

Brief submitted to Ontario's Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for the 2019 pre-budget consultations

January 2019

Ottawa, Monday, January 28, 2019

Mr. Stephen Crawford

President

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

Legislative Assembly of Ontario, room 271

Queen's Park

Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A8

Re: Brief submitted to Ontario's Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for the 2019 pre-budget consultations

Mr. President,

On behalf of the *Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario* (AFO) and the 744,000 Franco-Ontarians we represent, I thank you for giving us the opportunity to deliver a presentation in person and to submit a brief to your committee's 2019 pre-budget consultations. We trust that the Government of Ontario will build on the results of this important democratic exercise.

For over 400 years, Franco-Ontarians have helped to build Ontario in many fields: business, education, justice, arts and culture, and many more.

The next provincial budget presents a good opportunity to establish productive partnerships with the Franco-Ontarian population to build the Ontario of tomorrow... "Ontario for the people."

A strong Franco-Ontarian community makes Ontario stronger. In Ontario 1.5 million people speak French and half of them identify themselves as Franco-Ontarian.

Ensuring the participation of the Francophone community in the economy today and tomorrow

The economic future of our province depends in part on its capacity to leverage its Francophone and bilingual advantage. French means business opportunities!

After geographical proximity, the second factor that determines the extent of trade between two countries is sharing the same language.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, bilingualism brings more than 12 billion dollars in economic activity to Québec and New-Brunswick, including 9 billion related specifically to knowledge of the French language.

In New-Brunswick, a province where the Francophone population is only one third that of Ontario, bilingualism generates 1.4 billion dollars in revenue from interprovincial and international exports, due in large part to industries such as call centres and administrative services.

Last year, the AFO sponsored a Conference Board study on the economic benefits of bilingualism in Ontario. This was the first study of its kind in Ontario. Here are some of the findings of that report:

- The French presence contributes \$1.4 billion in imports to Ontario's economy and a paltry \$58 million in exports.
- Approximately 83% of Ontario's international trade is with the United States. Our economy is not very diversified.
- Ontario's balance of trade with member countries of the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF) is negative.

We can do better. We *must* do better.

Last year, we have again felt the effects of this relationship: when the American economy sneezes, Ontario's economy gets the flu. Our neighbour to the south is our main economic partner and that is normal, but Ontario has the opportunity to diversify its international trade thanks to its 1.5 million French-speaking citizens.

In this spirit, the *Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario* puts forward these two recommendations:

Recommendations 1 and 2

- That the Government of Ontario dedicate two full-time resources to work in the area of the *Organisation mondiale de la francophonie*, in order to strengthen our economic ties with Francophone countries and create partnerships to increase the number of Francophone immigrants to Ontario.
- That the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade propose initiatives to stimulate the growth of social enterprises, private businesses and cooperatives at the local, regional, provincial and international levels.

Pursuing fiscal balance with respect to the French Language Services Act

As president of a democratic “from the ground up” organization with a network of institutions and organizations throughout the province, I have the opportunity to talk with many Francophiles and Franco-Ontarians from all walks of life.

For the 1.5 million Ontarians who can speak French, access to quality government services in French is undeniable proof of good customer service.

Furthermore, Francophone institutions are essential to maintaining the social fabric and providing leadership for the Franco-Ontarian population. Ontario’s French dimension includes its network of schools and colleges, its educational television network, and countless institutions of all kinds.

Francophones and Francophiles in Ontario and across the country recognize the importance of their institutions. You have surely witnessed their expressions of concern. That message was delivered more than 15,000 times on December 1st during demonstrations held in about forty locations throughout the province.

Like the rest of the population, Ontario’s Francophones are ready to do their part. On June 7, Ontarians spoke clearly: improving the state of public finances is one of their priorities. However, it is essential to proceed in a manner that respects the French Language Services Act and preserves our institutions.

Recommendation 3

- To ensure that the French Language Services Act is fully respected, we recommend that the Government of Ontario include the Francophone perspective as a basis of its review of public finances and its creation of new programs to ensure the future of Franco-Ontarian institutions and Ontario's French-speaking citizens.

By applying a Francophone perspective to reviewing and creating programs, excellent opportunities will be found to improve the performance and efficiency of French language services.

