

Report of the Advisory Committee on Francophone Affairs to the Government of Saskatchewan



January 2023

Francophone Immigration

Letter of Transmittal

Honourable Laura Ross
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sports

I am pleased to submit this report for your review, following the June 3, 2022 meeting of the Advisory Committee on Francophone Affairs.

On this occasion, we met with representatives from the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training as well as with Francophone community organizations involved in immigration files. The discussions allowed us to identify the challenges and needs related to Francophone immigration in Saskatchewan.

On behalf of the Advisory Committee, I am pleased to present this report. The recommendations are intended to guide the government in improving and expanding opportunities to maintain the demographic weight of Saskatchewan's francophones and ensure their vitality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Dubé', written in a cursive style.

Michel Dubé
Chair, Advisory Committee on Francophone Affairs
January 2023

Table of contents

Letter of Transmittal	1
Introduction	4
Recommendations.....	4
Promoting Saskatchewan in Francophone countries	5
Promoting services offered in French	5
A target for Francophone immigration	6
Implementing the French-language Services Policy	6
Conclusion	7
Advisory Committee Mandate	8
List of Members	9

Introduction

Immigration contributes to Canada's demographic growth, cultural richness and socio-economic development. Francophone communities in minority settings, as in Saskatchewan, especially need immigration to maintain their demographic weight and ensure their vitality.

According to the data from recent censuses, the proportion of Saskatchewan residents with French as their first language has diminished over the years. This number dropped from 3.9% in 1961 to 1.6% in 2016. The population with French as their first official language spoken now represents 1.4% of the provincial total. The impact of immigration on demographic growth can be observed through the increase of provincial residents born in other countries. In 2016, the proportion of residents born outside Canada was 10.5% for Saskatchewan as a whole. This proportion is higher in the population with French as their first official language spoken, which is 16%.

While the majority of immigration programs are managed by the federal government, provincial government actions can significantly contribute to the demographic weight of Francophones living in Saskatchewan. A lack of promotion of the province in Francophone countries to attract bilingual immigrants, and the little effort made to promote services offered to the Fransaskois community to newcomers, are among the principal challenges to meet in order to maintain the demographic weight of Francophones in Saskatchewan. Moreover, adopting a Francophone immigration target for the *Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program* (SINP) and investing in employability services would increase the number of SINP candidates, and would also encourage retention of bilingual newcomers in the province.

In order to prepare this report, and craft recommendations, the Advisory Committee met with many community stakeholders working in the immigration sector, as well as officials from the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training. The Advisory Committee appreciates their presence at this meeting and their contributions.

Recommendations

1. That the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training agree to promote Saskatchewan's labour market advantages and economic possibilities in Francophone countries to attract bilingual immigrants.
2. That the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training better promote the French-language portal and implement the active availability of services in French in its communications with Francophone and bilingual SINP candidates.
3. That the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training consider establishing a target for Francophone immigration to help maintain the demographic weight of Francophones in Saskatchewan.
4. That the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training take into account the province's French-language Services Policy when funding its programs and recruiting its employees.

Promoting Saskatchewan in Francophone countries

During the meeting, discussions between members of the Advisory Committee and community stakeholders revealed the absence of support from the provincial government in the recruitment of bilingual immigrants. The Advisory Committee appreciates the participation of the Ministry in the “Destination Canada” event but would like the government to help raise awareness among employers about the advantages of recruiting bilingual candidates. Since not enough information is available, the majority of employers focus on recruiting from Anglophone countries, which continues to impede the arrival of Francophone immigrants in the province. Contrary to what the government and certain employees seem to believe, community stakeholders clarified that the objective of Destination Canada is not the recruitment of Francophone workers, but rather bilingual workers, i.e., capable of both responding to the needs of the Saskatchewan labour market and contributing to the vitality of the Fransaskois community.

In addition to the lack of support from employers and to the lack of initiatives to recruit Francophone and bilingual workers, the government does not make efforts to promote the province in Francophone countries. Saskatchewan has many economic possibilities to promote to attract newcomers, but does not do enough, especially regarding potential Francophone immigrants. Thanks to the labour market advantages and other opportunities offered in the province, the members of the Advisory Committee are certain that retaining these workers in Saskatchewan would be easy; this would help maintain the demographic weight of Francophones in the province.

Recommendation 1

That the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training agrees to promote Saskatchewan’s labour market advantages and economic possibilities in Francophone countries to attract bilingual immigrants.

Promoting services offered in French

Advisory Committee members recognize the decision by the Ministry to grant additional points to bilingual candidates in the *Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP)*. However, they deplore the lack of connections between candidates and the Fransaskois community. The members of the Advisory Committee think that the government could do better to facilitate these links during the application process and at the time of arrival of bilingual immigrants.

