

Francophone Economy



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Leveraging the Francophonie for Economic Development : The Role of Governments

Conseil des ministres
sur la francophonie
canadienne



Ministers' Council
on the Canadian
Francophonie

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Introduction

The Ministers' Council on Canadian Francophonie (MCCF) is an intergovernmental collaborative forum that brings together ministers responsible for French-language services, Acadian and Francophone affairs, the Canadian Francophonie, and official languages.

On the occasion of the MCCF's 30th anniversary, the ministers sought to explore perspectives that could offer innovative solutions to the challenges facing the Canadian Francophonie, and therefore organized the MCCF's Agora.

Its first edition took place on August 9 and 10, 2024, in Halifax, on the theme of economic development. The event's purpose was to define avenues to explore to better support the Francophonie's contribution to Canada's prosperity.

Here is the report from the MCCF's Agora – Francophone Economy. It is a summary of the items discussed. It also mentions the avenues that were suggested during the discussions and interventions, regardless of their feasibility.



The MCCF and the Francophone economy

The MCCF has been raising issues related to the Francophone economy for several years. In June 2010, in Yellowknife, the ministers supported the organization of a Pan-Canadian forum on economic development in the Canadian Francophonie. The forum, held in Gatineau in 2012, yielded some avenues for action. .

Between 2014 and 2015, the MCCF explored the creation of a Canadian Francophonie chamber of commerce. However, the associative sector advocated support for existing networks, such as the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité du Canada (RDÉE Canada) and its 12 national members, as well as the Francophone chambers of commerce.

At the same time, the MCCF is continuing its work by producing an internal inventory of government initiatives regarding Francophone economic development. More than a hundred initiatives were thus listed, and their analysis made it possible to identify three continuous areas of intervention: tourism, immigration and business support. This inventory provided governments with examples of good practices from which to draw inspiration.

At the June 2016 ministerial conference in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, decisions made by the ministers in the areas of tourism and immigration were geared toward a concrete outcome regarding economic development. Ontario developed the Route Champlain, and the Government of Canada announced the creation of a Francophone tourism corridor, now known as Salut Canada¹.

In 2022, during their annual meeting, the ministers pledged to seize opportunities to promote the Canadian Francophonie as a dynamic component of Canadian and international economies. Since then, the MCCF has participated in several economic events at home and abroad.

The discussions at the 2023 ministerial meeting resulted in the creation of Agora – Francophone Economy (Agora), which took place in Halifax on August 9 and 10, 2024, where the ministers played an active role. This event report responds directly to their desire to identify avenues to explore.

1 [Salut Canada website](#)



Opening remarks

The MCFE co-chairs, the Honourable Colton LeBlanc, Government of Nova Scotia, and the Honourable Randy Boissonnault, Government of Canada, conveyed a message to the Agora participants emphasizing the importance of economic development for MCFE members.

Minister LeBlanc pointed out how crucial this matter is for Acadian and Francophone communities. According to him, the 30th anniversary of the MCFE represents an ideal moment to come together and explore ways to maximize the economic impact of the Francophonie regionally, nationally and internationally.

“The Agora will explore the measures that can be taken by provincial and territorial governments—and by the federal government—to promote the development of the Francophone economy. These measures will have to take into account the responsibilities of each government that could collaborate with entrepreneur-partners, researchers, or economic development stakeholders within governments and community organizations.”

Minister Boissonnault had a question for the audience: “What can the Government of Canada do to further promote the Francophone entrepreneurship ecosystem?” He noted that the Action Plan for Official Languages 2023–2028, an investment of \$4.1 billion over five years, adds \$20.5 million to the Enabling Fund, which supports economic development and human resources development in official language minority communities.

The minister highlighted the importance of integrating new entrepreneurs who arrive in the country. He also said that Canadian companies invest less in developing their own workforce than do companies in the United States, Germany or Japan, and that they also suffer from a lack of research and development, which contributes to the productivity gap between Canada and the United States. For the minister, collaborations, particularly in the tourism, culture, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity sectors, would be desirable.

Pleased that this first edition of the Agora is being held in Nova Scotia, Minister LeBlanc indicated that the members of the MCCF were eager to share the areas for reflection resulting from this exercise with their ministerial colleagues responsible for economic development.

Wishing everyone productive discussions, the co-chairs expressed their hope that the MCCF's Agora – Francophone Economy would allow for better documentation of the support offered by governments to this ecosystem that is so important for Canada's prosperity.

Josée Bégin



The Honourable
Glen Savoie



Bilingualism: A profitable skill!

French is a real economic lever whose true potential remains unknown. However, having a bilingual staff is an advantage that seems to pay off for companies. The numbers speak for themselves. To draw a statistical portrait of the Francophone economy in Canada, Josée Bégin, Assistant Chief Statistician at Statistics Canada, presented some data to the audience.² According to 2022 numbers, one in four private businesses offer a service or activity in both official languages. This proportion rises to one in two among businesses with more than 100 employees. Bilingualism is therefore an important dimension of economic activity in Canada.

2 [Demographics and economy of the Canadian Francophonie — Statistics Canada](#)

According to the 2021 Census, the job market outside Quebec comprises approximately 440,000 people with French as their first official language. However, bilingualism's potential goes far beyond the deep-rooted Francophonie. In Nova Scotia, for example, there are 30,000 Francophones, but more than 100,000 people are able to communicate in French. This pool of bilingual Canadians represents a growth potential for the Canadian economy, and this is what the panelists testified to.

The Honourable Glen Savoie, then Minister responsible for La Francophonie in New Brunswick, Canada's only officially bilingual province, began the session by praising the resilience and willingness of Francophone entrepreneurs to participate in economic development provincially, nationally and internationally. For him, the bilingual character of his province is a major asset for attracting investment and supporting Francophone immigration.

The minister mentioned the importance of showing the country's Anglophones that French is a business language and an invaluable competitive advantage for Canada. Bilingualism must be presented as an investment that benefits all of Canadian society.

He added that there is a need to become aware of the global Francophonie's economic potential. Based on demographic projections from the UN and the Demographic and Statistical Observatory of the Francophone Space, he noted the need to integrate the African market, which is expected to account for 85% of the world's Francophone population by 2060.

In conclusion, Minister Savoie argued that governments have the tools and levers to stimulate the economy and that, as such, they must be liaison officers to guide entrepreneurs and businesspeople in the right direction.

The panel, moderated by economic journalist René Vézina, consisted of :

- **Pierre-Marcel Desjardins**, economist,
Université de Moncton
- **Justin Johnson**, CEO,
Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities (AMBM)
- **Suzanne Guèvremont**, Commissioner and Chairperson,
National Film Board of Canada (NFB)
- **Ali Massoudi**, Vice President,
Commercial Credit Risk Management, TD Bank

From left to right:
René Vézina,
Pierre-Marcel Desjardins,
Justin Johnson,
Suzanne Guèvremont
and Ali Massoudi



The discussion particularly highlighted the advantages of bilingualism:

- **Improved productivity through reduced business transaction costs:** Proficiency in multiple languages improves communication, thereby strengthening relationships of trust with business partners. Negotiations then lead to agreements more quickly.
- **Contribution to economic growth:** The call centre industry example speaks for itself. Well established in New Brunswick, which has the bilingual labour pool needed to serve customers, this sector employs more than 15,000 people and generates annual revenues of \$1.5 billion³. Even if not all positions created require proficiency in both official languages, bilingualism promotes economic diversification that stimulates job creation. As proof, the TD Bank now has operational centres in Atlantic Canada for its insurance sector and a significant portion of its financial services.
- **Job opportunities for Anglophones:** Companies that focus on bilingualism also generate jobs that do not necessarily require skills in both official languages⁴. Every bilingual position in the call centre industry generates two jobs where English is the working language.
- **Individual benefits:** Studies show that bilingualism fosters higher employment income⁵. Bilingualism also provides greater mobility and promotes career progression.
- **Leverage in various fields:** Bilingualism provides a competitive advantage, expanding access to new markets. In the audiovisual industry, the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) believes its productions reach a broader audience due to the expansion of markets. For every filmmaker hired, 5 to 10 jobs are created. The organization estimates that it will generate more than 3,000 employment contracts promoting bilingualism across the country, since its productions are filmed in both official languages throughout the country.

³ Reference from PM Desjardins

⁴ References from PM Desjardins

⁵ [English-French Bilingualism Outside Quebec: An Economic Portrait of Bilinguals in Canada – The Conference Board of Canada](#)

Currently, 60% of NFB staff have French as their first language and 80% of senior positions are bilingual.

- **Innovation:** The Canadian Francophonie is made up of multiple networks that share a sense of innovation. The Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities (AMBM) is a good example with the creation, in 2008, of an organization dedicated to the sustainable development of municipalities. Eco-West carries out the planning and implementation of infrastructure projects linked to the green economy. This service, available in English and French, covers transportation, wastewater treatment, energy efficiency and waste management.

The discussion made it possible to identify some avenues for multiplying the beneficial effects of bilingualism on the Canadian economy.

- **Better understanding the impact of bilingualism:** The positive impact of bilingualism on the economy is little known, and it would be appropriate to better document its contribution to the prosperity of Canadian society.
- **Investment in education:** The ability to offer secondary and post-secondary education programs that promote proficiency in French and English is a major asset for Canada's economic development. French immersion programs, which are very popular with parents, promote the development of a competitive bilingual workforce, and this is all the more important given that the proportion of Francophones in the country is declining⁶.
- **Support for municipalities:** Several studies⁷ show that municipalities play a major role in economic dynamism. They manage most public infrastructure, develop industrial zones, create environments conducive to investment, and create attractive living environments for the workforce. Government programs to support the provision of services in French could be examined by considering the benefits potentially generated by municipal administrations.
- **Support for bilingualism in business:** Providing access to programs that encourage bilingualism in business can help entrepreneurs build on a key skill to access new markets.

⁶ French is the first official language spoken by an increasing number of Canadians, but the proportion fell from 22.2% in 2016 to 21.4% in 2021 – Statistics Canada, 2021 census

⁷ Available only in French / Les villes : moteur économique du Québec, du Canada et du monde! – Association des économistes québécois

From left to right:
René Vézina,
Isabelle de Bruyn,
Monique Poirier,
Peggy Somers Feehan
and Angela Cassie



French, a language that travels

This panel, moderated by economic journalist René Vézina, consisted of:

- **Isabelle de Bruyn**, Vice-President,
Tourism HR Canada
- **Monique Poirier**, General and Artistic Director,
Le Pays de la Sagouine, New Brunswick
- **Peggy Somers Feehan**, Director,
Council For The Development Of French In Louisiana (Codofil)
- **Angela Cassie**, Chief Operating Officer,
Travel Manitoba

In Canada, tourism generates nearly \$300 million in revenue per day⁸. The sector is booming, with annual growth exceeding that of the country's overall economy. Bilingual workers are a valuable asset to this industry, which is experiencing strong post-COVID growth. For many stakeholders, French is a key strategic focus for development.

In Ontario, there are 11,000 Francophone workers in this sector.
In New Brunswick, Francophones represent 22% of the tourism workforce. Several Francophone post-secondary institutions outside Quebec offer study programs in tourism management.

The panelists presented examples of initiatives related to the Francophonie or strategies dedicated to the Francophone market which prove to be profitable for the entire community in which they are located.

8 [2023 recovery: Canada's tourism renaissance – Destination Canada Annual Report 2023](#)

In New Brunswick

Promotional campaigns focusing on New Brunswick's bilingual status and its ability to welcome tourists in French allow the province to attract its visitors from neighbouring Quebec. In 2022, 1.5 million travellers visited the province and many of them came from Quebec, according to officials⁹. The Franco-Ontarian market was also coveted, focusing on the beauty of the beaches and the Acadian sense of hospitality.

There are several examples of investments by all three levels of government in the tourism industry that have had successful results. The example of the tourist attraction Le Pays de la Sagouine is presented.

Le Pays de la Sagouine is a tourist village based on the imagination of the best-selling author Antonine Maillet. In 1992, operations were limited to 10 weeks per year with 50 employees. In 2024, this operator created 142 jobs that are active 9 months of the year.

The economic benefits for businesses in the region are significant, with dozens of local merchants benefiting from the economic contribution generated by 60,000 visitors annually. Since its opening in 1992, the site has welcomed more than 1.5 million visitors who have generated significant economic benefits for the region.

It is noted that the operator's ability to welcome visitors in both official languages contributes to making both English and French speakers aware of the history, culture and aspirations of the Acadian people.

In Manitoba

This province, located in central Canada, has 20,000 jobs in the tourism industry. This represents repercussions of more than \$2 billion. Manitoba's 17 Francophone minority communities (FMC) have good development potential, which is essential for attracting and retaining young people in rural areas because tourism is a vehicle for lucrative and attractive employment.

Convinced that promoting its Francophone and Métis heritage can contribute to achieving its economic development objectives, Manitoba has integrated a Francophone Tourism Strategy¹⁰ into its provincial strategy.

⁹ Annual Report 2021–2022—Tourism, Heritage and Culture, New Brunswick

¹⁰ Manitoba Francophone Tourism Strategy—Travel Manitoba

Voyage Manitoba (Travel Manitoba in English), the Crown corporation responsible for developing initiatives in this industry, involved community organizations in developing the strategy in order to maximize its relevance, scope and consistency with the reality of the community. Travel Manitoba intends to benefit from promoting the province's cultural wealth to increase the number of visitors to the province and increase the length of their stay.

In Manitoba, out of 267 operators, only 7% are ready for export. The development potential is therefore enormous. For those responsible for Travel Manitoba, the development of Francophone tourism is not just an asset, but a real driving force that must be set in motion.

In Louisiana

The cultural ties that unite Louisiana to the Francophonie are both historical and current. In 2022, the state welcomed 42 million domestic and international travellers who contributed \$17 billion to the economy. According to the state, tax revenue generated by the tourism industry saves each household in the Pelican State \$1,068 in taxes.

Louisiana identifies international Francophonie as one of its main markets. At Laura Plantation, a historic tourist site that tells the story of slavery, French-language tours attract visitors who represent 28% of revenue.

In 1999, Louisiana hosted the Congrès mondial acadien. The international event brought together more than 200,000 people. Local leaders have acknowledged the potential of their membership in the Francophonie to connect to the global economy, thus placing the Francophonie among the axes of Louisiana's economic development. Since then, Louisiana's French heritage, the promotion of Cajun culture, the resurgence of French in schools through immersion programs, and the academic focus at Louisiana universities have become key assets that Louisiana Economic Development highlights to attract investors. Since 2003, the organization has attracted 10 major projects from businesses with head offices in France. Air Liquide, Axa Advisors and SNF Holding are among the French investors with total investments of \$926.8 million and 1,778 jobs created. Louisiana now holds an observer seat at the International Organisation of La Francophonie, as do the governments of Ontario and, since October 2024, Nova Scotia.

For this American state, the Francophonie is a renewable resource to be utilized. The Council for the Development of French in Louisiana's (CODOFIL) budget has been increased by \$100,000 to support Francophone economic development. One of the objectives is to help small businesses take full advantage of their Francophone customers. As part of these initiatives, menus at approximately 20 restaurants in Lafayette have been translated. The restaurateurs were surprised to discover,

following a simple translation, that a significant proportion of their customers were Francophone.

The discussions among the panelists made it possible to identify some avenues to explore for an increased contribution from the Francophonie to economic development in the tourism industry:

- **Better data:** Contribute to the production of data on Francophone tourists and the bilingual workforce, in order to provide tourism operators with reliable information on which to base their strategic decisions.
- **Promotion of Francophone tourism:** Include a Francophone dimension in government marketing campaigns that promote the tourism supply of their province or territory, and of Canada.
- **Informing business communities:** Contribute to better informing local business communities about Francophone tourism's economic development potential. Developing a solid tourism supply requires consultation activities because the appeal is generated by the ecosystem of a region and not only by the loss leaders.
- **Promoting careers in tourism:** Support initiatives to promote careers in tourism. In 2023, the tourism industry was facing a labour shortage with a deficit of 170,000 people. According to forecasts, labour requirements are expected to increase by 26% by 2040.¹¹ The tourism sector is not valued by young people. Parents also struggle to see a promising future in it. Little is known about the career opportunities and variety of specialties sought by this industry (accounting, marketing, project management, event coordination, etc.).

11 [Labour Demand and Supply Analysis: The Future of Canada's Tourism Sector—Tourism HR Canada](#)

From left to right:
l'honorable Glen Simard,
Marie-Christine Morin,
Anne-Marie Jean,
Blanche Israël and
Darrel Nadeau



Culture and GDP

This panel was moderated by Glen Simard, Manitoba Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism and Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs. Its participants consisted of:

- **Marie-Christine Morin**, Executive Director, Fédération culturelle canadienne-française
- **Anne-Marie Jean**, President and Executive Director, Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec
- **Blanche Israël**, CEO, East Coast Music Association
- **Darrel Nadeau**, Vice President, Visitor Experience, Canadian Museum for Human Rights

Excluding Quebec, Francophone cultural industries contribute \$5.63 billion to Canada's GDP¹². Although they only make up 3.5% of the population, Francophones outside of Quebec represent 5.2% of the workforce in the cultural sector, which is still expanding.

Culture is a vehicle for development that deserves the attention of the stakeholders involved in economic policy. Considering the role of culture in attracting and retaining people in communities¹³, particularly in rural areas, we see that the cultural sector and the creative industries are areas on which it is relevant to invest.

¹² [Economic impact of the French-Canadian cultural community in 2021—Hill Strategies](#)

¹³ [Culture - key to rural-urban development of historic towns — UNESCO](#)

At the international level, exports of creative goods have increased by 19% since 2017. Over the last decade, the share of creative services in total exports of services has increased from 12% to 19%¹⁴, while the share of creative goods in total exports of goods has remained stable at around 3% since 2002.

Yet, cultural entrepreneurs have limited access to traditional economic development tools. With the exception of Quebec, a large portion of government investment appears to be focused on large-scale events. Can we broaden the scope of cultural support programs? What are the innovative approaches to maximize the economic value of this cultural wealth?

The panelists highlighted the economic and social importance of cultural and creative industries, their continued growth, the crucial role of government support, the economic impact of cultural events, as well as the role of culture as a vehicle of social integration and a distinctive element in a context of globalization.

- **Economic impact of cultural events:** In its presentation, the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ) demonstrated that each dollar invested generates economic benefits of \$7.55. This explains why several ministries of the Quebec government include investments in culture in their budgets (Education, Tourism, Economy and Innovation, etc.).

In Manitoba, the Festival du Voyageur has a budget of \$6 million, including \$500,000 in public funds. The event generates \$16 million in economic benefits. Even though it is a French-speaking festival, the whole community benefits from it.

- **Government support for creation and dissemination:** Government assistance is fundamental for project start-ups that will eventually generate independent revenue. Government assistance also helps extend a work's lifespan, improve artists' socio-economic conditions and reach out to new audiences.
- **Culture as a distinctive element:** With globalization, culture is a way to stand out and maintain a competitive advantage, both in terms of tourism and quality of life, to increase the attractiveness of regions in terms of labour, investment and business development.
- **Culture as a social vehicle:** Culture is a vehicle of social integration and cohesion, particularly in school environments and cosmopolitan areas. Artists play a major role in engaging the public on social and environmental issues.

14 [Creative Economy Outlook 2024—UN trade & development](#)

This discussion brought economic insight that has rarely been discussed in the past. In Canadian Francophonie, the cultural sector was almost exclusively addressed from an identity perspective. Applying an economic perspective reveals numbers that surprise and encourage us to look more closely at avenues of action that have so far received little attention.

- **Supporting innovation:** Increase investments in culture for innovative and digital projects that will strengthen the competitiveness of Francophone artists.
- **Collaboration with the business community:** Draw inspiration from initiatives led by certain chambers of commerce that rely on the cultural sector to revive city centres and create incentives to encourage partnerships between the arts sector and the business community.
- **Development of diffusion networks:** Support the networking of Francophone broadcast circuits across Canada to help cover costs and promote artists.
- **Focus on international export networks:** Facilitate cultural export by supporting the renewal of existing networks and developing new international circuits for the Francophonie.
- **Support for artists and events:** Provide increased support for artists and cultural events, with particular attention to the different components of the Francophonie, such as LGBTQ+ communities and Francophones of African origin.
- **Promotion of culture:** Promote culture in school programs to raise awareness of its importance among young people. If culture outranks sport in terms of GDP¹⁵, sport prevails in the budgets allocated to school programs. Yet many skills crucial to the development of individuals can be acquired in the arts as well as in sporting activities, with a positive impact on GDP.

15 [Culture and sport GDP as a share of the total economy, 2021—Statistics Canada](#)



The skills of the future

El-Iza Mohamedou, Head of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Centre for Skills, gave participants a presentation on current trends shaping the skills of tomorrow¹⁶. Canada's specific advantages according to the OECD are summarized below.