For example, consider the government's planned structural reform of the healthcare system. The Government of Ontario has the opportunity to improve access to French health care services by strengthening the role of the French Language Health Planning Entities.

We stress the importance of maintaining the Entities' mandate, resources and community governance to allow these institutions to continue to expand their excellent work and to increase their impact after a structural reorganization,

In recent years, we have witnessed the efficiency of the French Language Health Planning Entities in handling their files:

- Capturing the language variable on the Health card
- Evaluating system capacity for Francophones using OZi
- Joint position and training modules for active offer
- Evaluation process for conformity to designation criteria for French language services
- New designations and identification of organizations for the provision of French language services

Following structural changes made to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care in 2017, the Entities interact only with the ministry's division of Community, Mental Health and French Language Services.

With a view to improving the offer of French language health care services, the Entities could benefit from being able to consult and cooperate with other sections of the ministry, such as long-term care, hospitals, emergency services and many others. Currently, it is the LHINs that work with and advise these sections of the MOHLTC regarding French language services.

Recommendation 4

- That the Government of Ontario, in its proposal for structural reform of the healthcare system, maintain the objective of improving access to French language health care services by preserving community governance of the French Language Health Planning Entities and giving them a clear mandate and additional resources.

Improving the efficiency of French language university education

As stated above, Franco-Ontarian institutions are the lifeblood of our community. Since the Government of Ontario's latest economic update last fall, the *Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario* has explored and proposed solutions to ensure the growth of our only university administered by and for Francophones.

The AFO initiated the conversation with the Government of Canada regarding federal funding for the *Université de l'Ontario français*. Since that time, the Government of Canada has stated in writing its intention of funding its share of the work to continue moving forward in creating this institution. The Government of Canada is even open to providing the entirety of funding for the next four years, provided that the Government of Ontario does its share starting in 2023 or 2024.

The *Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario* agrees with Ontario's Ministry of Francophone Affairs on one point: the federal government is underfunding French language services in Ontario. Our member organizations are in the same situation: they must serve 54% of the country's Francophone population outside of Québec, but with only 23% of the federal funding for these organizations. We have raised this problem last year and we will continue to raise it in the future.

Why, then, is the Government of Ontario passing up the opportunity to receive approximately \$40 million from the federal government to implement the *Université de l'Ontario français* by not submitting a request for funding to Heritage Canada? This bears repeating: the federal government is even ready to assume 100% of the costs over the next four years, thus giving the province time to put its fiscal house in order.

It should be noted that the Progressive-Conservative Party was the first party to raise the underfunding issue in the Legislature. The former leader of your party was also the first party

leader to take a position in the Legislature in favour of the *Université de l'Ontario français*. The new Premier promised this investment during the leadership race and the day after he was elected. On July 23, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and the Minister of Francophone Affairs both formally announced that the institution would be going forward. Two months later, just days after the government's update on the province's deficit, the Minister of Francophone Affairs again stated this commitment.

Recommendation 5

- That the Government of Ontario develop as quickly as possible a financial framework for the implementation of the *Université de l'Ontario français*, which could include a federal contribution covering the entirety of the institution's next four years of operation, as well as private sector investments and others sources of funding.

Improving the delivery of French language justice services

Pilot project for seamless access to justice in French

On May 29, 2015, the Government of Ontario announced the launch of a pilot project that would soon meet with great success. The Seamless Access to Justice in French Pilot Project aimed to improve access to justice in French and to deal with challenges that Francophones potentially face when attempting to obtain French language services or to exercise their language rights as provided by Ontario's Courts of Justice Act or the Criminal Code of Canada.

Like access to health care services, the importance of access to justice in French goes beyond identity concerns. The evaluation report lauded the results of the pilot project, which achieved the goals of improving French language services in the courthouse at a low cost, particularly due to :

- prominent signage and information on language rights in family law, criminal law and civil law cases, as well as before the Small Claims Court, throughout the court house;
- informing Francophone Ontarians about their language rights as early as possible to help them navigate Ontario's justice system and exercise their right to proceedings in French;
- actively offering French language services through greetings, public announcements and signage in both official languages, so that users of Francophone courts are aware that they can request services in French;

- establishing protocols between representatives of local administrations and Ottawa magistrates to improve access to justice in French.

