to enable FJA to establish collaborations with various ministries.**

[111] As an organization that represents an age-based clientele, and not a specific sector, the interests and priorities of this clientele are varied. These priorities include **assistance in finding jobs in French, a Francophone education continuum**

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<sup>95</sup> Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française. 2025. *Baromètre jeunesse : résultats de sondage*.

<sup>96</sup> Anne Robineau et al. 2022. *Étude d'impact de la philosophie...*, p. 156. (Translated from French)

<sup>97</sup> Government of Alberta. 2024. *Arts, Culture and the Status of Women: Ministry Business Plan*. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/148e717e-ea65-42e7-8a3d-53cd3d50df56/resource/722082eb-3694-4567-9c46-a9567b5193a5/download/arts-culture-and-status-of-women-business-plan-2024-27-english.pdf>



**equivalent to that of the Anglophone majority, and social and mental health services offered in French**, to name a few. Moreover, among the top 5 priorities for French-speaking youth in Canada are also issues of access to post-secondary education in French, mental health care, and employability.<sup>98</sup> Thanks to its expertise with the young people aged 14 to 25, FJA brings a Francophone youth lens to all discussions on the development of French-language programs and services in these sectors.

[112] The Francophone Secretariat could then play an essential role in establishing connections between FJA and various government ministries. By applying a Francophone youth lens to various sectors, the Government of Alberta could ensure that its current and future initiatives consider the specific needs of this population. This strategy would also reduce administrative barriers to improve young Francophones' access to programs and services that meet their needs.

[113] Here are four examples of programs and services where integrating a Francophone youth perspective, in collaboration with FJA, could be beneficial for the ministries concerned.

[114] First, in terms of the **employability** of French-speaking youth, FJA could help identify existing gaps. The issue of the employability of Albertans is included in the objectives and priorities set out in the business plans of several ministries: Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services, Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Trade, and Ministry of Tourism and Sport.

[115] In the area of employment services, a responsibility of the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services, Parallèle Alberta, the lead organization in the economic development sector for Alberta's Francophonie, has a contract with the Ministry to provide services to residents in Edmonton, Red Deer, and the northeast of the province.

[116] Parallèle Alberta offers the *Jeunes-Études-Travail* ("JET") program, a two to four weeks training program in which young people take part in career exploration sessions, self-knowledge workshops, entrepreneurship workshops and job search workshops. The programme offers participants the opportunity to have their resume reviewed and to prepare for interviews.

[117] Through collaboration between Parallèle Alberta and FJA, the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services could consider expanding its employment assistance programs to all regions of the province, reaching more young people who would not have access to these services under the current delivery model. In addition, an expansion of the JET program in rural and semi-urban areas could enable the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Trade to achieve its objective of diversifying the local economy in the regions in collaboration with community partners.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française. 2025. *Baromètre jeunesse : résultats de sondage*.

<sup>99</sup> Government of Alberta. 2024. *Jobs, Economy and Trade Ministry Business Plan*.  
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/df101219-ef6d-4eda-badd-0c2d088dacbe/resource/364318b1-fa9f-4400-918f-a46a8b932b3c/download/jobs-economy-and-trade-business-plan-2024-27.pdf>

[118] Furthermore, as shown above, almost 48% of young Francophones work in sales and services. When we look in more detail at the industries in which these Francophones aged 15 to 24 work, we see that accommodation and food services is the second most popular industry after retail trade.<sup>100</sup> This reality coincides with the objective of the Ministry of Tourism and Sport in its business plan to “work with ministry partners to develop a job-attraction strategy for young Albertans (aged 16 to 24) to train and transition to serve new market demands.”<sup>101</sup> To support the vitality of regional Francophone communities, the ministry could work with FJA to ensure that the strategy incorporates a Francophone lens and takes into account the realities of young Francophones in rural areas of the province.