In summary, Canada benefits from its commitment to bilingualism, its adaptation to global megatrends, its investment in ongoing training, and its support for the development of socio-emotional skills. These advantages position the country to respond effectively to future challenges and promote a competent and adaptable workforce.

Bilingualism is seen as an essential skill for social and professional integration. Knowledge of several languages improves chances of access to higher education and the labour market, both at the national and international levels. Languages serve as gateways to other cultures, promoting respect and integration. They are a vehicle for promoting diversity.

Eight out of ten Canadians believe that more needs to be done to ensure that young people become bilingual.

Canada, like other countries, must adapt its sectors of health, transportation, housing and urban planning to meet the needs of an aging population. This includes the development of new skills and technologies and the transition to green jobs, requiring technical and transversal skills. The Canadian labour market is demonstrating a growing demand for artificial intelligence and computer science skills, with a considerable increase in positions requiring these skills.

¹⁶ [Skills of the Future and the Advantages of Bilingualism—OECD](#)

There is a narrative around artificial intelligence that argues that language learning will soon no longer be necessary, which the OECD does not agree with.

Technical skills will evolve very quickly, and therefore socioemotional skills will be crucial for the future of the labour market. Learning a second language is part of this, as it increases cognitive abilities, such as flexibility, problem solving, and abstract and creative thinking.

Ongoing training is essential to keep workforce qualifications in line with market needs. Francophone post-secondary institutions therefore play a crucial role. They generate the language and professional skills required for the local labour market. Much remains to be done to raise awareness among employers about the training needed to gradually develop their employees' skills for the future.

From left to right:
Catherine Clark,
Aurélie Lacassagne,
Rose Cathy Handy,
Isabelle Doucet and
Alain Dupuis.



Increasing the labour pool in critical sectors

This panel was moderated by Catherine Clark and featured:

- **Aurélie Lacassagne**, Rector, Université de Hearst
- **Rose Cathy Handy**, President, Bilingual Link
- **Alain Dupuis**, Executive Director, Federation of Francophone and Acadian Communities of Canada (FCFA)
- **Isabelle Doucet**, Director, International and Multilateral Francophonie, Government of New Brunswick

Human capital is a critical element of economic development. This is even more pronounced in Francophone minority communities (FMC) where the lack of qualified labour can quickly become a vital issue. Here are a few examples:

- The glaring shortage of teaching and early childhood staff may encourage a movement toward Anglophone services and promote assimilation. There is a shortage of 10,000 childcare spaces, and more than 12,000 French language and second-language teaching positions are vacant¹⁷.
- Difficulty in finding staff capable of providing services in French and English may encourage employers to no longer seek bilingualism when seeking candidates.
- The lack of French-language services in a community harms the retention of families and can therefore have a significant negative impact on demographics.

Aging societies highlight the urgency of investing in skills across all sectors. This is a reality on a global scale. To illustrate the extent of the emergency, the OECD estimates that by the end of the 2070s, there will be more people over the age of 65 than under 18.

To fill vacancies in Francophone communities, Francophone immigration is unavoidable. While many jobs require bilingualism, a good number of employers can also welcome unilingual Francophone candidates, with English being a skill that can be acquired thereafter. Francophones who wish to settle in Canada come mainly from Sub-Saharan Africa. According to several stakeholders, immigration pathways from Africa are not as easily accessible as those from Asia or Europe.

Below are some of the ideas brought forth by the panelists:

- **A government recruitment strategy:** To develop its international recruitment strategy, New Brunswick conducted an extensive consultation within government and labour market stakeholders. One of the findings was the need to break down silos, including between different ministries. Post-secondary institutions and professional associations play an important role in meeting workforce needs. Recognition of prior learning, the distinct needs of rural versus urban areas, and the promotion of bilingualism—even in a bilingual province—are all factors considered in the development of the recruitment strategy, which includes both short- and long-term measures. In the short term, recruitment missions now include joint delegations between ministries and post-secondary institutions.

As part of its long-term strategy, the government has decided to open private schools abroad, where the provincial curriculum will be taught and the schools will be managed by Canadian administrators through local partnerships. Therefore, there would be opportunities to promote the province's workforce

17 [The Shortage of French Immersion and French as a Second Language Teachers—Socius](#)

needs along the way. The hope is to create a pool of students who wish to pursue post-secondary studies in Canada, many of whom will pursue careers in the country.

- **The contribution of international students:** International students already contribute to the economy by working during their studies. They therefore gain experience while earning a diploma that is recognized in the job market. According to a 2020 DPM Research report¹⁸, 19% of international students choose to stay in Canada after their studies. However, it is necessary to enable these students to acquire the language skills required by the labour market in their adopted region, if these are not already part of their skills. Conversely, their rate of bilingualism is generally higher than that of economic immigrants.
- **Recognition of foreign credentials:** As of July 2024, the unemployment rate for immigrants who had arrived less than five years previously was 12.6%, while the unemployment rate for immigrants who had been established for longer was 6.3% nationally¹⁹. By comparison, the unemployment rate for people born in Canada was 5.6%. The non-recognition of qualifications is among the causes of this disparity. The language barrier is said to be the second cause, followed by discrimination based on ethnic origin.
- **Ethical recruitment:** International recruitment must be carried out ethically, particularly in the healthcare field. It is important to adopt a give-and-take approach, to offer benefits for the region from which the workforce is recruited. Educational and training opportunities are a win-win solution. They can be offered by educational institutions, or by employers. Some of the trained individuals will come to work in Canada, while others will stay in their country of origin, where the skills they've acquired will benefit the local community.
- **The job seeker's perspective:** The job market is always analyzed from the employers' point of view. A look from the employees' perspective suggests different priorities. Conflict management, hierarchical relationships and the interpretation of texts are too often stumbling blocks for candidates from immigrant backgrounds. We question the allocation of financial resources, as a significant portion is directed toward job searching rather than preparing candidates for the job market they are about to enter.
- **Lack of access to information** is also mentioned. Francophone job seekers do not have easy access to national data that would allow them to move to locations that need their specific skills.

18 Available only in French / [Projet de priorité à la recherche et à l'analyse portant sur l'établissement des étudiants internationaux sélectionnés dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire](#) — DPM Research

19 [Larger rise in unemployment rate for recent immigrants in July compared with 12 months earlier](#) — Statistics Canada

Below are some ideas inspired by the panelists' discussions:

- **Partnerships with employers:** Encourage partnerships between educational institutions and employers to improve student placement rates and increase the match between training and market needs.
- **Awareness-raising and training for employers:** Support employers in the integration of staff from immigrant backgrounds. Workplaces are part of the equation for successful integration.
- **Student mobility:** Facilitate the development of centres of excellence with the creation of programs encouraging student mobility. In FMCs, the clientele of post-secondary institutions does not always reach the critical mass required for a program to be offered in French. However, these training courses in French would reduce this risk and promote the development of a bilingual workforce.
- **Data on the French-speaking labour market:** There is very little data available on the labour market that takes into account the linguistic specificity of workers or jobs filled or vacant. Government organizations should be able to fill this void. This information is necessary to better serve populations living in minority environments and enable Francophone workers to contribute their full potential to the Canadian economy.



Francophone Female Entrepreneurship

Speech by Danièle Henkel, President of Henkel Média and Ambassador of the Francophonie for the Conseil du patronat du Québec (CPQ).

In her speech, Ms. Henkel highlighted the challenges faced by Francophone entrepreneurs in Canada, particularly women.

She mentioned that access to capital remains a major barrier, with only 4% of venture capital funding going to women in 2019.²⁰

She stressed the need to create an equitable economic ecosystem, where all entrepreneurs, including women, youth and immigrants, can achieve their ambitions through increased financial support and public policies that promote equal opportunities.

The speaker shared her personal experience as an immigrant and entrepreneur, describing the difficulties encountered in having her skills and degrees recognized. She also highlighted that perceptions and biases are additional barriers that women face, giving as an example the company she founded in the medical-aesthetic field, a sector that is often undervalued.

Ms. Henkel sits on the governing board of the “La Francophonie avec Elles²¹” Fund, an Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) mechanism dedicated to the economic and social empowerment of women in vulnerable situations. In this role, as well as in her activities as a strategic advisor, she says she notes that the social environment remains inequitable for women. She stressed the importance of access to information and education, especially for women, and in accordance with the diversity in the regions.

She highlighted the role of public policies in developing female entrepreneurship, citing recent progress in the United Arab Emirates, where the number of women

²⁰ [Minister Ng launches call for applications to deliver the Inclusive Women Venture Capital Initiative —Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada](#)

²¹ Available only in French / [Site Internet du Fonds « La Francophonie avec Elles »](#)

entrepreneurs has doubled in a decade thanks to access to capital and legislative reforms to promote gender equality.

In closing, Ms. Henkel encouraged the audience to consider what actions can be taken to create an environment where women's dreams can come true.

Roda Muse
Ontario's Deputy Minister
of Francophone Affairs



The Ontario Government's Francophone Economic Development Strategy

More than half of the 30,000 Francophone businesses outside Quebec are located in Ontario. They represent 4.3% of the province's SMEs and generate a turnover of 80 billion dollars. Ontario's Francophone Economic Development Strategy²² de l'Ontario est une initiative pangouvernementale visant à soutenir ces entreprises et à promouvoir le développement économique dans la province. is a government-wide initiative to support these businesses and promote economic development in the province.

Roda Muse, Ontario's Deputy Minister of Francophone Affairs, presented the three pillars of this government strategy: support for Francophone entrepreneurship and innovation, development of a bilingual workforce and promotion of Ontario's Francophonie as an economic asset.

Although the ministries of Economic Development, Immigration and Education are key partners of the Ministry of Francophone Affairs in implementing this strategy, Ontario is also counting on intergovernmental collaboration to promote the economic

²² [Francophone Economic Development Strategy—Government of Ontario](#)

vitality of the Franco-Ontarian community. Its membership in the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), the Memorandum of Understanding between the Province of Ontario and the French Community of Belgium, as well as bilateral agreements on the Francophonie, are integral to this strategy.

The Ontario Ministry of Francophone Affairs has defined two indicators to monitor the progress of initiatives: the total value and proportionality of Francophone projects funded by a Francophone Community Grants Program (FCGP), and the number of Francophones or beneficiary projects.

Among the lessons learned during the implementation of the strategy, the Deputy Minister mentioned the importance of identifying the possibilities offered by the initiatives of partner departments and promoting their programs to Francophones. She also stressed the importance of supporting a unifying body that allows the business sector to speak with one voice.

Dominic Mailloux
President, Fédération
des gens d'affaires
francophones de l'Ontario



The Alliance de la francophonie économique canadienne [Canadian Economic Francophonie Alliance]

Networking is an important aspect for business prosperity. Membership in business associations plays a major role in this regard. While several associations already unite French-speaking businesses, it is only recently that an initiative has been established to connect them through a pan-Canadian network. The Alliance de la francophonie économique canadienne (AFEC) was founded on January 23, 2023 by groups from four provinces: the Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick, the Fédération des

chambres de commerce du Québec, the Fédération des gens d'affaires francophones de l'Ontario (FGA), and Parallèle Alberta.

AFEC wishes to play a role in the networking of Canadian companies, including Quebec companies. During the Agora, FGA president Dominic Mailloux announced on behalf of AFEC the addition of two new members: the Halifax Chambre de commerce francophone and the Société de développement économique de la Colombie-Britannique. To date, AFEC brings together organizations from six provinces. In addition to developing its membership, AFEC plans to launch a study on the contribution of French-speaking businesses to interprovincial trade.

The organization also invites the federal government to develop a Francophone economic development strategy that would include the promotion of entrepreneurship, Francophone innovation, the development of a bilingual workforce and, finally, Canadian Francophonie as an economic asset for the country.

AFEC intends to hold a first summit in April 2025, on the sidelines of the Forum franco-ontarien des affaires to be held in Sudbury, Ontario.

From left to right:
Catherine Clark,
Paul Muamba,
Étienne Alary,
Julien Geremie and
Miguel Barrias



Promote and support French-speaking entrepreneurship

The panel was moderated by Catherine Clark and featured:

- **Paul Muamba**, Economic Development Manager, RDÉE Canada
- **Étienne Alary**, Director, Parallèle Alberta

- **Julien Geremie**, Managing Director, Impact ON
- **Miguel Barrieras**, Head of Community and Impact Banking, BDC

Business support is at the heart of government policies promoting economic development, whether expressed through advisory services, low-interest loans, training programs, tax credits or preferential tax treatments to support innovation. But are these efforts having the expected results among French-speaking entrepreneurs? Should they be directed in a different way?

The panelists highlighted the crucial role of French-speaking businesses in the vitality of FMCs, the specific challenges faced by French-speaking and immigrant entrepreneurs, as well as the difficulties encountered by support organizations.

- **Role of businesses:** French-speaking businesses offer services, provide jobs and generate a positive contribution to the maintenance of local populations. When a company closes its doors, its services, jobs, customers, and the economic activity it generated are transferred to another company, where operations will be conducted mostly in English.
- **Challenges for French-speaking entrepreneurs:** In Canada, 60% of entrepreneurs are over 50 years old. It is estimated that at least 50% of businesses have poor succession planning. Francophone companies are no exception. There are few measures to support entrepreneurship and they remain little known.
- **Challenges for immigrant entrepreneurs:** The immigrant entrepreneur faces a triple challenge: providing for the basic needs of their family, starting their business project and learning English. It should be noted that the federal government's Start-up Visa Program²³ does not have a Francophone lens. Francophone communities are little known to foreign investors and economic immigrants. The entrepreneurs therefore go into business without having fully appreciated the advantages that a Franco-minority environment could have brought.
- **Challenges for support organizations:** According to the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC), 50% of businesses do not survive more than five years, but the success rate increases by 70% with support. However, most organizations that support the start-up of businesses in French-speaking minority communities quickly lose contact with them due to a lack of financing links. This limits organizations' ability to collect data on the effectiveness of the services offered.

²³ [Start-up Visa Program—Immigration and citizenship](#)

- **Defining a Francophone business:** It is difficult to identify Francophone businesses in minority settings and, consequently, to collect relevant data. Statistics Canada defines French-speaking businesses as those in which at least 50% of the ownership is held by people whose first official language spoken is French. Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) more broadly includes companies where French is the language predominantly used in business. This includes businesses where most internal and external interactions, such as communication with customers, suppliers and employees, are conducted in French. Definitions too broad for some, too restrictive for others, there is no consensus. A company may use French for some aspects and English for others. Can only one definition be used to identify a Francophone business in Edmundston, NB, and another in Edmonton, AB? More detailed data would be necessary, both for business groups and for support organizations and public policy managers.

Here are some courses of action suggested by the panelists:

- **Support funds specific to Francophone businesses:** There are support funds for business start-ups, but there are none specifically for Francophone entrepreneurs outside Quebec. This clientele presents distinct challenges. Several stakeholders in the Canadian Francophonie are calling for the creation of a support fund for the start-up of Francophone businesses. This question deserves further study.
- **An increased role for the BDC:** A new initiative from the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) is intended to serve clients with limited access to sources of financing. The organization plans to work with local organizations to create partnerships and collaborative funding through a community-focused business-to-business program. It must deploy this program in accordance with its mandate, which requires it to be complementary to what already exists in the sector. Collaborations with French-speaking organizations will be important to promote this new resource.
- **Business identification:** Encourage businesses to identify themselves as stakeholders in the French-speaking entrepreneurial ecosystem when they offer services in French, or when French is one of the working languages used.
- **Development of the Francophone business network:** Support the efforts of the Alliance de la francophonie économique canadienne (AFEC) for the development of a pan-Canadian Francophone business network.

- **Facilitation of takeover:** Multiply and promote resources that facilitate networking between entrepreneurs at the end of their career and potential buyers. For example, facilitating the acquisition of existing businesses by new immigrants. In FMCs, the cooperative model could be a solution: according to Impact ON, 47% of Canadian cooperatives are operated by French speakers.
- **Teaching entrepreneurship:** It has been mentioned a few times that the education system produces good employees, but not good entrepreneurs. This is an invitation to promote entrepreneurship in school curricula.

Jean-François Roberge
Quebec Minister
Responsible for Canadian
Relations and the
Canadian Francophonie



Expanding relationships with Quebec

This segment was presented by the Quebec Minister Responsible for Canadian Relations and the Canadian Francophonie, Jean-François Roberge. He highlighted the importance of French not only as a language of identity and culture, but also as a major economic asset that is still underused.

For the minister, Quebec plays a strategic role as a gateway to Canadian and international Francophonie. He also stressed the importance of partnerships with Canadian provinces and territories. Each of these partnerships has generated economic successes and fruitful collaborations.

Jean-François Roberge emphasized the need to celebrate the successes of French-speaking businesses to inspire others to follow the same path. Finally, he stressed the role of education and bilingualism as crucial renewable resources for the Canadian economy. He called for leadership to promote the learning of both official languages in secondary schools across the country.

From left to right:
Catherine Clark,
Dominic Mailloux,
Carole Freynet-Gagné,
Robert Manseau and
Florent Favrel



The panel on this topic was moderated by Catherine Clark and featured:

- **Dominic Mailloux**, President,
Fédération des gens d'affaires francophones de l'Ontario
- **Carole Freynet-Gagné**, Entrepreneur,
Entrepreneur, AHA Learning, Manitoba
- **Robert Manseau**, Director,
Commerce Management Group, Ontario
- **Florent Favrel**, directeur, Director, Trade Corridors,
Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec (FCCQ)

Panelists' discussion

As Minister Roberge pointed out, Quebec shares historical ties with the Francophone and Acadian communities, and it intends to play a leading role within the Canadian Francophonie to demonstrate that French constitutes a real vector of social and economic development. This commitment by Quebec to the development of the Francophone economic space presents opportunities that can produce mutual benefits for the communities and Quebec. The panelists attempted to explore these opportunities.

As part of its Politique en matière de francophonie canadienne, the Government of Quebec has allocated a total budget of \$24.5 million over the 2022–2025 period to bolster promotion of the French language and Francophone culture, preserve the strength of Francophone communities outside Quebec and highlight the contribution of Francophones to society and the economy²⁴.

Nine million dollars are dedicated to intergovernmental collaboration agreements, the amounts of which are invested equally between Quebec and its partner governments. These agreements are not limited to supporting cultural and community partnerships. The economy is also one of the themes targeted by this initiative.

²⁴ Available only in French / [Le gouvernement dévoile sa nouvelle Politique du Québec en matière de francophonie canadienne — Secrétariat du Québec aux relations canadiennes](#)

In 2021, the governments of Quebec and Ontario launched the Prix du commerce Québec-Ontario, awarded annually to a company from each province that has distinguished itself in interprovincial trade and business development in French. This award is inspired by the Quebec-New Brunswick Innovation and Marketing Award, launched in 2019 by these two governments.

In order to promote the economic Francophonie, Quebec has allocated funding to the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec (FCCQ) to ensure there is a Francophone component at major economic events taking place in Canada. The Mobilisation Franco²⁵, activity, carried out in partnership with the Federation of Francophone and Acadian Communities of Canada (FCFA), helps Quebec organizations network with those of other provinces and territories, many of which work in the economic sector.

However, entering the Quebec market remains a challenge for many entrepreneurs, some of whom may be uncomfortable with the application of the Civil Code in business relations. However, according to a report from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), the language barrier is the main obstacle (47%)²⁶ to business activities for Ontario SMEs that want to do business in Quebec.

The creation of a pan-Canadian network certainly has a role to play in developing business links between French-speaking companies in Canada and the Quebec economic ecosystem.

Quebec companies will also be able to benefit from interesting networks: entrepreneurs from the Canadian Francophonie represent a gateway opening beyond Quebec, into both Anglophone and Francophone environments.

Finally, Quebec has a solid national and international network representation entirely in French. However, Quebec has no role to play in supporting the international development of Canadian businesses. Nonetheless, there is certainly a source of potential mutual aid in this resource.

25 Available only in French / Page Web de Mobilisation franco – Centre de la francophonie des Amériques

26 Ontario and Quebec: Unlocking an economic corridor for SMEs—CFIB

The panelists suggested avenues to explore:

- **Integrate the Francophonie outside Quebec:** Invite Quebec government departments and agencies playing a major role in economic development to incorporate Canadian Francophonie into their strategies and activities (Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor, Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, Investissement Québec, etc.).
- **Expand the scope of development capital funds:** Invite Quebec institutions responsible for workers' funds (e.g. the Solidarity Fund of the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec [FTQ], the Fondation initiative of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux [CSN]) to include French-speaking companies outside Quebec in their investment portfolio.
- **Tax benefits:** Examine the possibility of creating a financial investment with tax benefits linked to the development of the Canadian Francophonie, based on a model similar to that of the Régime d'épargne-actions (RÉA) created in Quebec in 1979, or the Plan d'épargne en actions (PEA) established in France in 1992. This type of tool, developed to support the local economy, could make it possible for individuals to invest in the Francophonie.
- **Offer translation services:** Set up language courses adapted to entrepreneurs' needs, as well as translation and interpretation services, as suggested by the CFIB. These measures would promote interprovincial trade by reducing language barriers.
- **Encourage networking:** Increase networking opportunities between Francophone entrepreneurs to facilitate access to the Quebec and Canadian markets, in both directions.

