



**Government of Alberta's 2026 Budget:**  
**Investing in Francophonie for a More Inclusive Alberta**

Brief submitted by the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA) to the Honourable  
Nate Horner, President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, as part of the Budget 2026  
Public Engagement

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## Summary of Recommendations

1. Create a new position of Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for the Francophone Secretariat.
2. Provide annual operational funding to the ACFA to support the implementation of the *French Policy*, while maintaining the Community Initiative Program, which benefits many Francophone organizations.
3. Provide annual operational funding to Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta to support the implementation of the *French Policy* and to develop a new strategy aimed at engaging Francophone youth in rural and semi-urban areas.
4. Increase funding for Francophone schools to ensure equivalence with the Anglophone majority, as set out in Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.
5. Allocate funding to ensure the renewal of the ACCENT project, a bilingual directory of educational, cultural, and recreational activities and resources offered in French to school communities in Alberta.
6. Provide funding to the Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta under the Canada–Alberta Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.
7. Ensure that some funding under the *Aging with Dignity* bilateral agreement (2023–2024 to 2027–2028) goes to the ACFA and Fédération des aînés franco-albertains to support the offer of social services in French.
8. Renew the ongoing projects under the *Canada–Alberta Agreement to Work Together to Improve Health Care for Canadians* (2023–2024 to 2025–2026) for the next three-year period and increase funding as part of the negotiation of the next agreement.
9. Seek increased funding from the Government of Canada to ensure that financial resources associated with Francophone immigrants effectively follow them when they settle in Alberta, regardless of their initial province of arrival.
10. Allocate a budget for the translation of public communications to improve the coordination of interventions and the recovery of Francophone communities in emergency situations.

## Introduction

[1] The Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (« ACFA ») thanks the Government of Alberta for the opportunity to present this brief as part of the Budget 2026 consultations. The ACFA wishes to bring to the government's attention specific investments for Alberta's Francophonie that it could include in its next budget to implement its *French Policy* and offer services and programs in French.

[2] Founded in 1926, 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.

[3] 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>

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

- a) The **status of the French language in Alberta** by (1) presenting a demographic portrait of Alberta's Francophonie and (2) highlighting five legislative texts that support the offer of services in French and the recognition of the Francophonie in the province;
- b) **Recommendations for investments** relating to the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028* and the *French Policy: 2024-28 Action Plan*.

## Status of the French Language in Alberta

### *Demographic Portrait*

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

[6] The first francophone presence in Alberta dates back to the 18th century, well over 250 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 (4) of these villages became officially bilingual: Beaumont, Legal, Falher and Plamondon.<sup>3</sup>

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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>

<sup>3</sup> Government of Alberta. <https://www.alberta.ca/fr-CA/francophone-heritage.aspx>

[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 French-speaking Albertans, Statistics Canada estimates that 119,690 are likely to request services in French, or 2.6% of Alberta's population.<sup>7</sup>

[11] Alberta also has the second-largest population of children eligible for minority language education in the country (excluding Quebec). The 2021 Census indicates 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 children in the Alberta population.<sup>8</sup> However, these figures have some limitations, since they consider families 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. Statistics Canada then produced a study to estimate this number of children; the new figures came to 75,055 eligible children.<sup>9</sup>

[12] It is also important to note that the median age of the Francophone population is 43, which is higher than the median age of the province's total population, which is 38. In fact, the Francophone population has a higher proportion of people aged 65 and over (18%), compared to the proportion observed among the general population (14%).<sup>10</sup>

[13] Moreover, there has been an increase and diversification of the French-speaking population over the years. This reality has a significant impact on the growth of Alberta's Francophonie and the demand for French-language services.

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<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](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. *Demographic Portrait...* p.10.

<sup>8</sup> Sociopol. *Demographic Portrait ...* p.42.

<sup>9</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>10</sup> Sociopol. *Demographic Portrait ...* p.21.

[14] The number of Albertans with French as their first official language spoken increased by 35.9% over 20 years (2001-2021).<sup>11</sup> The number of Albertans with knowledge of French increased by 54.6% over 30 years (1991-2021).<sup>12</sup>

[15] Although many Francophones were born in Alberta, the majority came from across Canada and around the world. Among Albertans with French as their first official language spoken, about 24% were born in Alberta, 44% came from elsewhere in Canada, and 32% came from elsewhere in the world.<sup>13</sup>

[16] A closer look at the 2021 census data reveals that 3,120 (4%) Francophones have an Indigenous identity, mainly Métis (74%).<sup>14</sup>

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

[18] The percentage of Albertans with an immigrant background within Alberta's Francophone population is also higher than within Alberta's total population, which stands at 23%. Africa is the birthplace of 50% of Francophone immigrants, a significant difference from Alberta's total immigrant population, 57% of whom come from Asia.<sup>16</sup>

[19] 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).

[20] Here is a table summarizing the Francophonie's presence in these municipalities, including the number of children eligible for instruction in the Minority Official Language<sup>17</sup> :

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<sup>11</sup> Statistics Canada. 2019. *The French Language in Alberta, 2001 to 2016: Facts and Figures*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/fr/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2019016-fra.pdf?st=xgAyz9SW>; Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*.

<sup>12</sup> Statistics Canada. 2019. *The French Language in Alberta, 2001 to 2016: Facts and Figures*; Statistics Canada. *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Alberta*; *Census Profile, 1991 Census of Population, Alberta*; *Census Profile, 1996 Census of Population, Alberta*.

<sup>13</sup> Sociopol. *Demographic Portrait ...* p.26-27.

<sup>14</sup> Sociopol. *Demographic Portrait ...* p.31.

<sup>15</sup> Sociopol. *Demographic Portrait ...* p.32.

<sup>16</sup> Sociopol. *Demographic Portrait ...* p.26-27.