During the meeting with community representatives, Advisory Committee members learned that the *Service d’accueil et d’inclusion francophone (SAIF-SK)*, a Francophone settlement organization, is not recognized as an immigration gateway. English-language gateways rarely direct Francophone immigrants to French-language service providers, since they do not have language clauses requiring them to do so. Once they have been directed to the Anglophone milieu, very few newcomers will know of the existence of a Francophone community, offering services in French, which could have provided them a better integration experience. Advisory Committee members would like the government to make more efforts to raise awareness among Anglophone organizations with regard to newcomer support.

Additionally, in the *Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP)*, the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training does not promote the existence of services in French to future residents of the province. In its communications with Francophone and bilingual candidates, the ministry should, for example, include a message

directing them towards SAIF-SK. Also, the ministry should notify candidates, after their nomination, that they have the choice of using French when they request permanent residence and include a link to the forms in French. It is important that candidates know that they can go through the immigration process in French with the federal government and that they can receive settlement services in French when they arrive in Saskatchewan.

Recommendation 2

That the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training better promote the French-language portal and implement the active availability of services in French in its communications with Francophone and bilingual SINP candidates.

A target for Francophone immigration

The members of the Advisory Committee have learned from representatives of the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training that immigration to Saskatchewan depends greatly on the *Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program* (SINP). They stated that 70% of immigrants settling in the province arrive through SINP.

Given the comments of community representatives, SINP is far from being the main channel for Francophone newcomers to arrive in the province. SINP does not help meet the critical needs of the Fransaskois community, whose demographic weight is steadily declining. While the members of the Advisory Committee recognize the granting of additional points to bilingual candidates, they are not convinced this will have a significant impact on increasing the number of Francophones accepted under SINP. Consequently, members of the Advisory Committee invite the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training to set a Francophone immigration target.

The members of the Advisory Committee note that the provincial government is taking few initiatives regarding Francophone immigration. They would like to see the province play its role and take action according to the *Canada-Saskatchewan Immigration Agreement*. The Ministry of Immigration and Career Training says that the SINP does not establish a target and manages the number of nominations determined by the federal government. However, Advisory Committee members would like the Ministry to consider Francophone immigration as a primary means to maintain the vitality of the Fransaskois community. Consequently, they urge the province to find ways to stimulate Francophone applications in order to improve the percentage of SINP nominations of people speaking French.

Recommendation 3

That the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training consider establishing a target for Francophone immigration to help maintain the demographic weight of Francophones in Saskatchewan.

Implementing the French-language Services Policy

The Ministry of Immigration and Career Training funds settlement services offered to Francophone immigrants. During the Advisory Committee meeting with community workers, some of the challenges mentioned included the disproportion between funding and the needs of their clients, as well as the absence of bilingual personnel in the ministry to facilitate interactions with Francophone immigrants and the staff of Francophone community intake organizations.

While they recognize this funding from the ministry, community workers indicated that they do not receive sufficient funds from the provincial government to help their clients better integrate and remain in the province. The community workers would like to draw attention to the fact that the needs of Francophone newcomers are not the same as those of Anglophones and that the province should act appropriately. Since they are a linguistic minority, Francophone immigrants arriving in Saskatchewan have unique needs, different from most immigrants. Moreover, if they are not well-integrated from a socio-economic standpoint, they will leave the province for better opportunities. As a result, the community continues to lose new members, which has a harmful effect on all other aspects such as a bilingual labour force, school registrations and the vitality of the community in general.

In addition, members of the Advisory Committee have been told that the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training currently has no bilingual employee in its immigration section that can offer direct services in French to newcomers or interact with Fransaskois community organizations. Ministry representatives did not deny this reality and the Advisory Committee had the impression that the ministry has no intention to remedy the situation. Consequently, the Advisory Committee members would like to remind the ministry of the existence of the French-language Services Policy and would like it to be implemented.

Recommendation 4

That the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training take into account the province's French-language Services Policy when funding its programs and recruiting its employees.

Conclusion

The Advisory Committee recognizes the good participation of representatives from the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training during the meeting. The members of the Advisory Committee also appreciate the granting of additional points to bilingual SINP applicants designed to improve Francophone immigration, on which the vitality of the Fransaskois community depends. However, the Advisory Committee members think the ministry is not doing enough to encourage the arrival and retention of bilingual immigrants in the province. They urge the government to set a target for Francophone immigration and to invest in promotion as well as in intake and integration programs for Francophone immigrants.

Advisory Committee Mandate

In 2003, the Government of Saskatchewan adopted its French-language Services Policy. With this policy, the Government of Saskatchewan committed to “enhancing the services offered to Saskatchewan’s Francophone community in support of the development and vitality of this community.”¹

The policy is organized according to three areas:

1. Communication;
2. Development and delivery of services; and
3. Consultation.

The mandate of the Advisory Committee on Francophone Affairs is to advise the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, responsible for Francophone Affairs, through the review and analysis of programs and policies to guide the implementation of Saskatchewan’s French-language Services Policy.