From left to right:
Catherine Clark,
Karl Blackburn,
Sylvain Lavoie and
Souad Elmallem



French, a gateway to new markets

The panel was moderated by Catherine Clark and featured:

- **Karl Blackburn**, President and CEO, Conseil du patronat du Québec
- **Sylvain Lavoie**, President and CEO, Centre de la francophonie des Amériques
- **Souad Elmallem**, Executive Partner, 6temik

According to the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), the Francophonie represents 16% of global GDP and shows an annual growth rate of 7%. Globally, more than 20% of merchandise trade and 14% of mining and energy resources are in Francophone territories. French is positioning itself as the third business language and by 2050, the OIF estimates that the number of French speakers will increase from 320 million to more than 750 million, 85% of whom will reside in Africa.

In 2021, 25 employers' organizations from the Francophone world joined together to form the Alliance des patronats francophones²⁷. The organization aims to be a vector of growth and economic prosperity. Three years later, the network has brought together 37 employers' organizations representing a total of 1 million Francophone companies throughout the world. For companies in the global Francophonie, the business networks of the Canadian Francophonie constitute a gateway to the North American market. Conversely, business opportunities for Canadians can be multiplied at the international level thanks to the Canadian Francophonie.

The Canadian Francophonie can benefit not only from the international Francophone diaspora that has chosen to settle in the country, but also from international investors attracted by a qualified bilingual workforce.

27 Available only in French / [Site Internet de l'Alliance des Patronats Francophones](#)

Governments are in favour of facilitating business ties with the global Francophonie. Several have signed international memoranda of understanding to this effect, such as Ontario and Belgium, or New Brunswick and France. Organizations representing the business community also promote the establishment of formal partnerships to strengthen commercial ties. The agreement between the Conseil du patronat du Québec (CPQ) and the Confédération générale des entreprises du Maroc (CGEM) is an example.

The Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario (AFO) estimates that Ontario exports to Francophone countries would have been \$58 million lower and imports \$1.4 billion lower if the province had not traded with Francophone countries²⁸.

The panelists discussed the significant growth of the Francophonie in the world, with an emphasis on economic aspects and opportunities for collaboration.

The panelists expressed the wish that governments play a more unifying role in the economic Francophonie. They raised a few ideas:

- **Unifying role:** Consider strategic planning for the development of the economic Francophonie. Governments must aim for concrete and measurable results, and not just be facilitators. This planning would make it possible to define clear objectives with specific projects.
- **More Francophone directors:** Promote the presence of Francophones on the boards of directors of large companies to strengthen the development of economic ties with the French-speaking world.
- **Collaboration and partnerships:** Support initiatives aimed at bringing together public, private and institutional players in the global Francophonie. Relationships with Francophone African countries, as well as ties with Francophones and Francophiles in the Americas, appear to be promising for creating win-win partnerships.
- **Support for Francophone economic missions:** Define and promote promising sectors such as energy, digital industries, logistics chains and port infrastructure. Economic missions need support for planning and operationalization in order to maximize their impact. Support for the creation of a Francophone visa should also be promoted.

²⁸ Available only in French / [L'Ontario, le commerce et les avantages du bilinguisme anglais-français – The Conference Board of Canada](#)

- **Promotion of the international Francophonie:** Promote, in Canada, the international Francophonie and the possibilities it offers to respond to our production capacity issues. In particular, we must move past the perception that Africa is a vast pool of labour by seeing its potential for partnerships. Conversely, we must promote Canada to the Francophone world by going beyond the idea that it is just a welcoming land. It can also be a partner offering opportunities for commercial exchanges.
- **Canada-Africa Economic Cooperation Strategy (CA-ECS):** In 2023, Global Affairs Canada conducted a broad consultation to lead to the adoption of an economic cooperation strategy with Africa. This strategy aims to strengthen relationships of trade and economic cooperation with African countries and aims to support Canada's overall objective of increasing and diversifying trade, investment and innovation with African partners. Like the United States, Canada could add to this strategy the creation of a council of the Francophone African diaspora to specifically guide its commercial and economic strategy in Francophone Africa.



Thoughts from the Grand Rapporteur

The MCCF called upon Marc Duhamel, associate professor at the UQTR School of Management and researcher at the Institut de recherche sur les PME, to examine the economic Francophonie through the lens of his work in economic development. As a participant in the 2012 Pan-Canadian Forum, and with 15 years' experience in the federal public service, Prof. Duhamel is particularly well positioned to play the role of Grand Rapporteur.

Based on the remarks made during the Agora, Prof. Duhamel's mission was to document avenues for promoting the contribution the Francophonie has made to the Canadian economy. His thoughts on the evolution of the economic Francophonie are recorded in an attached report. A documented examination of this major development issue for the Francophone world presents levers that can be activated as well as five avenues of research that would allow us to better understand the impact of the Canadian Francophonie on trade.



Conclusion

In conclusion, MCCF Executive Director Sylvie Painchaud warmly thanked the participants. She also reminded the audience of the MCCF's motivations for holding the Agora and the parameters that govern an organization of intergovernmental collaboration.

Ministers bring a Francophone lens to their respective governments. Support for the Francophonie is a multi-sectoral issue that requires the mobilization of several departments, all managed by different linguistic regimes across the country.

It is important to increase avenues so that everyone can determine those which correspond not only to their legal framework, but also to the needs of their community and the priorities of their government.

In conclusion, Ms. Painchaud praised the commitment of the civil servants who work within the Intergovernmental Network on the Canadian Francophonie. This commitment made it possible to hold this Agora and ensured that economic development could remain a priority issue for the MCCF. The next step is to present the avenues identified during this event to the ministers.



Appendices

Report

Francophonie in the service of economic development: reflections on the issues and future avenues to better target government actions

— Marc Duhamel

Presentations

Demographics and economy of the Canadian Francophonie

— Josée Bégin

Bilingualism: A profitable skill!

— Pierre-Marcel Desjardins

Tourism employment transforms lives & communities

— Isabelle de Bruyn

French, a language that travels

— Angela Cassie

Investir dans l'imaginaire

— Anne-Marie Jean

Skills of the future and the advantages of bilingualism

— El Iza Mohamedou

Ontario's Francophone economic development strategy

— Roda Muse

The potential of the economic Francophonie

— Karl Blackburn

Francophonie of the Americas

— Sylvain Lavoie

Francophonie in the service of economic development: reflections on the issues and future avenues to better target government actions

Marc Duhamel*

Department of Finance and Economics
Institut de recherche sur les PME
Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières
www.uqtr.ca/marc.duhamel

Revised final report

* The opinions expressed are those of the author and the author alone. They do not necessarily correspond to those of the Ministers' Council on Canadian Francophonie or its National Coordination Office and they are the sole responsibility of the author. The author can be contacted by email at marc.duhamel@uqtr.ca for any questions or comments. I would like to thank André Brin, Souad Elmallem, Danielle Henkel, Paul Muamba, Sylvie Painchaud and Jean-Pierre Voyer for comments and suggestions that improved the text.

SUMMARY

This report has three objectives.

- The first is to define the main *issues* of economic development for Canadian Francophone communities based on the presentations, speeches, interventions and discussions held at the Economic Agora organized in August 2024 in Halifax by the Ministers' Council on Canadian Francophonie (MCCF) on the topic of "Leveraging the Francophonie for Economic Development: The Role of Governments."
 - Echoing the recurring and persistent issues of growth, prosperity and productivity of businesses in Canada that have been present for nearly four decades, the discussions during the Economic Agora focused on the causes, as well as the impacts and repercussions of labour policies, industrial policies and trade policies on the economic development of the Canadian Francophonie.
- The second objective is to identify the levers of economic development that promote the economic contribution of the Francophonie to the Canadian economy.
 - The persistent interest of governments in finding solutions to these problems for nearly 40 years has made it possible to develop a wide range of levers to support the contribution of the Canadian Francophonie to the Canadian economy. The discussions and interventions during the Economic Agora made it possible to identify certain opportunities for the Canadian Francophonie to support short-term reform efforts, particularly with regard to trade and labour mobility policies.
- Finally, the third objective is to identify some of the "low-hanging fruit" in economic research that would help target government actions.
 - In addition to a literature review and a comparative analysis of the different strategies and action plans targeting economic development across Canada, I propose five avenues of research that would allow us to better understand the impact of the linguistic and cultural proximity of the Canadian Francophonie on trade, labour mobility and the sustainability of the next generation of entrepreneurs, by harvesting administrative big data. This research could contribute to a better understanding of the economic development issues of the Canadian Francophonie and promote a more effective coordination of the different stakeholders on these economic issues.

1. Introduction

The Economic Agora organized by the Ministers' Council on Canadian Francophonie (MCCF) on the topic of "Leveraging the Francophonie for Economic Development: The Role of Governments," held on August 9-10, 2024, in Halifax, aimed at bringing together the perspectives of the main players in the Canadian Francophonie and identifying avenues to explore in order to support the contribution of the Francophonie to the economic development and prosperity of Canada.

This report, authored in my capacity as the Grand Rapporteur of the Economic Agora, has three objectives.¹

First, to define the main *issues* of economic development in Canadian Francophone communities based on the presentations, speeches, discussions and general conversation at the Economic Agora.²

In 2006, a vast national consultation conducted by the MCCF on the main issues and common challenges of the Canadian Francophonie highlighted the feeling of a precarious demographic future and the perception of linguistic erosion that required the accommodation of spaces dedicated to the overall development of French and identity building areas. Economic development came at the bottom of a list that included the pressing issues of education, early childhood development, justice, health, culture and communications, and immigration.³

Thanks to the diversity of perspectives expressed and the wealth of exploratory avenues suggested during the Economic Agora, the issues for economic development were relatively well defined: the development of the Canadian Francophonie's skills and human capital, and the potential of industrial and commercial policies.

The second objective is to identify the levers of development of the Francophone economic space with regard to the issues defined above. These issues have been of concern to governments in Canada for several decades. Considering that the majority of literature on

¹ This report is a complement to the observations, comments and reflections presented as Grand Rapporteur at the conclusion of the Economic Agora. Duhamel, Marc (2024). *Réflexions et pistes d'avenir pour mieux cibler les actions gouvernementales*. Conference given as part of the Economic Agora of the Ministers' Council on Canadian Francophonie, "Leveraging the Francophonie for Economic Development: The Role of Governments," Institut de recherche sur les PME, University of Quebec at Trois-Rivières, 24 pages. Halifax, Nova Scotia. August 11.

² By issue, I mean its common meaning in the field of public policy, namely, a gap in knowledge that prevents the implementation of solutions to a public policy problem. This notion of issue must be distinguished from a research issue whose solution or response is part of an established knowledge paradigm (e.g., Gosselin, 1994).

³ See Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie (2006). *Canadian Francophonie Issues, Challenges and Future Directions*. Synthesis of Cross-Canada Consultations Spring/Summer 2006. October 2006. https://cmfc-mccf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2006-10_Canadian-Francophonie-Issues-Challenges-and-Future-Directions.pdf [Document consulted August 5, 2024]

these issues is fragmentary or simply outdated because of the changes that have taken place over the years in Canada, I will address the question of the role of governments in economic development by considering the relatively recent evolution of these issues from the perspective of the impact of linguistic and cultural proximity.

The third objective is to identify certain “low-hanging fruit” in the research to target government actions aimed at the economic development of the Canadian Francophonie. Experience has shown the catalytic role research plays in government actions, and in particular evidence-based economic research based on reliable data that is representative of different local communities. This research not only contributes to a better understanding of the mechanisms of economic development in different communities, but in particular it promotes more effective coordination of different civil society organizations and government institutions on economic development issues.

The remainder of this report is organized as follows: first, I address the main economic development issues that were discussed during the Agora before then focusing on concrete economic development actions. Considering the recent importance placed on government actions aimed at the succession of entrepreneurs across Canada, I pay particular attention to this determining factor of economic development in the medium and long term. Then, in section 4, I propose some “low-hanging fruit” from the research that would, in my opinion, support government actions aimed at the economic development of the Canadian Francophonie. In the conclusion, I present some personal remarks on the role coordination and mobilization of the vital forces of the MCCF play in supporting research and informed decision-making for the economic development of the Canadian Francophonie and of all of Canada.

2. The issues of economic development in the Canadian Francophonie

Economic development issues are numerous and varied in Canada. Since 1985, analyses and diagnoses have tended toward conclusions similar to those of the *Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada* (the Macdonald Commission) in regard to the main determinants of economic development: trade, growth in business productivity and innovation, development of skills and a qualified workforce, development of natural resources, and environmental protection, which now includes the fight against climate change (e.g., Canada. Privy Council Office, 1985; Canada. Science Council of Canada, 1984).

Although each issue raises its own set of challenges and opportunities in each Canadian province, most observers of the Canadian economy agree on the centrality of human capital development, business innovation and foreign trade as the main determinants of productivity growth and prosperity in Canada (e.g., Baldwin et al., 2011; Baldwin et al., 2014; Council of Canadian Academies 2009, 2013, 2018; Harris, 2015; Industry Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2008a-d; Lane, 2017; McFetridge, 2008; Schwanen, 2017; Sulzenko, 2016; Trefler, 2008).

Notwithstanding the existence of a consensus in Canada on these issues, the fact remains that they are particularly complex, persistent and, above all, resistant to systematic approaches to the development of public policies. In fact, it would be more accurate to call them “wicked problems” in Canada, to borrow the terminology of Rittel and Webber (1973) (e.g., Head, 2022; Head, 2018; Head and Alford, 2015).

The discussions during the Agora largely echoed these issues. They were grouped under three main themes of public policy (see Table 1): labour policies, industrial policies and trade policies.⁴

Table 1. Main themes of the MCCF Economic Agora

Labour policies	Industrial policies	Trade policies
Bilingualism: A profitable skill		
	French, a language that travels	
	Culture and GDP	
Increasing the labour pool in critical sectors		
Promote and support French-speaking entrepreneurship		
		Focusing on relations with Quebec
		French, a gateway to new markets

It is clear that there has been an increase in discussions regarding the importance of these

⁴ Labour policies generally aim to [TRANSLATION] “[...] correct, in a preventive and curative manner, labour market problems and operating difficulties such as unemployment, underemployment, discrimination, absenteeism, job rotation, etc.” (Sexton et al., 1980). For Criscuolo et al. (2022b), industrial policies are limited to “government assistance to businesses to boost or reshape specific economic activities, especially to firms or types of firms based on their activity, technology, location, size or age.” However, from the discussions held at the Agora, it appears that the definition proposed by Juhász, Lane and Rodrik (2024) seems more appropriate, namely policies that “explicitly target the transformation of the structure of economic activity in pursuit of some public goal.” Finally, DeBlock and Marcoux (1997) state that trade policies are [TRANSLATION] “all the laws, regulations, decisions and policies that apply to imports and exports of goods and services.”

economic issues for the Canadian Francophonie since the national consultation exercise mandated by the MCCF in 2006, where the issue of economic development was generally, but not exclusively, addressed from a demographic, identity, social or institutional perspective (e.g., Arcand, 2013; Chiasson, 2013; Duhamel et al., 2012; The Conference Board of Canada, 2012).

However, we see two interesting things in this representation of the themes of the MCCF Economic Agora 2024. First, they align easily with the visions, action plans and other more general strategic economic development plans of the federal government and certain Canadian provinces.⁵

Second, they resonate with the anticipated impacts on productivity growth, employment and prosperity of Francophone communities of the Government of Ontario's Francophone Economic Development Strategy (2021).

2.1 Labour policies

With an aging population, workforce development issues have become more pressing and complex, particularly in rural and remote communities of the Canadian Francophonie. Although discussions at the Economic Agora touched on the topics of demographic aging, youth education and early childhood development, the focus of the conversation was clearly focused on developing the skills of the workforce. They highlighted the fact that contemporary labour issues in French-speaking communities involve several local, provincial and federal stakeholders, and that they are not limited to labour market participants (employers and employees).

In particular, one might think that immigration would be able to remedy the lack of qualified labour in Canadian Francophone communities at a low cost. The discussions showed that there is a great need for training and skills development. Workforce policies require complementary investments in health, housing and public infrastructure, among other things. In terms of the employability of the working population and the supply of highly qualified, bilingual (e.g., Desjardins and Campbell, 2015) and increasingly multilingual labour in key sectors such as education, health, tourism, green, sustainable and creative industries, there are numerous supply bottlenecks. The solutions discussed require effective coordination of all levels of government, from municipal to federal, and the intervention of numerous social economy organizations to promote the integration of domestic migrants and international immigrants into Canadian Francophone communities.

⁵ For example, in its 2017 Budget, the Government of Canada announced an [Innovation and Skills Plan](#) to make Canada a world-leading centre where innovation, lifelong learning and support in key growth industries strengthen the creation of well-paying jobs and foster the growth of middle class prosperity. The [Vision économique du Québec \(2021\)](#) [Economic vision for Quebec] targets five major projects that touch on the same themes.

Of course, the development of the Canadian Francophone workforce is part of other broader issues of human capital development. Historically, interventions surrounding access to education, post-secondary education and early childhood services in French demonstrate the importance given to the development of human capital with a long-term perspective for the Canadian Francophonie. While these issues must be considered in a long-term economic growth strategy, the discussions held at the Agora focused primarily on measures to improve the skills of the workforce in the short term—that is, all people who are employed or who operate a business.

Human capital development issues are complex, as they are not simply a matter of access to education and post-secondary education or vocational training services (e.g., OECD, 2024). Indeed, population aging and immigration raise new issues for adult education, immigrant vocational training, and learning *throughout adulthood and working life*, from young people to retirees, at least in postsecondary institutions traditionally dedicated to a young adult population (e.g., Adamuti-Trache et al., 2013; Aydede and Dar, 2017; Banerjee and Verma, 2012; Blaxter and Tight, 1994; Girard, 2010; Hori and Cusack, 2006; Hou, Lu, and Schimmele, 2021; Linda Morrice and Sprung, 2017; Liu and Guo, 2021; Sloane-Seale and Kops, 2008, 2010; Stromquist and da Costa, 2017; Warman, Sweetman and Goldmann, 2015).

Programs and resources tailored to these growing populations of learners are needed to foster the development of key skills and abilities related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). These key skills include literacy and numeracy, critical thinking, logical-mathematical skills and creativity in a workforce that is more diverse than ever. When considering these issues, it must be recognized that the development of skills and the workforce of Canadian Francophone communities raises much more complex challenges than simply setting immigration targets, including work-life balance, particularly for women who have increased responsibilities toward young people and seniors (e.g., Benavot et al., 2022; Cruikshank, 2008; Doyle, Skuterud and Worswick, 2023).

Finally, it should be noted that two workforce issues are at the forefront of industrial policies — the labour force and skills required in sectors critical to economic development, and entrepreneurship in general. This illustrates the growing complexity of the issues being addressed with regard to human capital in the knowledge economy. I will revisit the specific case of entrepreneurship later because it deserves to be examined more closely due to the problem of entrepreneurial succession that is emerging in several Canadian Francophone communities.

2.2 Industrial policies

Industrial policies are a particular category of economic policy. Concretely, they are a hodgepodge of different initiatives with broad objectives. They have been used in the past to support companies in the aluminum, automotive, shipbuilding and national defence sectors. They have also been used to justify other targeted forms of support, such as minimum thresholds for pharmaceutical research and development spending in return for high price ceilings in Canada. Today, objectives include the fight against climate change (e.g., the development of renewable energy resources, electrification of transportation), the development of the technological sector, social entrepreneurship, the resilience of supply chains or national security.

Industrial policies aim to transform the structure of an economy with a stated goal of increasing the productivity and competitiveness of firms (Brown and Mason, 2012; Criscuolo et al., 2022a; Greenstone, Hornbeck, and Moretti, 2010). But they will occasionally seek to slow down a business closure or protect jobs in unproductive or uncompetitive businesses (e.g., Criscuolo et al., 2019; Pack and Saggi, 2006). Hence the empirical skepticism that is associated with the anticipated effects of these policies in developed countries, with a few exceptions (e.g., Criscuolo et al., 2022; Jenkin, 1983; Kline and Moretti, 2014; Lane, 2020; Warwick, 2013).