[119] Secondly, in terms of French-language post-secondary education, which mainly concerns young people aged 18 and 24, FJA could work with French-language post-secondary institutions funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education to ensure that they offer a student life that meets the needs of French-speaking youth.

[120] The issue of student life was one of the themes of the *Sommet sur l'éducation postsecondaire de langue française en Alberta* (Summit on Post Secondary Education in French in Alberta), an event organised by the ACFA in April 2024, which brought together approximately one hundred participants. The discussions at this event identified four major issues related to student life: (1) the importance of having a cultural leadership position to help students' identity building; (2) strengthening ties between the student community and Alberta's Francophone community to improve coordination of activities and foster a better understanding of the history and issues of the local Francophone community; (3) a smoother transition from secondary to post-secondary education; and (4) the changing student profile, marked by an increase in the number of newcomers, which requires rapid adaptation of the services offered to better meet their specific needs.<sup>102</sup>

[121] These actions are designed to ensure that French-speaking students continue their education at institutions offering post-secondary programs in French in Alberta, thereby consolidating the vitality of Alberta's Francophonie. By offering a student life adapted to their needs, these measures contribute to developing a post-secondary education offer in French that is attractive to young people who speak French, as well as strengthening their ties with the Francophone community. These measures will make it possible to train more young people who speak French at the post-secondary level who

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<sup>100</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0369-01. *First official language spoken by mobility status 5 years ago, place of residence 5 years ago, industry, highest level of education and employment income statistics: Canada, provinces and territories.*

[https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810036801&request\\_locale=en](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810036801&request_locale=en)

<sup>101</sup> Government of Alberta. 2024. *Tourism and Sport Ministry Business Plan.*

<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/97284f35-cf7b-424e-a9e9-e3b7f7df89ea/resource/eefe6a94-adfb-44dd-b0a8-f5dfcdabc7615/download/tourism-and-sport-business-plan-2024-27.pdf>

<sup>102</sup> ACFA. 2024. *Rapport du 2<sup>e</sup> Sommet sur l'éducation postsecondaire de langue française en Alberta*, p. 6. [https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Rapport-2e-sommet-sur-leducation-postsecondaire\\_vf-2.pdf](https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Rapport-2e-sommet-sur-leducation-postsecondaire_vf-2.pdf) (Available only in French)

are capable of pursuing their careers in French, and to make up for the shortage of bilingual workers in the province. This collaboration between FJA and post-secondary institutions will enable the Ministry of Advance Education to achieve its objectives to “Strengthen the alignment of post-secondary programs to employment and expand innovative learning opportunities... to meet Albertans’ skills development needs and support labour market demand.”<sup>103</sup>

[122] Third, in terms of **social and mental health services**, FJA notes that there are glaring needs in terms of services for French-speaking youth. These needs were also raised by the ACFA in its efforts to draw up an inventory of French-language social and mental health services in the province.

[123] In 2022-2023, the ACFA retained KPMG to carry out this review. KPMG conducted focus groups with more than 30 Francophone organizations and a survey to which more than 700 participants responded. Looking specifically at the results for young people, there is a glaring lack of French-language mental health services across the province, as well as in Francophone schools. For young people aged 18 to 24 and parents of school-age children, mental health was ranked as the number one priority (out of nine priorities).<sup>104</sup>

[124] As a result, FJA could work with Francophone school boards and organizations responsible for delivering services to youth, as well as the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, to identify the needs of young people in rural and semi-urban areas. The services currently offered are mainly available in Edmonton and Calgary. This collaboration would not only enable the development of services that effectively meet the needs of French-speaking youth, but would also help the ministry to achieve two of the objectives set out in its business plan: (1) “Invest in mental health facility expansion to increase access to a suite of community-based mental health services across the province that provide consistent supports to youth experiencing mental illness” and (2) “Evaluate and expand access to mental health supports for youth in schools and in community to promote positive mental health, prevent severe mental health issues from developing, and provide treatment for students with mental illness.”<sup>105</sup>

[125] Finally, as mentioned earlier, **more than half of young Francophones in Alberta are immigrants, a higher proportion than in the province’s Francophone population as a whole**. This reality accentuates the need to set up integration and inclusion programs tailored to the needs of young people.