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

<b>Municipalities</b>	<b>French as their first official language spoken (FOLS)</b>	<b>Knowledge of French</b>	<b>Potential demand for French-language services</b>	<b>Aboriginal identity within FOLS</b>	<b>Children (0 to 18 years old) eligible for instruction in the Minority Official Language</b>	<b>Ethnocultural diversity within FOLS</b>
Airdrie	1 525 (2.1%)	5 410 (7.3%)	2 460 (3.3%)	40 (2.6%)	1 850 (8.6%)	455 (29.8%)
Banff	265 (3.9%)	880 (12.8%)	845 (10.2%)	0 (0%)	110 (12.4%)	20 (7.5%)
Beaumont	790 (3.8%)	2 030 (14.5%)	1 265 (6.15%)	40 (5%)	700 (11.1%)	130 (16.5%)
Bonnyville and surroundings	865 (4.4%)	2 265 (11.6%)	1 380 (7%)	70 (8.1%)	610 (12.1%)	10 (1.2%)
Brooks	390 (2.7%)	540 (3.7%)	385 (2.6%)	0 (0%)	205 (4.9%)	285 (73%)
Calgary	23 590 (1.8%)	86 140 (6.7%)	34 640 (2.7%)	695 (2.9%)	19 845 (6.9%)	8 370 (36%)
Camrose and surroundings	235 (0.8%)	1 035 (3.6%)	425 (1.5%)	15 (6.4%)	240 (3.9%)	15 (6.4%)
Canmore and surroundings	920 (5.4%)	3 180 (18.6%)	1 395 (8%)	0 (0%)	425 (14.7%)	40 (4.3%)
Chestermere	300 (1.4%)	925 (4.2%)	390 (1.8%)	0 (0%)	360 (5.9%)	100 (33.3%)
Cochrane	790 (2.5%)	2 880 (9.2%)	1 150 (3.6%)	10 (1.2%)	790 (9.7%)	25 (3.1%)
Cold Lake	815 (5.3%)	1 930 (12.6%)	1 100 (7.1%)	50 (6.1%)	555 (13.1%)	45 (5.5%)
Crowsnest Pass and surroundings	125 (1%)	500 (4.1%)	250 (2%)	0 (0%)	65 (3%)	0 (0%)
Edmonton	23 205 (2.3%)	67 175 (6.7%)	33 165 (3.3%)	600 (2.6%)	17 265 (7.9%)	10 750 (46.3%)
Falher and surroundings	1 240 (25.3%)	1 815 (37.1%)	1 610 (29.5%)	30 (2.4%)	420 (35.9%)	20 (1.6%)
Fort Saskatchewan	420 (1.6%)	1 495 (5.6%)	735 (2.7%)	0 (0%)	525 (8%)	70 (16.9%)
Grande Prairie	1 575 (2.5%)	4 890 (7.7%)	2 315 (3.6%)	150 (9.5%)	1 650 (10%)	250 (15.9%)
Grande Prairie County and surroundings	410 (1.4%)	1 470 (5%)	675 (2.3%)	35 (8.5%)	455 (5.6%)	20 (4.8%)
High Prairie, Slave Lake and surroundings	365 (2.2%)	625 (3.7%)	675 (4%)	0 (0%)	210 (4.9%)	35 (9.9%)
Hinton, Edson and Yellowhead County	575 (2%)	1 825 (6.5%)	855 (3%)	55 (9.6%)	375 (5.8%)	35 (6.3%)
Jasper	175 (4.5%)	765 (19.5%)	465 (10%)	25 (13.9%)	150 (21%)	10 (5.6%)

Lac La Biche County and surroundings	410 (5.4%)	895 (11.8%)	580 (7.7%)	35 (8.5%)	290 (16.5%)	10 (2.4%)
Lacombe and surroundings	330 (0.9%)	1 530 (4%)	655 (1.7%)	15 (4.8%)	395 (4.1%)	10 (3.1%)
Leduc and surroundings	990 (1.9%)	2 990 (5.7%)	1 395 (2.7%)	70 (7.3%)	710 (5.4%)	100 (10.2%)
Legal and surroundings	1 400 (2.8%)	3 610 (7.3%)	2 245 (4.4%)	50 (3.6%)	915 (7.5%)	35 (2.5%)
Lethbridge	920 (1%)	5 060 (5.3%)	1 795 (1.8%)	15 (1.6%)	955 (4.6%)	275 (29.9%)
Lloydminster	185 (1%)	935 (4.9%)	345 (1.8%)	15 (8.1%)	295 (5.7%)	30 (16.2%)
Medicine Hat	475 (0.8%)	2 210 (3.6%)	1 035 (1.7%)	25 (5.3%)	640 (4.9%)	60 (12.8%)
Okotoks and surroundings	1 120 (1.5%)	4 425 (6.1%)	1 685 (2.3%)	75 (6.8%)	1 025 (5.9%)	65 (5.9%)
Peace River and surroundings	605 (4.6%)	1 365 (10.4%)	850 (6.5%)	25 (4.2%)	370 (11.1%)	50 (8.3%)
Red Deer	1 285 (1.3%)	5 315 (5.4%)	2 200 (2.2%)	60 (4.7%)	1 370 (6.1%)	340 (26.5%)
Red Deer County and surroundings	500 (1%)	2 145 (4.4%)	840 (1.7%)	35 (6.8%)	630 (5.5%)	10 (1.9%)
Rocky View County	395 (1%)	2 805 (6.9%)	865 (2.1%)	15 (3.8%)	650 (7.1%)	55 (13.9%)
St. Albert	1 815 (2.7%)	7 115 (10.6%)	2 930 (4.3%)	75 (4.1%)	1 480 (9.7%)	270 (14.8%)
St. Paul and surroundings	1 025 (7.8%)	2 145 (16.2%)	1 525 (11.4%)	55 (5.4%)	650 (20.2%)	0 (0%)
Stony Plain, Spruce Grove and surroundings	1 250 (1.4%)	4 775 (5.4%)	2 400 (2.7%)	65 (5.2%)	1 120 (5.3%)	145 (11.6%)
Strathcona County (including Sherwood Park)	1 660 (1.7%)	6 725 (6.9%)	2 725 (2.8%)	60 (3.6%)	1 745 (7.9%)	245 (14.8%)
Wainwright	150 (2.4%)	340 (5.4%)	215 (3.4%)	30 (20%)	155 (10.6%)	0 (0%)
Wood Buffalo (including Fort McMurray)	1 650 (2.3%)	4 380 (6.1%)	2 485 (3.4%)	120 (7.3%)	1 340 (6.9%)	385 (23.3%)

[21] To provide services to this population, there are a number of organizations and institutions managed by Alberta's Francophonie. These include four (4) Francophone school boards (Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord; Conseil scolaire FrancoSud; Conseil scolaire Centre-Est; Conseil scolaire

du Nord-Ouest), which administer 49 Francophone schools and have a total of 10,093 students. In the early childhood sector, there are more than 50 daycare centres and preschools, many of which are integrated in Francophone schools. There is also the ACFA and its 13 regional offices, as well as more than sixty community organisations. Alberta's Francophonie also has access to numerous private companies.