That said, this skepticism will not prevent policymakers from attempting to encourage the transformation of national industries or local flagships by launching a new wave of industrial policies in times of economic disruption (e.g., Hausmann and Rodrik, 2006; Juhasz, 2018; Juhasz and Steinwender, 2024; Lee et al., 2012; Parilla, Haskins, and Muro, 2022; PBS News Hour, 2024; ProMarket, 2023). Moreover, new versions of industrial policies have emerged since the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Balawejder et al., 2021; Dean et al., 2021) and they share two main characteristics according to Juhasz, Lane and Rodrik (2024). First, they are selective: they target certain economic activities, and not others. And second, they are intentional and represent an explicit desire to change the economic structure resulting from the natural (and not necessarily competitive) market forces.

Considering the nature of some of the interventions that were proposed during the Economic Agora, it is important to recall the three necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for industrial policies to succeed in this transformation of the economic structure, while contributing positively to economic development.

First, the presence of positive (e.g., agglomeration economies) or negative (e.g.,

institutional barriers to investment in protected sectors) externalities implies that the market will not provide sufficient incentives for this economic transformation. Incentives are therefore needed to facilitate and encourage the reorientation of business activities. Second, coordination problems can prevent economic development when an activity is not profitable individually, while it would be if a sufficient number of partners coordinated (e.g., the sustainable transformation of value chains toward a green economy where the different parties in a chain must adopt the same green technology). And third, access to critical inputs to an activity that are purely public goods or services (i.e., possessing very specific characteristics of *non-rivalry* in consumption and *non-exclusion* in use).⁶

Since these three conditions are rarely met, it is difficult to observe widespread economic development from particular initiatives (apart from the individuals and organizations that benefit directly from the support of these industrial policies, of course). Entrepreneurship support initiatives also suffer from this problem, particularly in cases where the potential for innovation and trickle-down of advanced technologies is low (e.g., Brown, Mawson and Mason, 2017; Fairlie, 2021; Fairlie, Karlan and Zinman, 2015; Shane, 2009).

During the Economic Agora, some speakers recalled the fundamental and historical importance of certain sectors for the economic development of the Canadian economy and Canadian Francophone communities (e.g., tourism, culture, creative industries, cybersecurity and the various international platforms for intermediation and exchange of digital goods and services, which are becoming increasingly important). Although some of these sectors may be subject to market failures, it is not certain that new industrial policies would promote a profound transformation of the economic structure of a community and its economic development.

In the tourism sector, for example, the impacts of these policies may be relatively small, even if the multiplier effect is positive. Moreover, the benefits may be realized at the expense of other peripheral regions (e.g., Castillo et al., 2017; Faber and Gaubert, 2019). Thus, we must focus on the impacts of these policies in creative industries with greater potential in terms of research, creation and innovation outcomes (e.g., Florida, 2019; Wilson and Keil, 2008). It is therefore necessary for policies to take into account more fundamental factors than the direct, indirect and induced multiplier effects on employment in order to bring about a transformation of the economic structure. Moreover, it is necessary

⁶ Although examples such as national defence and street lighting are frequently used as examples of public goods, very few public goods or services meet both of these conditions. The development of new technologies and the relaxation of institutional restrictions (e.g., liberalization, privatization) have limited this type of justification in recent decades (e.g., the Internet is accessible only after paying an access fee). These different types of goods and services are referred to as private goods and services (rivalry and exclusion), common goods and services (rivalry and non-exclusion) or club goods and services (non-rivalry and exclusion).

to consider all the complementary programs and policies that work on both the demand and supply sides (e.g., Criscuolo et al., 2022a, b).

In the same vein, the discussion on entrepreneurship highlighted the importance of exploring the most appropriate avenues to support the entrepreneurship of women, young people and newcomers. Interventions aimed at promoting more inclusive and diversified access to public markets and public procurement contracts from various levels of government across Canada for Francophone entrepreneurs and very small businesses highlight the economic concerns of the Canadian Francophonie.

But there are questions that can be asked about the medium- and long-term impacts and repercussions of such initiatives intended to encourage entrepreneurship among targeted groups such as women, young people and newcomers (Fairlie, 2007). Policies that promote work-life balance and attitudes that value entrepreneurship and the inclusion of these targeted groups of entrepreneurs may be factors that play more of a determining role in motivation to start a business than support and training (e.g., Dabić et al., 2020; Duhamel and St-Jean, 2021; Patrick, Stephens and Weinstein, 2016; St-Jean and Duhamel, 2020).

Furthermore, it is far more important to explore the avenues most likely to support business growth and sustainability than short-term start-up support (Shane, 2009). I will revisit this in section 2.4.

2.3 Trade policies

Trade policies that promote interprovincial and international trade with the French-speaking world, and in particular for cultural industries, made only a brief appearance among the issues, challenges and future avenues of the MCCF in 2006 (Labrègue, 2006 at p. 7). This distant interest in trade in 2006 is a stark contrast to its prominence at the Economic Agora of 2024.

Stakeholders' interest in trade policies has real potential for transforming the Canadian Francophone economy. The sharing of a common language offers a catalogue of possible actions, which mobilizes the most recognized advantages of cultural proximity for economic development (e.g., Egger and Toubal, 2018). The expected effects of cultural proximity on trade, as well as the mobility of skilled workers, temporary foreign workers and foreign investors between Canadian Francophone communities, are significant and trade policies offer concrete opportunities to promote the Canadian Francophonie's contribution to Canada's prosperity (e.g., Egger, Ehrlich and Nelson, 2012; Head and Mayer, 2013; Lazear, 1999; Melitz, 2008; Egger and Lassmann, 2018).

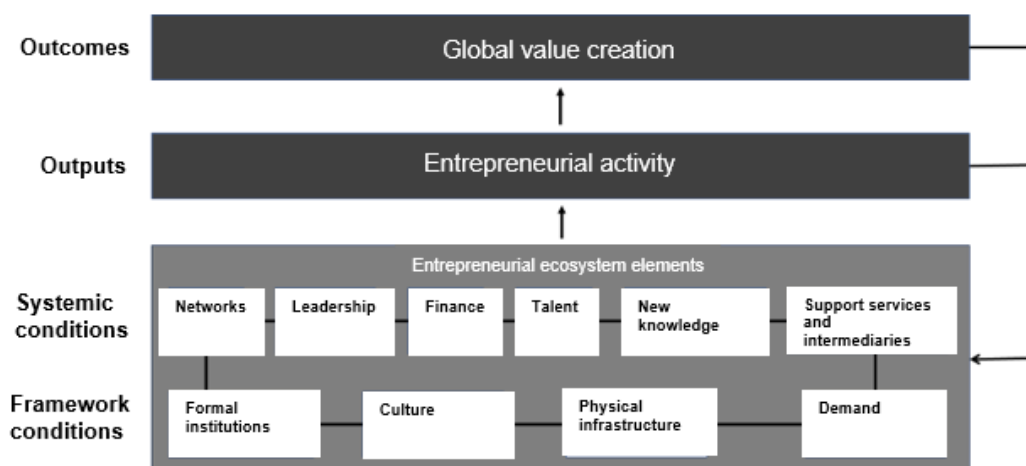
In the case of French, Carrere and Massood (2015) show that on average a French-speaking country benefits from a 22% increase in trade with another country in the Francophone economic space, when compared to the trade it would have with the same country if it were not French-speaking. Moreover, the results of Carrere and Massood (2018) show that sharing a language promotes not only more intense but also more resilient trade in times of crisis, by around 11%, compared to the already advantageous normal situation. With the growing threats of trade wars involving Canada and its major trading partners, sharing a common language not only contributes to the development of the Canadian economy, but also to greater resilience to the adverse effects of these trade wars.

Since the replacement of the Agreement on Internal Trade, deemed outdated and ineffective, by the [Canadian Free Trade Agreement \(CFTA\)](#) on July 1, 2017, the elimination of internal barriers to trade has opened new doors for Canadian Francophone communities to contribute to trade between provinces (Menucha, 2020). The [Regulatory Reconciliation and Cooperation Table \(RCT\)](#) online portal, launched in 2023, allows Canadian Francophone communities to report regulatory barriers to trade, investment and labour mobility, and indicate potential areas of regulatory cooperation that would promote the resilience of internal trade.

2.4 Policies to support entrepreneurship: a special case

As stated previously, entrepreneurship support policies may not achieve their full economic development potential, especially when they are not well aligned with the ten elements of the upstream entrepreneurial ecosystem (e.g., Stam, 2015) or when they only target certain activities without considering downstream results, namely entrepreneurial activity and its impacts (see Figure 1).

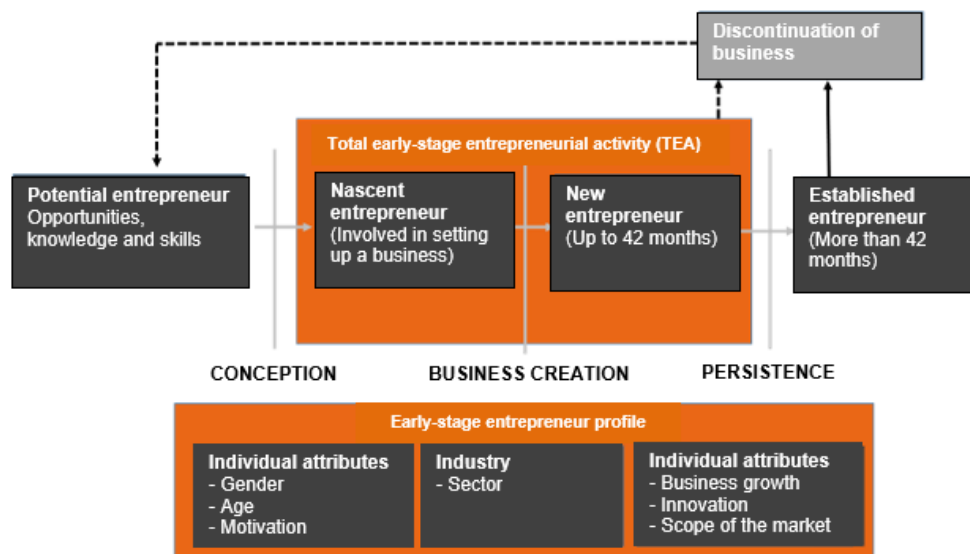
Figure 1. The ten elements of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, its results and impacts according to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor



Translation from original (French): St-Jean, É., Razafindrazaka, T., Koropogui, S. T. and Duhamel, M. (2024). *Portrait Comparatif de l'Indice de l'Écosystème Entrepreneurial de Montréal*. Institut de recherche sur les PME, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, Trois-Rivières, QC.

As Figure 2 shows, there are several phases to entrepreneurial activity according to the *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor*, the largest international study of entrepreneurial dynamism. Contrary to popular belief, the majority of the economic benefits an economy derives from entrepreneurship do not result from the “creative destruction” of entrepreneurship (Schumpeter, 1934) during the initial and terminal phases of entrepreneurship (potential, nascent, and new entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial exit), but rather from the enduring phase of the established entrepreneur.

Figure 2. The Phases of Entrepreneurship According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor



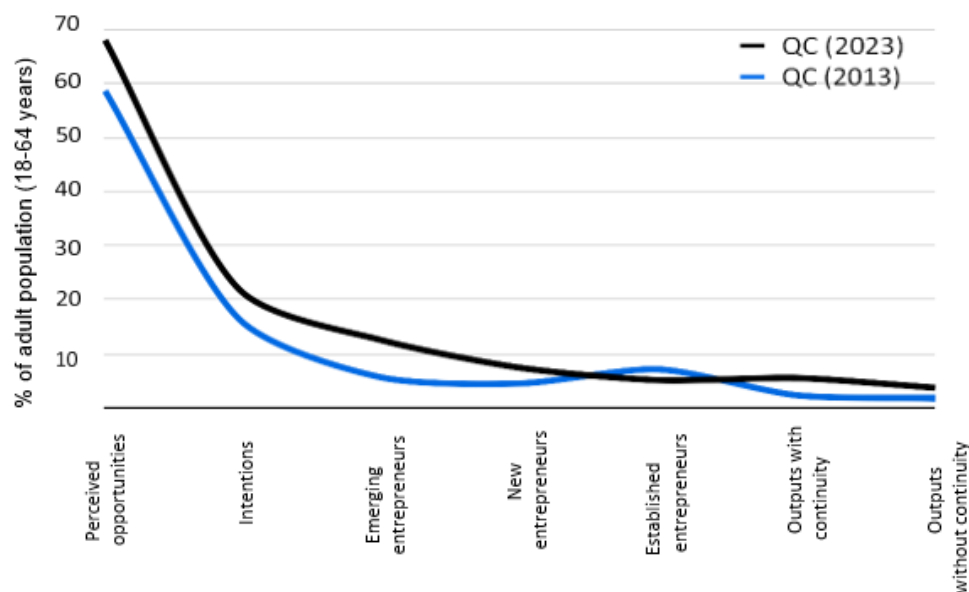
Translation from original (French): St-Jean, É. and M. Duhamel (2023), "Situation de l'activité entrepreneuriale québécoise : rapport 2022 du Global Entrepreneurship Monitor," Institut de recherche sur les PME, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (Canada). Note: The label in the lower right box of the figure should be "Impacts."

Indeed, Bérubé, Dostie and Vilhuber (2013) estimate that net entries (business creations and closures) did not contribute more than 15% to productivity gains in the manufacturing sector in Canada during the period 1989-2007. Baldwin and Lafrance (2014) show that this contribution varied substantially between different industries in the manufacturing and service sectors in Canada over the short period from 2000 to 2007. With the exception of the finance and insurance and trucking industries, which experienced very high net entry rates during this period, net entry contributed to less than half the productivity growth. In the retail sector, the contribution of net entries was negative due to the expansion of big box chains in Canada. In the business services, transportation and warehousing, and wholesale trade sectors, net inflows accounted for less than 41% of business productivity growth.

In other words, empirical studies in Canada show that most of the growth in firm productivity results from established entrepreneurship. The problem is that many of the initiatives that target economic development through entrepreneurship target the initial phases of entrepreneurship (e.g., business start-ups), which contribute relatively little to productivity growth. Moreover, the downstream effects of these initiatives on established entrepreneurship are mixed.

Figure 3 illustrates a case study based on Global Entrepreneurship Monitor data for Quebec, where each solid curve represents the rate of participation in entrepreneurship of the adult population at each subsequent phase of entrepreneurial activity. Since the black curve of the situation in 2023 is higher than the blue curve of 2013 in the initial and terminal phases, the figure shows that the policies implemented to promote business start-ups since 2013 have borne fruit. However, it is observed that greater entrepreneurial activity in the initial phases since 2013 does not necessarily lead to a subsequent increase in established entrepreneurship in 2023. In fact, a higher rate in the initial phases of entrepreneurship is associated with a higher rate of entrepreneurial outputs with and without business continuity, showing that many new ventures have not survived the start-up intentions of their founders.

Figure 3. Evolution of entrepreneurial activity in Quebec, 2013 and 2023



Source: Adult Population Survey, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2013-2023

Thus, to more effectively support the economic development, entrepreneurship policies must target the most productive phases of entrepreneurial activity and focus on the factors that lead to established entrepreneurship, and therefore, to the sustainability of businesses. In particular, in addition to growth capital investments, one of the factors that promote the sustainability of companies is business transfer, that is, the phase of entrepreneurial outputs with continuity of the company's activities, long neglected by industrial policies.

Table 2. Average financial and economic impacts of a change in primary ownership of an SME in Quebec, 2021

	With change of primary owner	Without change of primary owner	New primary owner
	Average per company	Average per company	Average per company
Number of employees	15.8	9.9	4.6
Revenue	\$4,824,000	\$2,789,000	\$525,000
Assets	\$3,841,000	\$2,429,000	\$453,000
Profit before taxes	\$470,000	\$287,000	\$79,000
Net revenue after taxes and extraordinary items	\$404,000	\$250,000	\$66,000
Revenue per employee	\$305,316	\$281,717	\$114,130

Source: *Observatoire du repreneuriat et du transfert d'entreprise [Observatory of business takeovers and transfers] (2024).*

Table 2 shows that the average financial and economic impacts of a transfer of business ownership are higher than those of new businesses (new primary owner) and established businesses that do not change primary owner (major shareholder). In particular, the productivity (average revenue per employee) and employment (average number of employees) of SMEs involved in a business transfer are significantly higher on average than those of a new business: +168% and +345%, respectively.

These results show that the economic development opportunities associated with business transfers in terms of productivity and employment are greater than those associated with business start-ups. It is therefore important that entrepreneurship policies also address the factors that contribute to business transfers and do not neglect this productive phase of entrepreneurial activity.

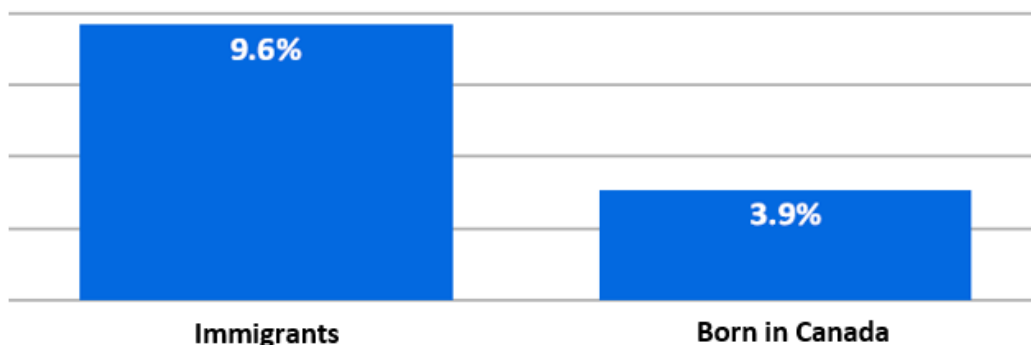
What could this mean in concrete terms for the economic development of the Canadian Francophonie? Let's take a recent example.

With an aging population and fragmented family structures across Canada, passing on the family business to a family member has become more difficult for many business owners. In 2020, transferring a business to a family member represented less than a third of the intentions regarding business transfers in Canada according to Statistics Canada's *Survey on Financing and Growth of Small and Medium Enterprises*. Without a successor or buyers, the only two options available to owners of family-owned SMEs across Canada are to

liquidate the tangible assets of the business or to merge the business's activities with those of another business. Both of these options reduce the economic development potential of entrepreneurship, since they lead, respectively, either to a destruction of the intangible capital of the enterprise or to a loss of allocative efficiency.

How can we promote the sustainability of these SMEs? Since young immigrants represent a large proportion of young entrepreneurs in Canada, policies that encourage them to become the new primary owners of these established businesses contribute to the sustainability of businesses, and therefore to economic development. Indeed, the real potential of these policies is not insignificant. In Quebec, an average annual growth in the number of immigrant buyers of 9.6% was seen during the 2015–2021 period, 5.7 percentage points more than for buyers born in Canada (see Figure 4). This represents more than 1,535 immigrant buyers in 2021, an increase of 73.4% compared to 2015. According to Table 2, the impact of these immigrant buyers is quantitatively greater than that of new immigrant entrepreneurs.

Figure 4. Average annual growth of changes in primary owner-manager, by immigrant status of the buyer Quebec, 2015–2021



However, until very recently, the Entrepreneur Program of the Quebec Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration only considered innovative business projects or business start-ups for granting a Certificat de sélection du Québec to immigrants. Since business takeovers represent a better potential for economic development than starting a business, a “business takeover” stream was added to this program on January 1, 2024.

Considering the growth in the number of immigrant entrepreneurs, the case of Quebec clearly illustrates how policies targeting entrepreneurship can be adapted to the specific circumstances of the Canadian Francophonie, and how the modulation of existing policies

can offer a potential for economic development that is still untapped. Considering the relative importance of business transfers across Canada (see Appendix A), the establishment of a “takeover” component across Canada should promote the sustainability of businesses in the Canadian Francophonie.

3. Identifying government levers in the economic development of the Canadian Francophonie

Economic development arises from the aggregate gains of free and mutually beneficial economic trades.

As Jean Tirole, Nobel Prize winner in economics in 2014, recalls in *Économie du bien commun* published in 2016: “(...) *the market needs the State: not only to protect the freedom of undertaking and securing contracts through the legal system, but also to correct its failures.*”

In other words, the economic development of the Canadian Francophonie does not rely exclusively on markets or on the State’s intervention, but rather on their *complementarities*. The governments intervene when the potential for gains from trade is hampered by market failures. This perspective is not limited to the strictly economic objectives of governments. It also fits with the thinking of other economists, who are interested in the sources of social progress in the broad sense (e.g., Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012; Fleurbaey, 2019; Stiglitz, 2024).

