

# **Study on Federal Funding for Post-secondary Institutions serving Official Language Minority Communities in Canada**

## **Submission to the House of Commons Official Languages Committee**

May 2024

## Summary

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) represents 72,000 academic staff at universities and colleges in all provinces. A list of institutions where our members serve official language minority communities is found in Appendix A. CAUT Francophones' Committee advises our Executive Committee on concerns of francophone academic staff at francophone, bilingual, and anglophone institutions.

CAUT recommends federal government action and leadership in post-secondary education to ensure the vitality of official language minority communities in Canada.

### Recommendations:

- Increase funding for post-secondary education in minority settings through Heritage Canada's Official Languages Program and directly fund institutions;
- Develop a national strategy with the provinces and territories that provides adequate, stable funding to ensure more affordable high quality post-secondary education;
- Improve data collection and analysis on working and studying in French at post-secondary institutions; and,
- Support and provide incentives for francophone researchers and students to encourage academic pursuits in French.

## Strengthen French language programming in minority communities

Universities and colleges are anchor institutions that promote the cultural, social, economic, and scientific development of communities. This is especially significant for institutions serving minority populations.

The educational missions of universities and colleges are inextricably linked to a commitment to maintaining a connection with the historic francophone communities in the various regions of the country and to the preservation, interpretation and dissemination of cultural works and archival materials from these communities. Francophone and bilingual post-secondary institutions provide community and public infrastructure, in addition to their central mission of teaching, training, and conducting research in French. Graduates can go on to work in French in various professions, enabling access to services in French.

The lack of French post-secondary education opportunities can discourage K-12 students from studying in French and undermines the French education continuum. As the 2012 Ontario report on the State of French-Language Postsecondary Education in Central-Southwestern Ontario asks: "What is the impact of this almost non-existent offer of postsecondary programs in French? The answer is rather simple: No access, no future. In other words, for the francophone community, it is slow death. And for society as a whole, it is an incredibly sad missed opportunity."<sup>1</sup>

Since this report was written, access to French post-secondary education opportunities outside of Quebec have been made more precarious, despite the creation of the Université de l'Ontario français.

The Alberta government announced deep cuts to post-secondary education beginning in 2019. These have led to budget reductions at Campus St-Jean and a lawsuit from the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta for its failure to appropriately fund the faculty.<sup>2</sup>

The Laurentian University decision in 2021 to embark on an insolvency process under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA) resulted in a significant blow to the viability of this tri-cultural and bilingual institution, but also to the francophone community in Greater Sudbury and northern Ontario. Over 100 faculty lost their positions as teachers and researchers, and hundreds of students left to pursue their education elsewhere.

Fifty-eight undergraduate programs were cut, nearly half of which were delivered in French. Among the French-language programs cut were politics, economics, engineering (chemical, mechanical, mining), environmental studies, education (intermédiaire/supérieur), mathematics, and midwifery.

French programs in a minority context, as well as French as a second language courses, are increasingly threatened as they are deemed too costly due to smaller class sizes, as they were in the case of Laurentian.

The federal budget 2021's commitment of an additional \$121.3 million for the Official Languages program for education at Heritage Canada was welcomed but insufficient. The federal government must work with the provinces to ensure that these funds are increased and do not remain unused, and mechanisms must be explored to allow institutions to have direct access to these funds, as in the case of the [Post-Secondary Institutions Strategic Investment Fund](#).

**Recommendation 1: Increase funding for French language programming and strengthen the mechanism to ensure funding reaches institutions**

### Improve access, affordability and quality of post-secondary education

The recent federal international student cap has shone a spotlight on the issues arising from sustaining public post-secondary institutions on private tuition fees, overwhelmingly from international students. Public funding for Canadian universities is now less than 50% of total revenue.

For francophone institutions serving official language minority populations, international student recruitment contributes to community and linguistic vitality. This viewpoint is reflected in the decision by the Association of Colleges and Universities of the Canadian Francophonie to file a complaint with the Commissioner of Official Languages about the federal government's decision to lower the number of foreign students.