Ontario Legal Information Centre / Centre d'information juridique de l'Ontario

A service that has shown its worth to improve access to French language legal services is the Ontario Legal Information Centre / *Centre d'information juridique de l'Ontario*. Administered by the *Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario* (AJEFO) and based in Ottawa, this program provides access to a French-speaking lawyer at no charge.

The program has two components:

- Information: General explanations of the law to help users understand their legal issues and available options for settlement.
- Orientation: Referral to local organizations or resources that can help users to move forward in resolving their problems.

The Government of Ontario has an opportunity to make significant progress in ensuring access to justice in French by providing the AJEFO with resources to open an Ontario Legal Information Centre in Sudbury.

The AFO adds its voice to that of its member organization, the *Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario*, in this recommendation.

Recommendation 6

- That the provincial government extend the Seamless Access to Justice in French Pilot Project to the Sudbury Courthouse and fund the creation of an Ontario Legal Information Centre in Greater Sudbury to improve access to French language justice services.

Ensuring the durability of Franco-Ontarian arts and culture

The Franco-Ontarian arts and culture community includes a large number of artists and arts organizations all across the province. They are active in a wide range of artistic disciplines, they contribute directly to the province's cultural development, they allow Ontarians to share enriching arts and culture experiences and they are at the forefront of the vitality of Francophone communities in Ontario. Over the years, the arts and culture network has become greatly

diversified and specialized and today it is one of the most sophisticated ecosystems in French-speaking Canada.

The network contains more than 100 organizations, including arts organizations, cultural centres, festivals, book fairs, theatre companies, artist-run centres, art galleries, book publishers, bookstores and many others.

The Ontario Arts Council (OAC) plays a leading role in the development of Franco-Ontarian arts and culture. For most of the players in this network of associations, the main source of provincial funding is the OAC.

Moreover, arts and culture represent an excellent investment in the province's economy. Here is a quote from the brief submitted by one of our member organizations, the *Alliance culturelle de l'Ontario*, which the AFO supports:

“According to recent data from Statistics Canada, the arts and culture sector represents \$27.5 billion dollars, or 3.7% of the province's gross domestic product and 287,000 jobs. Our sector's GDP surpasses sectors such as hospitality, mining, oil and gas, agriculture, forestry and hunting and fishing.

Ontario's arts and culture community is part of a nation-wide ecosystem. Ontario generates 48% of the total GDP of Canada's arts and culture sector and 41% of jobs in the country's cultural sector. In 2011, the City of Toronto noted that for every dollar it spends on arts and culture, its clients generate almost \$18 more in investments by other levels of government and the private sector and in sales revenue.

A recent CROP survey in Québec found that for every dollar spectators spend to attend a performance, they spend another dollar in nearby businesses. Investments in arts and culture generate revenue and create jobs.”

Recommendation 7

- That funding for the Ontario Arts Council and Ontario Creates remain at 2018 levels in the next provincial budget.

I thank you for your attention to this brief. Should you wish to obtain further information or if you have questions or comments, I invite you to contact the AFO's political analyst, Bryan Michaud, at 613-744-6649, ext. 130, or bmichaud@monassemblee.ca.

Please accept, Mr. President, my best regards.



CAROL JOLIN

President

Annex A

Profile of the *Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario (AFO)*

The *Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario* is the umbrella organization and the political voice of Ontario's Francophone community.

It is also :

561 individual members;
155 member associations; and
51 institutional members.

A vibrant community of 744,00 Francophones in all corners of Ontario.

Vision

Ontario's Francophone community united in its diversity, unified in its action and collectively committed to ensuring its well-being

Board of directors

The AFO is led by an eleven-member board of directors, including the president (Carol Jolin) and :

- 5 regional representatives (Centre: Julien G r mie; East: Marie-France Paquette; Northeast : Alexi Breton; Northwest: Claudette Gleeson; Southwest: G rard Malo)
 - 1 identity group representative for seniors (Nicole Sauv )
 - 1 identity group representative for women (Nathalie Vilgrain)
 - 1 identity group representative for youth (Camille Sigouin)
- 2 representatives of Francophone racial and ethno-cultural minorities (Julie Mbengi Lutete and Marcel Mukuta Kalala)

Contact

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