[22] Other organisations and institutions are managed by the majority, but offer services in French, such as a French-language post-secondary institution (the University of Alberta's Campus Saint-Jean), 225 schools offering French immersion programs, and numerous schools offering French as a second language courses.

### *Encadrement législatif*

[23] 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*.

[24] 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.

[25] 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>18</sup> and the *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction* ("OLEP")<sup>19</sup>.

[26] 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>20</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>21</sup>

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<sup>18</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>19</sup> Government of Alberta. "Official Languages in Education Programs." <https://www.alberta.ca/official-languages-in-education-programs>

<sup>20</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>21</sup> Government of Canada. "Section 23 –Minority Language Educational Rights." <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csjsjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccd/check/art23.html>



[27] 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>22</sup>

[28] 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>23</sup>

[29] The *French Policy* "applies to all government of Alberta departments, agencies, boards and commissions, and to court services."<sup>24</sup>

[30] To support the implementation of the *French Policy*, the Government of Alberta released its *French Policy: 2024-2028 Action Plan* in May 2024.<sup>25</sup> This is the province's third action plan since the adoption of the *French Policy*.

[31] 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>26</sup>

[32] 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>27</sup>

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

[33] The *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie* ("Action Plan")<sup>28</sup> is the most ambitious initiative ever undertaken by Alberta's Francophonie to identify its priorities in terms of French-language services offered or funded by the provincial government.

[34] Elaborated by the ACFA in 2022, and revised in 2024, the *Action Plan* is a credible tool to help guide government, elected officials, public servants, and political parties toward the priorities, opportunities, and issues of Alberta's Francophonie for implementing the province's *French Policy*.

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

<sup>23</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.6.

<sup>24</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. *French Policy*, p.6.

<sup>25</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>26</sup> Province of Alberta. *Education Act*. [https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=E00P3.cfm&leg\\_type=Acts&isbncIn=9780779846450](https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=E00P3.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncIn=9780779846450)

<sup>27</sup> Government of Alberta, 2023. *French Policy*, p.5.

<sup>28</sup> ACFA. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*. [https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Version-officielle-Plan-daction-FRAB\\_EN.pdf](https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Version-officielle-Plan-daction-FRAB_EN.pdf)

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

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

[37] Since its unveiling, the ACFA and several community organizations have held several meetings with the Government of Alberta to present this document. When the Government of Alberta unveiled the *French Policy: 2024-28 Action Plan* on May 7, 2024, the ACFA noted that 75% of the proposed initiatives were directly aligned with community priorities identified in the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie*.

[38] That is why the ACFA's recommendations for Budget 2026 are based on the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie*, but also on the government's priorities identified in the *French Policy: 2024-28 Action Plan*.

## Recommendations

### **#1 – Create a new position of Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for the Francophone Secretariat.**

*Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women*

[39] The ACFA would like to sincerely thank the Government of Alberta for the remarkable efforts made in recent years to improve the availability of French-language services across the province.

[40] The increase in federal funding in 2024, which has tripled from \$650,000 to \$2.2 million<sup>29</sup> per year, as well as an increase in the Francophone Secretariat's budget by the government of Alberta, will make it possible to develop French-language services and better meet the needs of French-speaking Albertans.

[41] Furthermore, on December 13, 2025, the Government of Alberta declared 2026 as the Year of the Francophonie to highlight the deep roots, rich history, and lasting contributions of French-speaking Albertans. This provincial recognition underscores the essential role that the Francophonie plays in Alberta's cultural, social, and economic development. The year 2026 is also of particular significance, as it marks the 100th anniversary of the ACFA, founded in 1926.

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<sup>29</sup> Emmanuel Prince-Thauvette. "L'Alberta triple son enveloppe budgétaire pour les services en français." *Radio-Canada*, December 16, 2024. <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/2127369/entente-canada-alberta-services-francais-2024>

[42] It is in this favourable context that the ACFA proposes to go further by recommending the creation of an assistant deputy minister position specifically responsible for the Francophone Secretariat.

[43] The ACFA has been advocating for the creation of this strategic position for four years now. Currently, the Francophone Secretariat is led by an Executive director, a structure that presents hierarchical limitations within the decision-making process. The Francophone Secretariat must regularly collaborate with Assistant Deputy Ministers, designated by each ministry, to advise them on the implementation of the *French Policy*. However, this current organization can complicate interdepartmental coordination and slow down the progress of certain initiatives that are essential to the Francophone community.

[44] Transitioning the Executive Director position to an Assistant Deputy Minister position would give the Francophone Secretariat a higher position in the government hierarchy, giving it greater authority and legitimacy to act more effectively and to optimally coordinate actions related to the implementation of the French Policy across all ministries. This strengthened structure would be a crucial lever for accelerating the French Policy's implementation and ensuring greater efficiency of French-language services in Alberta.

**#2– Provide annual operational funding to the ACFA to support the implementation of the *French Policy*, while maintaining the Community Initiative Program, which benefits many Francophone organizations.**

*Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women*

[45] The Government of Alberta has identified the ACFA as one of two stakeholders to be consulted (the other being Francophone school boards) in identifying priorities for implementing the *French Policy*, because of its central role as the spokes organization for Alberta's Francophonie. The ACFA greatly appreciates this recognition by the government, which is a sign of trust and a shared desire to advance the offer of French-language services based on community priorities.

[46] However, with this commitment for regular engagement since 2017, the ACFA finds itself in a delicate situation. The ACFA has no recurring operational funding from the Government of Alberta, which limits its ability to fulfill its role optimally.

[47] The ACFA is frequently solicited by various ministries to provide strategic information on the priorities of Alberta's Francophonie, establish collaborations, and participate in constructive dialogues. These solicitations generate a considerable workload: regular meetings with government officials, invitations to engagement sessions, dissemination of information through our networks, participation in multi-stakeholder working committees, collaboration in organizing activities, and production of documents in French and English to provide evidence.

[48] The ACFA also plays a role in supporting the network of Francophone organizations, namely when they are consulted by the public service, to enhance their capacity and contribute to the development effective public policy proposals.