¹ [Government of Saskatchewan's French-language Services Policy](#)

List of Members

At the June 3, 2022 Advisory Committee meeting, the members were as follows:

Michel Dubé (Chair), Prince Albert

Michel Dubé was born in Duck Lake. He has been involved with the Francophone community in Saskatchewan for a long time, notably in community development and education. He was a member of the board of the Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise between 1999 and 2010, first as the community representative from the Prince Albert district and then as president between 2006 and 2010. Mr. Dubé has been a journalist, consultant and entrepreneur. He has owned several businesses including a produce farm and a fishing lodge. He is now owner of a small store featuring local goods and operates a bison farm north of Prince Albert.

Janice Murphy, Regina

Living in Saskatchewan for almost 20 years, Janice first worked at Collège Mathieu, offering, among other things, computer training for Francophone women in the province. She has volunteered with various Fransaskois associations, including the Fédération provinciale des Fransaskoises (FPF), the Association communautaire fransaskoise de Gravelbourg (ACFG), and the Association canadienne-française de Regina. She founded a family with her spouse from the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, enabling her to experience French education from daycare to Grade 12, and to better understand the challenges and successes of French-speaking newcomers. She currently works as a senior human resources partner with the Crown Corporation, Farm Credit Canada (FCC).

Élizabeth Perreault, Bellevue

Élizabeth Perreault and her husband own and operate a farm near Bellevue. Ms. Perreault has volunteered within many organizations in her community, including the local Francophone association and the Francophone school in her area. She has represented the St-Isidore school district (Bellevue) on the Conseil scolaire fransaskois since 2008.

Roger Gauthier, Saskatoon

Living in Saskatchewan for the past 40 years, Mr. Gauthier has been actively involved in the Fransaskois community both as a professional and as a volunteer at the local, provincial and national levels in multiple sectors: communications, economics, community development, cultural and artistic development, education, and involvement with parent and early childhood issues. Over the past seven years, his commitment has focused more specifically on improving access to health services in French through his role with the Réseau Santé en français.

Hélène Grimard, Saskatoon

Born and raised Fransaskoise, Hélène Grimard has not only maintained her first language, but has also helped it flourish by directing her career and volunteer work towards learning at all levels. Her career has focused mainly on French immersion and core French education, as well as education in Fransaskois schools, as she has taken on a wide variety of roles: member of the support staff, teacher, member of the school administration, and manager. She has been teaching provincial and federal public servants and has also taught courses for the Alliance française. As a volunteer, she has collaborated with Canadian

Parents for French to promote their Concours d'art oratoire (a public speaking competition) and organized the competition of the Saskatoon Catholic School Board's French immersion schools. She has sat on the executive board of the Saskatchewan Association of Teachers of French (SATF) and on the executive board of the Fédération des Francophones de Saskatoon. As well, she sat on the Conseil scolaire francaskois as a representative of the Saskatoon region between 2017 and 2020. She is currently an administrator of the Association des parents francaskois and a member of the University of Saskatchewan Senate, mandated by the Assemblée communautaire francaskoise to ensure the Francophone community's voice is heard.

Jolanta Bird, Saskatoon

Jolanta Bird is a student, entrepreneur and active community member. As an Aboriginal woman, she is keen to learn about First Nations traditions, notably through her involvement with the Gordon Tootoosis Nikaniwin Theatre Company. She graduated from École Valois in Prince Albert where she was president of the student council. She is active in the Francophone community as vice-president of the Association jeunesse francaskoise (Francaskois youth association). As a board member of the youth association, she participated in a conference marking the 50th anniversary of the *Official Languages Act*. She currently studies Business at the University of Saskatchewan and plans to pursue her studies in Law.

Denis Simard, Regina

Denis Simard has been involved in the Canadian Francophonie for many years. A graduate of College Mathieu in Gravelbourg, Denis was Executive Director of the Association jeunesse francaskoise and of the Assemblée communautaire francaskoise (ACF). An engaged Francaskois citizen, he first became involved with the Conseil jeunesse francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, the Conseil culturel francaskois, and the Centre culturel Maillard. He was elected president of the ACF in 2018.

Alpha Barry, Regina

Alpha Barry was born in Senegal, a country famed for its hospitality ("teranga" in Wolof), and has lived in Saskatchewan since 2005. A proud Francophone, husband, and father of three young children, he has been a board member of the Conseil scolaire francaskois since November 2014, and has been its Chair since 2017. He is also a member of the University of Saskatchewan's Senate, mandated by the Saskatchewan School Boards Association to speak on behalf of the school community, from kindergarten to Grade 12. Mr. Barry holds a degree in Business Administration and is a member of Chartered Managers Canada (CIM). He is part of the administrative team at the University of Regina, as the operations manager and project coordinator for French-language health training for La Cité universitaire francophone of Regina.