

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

January 2025
Culture and Inclusion

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Letter of transmittal

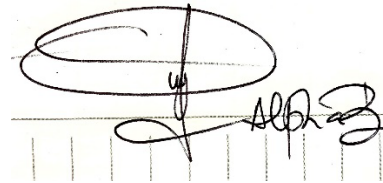
The Honourable Alana Ross
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport

It is my pleasure to submit this report for your review, following the November 3, 2023, meeting of the Advisory Committee on Francophone Affairs.

On that occasion, we met with representatives of your Ministry, as well as the main funding agencies. We also met with representatives of Fransaskois organizations involved in cultural issues. Our discussions enabled us to better understand and identify the needs and challenges affecting the Francophone cultural sector in Saskatchewan.

On behalf of the Advisory Committee, I am pleased to present this report. The recommendations are intended to guide the government and funding agencies to better support the development and vitality of the Francophone cultural sector.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alpha Barry', is written over a set of horizontal lines. The signature is stylized and includes a large, circular flourish at the beginning.

Alpha Barry
Chair
Advisory Committee on Francophone Affairs

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Recommendations	4
Culture and Community Vitality	4
Role of the Provincial Government.....	5
Heritage.....	6
Economic Development.....	6
Recommendation 2.....	7
Fransaskois Lens.....	7
Quebec-Saskatchewan Agreement.....	7
Conclusion.....	8
Advisory Committee Mandate.....	8

Introduction

The November 3, 2023 meeting of the Advisory Committee on Francophone Affairs focused on culture and inclusion. Members of the Advisory Committee are aware that this is a very broad theme, culture being generally defined as the set of behaviours, knowledge, norms and institutions specific to a group or society.¹ In its reflections, the Advisory Committee focused on a narrower vision, emphasizing arts, heritage and community activities. This choice was motivated by the need to circumscribe the Advisory Committee's recommendations. The definition adopted by the Advisory Committee corresponds to the field of action of government agencies active in the cultural sector; they are covered by the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

The Advisory Committee met with both Fransaskois organizations active in the cultural sector (Conseil culturel fransaskois, Communauté des Africains francophones de la Saskatchewan, Troupe du Jour, Société historique de la Saskatchewan) and representatives of the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, as well as the main funding agencies (Creative Saskatchewan, SK Arts, SaskCulture and Community Initiative Fund). The Advisory Committee would like to thank all participants for their contribution.

Recommendations

1. That the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport work with the Société historique de la Saskatchewan to support the designation of a provincial heritage property reflecting Fransaskois history.
2. That Creative Saskatchewan translate their programs into French;
3. That funding agencies adopt a Francophone lens to assess whether their program criteria are fair to Fransaskois artists and organizations.
4. That the Francophone Affairs Branch improve its communications with community organizations about the cooperation agreement signed with Quebec (application process, eligible projects, deadlines, etc.).

Culture and Community Vitality

Culture is essential to the vitality of Canada's Francophone minority communities. Research into the vitality of these communities shows that there is a dynamic relationship between culture and vitality.² Access to artistic and cultural activities in French is both a manifestation of a community's vitality and a contributor to that vitality. In other words, a vibrant community offers its members opportunities to live their Francophonie, which strengthens their sense of belonging and their use of French on a daily basis.

This dynamic relationship can be seen throughout the Fransaskois community.

- Francophone cultural events, such as the Festival Fransaskois and Francofièvre, allow for the expression of Francophone pride.
- These events and community cultural activities provide additional opportunities to actively use

¹ See, for example, UNESCO, [Mexico Declaration on Cultural Policies](#), August 1982.

² Éric Forgues (2010). Autonomie, vitalité et identité des communautés en situation minoritaire : Proposition d'un cadre conceptuel. *International Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue internationale d'études canadiennes*, no. 42, 183-206. Rodrigue Landry (2012). Autonomie culturelle, culture sociétale et vitalité des communautés de langue officielle en situation minoritaire au Canada. *Minorités linguistiques et société/Linguistic Minorities and Society*, No. 1, 159-179. Canadian Heritage, Official Languages Branch. [Framework for the Vitality of Official Language Minority Communities](#).