[49] Since 2020, the ACFA has invested more than a million dollars of its own resources to meet these needs, a considerable effort that nevertheless has its limits. The ACFA's small team struggles to meet all of the government's demands due to the broad scope of the French Policy, which applies to all "departments, agencies, boards and commissions and to court services."<sup>30</sup>

[50] For example, the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women provides operational funding to other organizations that offer strategic advice to the ministry, such as Provincial Heritage Organizations and Provincial Arts Service Organizations. The ACFA, as part of the implementation of the French Policy, carries out similar work, but on a much larger scale, collaborating with a dozen ministries and all Francophone organizations and institutions.

[51] To support its efforts, the ACFA submitted a funding proposal to the Francophone Secretariat in 2024. Although Minister Tanya Fir confirmed in March 2024 before the Legislative Assembly that this request was under consideration, it was ultimately denied a few months later, leaving the ACFA in a difficult position to adequately respond to the growing needs of Alberta's Francophonie.

[52] For the time being, the ACFA has received funding from the Ministry of Health in June 2024 to carry out policy analysis and liaison work in the health sector, including the hiring of a human resource. These funds will enable the ACFA to make significant progress in improving the provision of services in French, but only in the health sector; they come from *the Canada-Alberta Agreement to Work Together to Improve Health Care for Canadians (2023-24 to 2025-26)*.

[53] The ACFA highlights the funding received through the Community Initiatives Program (CIP) for a project aimed at raising the visibility of Alberta's Francophonie within the public space on the eve of its Centenary in 2026. The ACFA recommends that the government maintain the CIP, as it also benefits a large number of Francophone community organizations. Special attention could be given to projects that support Alberta's Francophonie in 2026, given the announcement of the Year of the Francophonie.

[54] However, the funding received through the CIP is intended for one-time projects, which does not allow for stabilizing the programming of Francophone organizations involved in implementing the *French Policy*, including the ACFA.

### **#3– Provide annual operational funding to Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta to support the implementation of the *French Policy* and to develop a new strategy aimed at engaging Francophone youth in rural and semi-urban areas.**

*Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women*

[55] The Government of Alberta identified Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta (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, as well as limited funding from school boards to support school programs only. FJA receives no

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<sup>30</sup> Government of Alberta. *French Policy...* page 6

operational funding, which compromises the stability of this institution and, by extension, the vitality of Alberta's Francophonie.

[56] That is why, on March 24, 2025, the ACFA and FJA submitted a brief to the Ministry of Arts, Culture, and Status of Women entitled "Investing in the Leaders of Tomorrow: a Strong and Prosperous French-Speaking Youth."<sup>31</sup>

[57] In this brief, 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 engage Francophone youth in rural and semi-urban areas. Currently, FJA's funding does not allow it to offer activities regularly in all regions of the province.

[58] The ACFA and FJA are counting on this new strategy because 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. The departure of young people often results in an ageing population in rural areas, putting a brake on the economic, social and cultural 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.

[59] 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>32</sup>

#### **#4 – Increase funding for Francophone schools to ensure equivalence with the Anglophone majority, as set out in Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.**

*Ministry of Education and Childcare*  
*Ministry of Infrastructure*

[60] In 2025, the Government of Alberta announced several major investments in Francophone school infrastructure. In Edmonton, the construction of an elementary school in the southwest of the city, as well as a new high school in the west end, was confirmed. In Calgary, renovation work is planned at École de la Rose sauvage, along with the construction of a new public school in the north of the city. In Plamondon, the design phase for the modernization of École Beauséjour was also announced.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the province announced more than \$2

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<sup>31</sup> ACFA and Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta. 2025. *Investing in the Leaders of Tomorrow: a Strong and Prosperous French-Speaking Youth*. [https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/20250324\\_Memoire\\_Jeunesse\\_EN.pdf](https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/20250324_Memoire_Jeunesse_EN.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Anne Robineau et al. 2022. *Étude d'impact de la philosophie du « Par et Pour »* ... p. 154. (Translated from French)

<sup>33</sup> Government of Alberta. April 11, 2025. *Supporting francophone education/Soutenir l'éducation francophone*. <https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=931367C194A95-BBB2-682D-4137B35454316233> ; Government of Alberta. November 20, 2025. *Schools Now speeds up classroom projects / Le programme Des écoles dès maintenant accélère*

million in funding for the design phase of 20 Francophone schools across the province, including three (3) for Conseil scolaire Centre-Est, five (5) for Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord, three (3) for Conseil scolaire du Nord-Ouest, and nine (9) for Conseil scolaire FrancoSud.<sup>34</sup>

[61] However, the needs remain considerable. In fact, only three schools have received funding for full construction, while the other projects remain uncertain in terms of full funding.

[62] While 10,093 children attend the province's Francophone schools in 2025, Statistics Canada's 2021 Census reveals that there are 75,055 children aged 0 to 18 eligible for Francophone education. The significant gap between the number of eligible children and those who actually attend a Francophone school underscore an important issue.<sup>35</sup>

[63] This gap can be partially explained by an underfunding of Francophone schools. Access for Francophone students to infrastructure equivalent to that of the Anglophone majority remains a challenge, despite more than thirty years of school management. Although some 20 new infrastructures have been built among the 49 francophone schools, the needs are far from being met.<sup>36</sup>

[64] It is not uncommon for start-up Francophone schools to resort to creative solutions to operate before obtaining infrastructures equivalent to those of the Anglophone majority. Many schools have started up in temporary, often outdated or unsuitable facilities, such as former Anglophone school board buildings, portable classrooms without gymnasiums, or even unlikely locations such as a community center in another town more than 15 km away, a seniors' home, Canadian Legion spaces or a former convent that had been used as a drug rehabilitation center.<sup>37</sup>

[65] Although new buildings were inaugurated, some of them quickly reached full capacity within a few years of opening, due to the fact that Francophone school boards did not have access to the number of children eligible for Francophone education until 2021. This is the case of École des Hautes-Plaines in Airdrie, which opened in 2015. Built to accommodate 400 students, the school reached its maximum capacity after just 5 years. Several spaces not originally intended for classrooms have been converted into classrooms to accommodate enrolment. In 2023, the Government of Alberta announced a second school in Airdrie to serve the region's more than 1,850 eligible children.<sup>38</sup>

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les projets de salles de classe. <https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=952735DEE1D5D-A2E8-14C6-7C87AFA4387EC466>

<sup>34</sup> Government of Alberta. December 8, 2025. *Planning for future francophone school/Planifier de futures écoles francophones*. <https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=9536301299D9B-D1C5-E30E-E439762B09C6A9E0>

<sup>35</sup> Fédération des conseils scolaires francophones de l'Alberta (FCSFA), ACFA and Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta (FPFA). 2024. *Un continuum de l'éducation francophone, de la petite enfance jusqu'aux études postsecondaires, pour une francophonie albertaine en croissance*, pages 16-18. Only available in French. [https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/20241223\\_Memoire\\_Etude-continuum-de-leducation-francophone.pdf](https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/20241223_Memoire_Etude-continuum-de-leducation-francophone.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> FCSFA, ACFA and FPFA. *Un continuum de l'éducation francophone...* pages 16-18.