The economic contexts are very different between the various communities of the Canadian Francophonie. This complementarity is therefore exercised in very different ways from one community to another across Canada, due to the variability of opportunities offered by: the size and proximity of markets (e.g., cultural and tourism industries); the quantity and quality of the workforce (e.g., bilingualism, training, skills, employability, immigration); the importance of creative and innovative industries (e.g., culture, post-secondary education); as well as the presence of historically sensitive sectors and the strength of Francophone entrepreneurship and takeovers.

In a market economy, this diversity of economic contexts promotes the realization of gains from trade across Canada and around the world. In addition to the often forgotten levers that ensure healthy market competition (e.g., market framework laws, reduction of regulatory and bureaucratic burden), the economic development levers are mainly trade policies that promote interprovincial and international trade, labour mobility and migration.

Considering the competitive advantages associated with French and bilingualism, support for trade and labour mobility policies between provinces can contribute to the development

of Canadian Francophone communities and to Canada's prosperity.

Although one may be skeptical about the effectiveness of industrial policies generally associated with the use of the French language and bilingualism in Canada, there is reason to be better informed about the role of these policies considering the unsuspected and poorly understood effects of language and culture on economic activity (e.g., Bourcheix-Laporte, 2019; Galloway and Dunlop, 2007).

A growing body of empirical research focuses on the poorly understood effects of language and cultural structure on the cognition, judgment and decision-making of economic actors (e.g., Casasanto and Boroditsky, 2008; Evans and Levinson, 2009; Slobin, 2003). A body of empirical research reveals unexpected economic impacts of linguistic relativity, diversity and cultural proximity on behaviours, economic activity and institutions, including health, investment, entrepreneurship and the diffusion of cultural products on global digital platforms (e.g., Alesina and Giulano, 2015; Alesina, Harnoss and Rapoport, 2016; Chen, 2013; Duhamel, Zeghaida and St-Jean, 2023; Egger and Toubal, 2018; Guiso, Sapienza and Zingales, 2006; Mavisakalyan and Weber, 2018; Melitz, 2018; Orefice and Santoni, 2018; Otmazgin, 2011; Park, Kim and Lee, 2023; Flew, 2011).

Ultimately, the research should provide a better understanding of these linguistic and cultural phenomena in order to determine whether the level of economic activity in French-speaking Canada is lower than what would be best for the Canadian economy. Notwithstanding these reservations, the intuition that these factors are important has justified a significant number of industrial policies in the creative industries, broadcasting and telecommunications sectors, where innovation and the diffusion of advanced technologies justify government intervention, such as protection against foreign competition, financial and tax incentives for creative industries production, set-aside programs and other government procurement practices and various programs that aim to encourage the supply of linguistic and cultural products and services (e.g., Bahkshi et al., 2015; Flew and Cunningham, 2010; [The Creative Canada: Policy Framework](#)).

On the contrary, market failures must be large enough that the anticipated gains from the industrial policies used can neutralize and overcome information asymmetries regarding the extent of market demand and the technologies that support market supply. The economic costs of capture of the common good by special interest groups and the failures in the integrity of government procurement are well-known. Given that market failures evolve with the changes in demand (e.g., aging of the population, immigration) and market supply (e.g., new technologies, new intermediation platforms and digital services), yesterday's industrial policies are no longer necessarily adapted to today's market failures. Despite all the goodwill of the recurring exercises of the strategic reviews of these policies,

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the delays in evaluating and correcting industrial policies impose additional economic costs, slowing down the economic development in the medium and long terms.

To summarize, governments therefore have a wide range of levers to support the economic development of the Canadian Francophonie which, in turn, will boost the Canadian economy. In light of the discussions held during the Economic Agora, numerous opportunities exist and justify exploring how the Canadian Francophonie can support efforts to reform these policies, particularly trade and labour mobility policies.

The contribution of the Canadian Francophonie to these reform efforts cannot be overlooked. Whether it is reducing barriers to interprovincial trade or facilitating the recognition of post-secondary training, skills or occupational certificate, increasing the mobility of skilled workers, immigrants and temporary workers should promote the economic development of Canadian Francophone communities and the growth of prosperity in Canada.

Regarding industrial policies in key sectors, such as culture and creative industries, including those aimed at entrepreneurial growth and renewal, they must ensure that they can neutralize and overcome the economic costs of the failures of the State's intervention in the short, medium and long terms and clearly target the growth in the productivity of businesses in the Canadian Francophonie.

In times of economic turbulence where the diffusion of general application technologies such as generative artificial intelligence will weigh in the balance of the comparative advantages of the economic Francophonie and bilingualism, it will be important that public levers do not become barriers to the economic development of the Canadian Francophonie.

4. Personal reflections on research avenues

The economic transformation of the Canadian Francophonie was noted by several speakers during the Economic Agora. The comments also reported an evolution or progression from a Canadian Francophonie based on identity and culture to an economic Francophonie that contributes to both the cultural and social development of the Canadian Francophone communities, as well as to economic development and Canadian prosperity.

How can the MCCF support and promote this transformation, progression or evolution of the Canadian Francophonie? The experience shows the catalytic role that research plays in government actions and in particular, quantitative research based on representative data.

The evidence-based research not only contributes to a better shared understanding of economic development issues, but it also promotes more effective coordination of the actions of different stakeholders on economic issues. By facilitating more enriching conversations based on shared knowledge of complex issues, research makes it possible to establish diagnoses that mobilize the interest of stakeholders and contribute to the development of individual, collective and governmental strategies and action plans.

Considering the nature and vast scope of the issues discussed above, there are numerous opportunities for economic research regarding the levers of government action most likely to support the economic development of the Canadian Francophonie. Each problem can lead to a range of substantial research, each more interesting than the last, which would justify at least one government action. In a context so rich in issues and levers of economic action, it is therefore important to target certain “low-hanging fruit” of the research. This low-hanging fruit will target and support the coordination of efforts of stakeholders in the Canadian Francophonie.

The challenge is therefore to determine which avenues of research will be most capable of illustrating, demonstrating, quantifying and channelling the economic and competitive advantages of the Canadian Francophonie and bilingualism in Canada in order to align them with those that are already in place.

First of all, it seems particularly relevant to me to carry out a comparative analysis of the different action plans and economic strategies based on an inventory of the different economic development programs of the federal government and the provinces and territories in Canada. Technological changes and geopolitical realignments will have concrete effects on the opportunities and challenges of economic development in Canada, where each province and territory will have to react strategically and implement the winning conditions for a structural transformation of the Canadian economy (e.g., Agrawal et al., 2018; Bennett, 2023; Kissinger et al., 2021). A better understanding of all the levers of action across Canada will reveal the levers common to the entire Canadian Francophonie and will promote the most effective initiatives, including artificial intelligence (e.g., Akhmetova and Harris, 2021; Charles et al., 2022). Although the OECD regularly conducts such analyses at the international level, comparative analyses of programs, action plans and intervention strategies in the field of economic development are rare in Canada, to my knowledge.

Secondly, it seems particularly important to me to update the review of literature on labour, industrial and internal and international trade policies in Canada, which would benefit from being subject to the economic issues of the Canadian Francophonie. The disruptive effects of the development and diffusion of digital technologies, climate change and migration have

profoundly changed the context for recent reforms in these economic areas of intervention. Recent literature reviews on these issues in Canada are outdated, both by recent events and by the interest in these issues in other OECD countries.

Third, since few participants raised concrete avenues for economic research during the Agora, I propose below a list of research that is the fruit of personal reflection inspired by the analyses and research results mentioned above.

4.1 Harvesting administrative data from the Canadian Francophonie and developing big data infrastructures on the Canadian Francophone economy.

The need for reliable data on the Canadian Francophone economy is omnipresent and multiple. Surveys of the population and businesses have significantly contributed to improving knowledge of the scope and the diversity of issues facing the Canadian Francophonie. Although this approach has made it possible to establish several relevant and useful findings over the years, it proves to be limited and exorbitant when it comes to more complex and localized issues, such as workforce mobility, entrepreneurial growth and succession, because of the excessive cost of obtaining sufficiently large representative samples for Canadian Francophone communities. It is therefore important to invest in projects that aim to harvest administrative data from the Canadian Francophonie and to establish research data infrastructure that will serve as a foundation for numerous studies on the Canadian Francophone economy. The development of digital technologies has facilitated the development and access to various big data infrastructures since the COVID-19 pandemic. The development of and access to such infrastructures that mobilize administrative data on the Canadian Francophonie should be a priority.

4.2 Study the migration profiles of the Canadian Francophonie, the economic impacts of barriers to the mobility of skilled labour and the positive impacts of key skills, such as bilingualism of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) graduates for the cultural and creative, innovative and tourism industries.

Since these key skills contribute to the growth of business productivity, labour policies must promote the development and employability of a highly qualified bilingual workforce and reduce barriers to the mobility of this workforce in Canadian Francophone communities.

4.3 Studying the impacts of cultural proximity on commercial exchanges between Francophone communities in Canada.

Research shows that countries that share a language trade more with each other, whether in trade flows, foreign direct investment or migration. In particular, Carrere and Massood (2015) show that sharing the French language increases trade in goods between around

thirty Francophone countries by 22% and adds an average of 6% to the wealth per capita of these countries over the period 1995-2013. Is this the case for trade between Francophone communities in Canada? It would be important to quantify the contribution of cultural proximity to trade between the Canadian Francophone communities in terms of trade flows, investments and migrations over the longest possible time horizon, in order to evaluate the contribution of French and bilingualism to the creation of wealth and employment in the Canadian provinces.

4.4 Study the contribution of entrepreneurship and in particular entrepreneurial succession and business transfers, to the diversity, sustainability and productivity of businesses in the Canadian Francophonie.

With the aging of business owners, managers and directors, the sustainability of thousands of businesses is threatened by a lack of entrepreneurial succession across the Canadian Francophonie. The lack of entrepreneurial succession in Canadian Francophone communities can lead to the loss of ownership and control of local flagships, the liquidation of tangible and intangible assets or the relocation of business activities. It is therefore necessary for the entrepreneurship support to focus on better understanding the role of entrepreneurial succession in all its forms (e.g., internal, external, collective, cooperative and mixed), and in particular the role of diversity and cultural proximity, in the pipeline of entrepreneurial succession, in order to support economic growth and promote the sustainability of businesses over the next fifteen years.

4.5 Studying the role and effectiveness of industrial policies on the growth of the productivity of businesses in the Canadian Francophone economy.

While industrial policies are making a comeback in areas, such as green energy and supply chains for critical sectors, these policies remain controversial because of skepticism about their effectiveness in promoting firm productivity. This skepticism significantly hinders the implementation of targeted policies and programs that aim to increase the performance of businesses in the Canadian Francophone economy, such as public procurement programs reserved for PME's in the Canadian Francophone economy and social procurement programs. Descriptive research on the use of industrial policies by Canadian Francophone businesses (compared to other businesses) and analytical research on the impact of these programs on the productivity and innovation of Canadian Francophone businesses would be able to determine whether this skepticism is justified.

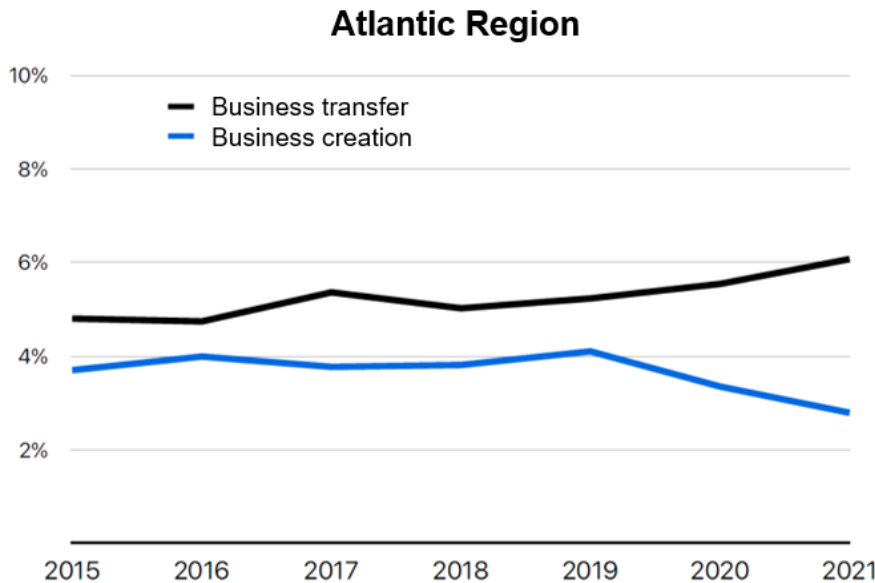
5. Conclusions

The transformation of an identity and social Francophonie into an economic Francophonie

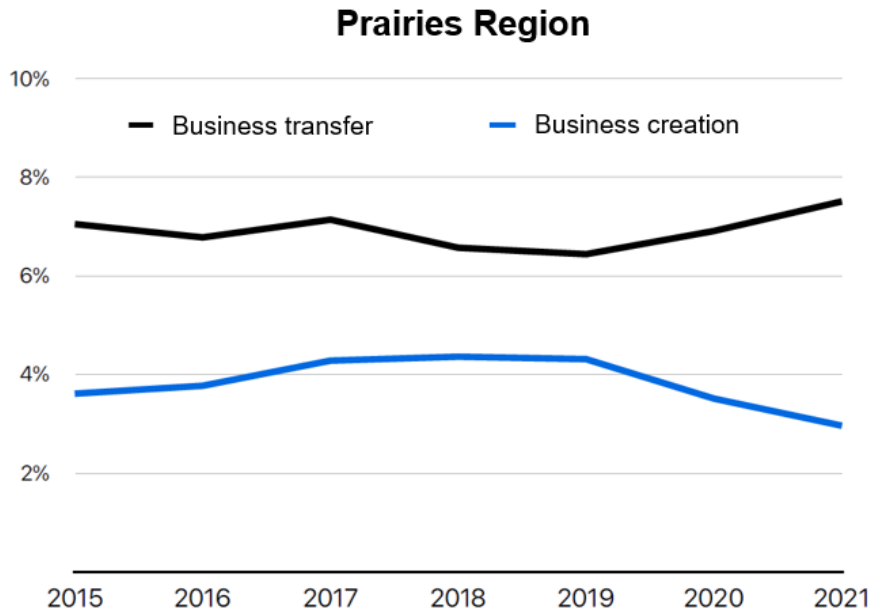
will have a significant influence on the need for reliable data and evidence-based research on the issues of the Francophonie. The analysis of economic issues requires new analysis and research infrastructures adapted to the nature and complexity of the issues of the labour market, trade and investment, innovation and growth in business productivity.

As a privileged observer of the institutions of the Canadian Francophonie on these economic development issues, the MCCF plays a leading role in the ability of stakeholders of the Canadian Francophone economy to make informed decisions that promote the economic development of the Canadian Francophonie and the prosperity of all Canadians. Supporting informed decision-making through the development of reliable data infrastructures and past evidence-based research also requires the development and updating of business intelligence products and short-, medium- and long-term research to address the issues of the economic development in the Canadian Francophonie. If there is a market failure that justifies government action, it is precisely in this area.

Appendix A: Business Transfer and Business Development in Canada

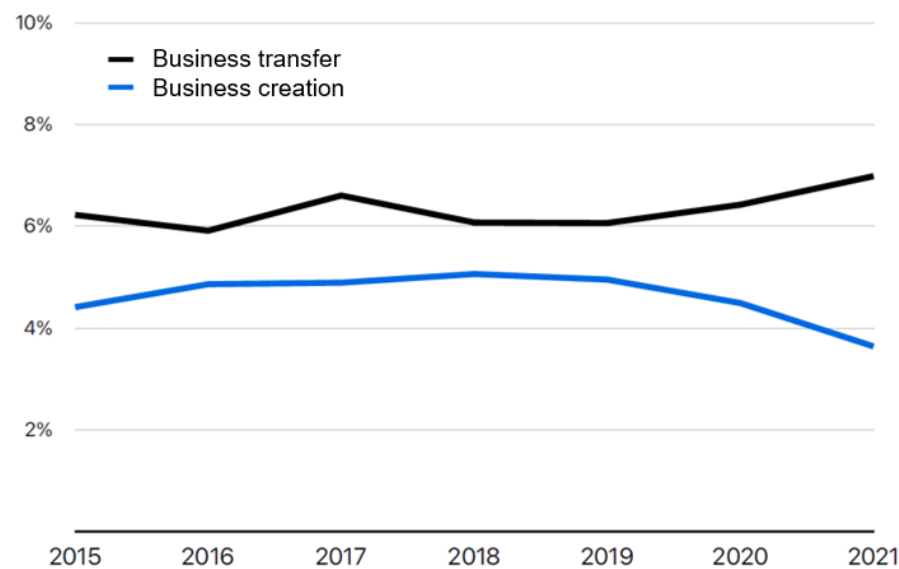


Source: Observatoire du reprenariat et du transfert d'entreprise [Observatory of business takeovers and transfers] (2024).



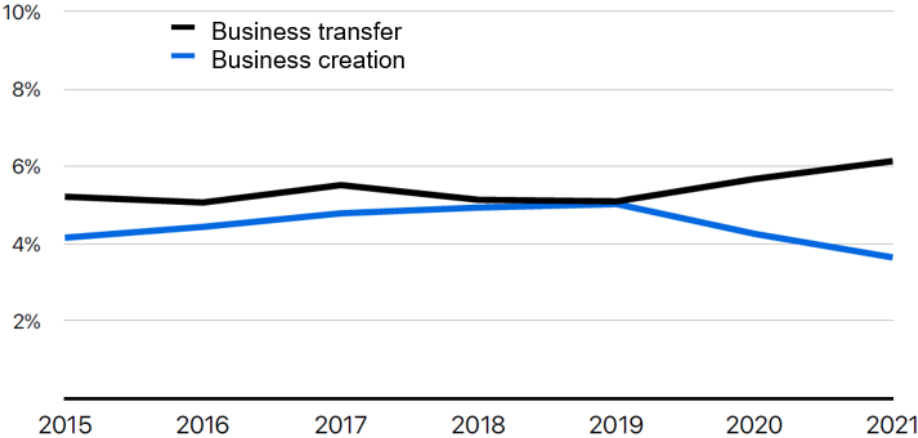
Source: Observatoire du reprenariat et du transfert d'entreprise [Observatory of business takeovers and transfers] (2024).

BC and Territories Region

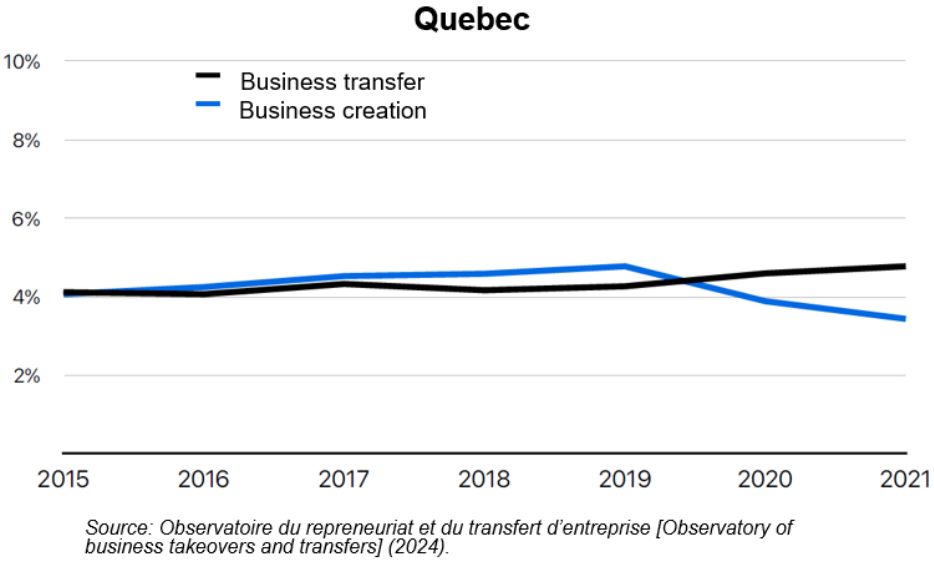


Source: Observatoire du reprenariat et du transfert d'entreprise [Observatory of business takeovers and transfers] (2024).

Ontario



Source: Observatoire du reprenariat et du transfert d'entreprise [Observatory of business takeovers and transfers] (2024).