French in everyday life, not only for native French speakers, but for anyone who speaks French.

- These events and activities, as well as Fransaskois artistic productions (plays, books, records, visual arts, etc.), are all expressions of Fransaskois identity.
- Fransaskois heritage (tangible and intangible) serves as the community’s collective memory.
- Growing enrolment in Francophone schools and immersion programs means a growing potential audience for Fransaskois artistic productions.
- Finally, Fransaskois arts, activities and heritage raise the profile of the Fransaskois community within Saskatchewan society and on a wider scale, such as the fame of singer-songwriter Étienne Fletcher.

As well, the 2023 amendments to the *Official Languages Act* recognize the dynamic relationship between culture and community vitality. Culture is explicitly mentioned as one of the “sectors that are essential to enhancing the vitality of... French linguistic minority communities, ...” along with education, health, justice, employment and immigration.³

Given the key role that culture plays in the vitality of Francophone minority communities, the Advisory Committee is of the opinion that government support for Fransaskois culture should be seen as a compensatory measure. The Advisory Committee borrows this concept from the jurisprudence concerning section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* on the right to minority-language education. The Supreme Court has recognized that this section has remedial value because it aims to remedy the restrictions on the teaching of French that have long prevailed outside Quebec, and which have undermined the vitality of Francophone minority communities.⁴

Role of the Provincial Government

The provincial government plays a determinative role in supporting Fransaskois cultural development. Numerous ministries and agencies are active in this sector.

- The Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport is responsible for the policy and financial framework of Saskatchewan’s cultural sector. The Saskatchewan government’s approach is to entrust funding responsibilities for the arts, artists and cultural activities to autonomous funding agencies, each with its own mandate and funding sources.
- Creative Saskatchewan is the economic development agency for Saskatchewan’s creative industries. Creative Saskatchewan’s programs focus on commercialization activities (audiovisual productions, records, books, concert tours, etc.) and are aimed at artists, promoters and producers. Creative Saskatchewan funding is provided directly by the Government of Saskatchewan.
- SK Arts supports artists’ professional development, artistic production and research activities. SK Arts also offers artist-in-residence, artist-in-school and artist-in-community programs. SK Arts programs are designed for artists and non-profit professional arts organizations (theatre companies, orchestras, art galleries, etc.). Funding for SK Arts is provided directly by the Government of Saskatchewan.
- SaskCulture supports community groups in offering cultural activities and projects. This organization has specific programs for local museums, multiculturalism and aboriginal organizations. SaskCulture’s funding comes from the proceeds of lottery ticket sales.
- The Community Initiative Fund (CIF) supports community groups in offering activities and

³ Section 41(6)(c)(v) of the [Official Languages Act](#).

⁴ [Mahe v. Alberta](#) [1990] 1 S.C.R. 342, [Arsenault-Cameron v. Prince Edward Island](#) [2000] 1 S.C.R. 2000.

projects. The CIF's mandate is not directly cultural, but the activities it funds may have a cultural component. Funding for the CIF comes from the profits of the Regina and Moose Jaw casinos.

- The Ministry of Education supports cultural activities for students in French-language schools and French second-language programs under the *Canada-Saskatchewan Agreement on Minority-Language Education and Second Official-Language Instruction*.

Community stakeholders with whom the Advisory Committee met highlighted several positive elements in the Saskatchewan government's approach to culture, including:

- SaskCulture's and CIF's funding models mean that both organizations benefit from a stable and predictable source of funding (lottery profits in the former case, profits from the Regina and Moose Jaw casinos in the latter).
- The Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan has hired bilingual archivists who are able to offer services in French, including the processing of archival documents in French.
- Funding from the Ministry of Education reinforces the role of cultural activities in the transmission and learning of French at school, as well as in the development of young people's identity.