<sup>37</sup> FCSFA, ACFA and FPFA. *Un continuum de l'éducation francophone...* pages 16-18.

<sup>38</sup> FCSFA, ACFA and FPFA. *Un continuum de l'éducation francophone...* pages 16-18.

[66] The current number of Francophone schools (49) is clearly insufficient to meet the needs of children eligible for Francophone education in Alberta. While it's difficult to estimate precisely how many additional schools are needed, the infrastructure deficit remains considerable.<sup>39</sup>

[67] Currently, the Government of Alberta typically funds two complete construction Francophone school infrastructure projects per annual budget. At this rate, it would take years to adequately meet infrastructure needs and provide all eligible children with equivalent access to French-language education.<sup>40</sup>

[68] To comply with Section 23 of the *Charter*, Francophone school boards must offer Francophone education to rights-holders "where numbers warrant", and that number "is somewhere between the known demand and the number of students who could potentially take advantage of the service".<sup>41</sup> To do this, funding must be sufficient to provide "an educational experience that is truly equivalent to that of the majority, regardless of the size of the school or program in question".<sup>42</sup>

[69] The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that substantive equality may require differential treatment for Francophones to consider their particular circumstances and needs.<sup>43</sup> The Supreme Court recognized that a larger per-student funding allocation will normally be required because these schools tend to be smaller, fewer in number and further apart.<sup>44</sup>

[70] In rural areas, for example, Francophone schools often have lower enrolments, yet face operating costs comparable to those of larger schools. This is the case for several Francophone schools in Alberta where there are 30 students or less, such as École des Grands-Vents in Bellevue, École des Fondateurs in Camrose, École Sans-Frontières in Lloydminster and École Sainte-Catherine in Lac La Biche.<sup>45</sup> In comparison, rural English and French immersion schools have over a hundred students enrolled.<sup>46</sup>

[71] Similarly, in Francophone schools offering primary and secondary education in the same facility, enrolment in grades 7 to 12 is often much lower, representing a small proportion of the school's total enrolment. For example, in 2024, these enrolments represent 17% at École Saint-Christophe in Wainwright, 17% at École Boréale in Fort McMurray, 18% at École Nouvelle

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<sup>39</sup> FCSFA, ACFA and FPFA. *Un continuum de l'éducation francophone...* pages 16-18.

<sup>40</sup> FCSFA, ACFA and FPFA. *Un continuum de l'éducation francophone...* pages 16-18.

<sup>41</sup> *Arsenault-Cameron v. Prince Edward Island*, 2000 SCC 1. <https://decisions.scc-csc.ca/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/1762/index.do>; FCSFA, ACFA and FPFA. *Un continuum de l'éducation francophone...* pages 16-18.

<sup>42</sup> *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique v. British Columbia*, 2020 SCC 13. <https://decisions.scc-csc.ca/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/18390/index.do>; FCSFA, ACFA and FPFA. *Un continuum de l'éducation francophone...* pages 16-18.

<sup>43</sup> *Arsenault-Cameron v. Prince Edward Island*, 2000 SCC 1.; FCSFA, ACFA and FPFA. *Un continuum de l'éducation francophone...* pages 16-18.

<sup>44</sup> *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique v. British Columbia*, 2020 SCC 13.; FCSFA, ACFA and FPFA. *Un continuum de l'éducation francophone...* pages 16-18.

<sup>45</sup> Government of Alberta. "2023/2024 School Enrolment Data." *Student population statistics*. <https://www.alberta.ca/student-population-statistics#jumplinks-2>

<sup>46</sup> FCSFA, ACFA et FPFA. *Un continuum de l'éducation francophone...* pages 16-18.

Frontière in Grande Prairie, 25% at École du Sommet in Saint-Paul, 25% at École Beausoleil in Okotoks, 25% at École La Prairie in Red Deer and 27% at École Citadelle in Legal.<sup>47</sup>

[72] Despite the many steps taken by Francophone school boards, current funding is still not sufficient to provide an education equivalent to that offered to the Anglophone majority in English and French immersion schools.<sup>48</sup> The Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028 specifically emphasizes the need to revise funding and develop infrastructure plans, and to "revise the funding formula to reflect the additional costs associated with instruction in French".<sup>49</sup>

[73] The ACFA therefore urges the Government of Alberta to continue its collaboration with Francophone school boards to revise financial support to reduce the gap between potential demand and current capacity in Francophone schools. In fact, one action for the Ministry of Education and Childcare identified in *the French Policy: 2024-28 Action Plan* emphasizes this collaboration: "Engage with Francophone education stakeholders to support Francophone education that is substantially equivalent."<sup>50</sup> The ACFA hopes that the next budget will include substantial investments in new Francophone school infrastructure to better meet the growing needs of Alberta's Francophonie.

#### **#5 – Allocate funding to ensure the renewal of the ACCENT project, a bilingual directory of educational, cultural, and recreational activities and resources offered in French to school communities in Alberta.**

*Ministry of Education and Childcare*

[74] The ACCENT directory is a strategic and essential project, funded by the Alberta Education, which will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2026. This unique project supports several educational objectives in a significant way; it brings together educational resources available in French, linked to the Alberta curriculum, while offering a list of curricular and extracurricular activities that promote identity building within Francophone schools and improve language security for students learning French.

[75] Since its inception, ACCENT has demonstrated excellent results. Not only has the project achieved its objectives year after year, it has also developed a strong partnership between ACFA and Canadian parents for French. The directory is consulted by nearly 4,600 users, reaches an average of 3,700 educators at outreach events, and features resources from over 150 service providers.