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Demographics and economy of the Canadian Francophonie

Presentation to CMFC
Statistics Canada
August 9, 2024



Delivering insight through data for a better Canada



Statistics
Canada

Statistique
Canada

Canada

Overview



A demographic portrait of Canada's French-speaking population



French-speaking immigration and migration across Canada



The French-speaking workforce and its future



French-speaking owners and businesses



Statistics
Canada

Statistique
Canada

Canada

2



Highlights on Canada's Francophonie in 2021

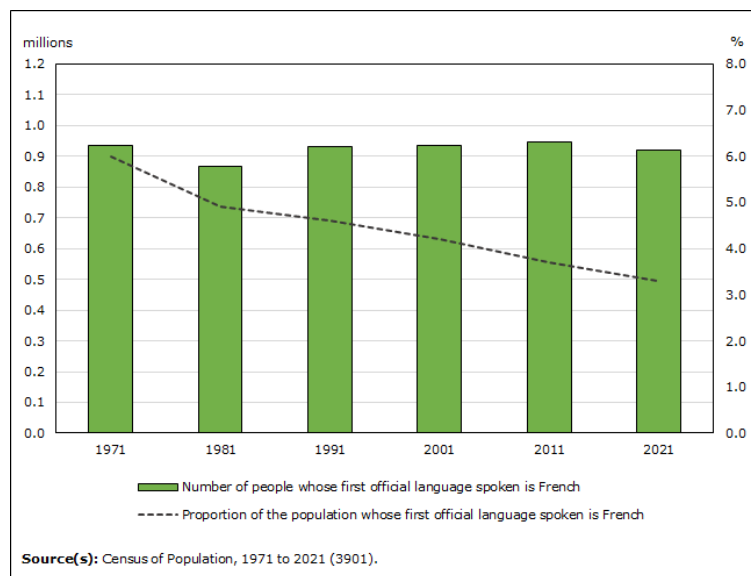
- Speaks enough French to hold a conversation ► 10.7 million
- French as mother tongue (single response) ► 7.2 million
 - First language learned and still understood
- French predominantly spoken at home ► 6.9 million
- French predominantly used at work ► 4 million
- French as first official language spoken (FOLS) ► 7.8 million

2021 population
of Canada
36.6 million



Outside Quebec, the proportion of people with French as their first official language is declining

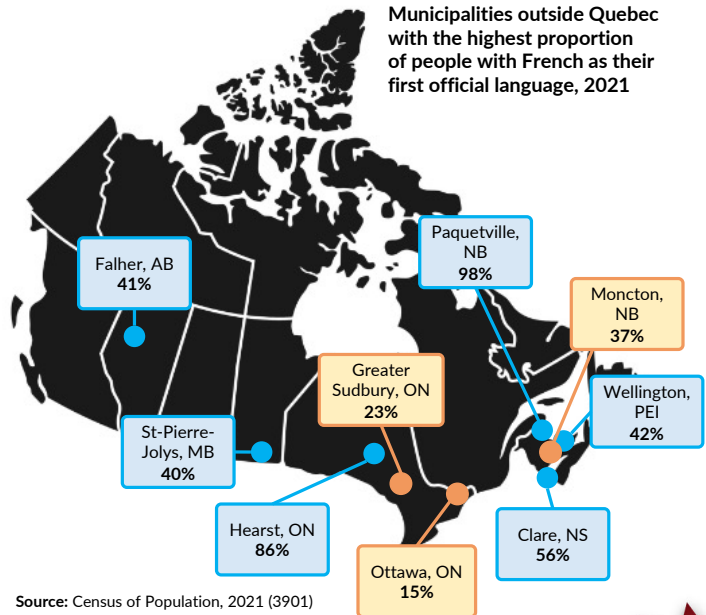
- Number of people with French as their first official language spoken roughly consistent over the last five decades
- Proportion continues to decline, as other language groups grow more quickly
- The proportion of Canadians with English as their first official language spoken has continued to rise over the same period, largely due to immigration





Examining French in municipalities in Canada outside Quebec

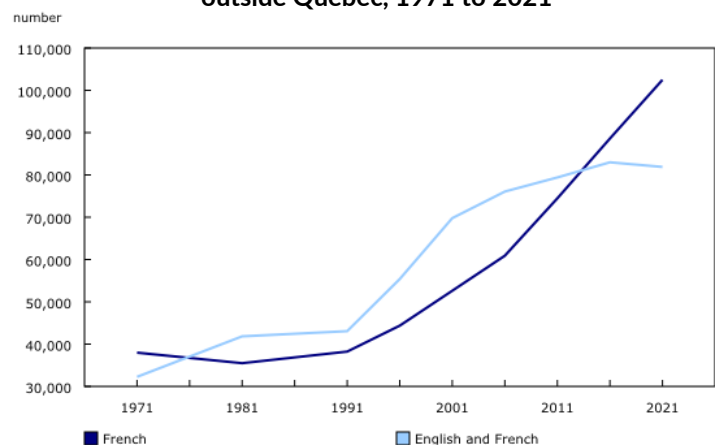
- In contrast with provincial averages, French speakers are concentrated in municipalities across the country, both small communities and large urban centres.
- In 2021, half the population with French as their first official language lived in Ontario, and one-quarter lived in New Brunswick.



Record high French-speaking immigration outside Quebec in 2021

- In 2021, Canada saw **more than 100,000** immigrants with French as their sole first official language living outside Quebec
- Proportion has also increased over time, from **1.0%** in 1991 to **1.4%** in 2021
- Most common countries of birth for French immigrants to Canada:
 - France (30.0%)
 - Cameroon (11.5%)
 - Côte d'Ivoire (8.4%)
 - Algeria (5.8%)
 - Democratic Republic of the Congo (5.7%)

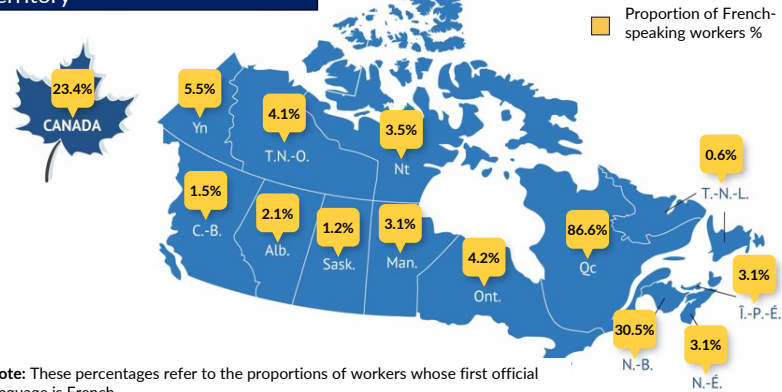
First official language spoken by immigrants outside Quebec, 1971 to 2021





Canada's French-speaking workforce is 4 million strong

Proportion of French-speaking workers, by province and territory



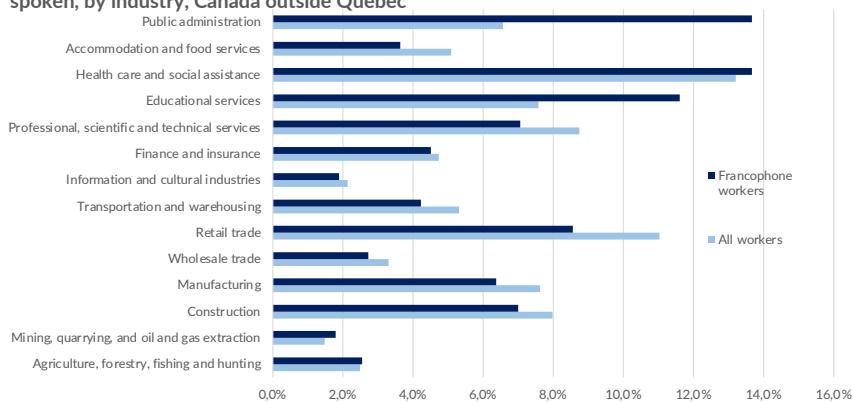
Note: These percentages refer to the proportions of workers whose first official language is French.
Source: Census of Population, 2021 (3901)

- The 2021 Census counted over 4 million workers with French as their first official language, of which 500,000 were outside Quebec.
- The French-speaking workforce makes up 23.4% of the nation's workers.
- Outside Quebec, Ontario has the highest number of French-speaking workers (272,000) and New Brunswick has the highest proportion (30.5%).



A higher proportion of French speakers work in education services and public administration

Distribution of the workforce with French as the first official language spoken, by industry, Canada outside Quebec



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021

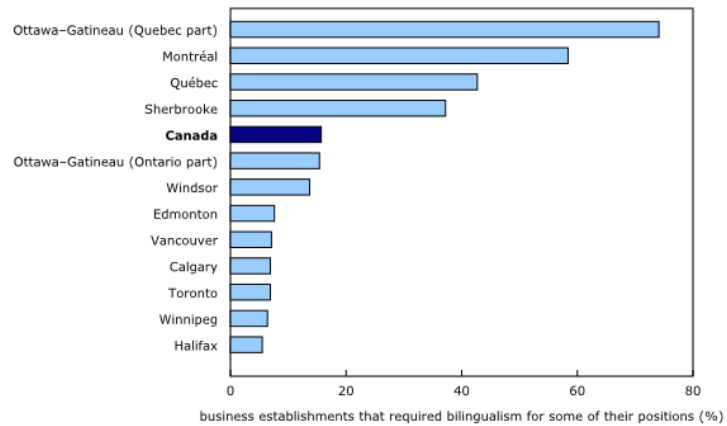
- Outside Quebec, 13.7% of workers with French as their first official language were in public administration, twice the proportion of workers in general (6.6%)
- Also a higher proportion of workers in educational services (11.6% vs. 7.6%)
- Lower proportions of workers with French as their first official language outside Quebec in most other sectors



Demand for bilingual skills in Canada

- Roughly 1 million private sector positions (8%) required bilingualism in 2022
- Montreal had the highest absolute number of businesses requiring bilingualism, followed by Toronto
- 1 in 6 organizations that required bilingualism expected to have trouble recruiting bilingual staff (second quarter of 2023)

Proportion of private sector establishments that require bilingualism, across large urban areas, 2023



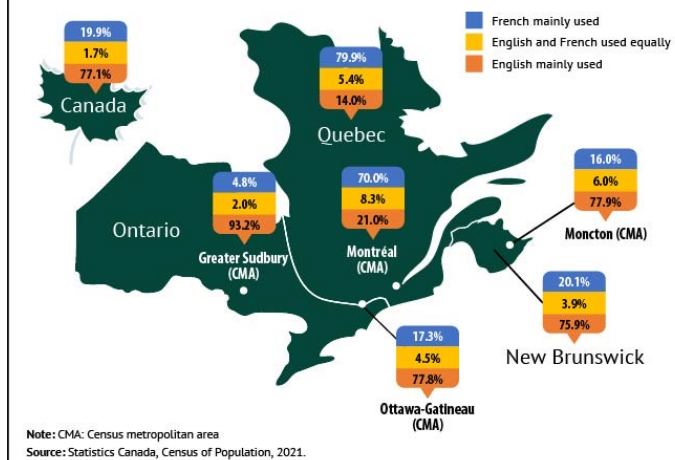
9



Languages used at work

- About 20% of workers in Canada mainly used French at work; another 5% used French regularly but not mainly
- Highest proportion in the federal public service (19%) and education (8%)
- Ottawa-Gatineau and New Brunswick were both close to the national average (which includes Quebec)

English and French at work in Canada in 2021

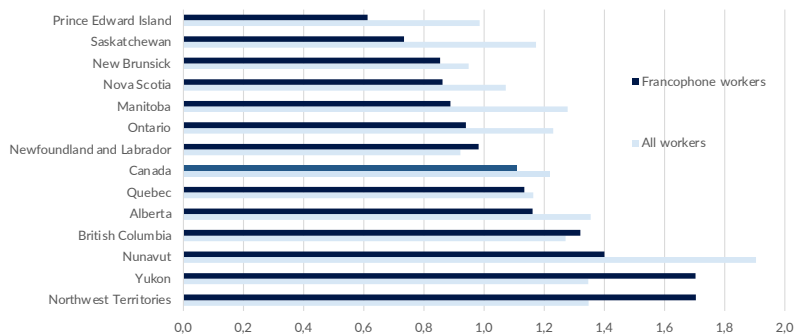


10



A growing share of the French-speaking workforce is approaching retirement

Labour force replacement rate, by province and territory, 2021



Note: The replacement ratio is obtained by dividing the number of workers aged 25 to 34 by the number of workers aged 55 to 64. A ratio below 1 means that the number of youth entering the labour market is lower than the number of workers approaching retirement age.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021

- In 6 out of 10 provinces, the replacement ratio for the labour force with French as their first official language was below 1, meaning there are fewer young French-speaking workers (25 to 34) than those approaching retirement (55 to 64).
- The ratios were lowest in Prince Edward Island (0.6) and Saskatchewan (0.7). They were highest in the territories: Northwest Territories (1.7), Yukon (1.7) and Nunavut (1.4).
- Lower ratios could mean that labour force needs will go unmet in the future.



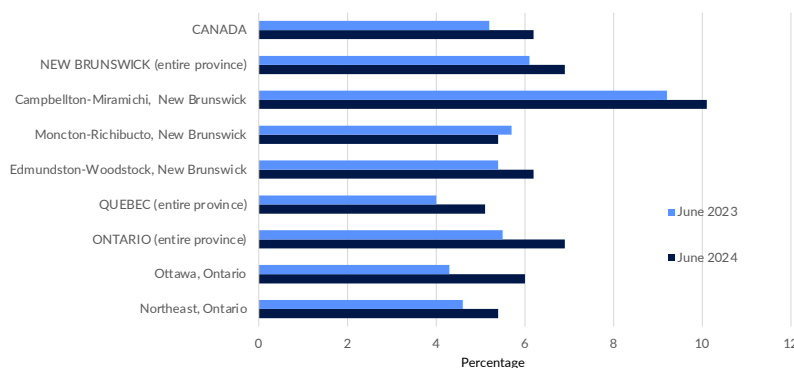
Statistics Canada
Statistique Canada

Canada



A tough labour market across Canada, and regions with high concentrations of French speakers are no exception

Unemployment rates, selected economic regions, June 2023 and June 2024



Note: The economic regions selected correspond to those in which at least one census division had a proportion of people above 20% with French as their first official language spoken in 2011.
Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (LFS).

- The labour market slowed considerably over the last year, after hitting record high participation rates in the post-pandemic period.
- The unemployment rate rose across the country, including a number of regions with the highest proportion of people with French as their first official language spoken.
- It rose notably in the economic regions of Ottawa and Northeast Ontario, as well as Campbellton-Miramichi and Edmundston-Woodstock in New Brunswick.
- Meanwhile, the unemployment rate changed little in the Moncton-Richibucto region.



Statistics Canada
Statistique Canada

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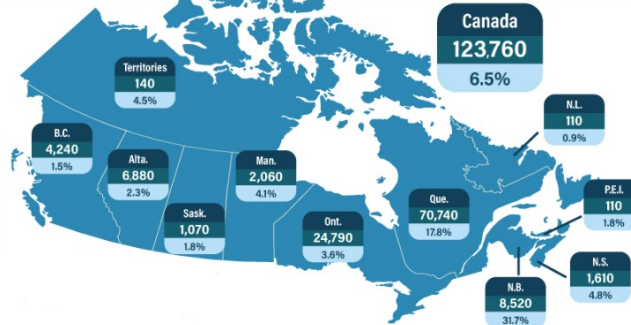


CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGE MINORITY BUSINESSES AND OWNERS



Businesses where at least 50% of owners have the minority official language as their first official language spoken (2017)

■ Provinces
■ Number of OLM businesses
■ Percentage of businesses in the province



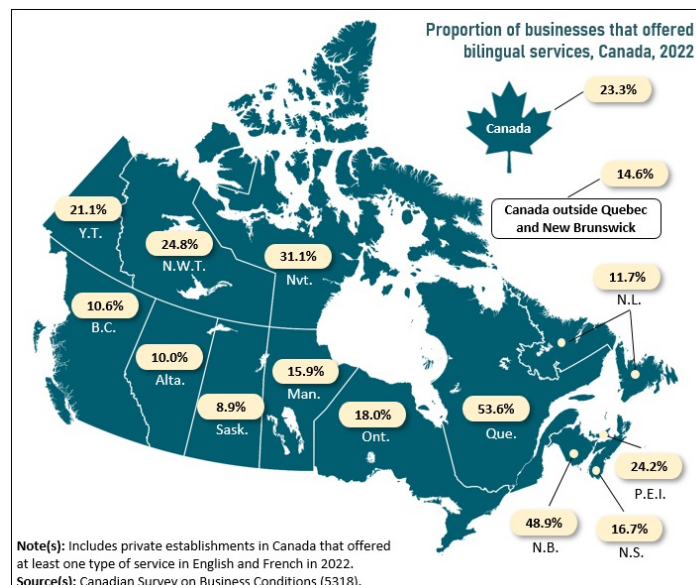
- 2.8% of businesses in Canada outside Quebec were primarily owned by people whose first official language was French
- Highest number of these businesses in Ontario, highest proportion in New Brunswick
- Industrial concentration varies greatly by region

13



Private businesses offering services and activities in both official languages

- About 1 in 4 private businesses in Canada offered a service or activity in both official languages in 2022
- Almost half of businesses with 100 or more employees offered services or activities in both official languages
- Highest proportions by industry were wholesale and retail trade; information and cultural industries; and finance and insurance



14

Statistics Canada – Your National Statistical Agency

Census of Population

- Data on mother tongue, language spoken at home, language used at work, language of instruction and other characteristics available at various geographic levels
- Can be linked to other sources, like business data

Survey on the Official Language Minority Population

- Detailed data on access to services, the workplace, education, and other key information on French speakers in Canada outside Quebec and English speakers in Quebec
- To be released late 2024



Delivering insight through data for a better Canada

15

BILINGUALISM: A PROFITABLE SKILL!

AGORA FRANCOPHONE ECONOMY

PIERRE-MARCEL DESJARDINS

AUGUST 9, 2024 – COURTESY TRANSLATION

Background

2

- ▶ Study on the economic benefits of bilingualism in New Brunswick: 2014, 2019, 2024
- ▶ Communication in economics

Canada: population, first official language spoken

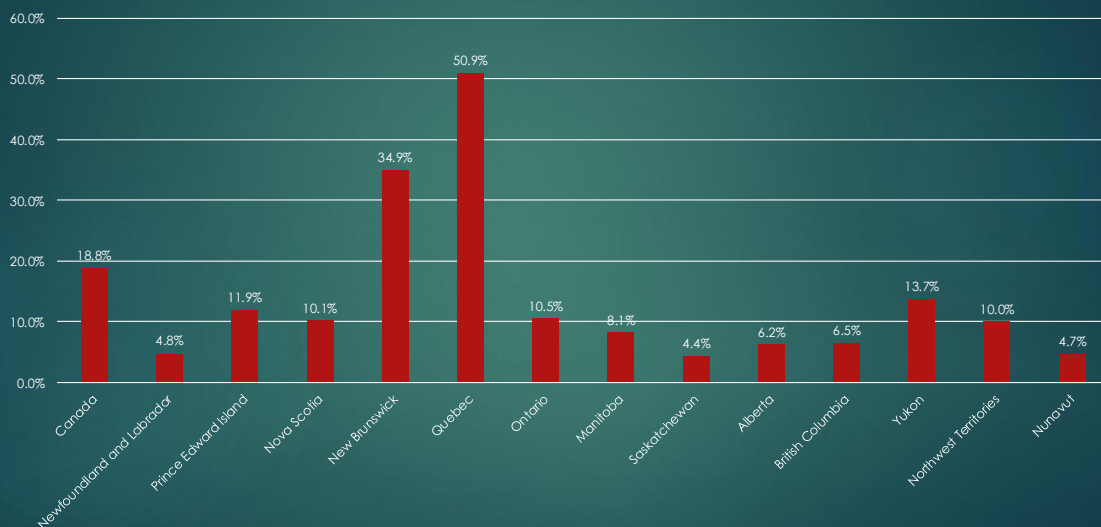
Place	French + FR/EN	Place	French + FR/EN
CND	8,208,230	MB	39,980
CND HQc	1,056,700	SK	13,230
PEI	4,645	AB	79,010
NL	2,425	BC	72,875
NS	29,015	YK	1,945
NB	233,170	NWT	1,465
QC	7,151,530	NU	670
ON	578,270		

Canada: population, knowledge of French

Place	French + FR/EN	Place	French + FR/EN
CND	10,563,240	MB	111,790
CND HQc	2,776,500	SK	52,065
PEI	19,445	AB	260,415
NL	26,130	BC	327,350
NS	99,300	YK	5,740
NB	317,825	NWT	4,440
QC	7,786,740	NU	1,450
ON	1,550,550		