Heritage

One of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport is the designation of provincial heritage properties. These are significant buildings, structures and objects in the province's history. The province boasts over 50 provincial heritage properties, including government, commercial and religious buildings, and archaeological sites. None of these properties are specific to the Fransaskois community.

This situation is regrettable. On the one hand, recognition of a historic Fransaskois property would give greater recognition to the community, its long-standing presence in Saskatchewan and its contribution to the province. Moreover, recognition as a provincial heritage property offers additional protection, as any modification becomes subject to the ministry's approval.

The designation of provincial heritage properties is subject to specific criteria and must be recommended by an independent committee. The Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport can support individuals or groups wishing to nominate potential provincial heritage properties.

Recommendation 1

That the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport work with the Société historique de la Saskatchewan to support the designation of a provincial heritage property reflecting Fransaskois history.

Economic Development

The provincial government's approach to culture recognizes that it contributes directly to economic development. This contribution is significant, including for the Fransaskois community. A recent study prepared for the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française puts the impact of Fransaskois arts, culture and heritage on Saskatchewan's gross domestic product at \$77 million, including \$50 million in direct impact.⁵

⁵ Hill Strategies, [Analyse de l'impact économique de la communauté culturelle canadienne-française en 2021](#), published November 30, 2023.

To support the marketing of artistic products, Creative Saskatchewan offers several programs designed to propel creative entrepreneurs in their pursuit of commercial success, including funding for production, business capacity, research, travel, touring, development, and marketing.. They are only available in English, which limits its reach to Fransaskois artists. According to the above-mentioned report, 520 Francophones work in culture in Saskatchewan. The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that this is a sufficient pool to offer these programs in French.

Recommendation 2

That Creative Saskatchewan translate their programs into French.

Fransaskois Lens

Earlier in this report, the Advisory Committee presented the dynamic relationship between culture and the vitality of Francophone minority communities, and the status of this dynamic in Saskatchewan. In discussions with representatives of the funding agencies, the Advisory Committee gained the impression that agencies are not fully aware of the reality of Fransaskois artists and cultural organizations, even though they are delighted with their success.

Fransaskois artists and organizations receive funding from granting agencies under programs of general application that do not specifically target Fransaskois artists. Program criteria of funding agencies do not always take into account the reality of Francophone artists and cultural organizations. For example, because the French-speaking market is smaller, the costs of touring French-speaking communities in Saskatchewan are significant due to the distances between them.

The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that granting agencies should evaluate their programs to see if they are equitable for Fransaskois artists and organizations. This evaluation should be done from a Francophone lens, i.e. an approach centred on the reality of Fransaskois artists and organizations. Such an exercise would be consistent with the commitment of granting agencies to diversity and inclusion.

Recommendation 3

That funding agencies adopt a Francophone lens to assess whether their program criteria are fair to Fransaskois artists and organizations.

Quebec-Saskatchewan Agreement

In 2017, the Governments of Quebec and Saskatchewan signed a cooperation and exchange agreement. This agreement enables the two governments to fund cooperation projects between Fransaskois and Quebec organizations, including cultural projects. This agreement remains little-known and underutilized by Fransaskois organizations, with only one project funded per year on average.

Recommendation 4

That the Francophone Affairs Branch improve its communications with community organizations about the cooperation agreement with Quebec (application process, eligible projects, deadlines, etc.).

Conclusion

This report began with the Advisory Committee's presentation on the dynamic relationship between culture and the vitality of Francophone minority communities. Artists and Fransaskois organizations working in the cultural sector are key players in this relationship. The Advisory Committee believes that implementing the recommendations contained in this report would strengthen the ability of Fransaskois artists and organizations to contribute to the vitality of the Fransaskois community, now and in the future.

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.”⁶

The policy is organized according to three areas:

1. Communications;
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.

⁶ [Government of Saskatchewan French-language Services Policy](#)