[76] French-language school communities know ACCENT as an essential and trusted tool for finding suitable educational resources, both for teachers and for families who are Francophone, Anglophone or interlinguistic. It is important to mention that the ACCENT directory is available in both French and English.

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<sup>47</sup> FCSFA, ACFA et FPFA. *Un continuum de l'éducation francophone...* pages 16-18.

<sup>48</sup> FCSFA, ACFA et FPFA. *Un continuum de l'éducation francophone...* pages 16-18.

<sup>49</sup> ACFA. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*, page 12.

<sup>50</sup> Government of Alberta. *French Policy: 2024-2028 Action Plan...*, page 10.



[78] However, funding for the project expired on August 31, 2025, and has not yet been renewed for the next three-year period (2025–2028), even though the ACFA submitted a request before the end of the current funding. As a result, for the past five months, school communities have been unable to benefit from the activities and resources offered through the ACCENT project.

[77] It is imperative that the Government of Alberta renew funding for the ACCENT directory in the next budget. Renewed funding for ACCENT is a priority of French-speaking Albertans, as identified in the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie*: "Maintain funding for [accentalberta.ca](http://accentalberta.ca), a bilingual directory of French language educational, cultural, and recreational activities and resources available to school communities in Alberta for use in the classroom and to provide home support for Francophone, interlinguistic, and Anglophone families." <sup>51</sup>

[78] In addition, the new curriculum for Kindergarten to Grade 6 now includes the teaching of Francophone perspectives for the entire Alberta population. In this context, ACCENT is an essential tool for ensuring that school communities have the resources they need to achieve this. Continued funding of ACCENT would ensure that all school communities have easy access to the resources available, while maximizing their use in classrooms and with families.

[79] Funding for the ACCENT directory would also contribute to the achievement of the Ministry's current strategic objectives, notably:

- "Ensure that authentic, respectful and appropriate francophone perspectives are present throughout the curriculum with consideration of stakeholder feedback." <sup>52</sup>
- "Engage with French education partners to support French-language programming to ensure that all Albertans, whether they speak French as a first or second language, have access to quality French-language education." <sup>53</sup>
- "Promote choice in education to enhance student learning through a variety of schooling options for students and parents." <sup>54</sup>
- "Address classroom complexities through specialized learning supports and improved access to qualified professionals and educational assistants." <sup>55</sup>

[80] ACCENT directly contributes to Alberta Education's priorities by supporting educators to reinforce cultural identity, enrich their curriculum delivery with Francophone perspectives, and address linguistic insecurity. It is a vital resource to help school communities fulfill their mandates and ensure that students across Alberta have meaningful opportunities to learn and live in French.

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<sup>51</sup> ACFA. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie*, p. 15.

<sup>52</sup> Government of Alberta. *French Policy Action Plan 2024-2028...*, p. 11.

<sup>53</sup> Government of Alberta. *French Policy Action Plan 2024-2028...*, p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> Government of Alberta. Education Ministry Business Plan – 2025-2028. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/cea65c12-a239-4bd9-8275-3ab54d84f5b3/resource/91354fef-32b8-4c7f-93bb-2dd0ff5399ff/download/educ-business-plan-2025-28.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Government of Alberta. Education Ministry Business Plan – 2025-2028.

## **#6 – Provide funding to the Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta under the Canada–Alberta Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.**

*Ministry of Education and Childcare*

[81] In 2017, the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada also agreed on a multilateral framework for early learning and child care, "which articulated their shared vision for early learning and child care." The most recent bilateral agreement, the Canada-Alberta Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement 2021–2026, stipulates that the province will work to build a community-based system of services. The Agreement contains several explicit references to official language minority communities<sup>56</sup>:

- With respect to "developing and delivering its programs and services in early learning and child care, Alberta agrees to take into account the needs of official language minority communities in Alberta."
- Under families more in need, this includes "families from official language minority communities" and that "needs also include having limited or no access to programs and services in the children's official language."
- In the area of accessibility, there is a reference to the principle that families should have access to child care services that "aligns with... linguistic preferences."
- As for investments, they may be used to provide "cultural and linguistic supports".

[82] For several years, the FPFA has collaborated with the Government of Alberta to ensure the development of early learning and child care services within Francophone communities in Alberta. The ACFA and the FPFA also submitted a brief to the Government of Alberta on April 18, 2023, as part of the implementation of the Agreement, to support the vision of access to childcare services that consider the needs of Alberta's Francophonie. This brief contained multiple pieces of evidence and was supported by consultations with community stakeholders.<sup>57</sup>

[83] Over the past year, the FPFA has also worked closely with the consulting firm Policy Wise, hired on behalf of the Government of Alberta, in the development of the Spark Guide (Culturally Responsive Early Learning and Child Care in Alberta). Francophone communities are identified as priority groups for culturally adapted childcare services. The Spark Guide emphasizes the importance of ensuring access to services that reinforce and promote the French language and culture from early childhood, given their impact on the Francophone education continuum and the rights guaranteed under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Guide lists four (4) principles for accessing culturally adapted Francophone programs: (1) For and by Francophones, (2) Building culture and identity, (3) Linguistic security, and (4) Creating educational continuity. It also notes that one possible measure is "expanding access to Francophone early learning and child care and retaining the workforce," which includes

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<sup>56</sup> Gouvernement of Canada. 2024. *Canada-Alberta Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement – 2021-2026*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territoires/alberta-canada-wide-2021.html>

<sup>57</sup> ACFA and FPFA. 2023. *Child Care Services that Consider the Needs of Alberta's Francophonie*. [https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/20230418\\_Memoire\\_Entente-garderies-federal-provincial\\_FPFA-ACFA\\_EN.pdf](https://acfa.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/20230418_Memoire_Entente-garderies-federal-provincial_FPFA-ACFA_EN.pdf)

increasing spaces in Francophone programs and supporting workforce professional development.<sup>58</sup>

[84] In this context, on November 14, 2025, the FPFA and the ACFA submitted to the Ministry of Education and Childcare a proposal for projects that could fall under the upcoming Canada-Alberta Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, ensuring that child care services specifically address the needs of official language minority communities in Alberta. In particular, the FPFA and ACFA aim to see more spaces in Francophone daycares and improved access to French-language resources to support early childhood workers.