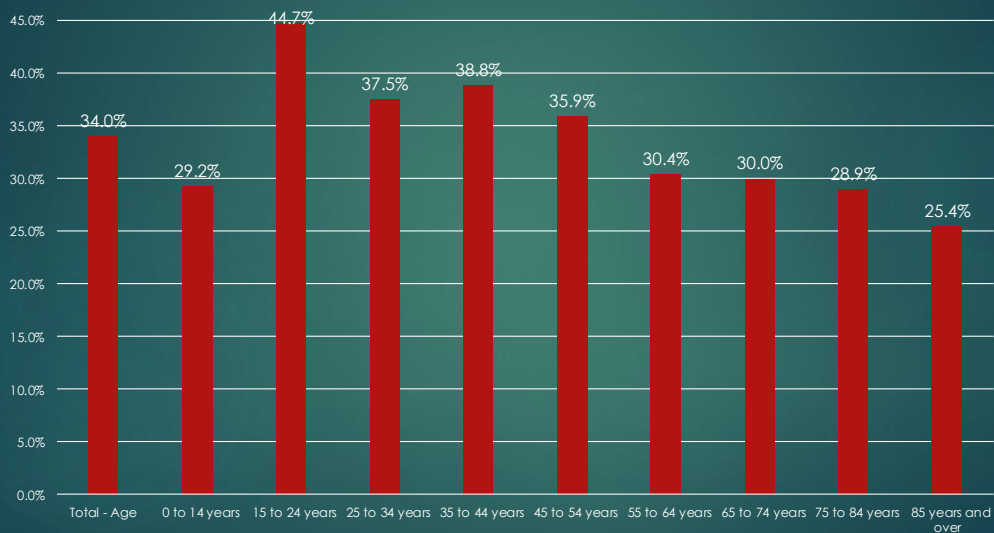
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Bilingual percentage, population aged 15 and over, 2021



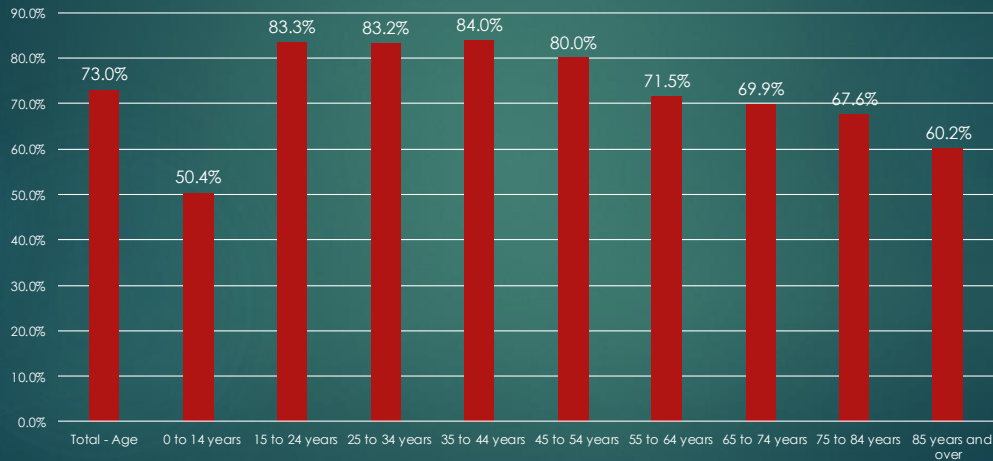
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Percentage of bilingual population, total by age group, New Brunswick, 2021



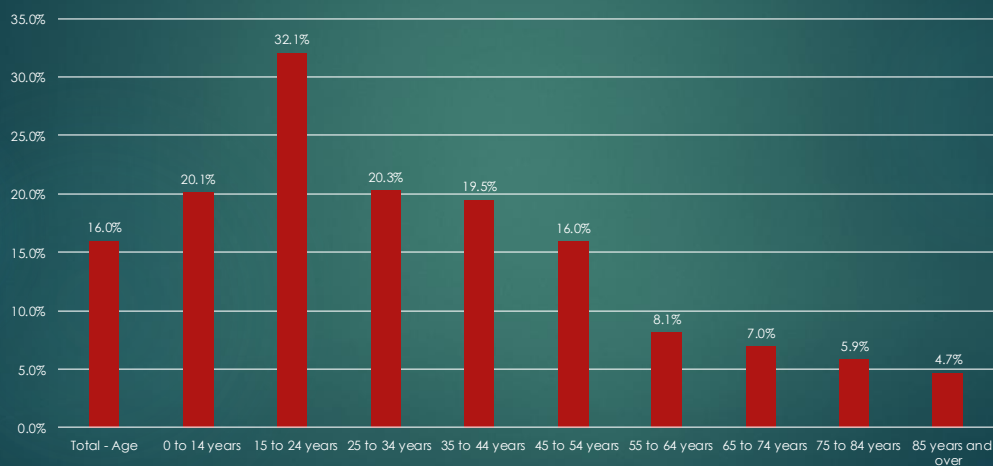
7

Percentage of bilingual population, French as mother tongue, by age group, New Brunswick, 2021



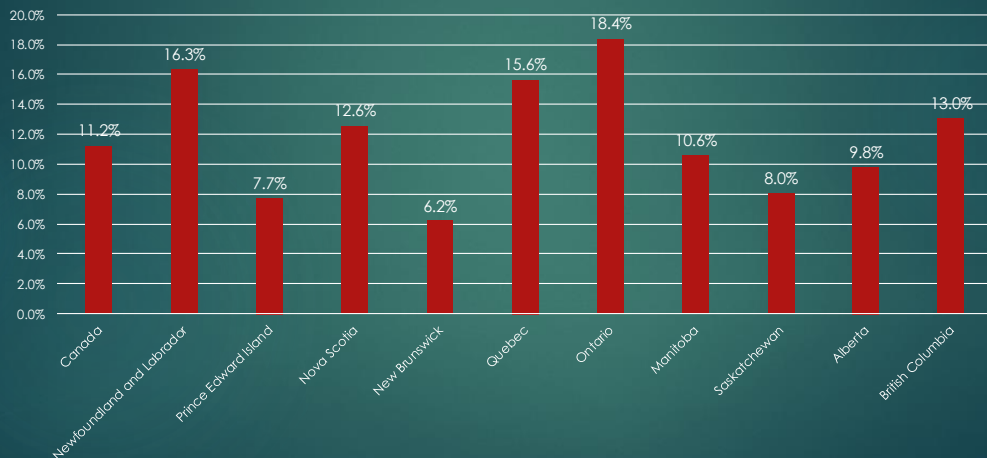
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Percentage of bilingual population, English as mother tongue, by age group, New Brunswick, 2021



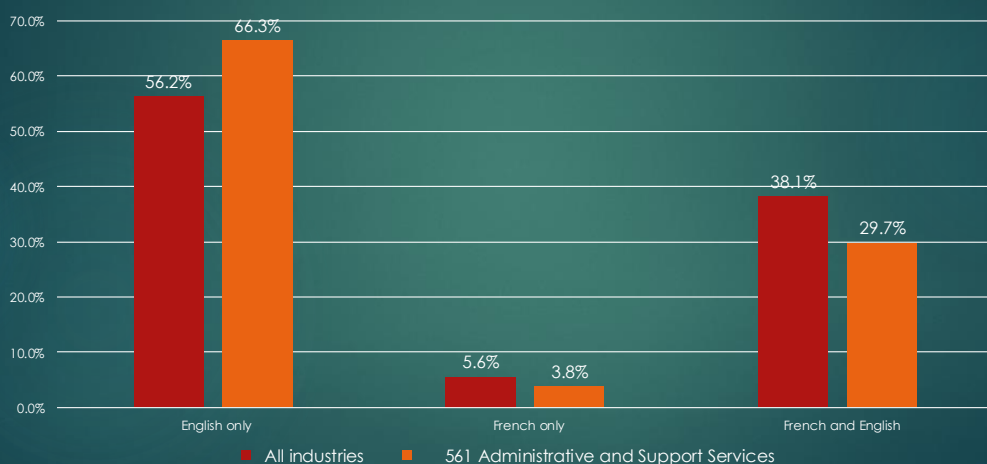
9

Average income, bilingual population vs. total population, difference, 2021



10

Jobs in NAICS 561 Administrative and Support Services and total of all sectors, by knowledge of official languages, New Brunswick, 2021



NINE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF A BILINGUAL WORKFORCE IN NEW BRUNSWICK, 2019

11

- ▶ **Benefit 1:** A bilingual workforce is a big part of why New Brunswick has been able to attract major companies like ExxonMobil, Xerox, IBM, FedEx, UPS, RBC, TD Insurance, Unilever and SNC-Lavalin.
- ▶ **Benefit 2:** Bilingualism has led to the development of a dynamic language industry in the province.
- ▶ **Benefit 3:** Bilingualism has been a key factor in developing business links and investments in the Quebec market.

NINE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF A BILINGUAL WORKFORCE IN NEW BRUNSWICK

12

- ▶ **Benefit 4:** Bilingualism largely explains why companies in the finance and insurance sectors serve their clients across the country from New Brunswick.
- ▶ **Benefit 5:** Bilingualism has been a key factor in the growth of the New Brunswick professional services sector in the Quebec market.
- ▶ **Benefit 6:** Bilingualism largely explains why New Brunswick is so successful in attracting Quebec tourists.

NINE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF A BILINGUAL WORKFORCE IN NEW BRUNSWICK

13

- ▶ **Benefit 7:** Bilingualism is an important factor in explaining the province's ability to attract post-secondary students from other provinces or other countries.
- ▶ **Benefit 8:** Bilingualism is an important reason why New Brunswick attracts a higher proportion of bilingual immigrants than most other provinces.
- ▶ **Benefit 9:** Bilingualism represents a unique comparative advantage for New Brunswick in Canada in addressing demographic challenges

Tourism HR
Canada



RH Tourisme
Canada

Conseil des ministres
sur la francophonie
canadienne



Ministers' Council
on the Canadian
Francophonie

TOURISM EMPLOYMENT TRANSFORMS LIVES & COMMUNITIES

Le français, une langue qui voyage

August 9, 2024 | Halifax, Nova Scotia

Isabelle de Bruyn
idebruyn@TourismHR.ca
TourismHR.ca

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1

TOURISM IN CANADA Performance & Perspectives

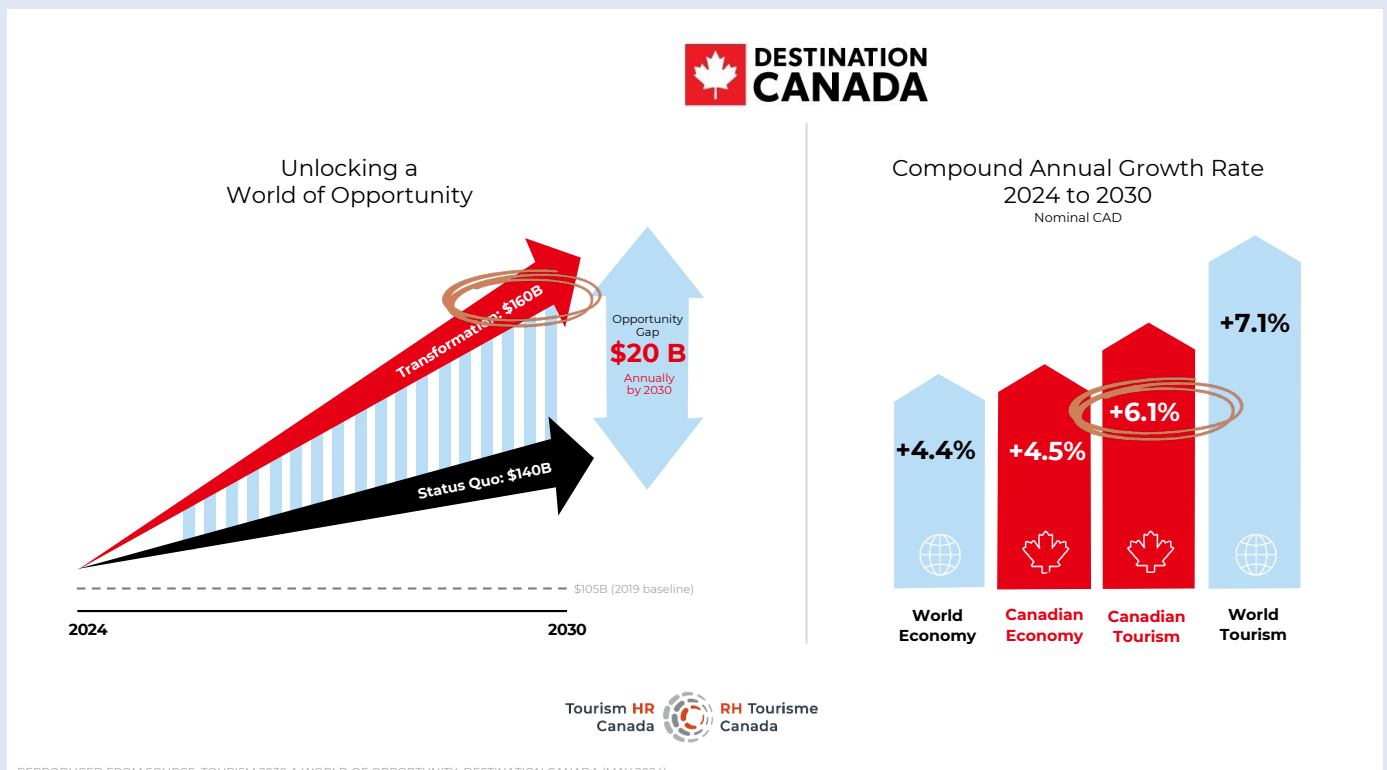
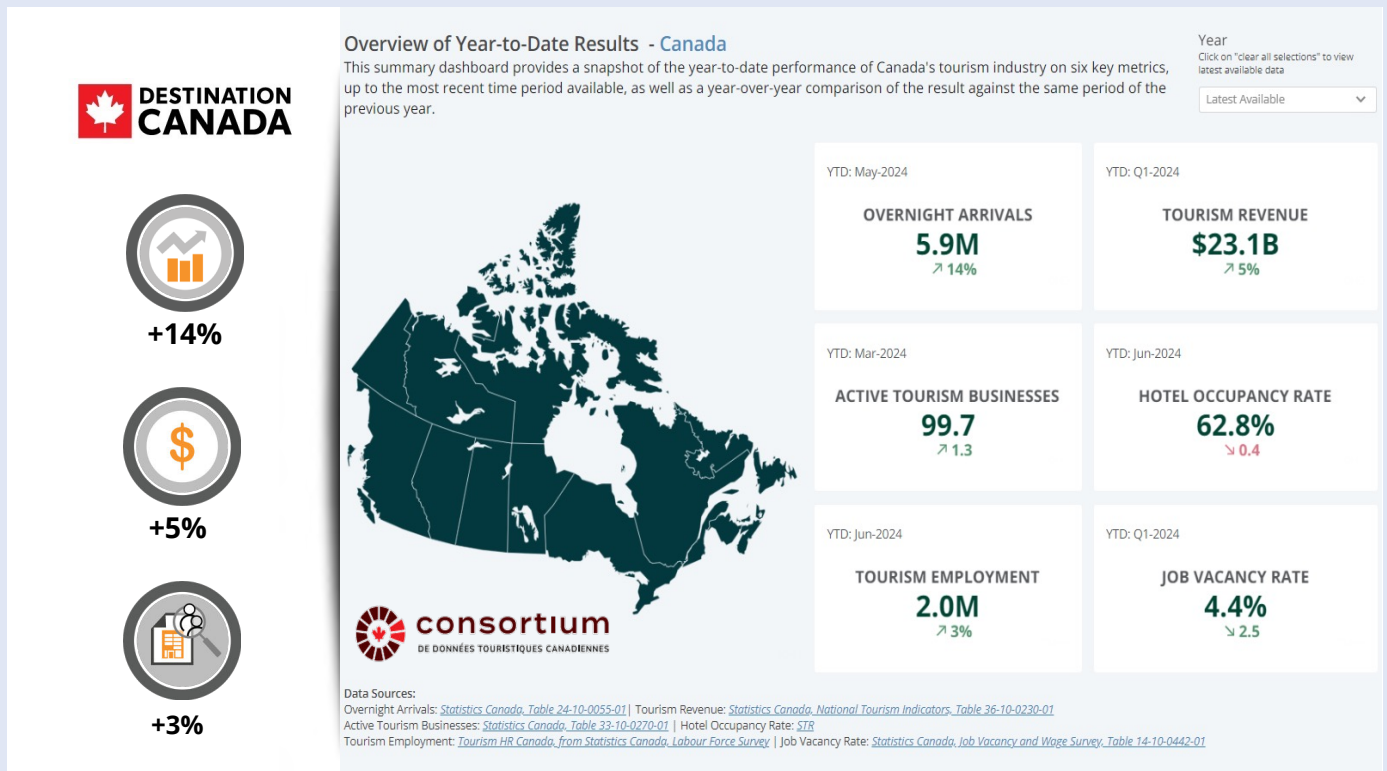
Tourism HR
Canada



RH Tourisme
Canada

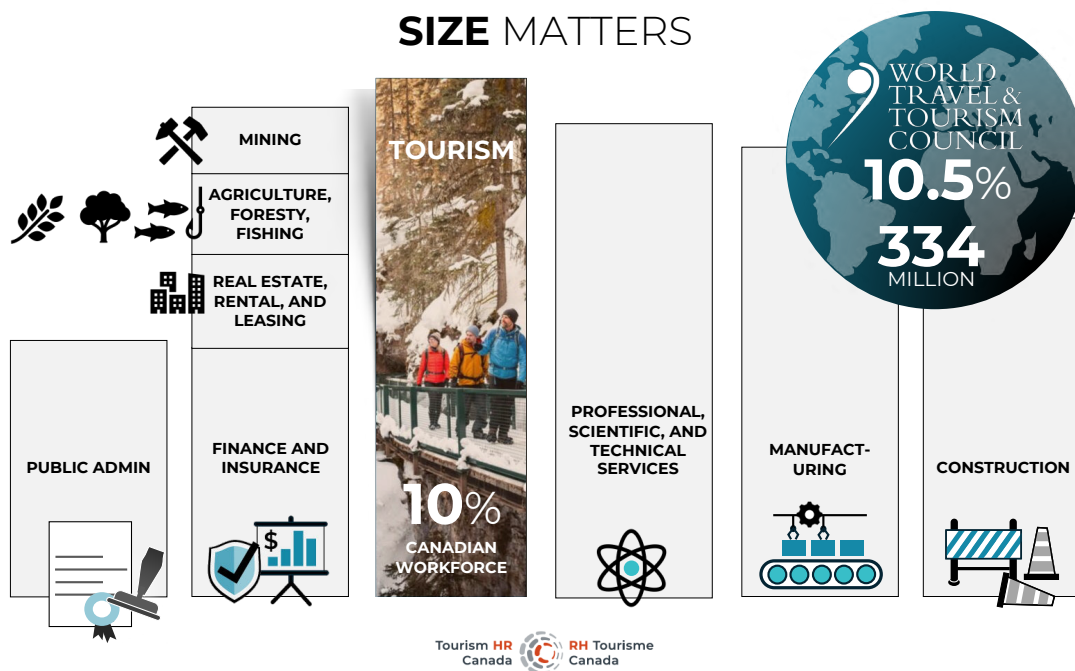


**DESTINATION
CANADA**



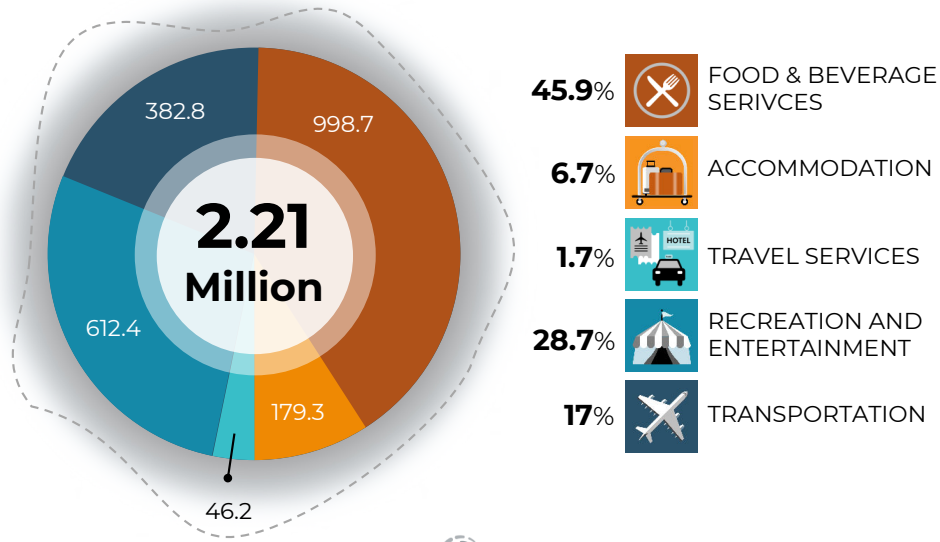
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TOURISM EMPLOYMENT IN CANADA Workforce Profile & Projections



