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FÉDÉRATION DES COMMUNAUTÉS
FRANCOPHONES ET ACADIENNE
du Canada]

***Brief from the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne
(FCFA) du Canada***

to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

for the 2014 pre-budget consultations

Ottawa, July 24, 2014

“In 2017, the citizens of Canada’s francophone and Acadian communities are living and thriving in French. They have the collective capacity to act in every sphere of their development and thus contribute to the growth of Canada.”¹

This vision, adopted at the Summit of francophone and Acadian communities in June 2007 by nearly 800 French-speaking citizens from every part of Canada, led in June 2008 to the adoption of a **Community Strategic Plan** [*Plan stratégique communautaire*], a tool provided with concrete initiatives to mobilize the communities and ensure their development.

The **Plan** is the result of a joint approach of empowerment. The communities have taken charge of their own development, focusing on their knowledge and the support of numerous partners, including the federal government and the provincial and territorial governments. They want to continue working on the various projects identified in the **Plan**, so as to promote civic commitment to the growth and the economic and social well-being of the francophone and Acadian communities of Canada.

This work and this expertise on the communities’ part was recognized by the government in the throne speeches of 2010 and 2011 with the comments: *“the best solutions to the diverse challenges confronting Canada’s communities are often found locally”* and *“[l]ocal communities are best placed to overcome their unique challenges.”*

In recent years, productive collaboration has been established between the Government of Canada and numerous organizations in the francophone and Acadian communities thanks to a good many mechanisms, including the *Roadmap for Canada’s Official Languages* and Canadian Heritage’s *Official Languages Support Programs*. These two initiatives are excellent examples of innovative partnerships which make it possible to come up with new solutions to numerous social challenges, as is the government’s intent.

The funding invested by the Government of Canada in these community organizations can reap tangible benefits, not only for francophones, but in many cases for the entire community.

¹ *Plan stratégique communautaire de la FCFA 2011-2014* [translation], p. 1.

Three of the project areas identified in the Community Strategic Plan require closer partnership between the various levels of government and the communities. They are:

OUR DEVELOPMENT

“The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of strengthening official language minority communities’ economic vitality and labour market participation through innovative community-based partnerships. Improving access to economic opportunities and enabling growth in business capacity in communities will provide for greater access to employment opportunities for English- and French-speaking minority communities.”²

The federal government’s priority of creating jobs and stimulating economic growth is shared by the citizens of the francophone and Acadian communities. The economic development of those communities is in fact integral to the success of the **Community Strategic Plan**.

Francophone and Acadian community organizations contribute to the vitalization of all the communities and to stimulating employment and economic growth in Canada by capitalizing on the dynamism of their networks and their private and collective entrepreneurship, while proposing innovative local development strategies.

Acquiring new skills and updating the know-how of the local and regional labour force are two key elements for attracting new investment, creating quality jobs, and ensuring a better quality of life for citizens generally. To this end, partnerships between the federal government and organizations, institutions and businesses will encourage young people to stay in their respective localities, enter quality jobs, improve organizational productivity, and ensure sustainable regional development.

This dynamic francophone economic space helps to better position the communities on the national market, and facilitates increased interprovincial/territorial and international trade.

² *Roadmap for Canada’s Official Languages 2013-2018*, p. 13.

OUR SPACE

“The Government of Canada will continue to be a model in favouring the use of our country’s two official languages. It will offer citizens direct access to a comprehensive range of information and federal government services. ... In addition, by partnering with other levels of government and community players, the Government will carry on supporting services in many other areas important to all Canadians.”³

All across Canada, hundreds of organizations dedicated to the development of francophone minority communities are devising and delivering programs, activities and services that touch every aspect of the daily lives of French-speaking citizens. Whether the field be health, education, the economy and job creation, access to justice, literacy, youth, culture or immigrant reception and integration services, these organizations are addressing local or regional challenges while building capacity to live in French all over the country.

Consequently, the funding invested by the Government of Canada in these community organizations, whether through the Official Languages Support Programs (Canadian Heritage), the *Roadmap for Canada’s Official Languages*, or other programs in different departments, serves to efficiently and effectively generate tangible benefits not only for francophones, but also for the whole community.

However, one of the impacts of the inferior working conditions that pervade the organizations in our communities is an abnormally high personnel turnover. This situation is doing great damage to the organizations’ productivity and efficiency. As inflation undermines their financial capacity, there is the danger of seeing an erosion of services. What is ultimately at risk here is the government’s commitment to supporting the development of the official-language minority communities. Furthermore, we are concerned about the changes being made to the call-for-proposals process for many government programs, which are now open to bidding from the general public. And yet, are the communities not “best placed” to define and assess what is truly best for them?

³ *Roadmap for Canada’s Official Languages 2013-2018*, p. 14.

OUR POPULATION

“There is no greater priority for Canadians than caring for their loved ones. ... They want their children and grandchildren to grow up with every opportunity to lead happy, healthy lives.”⁴

“It is the reality of our country that Canadians of very different origins live and work side by side, together. New Canadians work hard to learn our languages, our values, and our traditions, and in turn, are welcomed as equal members of the Canadian family.”⁵

Like the Canadian population generally, our francophone communities rely on the vitality of their families and the contribution of newcomers for their renewal and for meeting the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Whatever their origin, French-speaking families want to find services in their community that allow them to pass on to their children, starting at a very young age, the French language and a sense of their heritage and their francophone cultural identity.

For their part, newcomers want the communities to work with them to better meet their needs in terms of social, economic and cultural integration.

Greater collaboration among all the partners of the federal, provincial/territorial and municipal governments and the communities themselves is absolutely essential to meet our labour force needs and guarantee the satisfactory growth of our communities.

⁴ *Here for all Canadians: stability, security, prosperity*, Speech from the Throne, 41st Parliament, June 3, 2011, p. 7.

⁵ *Seizing Canada’s moment: prosperity and opportunity in an uncertain world*, Speech from the Throne, 41st Parliament, 2nd session, October 16, 2013, p. 20.

CONCLUSION

In light of our statement of the issues, and to enable the francophone and Acadian communities to achieve the objectives outlined in the **Community Strategic Plan**, we submit the following recommendations:

- That the Standing Committee on Finance recommend that targeted investments be introduced to guarantee the endogenous economic development of the communities, and that the federal departments work with their provincial/territorial, municipal, private and community partners in a comprehensive and integrated approach;
- That the Standing Committee on Finance recommend increased support to build the capacities of the organizations and institutions that work for community development and deliver services to francophone minority citizens;
- That the Standing Committee on Finance recommend that transfer agreements with the provinces and territories relating to service delivery in such areas as the labour market, health and social services be accompanied by tough linguistic clauses that include the concepts of consultation and collaboration with all key stakeholders in the francophone and Acadian communities.

The citizens of the francophone and Acadian minority communities are working very hard, both individually and collectively, to preserve their language and their culture and to transmit them to the next generation.

The organizations that represent them offer a wide range of services as efficiently and effectively as possible, given the resources at their disposal.

Like all Canadians, the members of the francophone and Acadian communities have done their part in helping to reduce the deficit. We hope that they will also be able to benefit from the surpluses following from the return to a balanced budget that is anticipated for 2015.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit this brief, and we look forward to an invitation to appear before the Committee this fall.