**#7 – Ensure that some funding under the *Aging with Dignity* bilateral agreement (2023-2024 to 2027-2028) goes to the ACFA and Fédération des aînés franco-albertains to support the offer of social services in French.**

*Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services*

[85] The importance of improving access to social services in French for Alberta's Francophone population was further confirmed through an in-depth study conducted by the ACFA. In 2022–2023, the ACFA hired the consulting firm KPMG to assess the current state of French-language social services and identify the priority needs of French-speaking Albertans. In its report, KPMG identified several key findings, including a lack of access to French-language social services and a shortage of French-speaking resources and professionals within the social services sector. Survey respondents indicated that access to services in French is difficult across all regions of the province, and even more so in areas such as Jasper, the Northeast, and the Northwest.<sup>59</sup>

[86] Furthermore, as mentioned above, Alberta's Francophone community is facing an aging population. The Francophone population "ages faster than the anglophone population in Canada," with seniors representing 41.5% of francophones outside Quebec and living more frequently in rural areas.<sup>60</sup> According to the 2021 Census, the median age of the francophone population in Alberta is 43, five years older than the provincial median of 38. Therefore, the challenges facing francophone seniors are expected to grow in the coming years.

[87] Faced with a wave of new seniors, it is imperative to prepare for the rapid aging of Alberta's population by putting mechanisms in place now to allow individuals to age with dignity. Home care, as well as community-based care, is expected to grow, both because institutional healthcare services are increasingly delivered in the community and because public expectations are shifting.

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<sup>58</sup> Gouvernement of Alberta. 2024. *A Guide to Culturally Responsive Early Learning and Child Care in Alberta*. <https://sparkguide.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Spark-Guide-English.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> ACFA and KPMG. 2023. *Rapport final de la Revue des services sociaux et de santé mentale en français en Alberta*. <https://acfa.ab.ca/en-action/affaires-communautaires/services-sociaux-et-sante-mentale/>

<sup>60</sup> Mwali Muray et al. 2022. "L'accès aux soins de santé des communautés de langue officielle en situation minoritaire (CLOSM) au Canada : une recension des écrits." *Minorités linguistiques et société/Linguistic Minorities and Society* 19 : 62-94. *Translated from French*.

[88] Additionally, the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*<sup>61</sup> includes an initiative specifically targeted for seniors and social services: "Work with Fédération des aînés franco-albertains (FAFA) to plan and implement initiatives and programs that enable Francophone seniors to age safely in their communities and homes, including hiring French-speaking social workers to accompany seniors (e.g., support with assistance benefits)."

[89] In this context, the ACFA, the Réseau santé Alberta, and the Fédération des aînés franco-albertains submitted a funding request to the Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services on November 14, 2025. It is recommended that the Government of Alberta allocate a portion of the funding under the bilateral 'Aging with Dignity' agreement (2023-2024 to 2027-2028)<sup>62</sup> to projects specifically aimed at improving French-language social services for the aging population. It is crucial that this funding be used to strengthen French-language service provision, in order to address current gaps and meet the growing needs of Francophone seniors in Alberta.

[90] According to the agreement, "Alberta makes ongoing investments in health consistent with its broader responsibilities for delivering health care services to its residents and in supporting diversity, equity, and the needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis; and underserved and/or disadvantaged populations, including, but not limited to **official language minority communities**, rural and remote communities [...]"<sup>63</sup>

**#8 – Renew the ongoing projects under the Canada-Alberta Agreement to Work Together to Improve Health Care for Canadians (2023-2024 to 2025-2026) for the next three-year period and increase funding as part of the negotiation of the next agreement.**

*Ministry of Primary Care and Preventative Health Services*

[91] The Government of Alberta has made significant funding efforts to improve the provision of French-language health care, in collaboration with the ACFA and the Réseau Santé Alberta. These organizations currently receive \$5,400,000 under the 'Collaborating to Improve Health Care for Canadians' agreement (2023-2024 to 2025-2026), which ends on March 31, 2026.<sup>64</sup> This collaboration has enabled the development of initiatives aimed at addressing French-language health care needs, particularly in primary care. Among other achievements, it has facilitated the hiring of 18 staff members, the development of a mobile clinic, the implementation of language programs to support health care professionals, as well as studies and community engagement sessions to gather evidence on the health care needs of Francophones.

[92] Moreover, some of these engagement sessions, including those organized by the Government of Alberta in 2024 and 2025, identified the following priorities:

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<sup>61</sup> ACFA. 2022. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*, page 32.

<sup>62</sup> Government of Canada. "Canada-Alberta Aging with Dignity funding agreement (2023-24 to 2027-28)." September 6, 2024, <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/corporate/transparency/health-agreements/shared-health-priorities/aging-dignity-bilateral-agreements/alberta-funding.html>

<sup>63</sup> Government of Canada. "Canada-Alberta Aging with Dignity funding agreement..."

<sup>64</sup> Government of Alberta. 2023. "Canada-Alberta Agreement to Work Together to Improve Health Care for Canadians (2023-24 to 2025-26)." <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/corporate/transparency/health-agreements/shared-health-priorities/working-together-bilateral-agreements/alberta-improve-care.html>

- “French-speaking Albertans expect to access consistent and timely health care in French when and where they need it.”
- “Education, awareness, and promotion of language skills are crucial for improving health care access for Francophones.”
- “Community engagement and inclusive governance are crucial for adapting health care services to the needs of Francophones and other cultural groups.”
- “Communication and transparency are vital in the health care system, especially in meeting the needs of Francophones and ensuring equitable understanding.”<sup>65</sup>
- “Access to health care in French remains a priority for the French-speaking individuals consulted, with particular attention given to vulnerable populations or those in remote regions.”
- “Communication and transparency remain central themes, with a strong emphasis on accountability and openness. Additionally, the engagement of French-speaking stakeholders in the refocusing process is a priority for strengthening trust with this population.”<sup>66</sup>

[93] Thus, on November 26, 2025, the ACFA and the Réseau santé Alberta submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Primary and Preventive Health Services for the renewal of their ongoing projects, as well as new initiatives, which could be considered under the next Agreement and action plan starting in 2026–2027. The ACFA and the Réseau santé Alberta believe that the Ministry should, at a minimum, maintain funding for the next three-year period to sustain the services already offered, sustain the new initiatives and preserve the 18 positions that have been created with this funding, and consider increasing funding to meet the needs expressed by the Alberta population during engagement sessions.