Reliance on international students to sustain institutional revenues however is a failed strategy. It is time for a national plan as to how the federal and provincial governments can better support public universities and colleges. The last top-up to the base amount of funding transferred to the provinces, nominally for post-secondary education, was in 2008.

**Recommendation 2: Develop a national strategy with the provinces and territories that provides adequate, stable funding to ensure more affordable high quality post-secondary education.**

### Measure access to French post-secondary education

As many institutions serving official language minority communities are bilingual institutions or affiliated with anglophone institutions, it is not possible, with existing Statistics Canada education data, to know how many students and academic staff are studying or working in French, and in which programs.

Improved data collection and dissemination would assist in tracking the health of francophone post-secondary education in Canada. Moreover, this data could assist with labour-market analysis and determining the level of community services available to minority language speakers in particular communities.

**Recommendation 3: Improve and expand education statistics to monitor the vitality of French in official language minority communities across the education continuum.**

### Support francophone researchers and students

The House of Commons Committee on Science and Research recently completed a [study](#) on revitalizing research and scientific publication in French in Canada.

As noted in our [submission](#) to this study, francophone academics shoulder a greater workload that goes largely unrecognized.

They are often called upon to take on extra tasks, such as managing translation requests and arranging for interpretation, communications, and representations.

CAUT members report that even if research is conducted in French, projects may need to be translated to obtain grant funding and to navigate the ethics approval process required for conducting research. There is often no availability of writing resources for grant applications, and applications for funding in French are often misunderstood by external review committees. It is difficult to form research groups in French, and presentations to university colleagues often must be delivered in English.

Publications in French may be devalued in comparison to English publications, as there is a more limited choice of journals in French. Depending on the field of research, francophone academics tend to publish in English to ensure a greater impact factor of their work and leverage favour for funding applications. Some publish only in English to make sure they are understood.

Even if postgraduate students write their theses in French, they must often publish their papers in English to make a name for themselves in their field.

CAUT supports many of the recommendations made by the Committee on Science and Research to address these issues, such as:

- That the Government of Canada continue its funding for the Service to Assist Research in French project launched by Acfas to support francophone scientists across Canada.
- That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, develop a program for sustainable funding for post-secondary institutions in official language minority communities; and that this program take into consideration the challenges that these post-secondary institutions face as regards small size, distance and additional costs;
- That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, develop and fund a Canada-wide strategy for supporting research and publication in French, in partnership with federal institutions, the provinces and territories, universities and colleges, and other stakeholders; and,
- That, the federal government increase its financial support for scientific publication in French and for French-language and bilingual scholarly journals and develop measures to encourage the bilingual scholarly journals that they fund to increase the percentage of articles they publish in French.

To encourage students to study at all levels in French, bursaries could be available specifically for francophones who choose to continue their education in French. Such bursaries are made available to anglophones to study in French. This will assist in ending the vicious circle of low enrolment reducing course offerings, further suppressing enrolment.

#### **Recommendation 4: Increase supports for science and research and students in French**

## Appendix A – CAUT has members at the following institutions serving official language minority communities

### Alberta :

- Campus Saint-Jean, University of Alberta

### Saskatchewan :

- University of Regina: La Cité universitaire francophone

### Manitoba :

- Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface

### Ontario :

- Campus Glendon, Université York
- Collège Boréal (7 campus)
- Collège militaire royal du Canada
- La Cité collégiale
- Université d'Ottawa

- Université de Hearst
- Université de Sudbury
- Université Laurentienne
- Université Saint Paul
- Université de l'Ontario français

### Nouveau-Brunswick :

- Université de Moncton, Campus Moncton
- Université de Moncton, Campus Edmundston
- Université de Moncton, Campus Shippagan

### Nouvelle-Écosse :

- Université Ste-Anne

### Québec:

- Bishop's University
- Concordia University
- McGill University

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<sup>1</sup> Ontario Office of the French Languages Services Commissioner (June 2012). "Investigation Report - The State of French-Language Postsecondary Education in Central-Southwestern Ontario: No access, no future,"

<sup>2</sup> Parsons. Paige. (August 2020). Francophone group files suit against U of A, province over Campus Saint-Jean funding. CBC.