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<sup>103</sup> Government of Alberta. 2024. *Advanced Education Ministry Business Plan*.

<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/1a50e092-9b23-4f7c-93a9-a13e9264c1ed/resource/0ef40d37-be03-4026-b5d8-de753cef99e2/download/advanced-education-business-plan-2024-27.pdf>

<sup>104</sup> ACFA. 2023. *Rapport final de la Revue des services sociaux et de santé mentale en français en Alberta préparé par KPMG*. <https://acfa.ab.ca/en-action/affaires-communautaires/services-sociaux-et-sante-mentale/> (Available only in French)

<sup>105</sup> Government of Alberta. 2024. *Mental Health and Addiction: Ministry Business Plan* <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/f8285c1c-7cbf-410e-a07d-beaae3169cc6/resource/d41ceadc-1b98-4562-a3be-3c4492a67109/download/mental-health-and-addiction-business-plan-2024-27.pdf>

[126] The issue of inclusion and anti-racism is of particular concern to FJA. In 2020, the organization collaborated with Francophonie albertaine plurielle ("FRAP"), Alliance Jeunesse-Famille de l'Alberta Society ("AJFAS") and Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord ("CSCN") to organize workshops and a community forum to find solutions to racism and discrimination against Francophones from immigrant backgrounds.<sup>106</sup>

[127] For example, FJA and the Ministry of Immigration and Multiculturalism could work together to develop initiatives specifically targeting French-speaking youth, as part of the ministry's anti-racism programs and to support ethnocultural communities. Such initiatives are essential to ensure the long-term vitality of Alberta's Francophonie and would help meet key objectives of the Ministry of Immigration and Multiculturalism, including: (1) "Advance the province's anti-racism initiatives, with advice from the Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council, to address systemic barriers and challenges facing racially marginalized and Indigenous peoples" and (2) "Develop and implement anti-racism legislation to build on Alberta's culture of inclusion, respect, and celebration of our diverse cultural communities."<sup>107</sup>

## Conclusion

[128] In conclusion, the ACFA and FJA hope that the Ministry of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women will consider the two main recommendations shared in this brief, namely (1) to provide FJA with predictable financial support and (2) to allow FJA to establish collaborations with various ministries. FJA is a key institution in Alberta's Francophonie for mobilizing French-speaking youth and ensuring that Alberta's Francophonie can count on a next generation that is not only able to express itself in French, but also wants to live in French. Alberta's Francophonie is currently facing major challenges in terms of brain drain, ageing and assimilation, all of which are creating challenges in terms of renewing the Francophone population in urban and semi-urban areas and, consequently, accessing a workforce that can offer services in French over the long term. Alberta's Francophonie also has the opportunity to welcome a number of French-speaking newcomers, particularly young people. To encourage their integration and inclusion in the host Francophone communities, it is crucial to offer them adapted services that enable them not only to speak French, but also to develop their full potential. By supporting FJA, the province is investing directly in the vitality and sustainability of Alberta's Francophonie, ensuring a future where young people choose to live in French.

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<sup>106</sup> Andréane Williams. "Des organismes francophones lancent un groupe de soutien contre le racisme." *Radio-Canada*, June 30, 2020. <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1716388/alberta-racisme-francophonie-communaute-culturelle> (Available only in French)

<sup>107</sup> Government of Alberta. 2024. *Immigration and Multiculturalism Ministry Business Plan*. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/67215cef-dc6a-4f52-9f90-fae7aa650325/resource/33778a70-0c9b-4c9e-85ef-95677cd13bc7/download/immigration-and-multiculturalism-business-plan-2024-27.pdf>