**#9 – Seek increased funding from the Government of Canada to ensure that financial resources associated with Francophone immigrants effectively follow them when they settle in Alberta, regardless of their initial province of arrival.**

*Ministry of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration*

*Ministry of Intergovernmental and International Relations*

[94] Alberta is welcoming a growing number of Francophone immigrants from other provinces, where they have briefly resided before settling in Alberta. However, federal funding for settlement, integration, and language support services remains largely based on the initial place of arrival rather than the immigrants’ actual long-term residence. The Government of Alberta should engage with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to address this issue, which particularly affects Alberta’s Francophonie.

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<sup>65</sup> Government of Alberta. 2024. *Shape the way: Refocusing Health Care in Alberta Public Engagement – What We Heard January – June 2024*, pages 14–16. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/4c9a0d40-d71b-427c-b591-077137297e0e/resource/e6fc7d08-c9c0-427e-a636-c518a2025e22/download/hlth-shape-the-way-what-we-heard-2024.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> Government of Alberta. 2025. *Lead the way: Refocusing Health Care in Alberta Public Engagement – What We Heard January – May 2025*, page 15. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/7a4958a7-f7c2-4879-9746-31d02ff49b84/resource/a508d902-9bb2-4bc2-877e-ffab3151f959/download/pphs-lead-the-way-what-we-heard-2025.pdf>

[95] In fact, Alberta has the highest net rate of interprovincial migration among Francophone immigrants admitted to Canada between 2010 and 2021, at 30%. British Columbia and Ontario rank second and third, at 17.8% and 8.1%, respectively.<sup>67</sup>

[96] This dynamic creates an imbalance: Alberta and the organizations serving Francophone immigrants bear the costs of settlement, community integration, and access to public services, without receiving the corresponding funding. This underfunding directly affects the ability of Francophone settlement organizations to meet growing demand.

[97] Nevertheless, this trend confirms Alberta's increasing attractiveness for Francophone immigrants, who see the province as a place to settle. It also shows that Alberta's Francophone community is not built solely through direct international immigration, but also through interprovincial migration, a factor often overlooked but essential to the vitality of the province's Francophone communities.

[98] Alberta's leading position in this type of migration demonstrates that the province plays a strategic role in retaining and growing the Francophone population in Canada, reinforcing the need to invest in accessible and adapted French-language services to support this expanding population.

[99] Moreover, this measure would contribute to the implementation of the following action under the *French Policy 2024–28 Action Plan*: "Strengthen the provision of settlement services in French provided to Francophone newcomers."<sup>68</sup>

## **#10 - Allocate a budget for the translation of public communications to improve the coordination of interventions and the recovery of Francophone communities in emergency situations.**

*Ministry of Public safety and Emergency services*

[100] Access to information during emergencies is a fundamental public safety issue. In Alberta, emergency alerts are an essential tool for quickly informing the public during natural disasters, industrial incidents, or other situations that put lives and safety at risk. When these alerts are issued only in English, a portion of the province's Francophone communities may not receive or fully understand critical instructions, creating a real risk to their safety.

[101] For example, Alberta has faced major natural disasters in recent years, as was the case with the forest fires in Fort McMurray in 2016 and Jasper in 2024. These events had particularly significant consequences for the Francophone communities in these regions, which had to be evacuated in an emergency.

[102] During such crises, the ACFA frequently receives requests for information in French regarding services offered to the evacuated Francophone population. Unfortunately, the province's official communications are available only in English, and the French-language media

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<sup>67</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2025. *Interprovincial Mobility of Francophone Immigrants*, virtual presentation.

<sup>68</sup> Government of Alberta. *French Policy Action Plan 2024–2028...*, p. 14.

provide very little coverage of such situations. As a result, many Francophones turn to the ACFA for essential information in their language.

[103] In emergency situations, it is a well-known fact that Francophones prefer to use their mother tongue to better understand crucial information. This reality can limit their ability to fully grasp messages in English, which can seriously compromise their safety.

[104] In a 2020 report, Canada's Commissioner of Official Languages stressed that access to information in French in times of crisis is fundamental to guaranteeing the safety of Francophones. He stated: "It is absolutely essential that provincial and territorial agencies—and all those who are responsible for the well-being of Canadians in emergencies—understand that there is a vast difference between using one's second official language to navigate daily life, social situations and the workplace and using that same language when one is injured, intimidated, or afraid for the safety of a loved one... Individual bilingualism is not absolute, and in emergency situations, it is only natural that Canadians revert to the instant ease and reassurance of their first official language."<sup>69</sup>

[105] In the *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie*, the Francophone communities have prioritized three elements that relate to the Government of Alberta's response to natural disasters<sup>70</sup> :

- "Translate press releases with relevant information for the Francophonie into French."
- "Work with stakeholders within Alberta's Francophonie to enhance the coordination of disaster response and recovery for Francophone communities."
- "Ensure that the emergency alert system informs the public in Alberta in both French and English."

[106] It's crucial to emphasize that, to ensure an adequate and effective response to natural disasters, the Government of Alberta must allocate a portion of its budget to the translation of official communications into French. The absence of this information in French compromises the safety of Francophones, who risk not receiving or understanding alerts essential to their safety. Without equal access to information in their language, Francophone communities are exposed to an increased risk of confusion, delays in rescue efforts and, ultimately, serious human and material consequences.

[107] Emergency alerts are a vital service. Ensuring their linguistic accessibility contributes to the inclusion of Francophones and strengthens their trust in provincial institutions, while supporting the vitality and safety of French-speaking communities.

[108] From an operational perspective, integrating French into the emergency alert system can rely on existing infrastructure, such as the French translation services of the Francophone Secretariat. This approach would help minimize additional costs while maximizing the impact on population protection.

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<sup>69</sup> 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>

<sup>70</sup> ACFA. *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie*, p. 8.

[109] By ensuring that emergency alerts are accessible in French, the Government of Alberta would take a concrete step toward protecting the province's Francophone communities.

## **Conclusion**

[110] To conclude, the ACFA hopes that the Government of Alberta and the ministries concerned will consider the ten (10) recommendations presented in this brief. These proposals are part of ongoing initiatives within the Government of Alberta, and would ensure that Francophone communities have a better equitable access to French-language services comparable to those offered to the Anglophone majority, while considering ministerial priorities and available resources