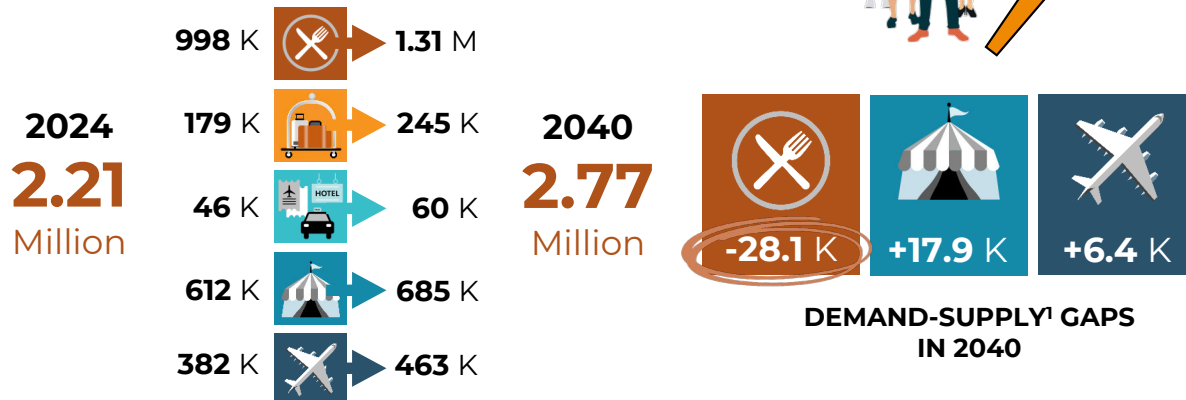
LABOUR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS 2023

CANADIAN TOURISM WORKFORCE PROFILE 2024



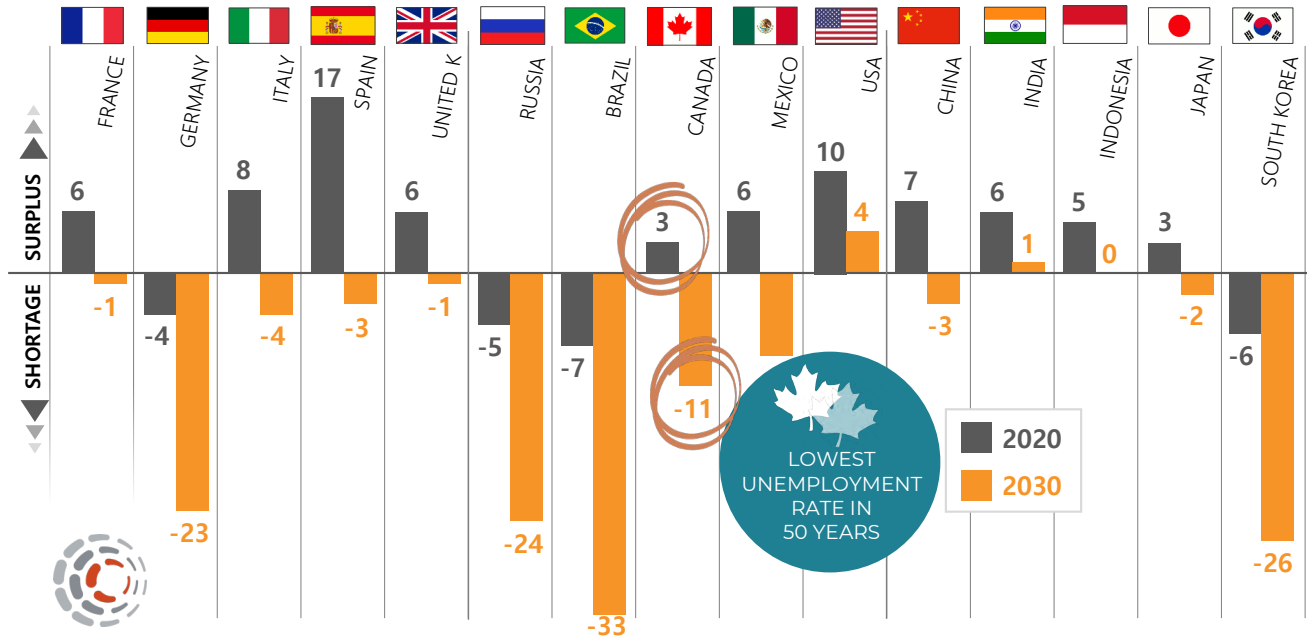
Conference Board of Canada, The Future of Canada's Tourism Sector – Labour Demand and Supply Analysis(2024)
Labour Demand and Supply Analysis - Tourism HR Canada

CANADIAN TOURISM WORKFORCE PROJECTED PROFILE



Conference Board of Canada, The Future of Canada's Tourism Sector – Labour Demand and Supply Analysis(2024)
Labour Demand and Supply Analysis - Tourism HR Canada

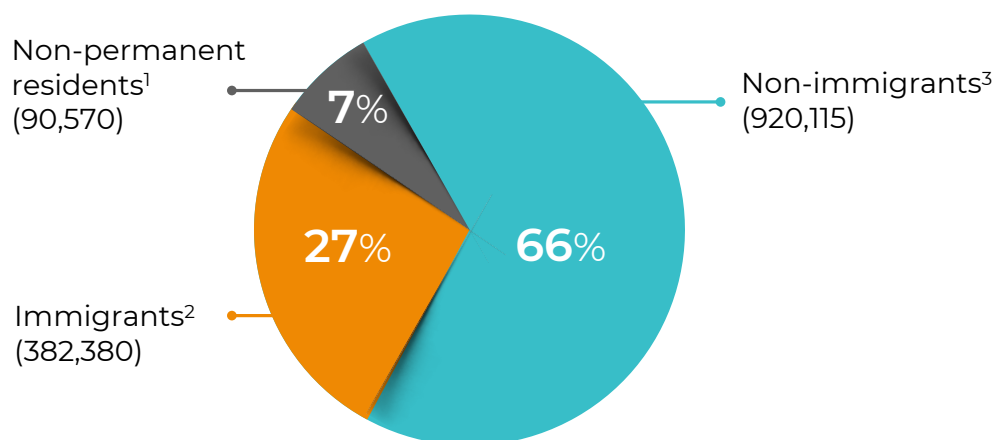
Global Workforce Crisis › Labour Shortage/Surplus



Boston Consulting Group, Berlin (2014): Rainer Strack

TOURISM WORKFORCE-2021 CENSUS

IMMIGRATION STATUS (Total: 1,393,065)



2021 Census Data
[Census Data: Who Works in Tourism? - Tourism HR Canada](#)
 For more information on Immigration and Tourism, visit:
[Immigration Hub - Tourism HR Canada](#)

Tourism HR Canada RH Tourisme Canada

¹ 'Non-permanent residents' includes persons from another country with a usual place of residence in Canada and who have a work or study permit or who have claimed refugee status (asylum claimants).

² 'Immigrants' includes persons who are, or who have ever been, landed immigrants or permanent residents.

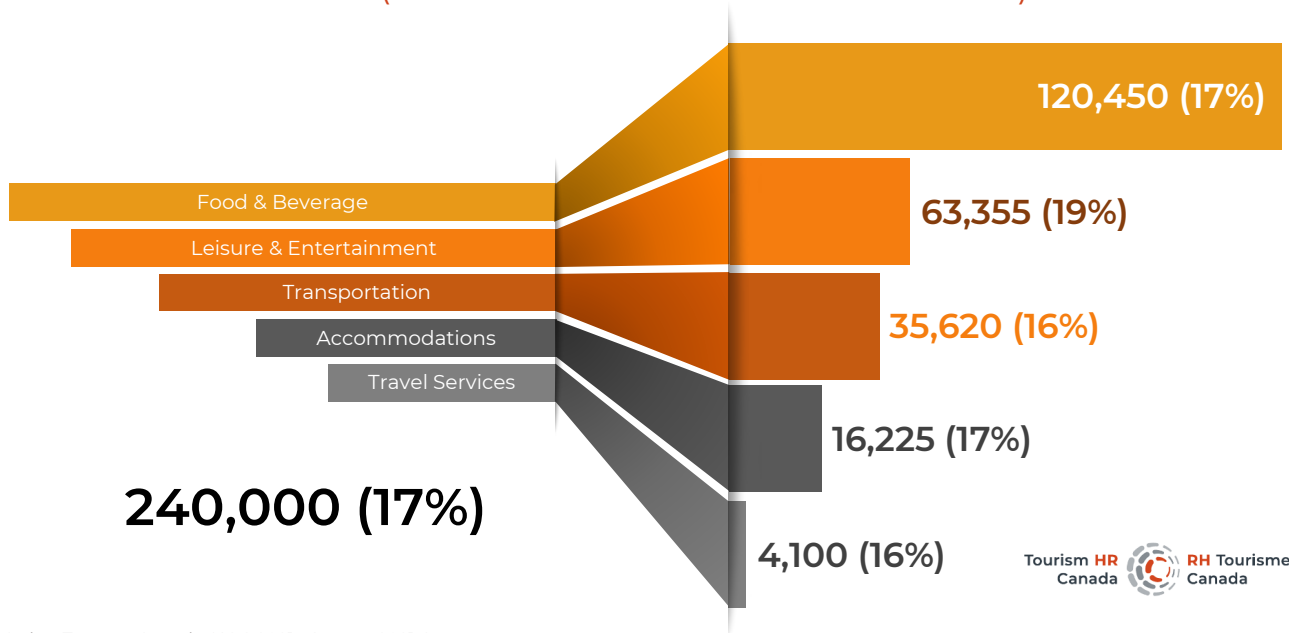
³ 'Non-immigrants' includes persons who are Canadian citizens by birth.

3

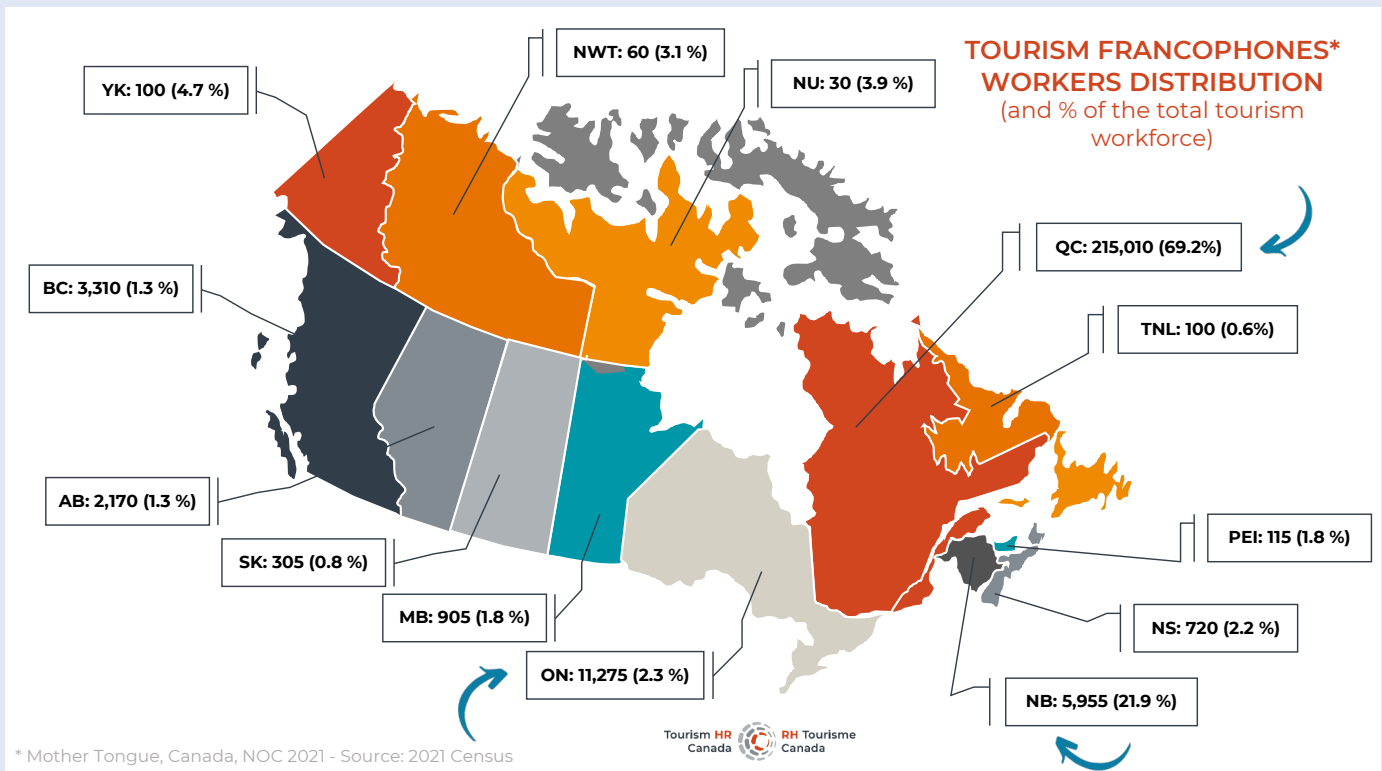
THE FRANCOPHONE WORKFORCE IN TOURISM Added Value & Challenges



TOURISM FRANCOPHONES* WORKERS (and % of the total tourism workforce)



* Mother Tongue, Canada, NOC 2021 - Source: 2021 Census



10 REASONS WHY 10% MATTERS...

High job growth potential	Helps transform waning communities	Rich learning experiences that are transferable	Social advantages: social development goals	Promotes environmental benefits
Creates and influx of wealth that contributes to local economies	Stimulus for infrastructure investments	Contributes to political stability; synonymous with Canadian identity	Good jobs and jobs at a premium	Tourism is everywhere: boundless opportunities

TOURISM EMPLOYMENT TRANSFORMS LIVES & COMMUNITIES

French, a language that travels

Courtesy Translation



French, a language that travels ...to Manitoba

- Francophone tourism is essential for Manitoba, not only to stimulate economic growth, but also to preserve and promote our vibrant and thriving French culture.
- Francophone tourism brings significant added value by presenting unique cultural experiences rooted in Manitoba's French and Métis heritage. It enriches our tourist offer by distinguishing it from that of other destinations and attracting people interested in cultural immersion and historical exploration.
- Manitoba's Francophone tourism includes Saint-Boniface, the largest Francophone community in Western Canada, and 17 Francophone communities in the province.



French, a language that travels

2







Impact of performing arts tours in Québec - 2021-2022



In Québec

\$1.5 million

invested by the CALQ in 124 tours



\$8.1 million

impact in total revenue



*Joue à Tom Waits, by the experimental folk band Orchestre d'hommes-orchestres.
Photo: Bernadette Fink*

Impact of performing arts tours in Québec - 2021-2022

In Québec

- **\$4.4 million** in remuneration for 1076 Québec artists, technicians and cultural workers
- **\$337,000** for agency fees
- **\$1.2 million** in expenses for accommodations and meals
- **\$2 million** for travel, shipping, promotional, publicity and other expenses

August 9, 2024

3

Impact of performing arts tours internationally - 2021-2022

Internationally

\$2 million

invested by the CALQ in 72 tours



\$7 million

in foreign investment impact



Gabriel Tullot
The circus company Les Foutoukours, presented its latest production, *GLOB*, at the 56th edition of the Festival OFF Avignon. Photo: André Chevrier

August 9, 2024

4

Internationally

- **\$4.3 million** in remuneration for 1572 Québec artists, technicians and cultural workers
- **\$689,000** in royalties
- Over **\$2.3 million** spent in hotels and restaurants abroad
- **\$5.3 million** for travel, shipping, promotional, publicity and other expenses



Skills of the Future and the Advantages of Bilingualism

El Iza Mohamedou

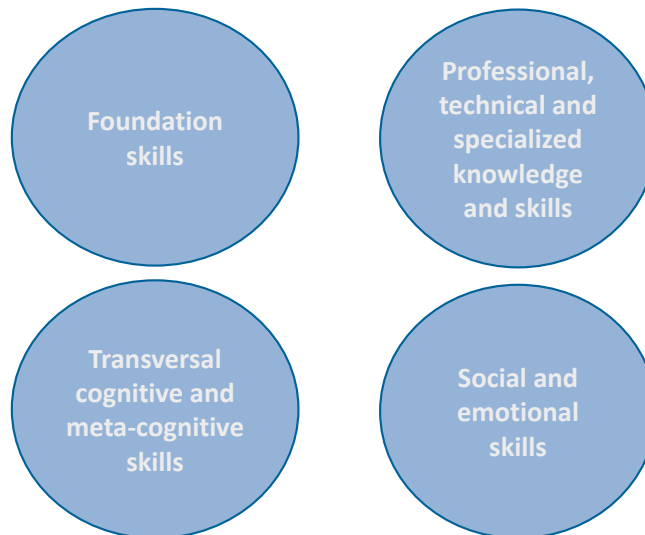
Head of the OECD Centre for Skills

Agora sur la Francophonie Économique

📍 Halifax, Nova Scotia, 10 August 2024



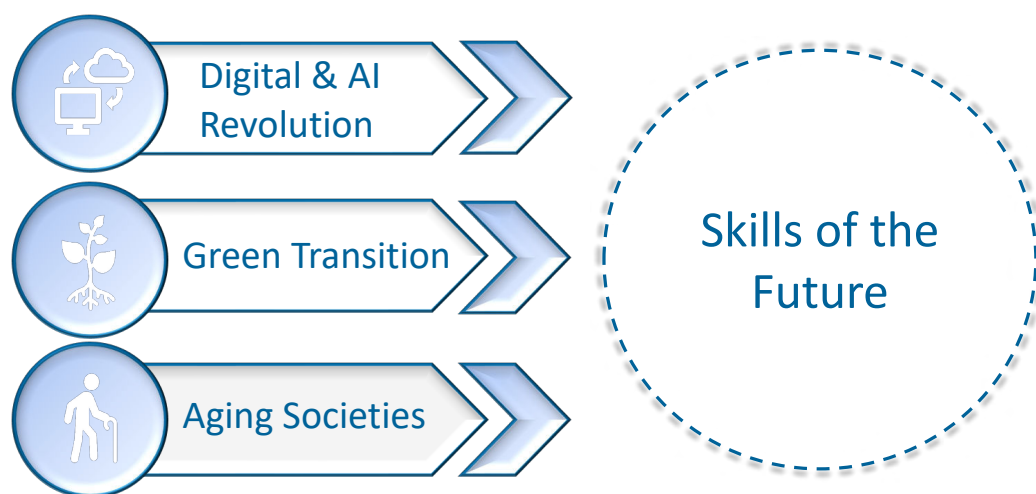
What do we mean by **skills**?



Source: [Home | OECD iLibrary \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](https://oecd-ilibrary.org/)

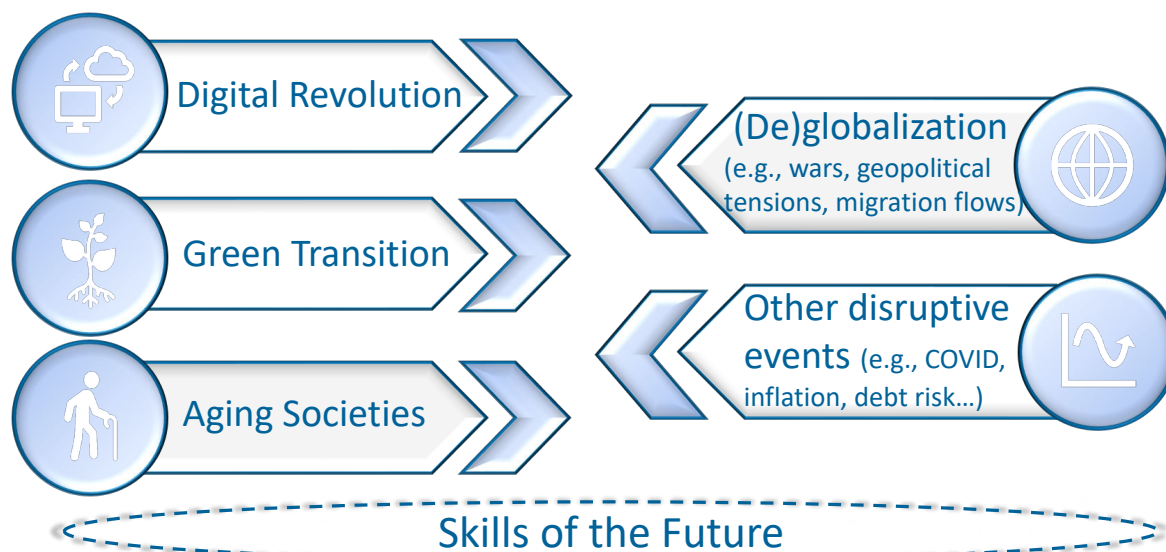
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Megatrends are shaping the skills of the future



2

Beyond the main societal challenges



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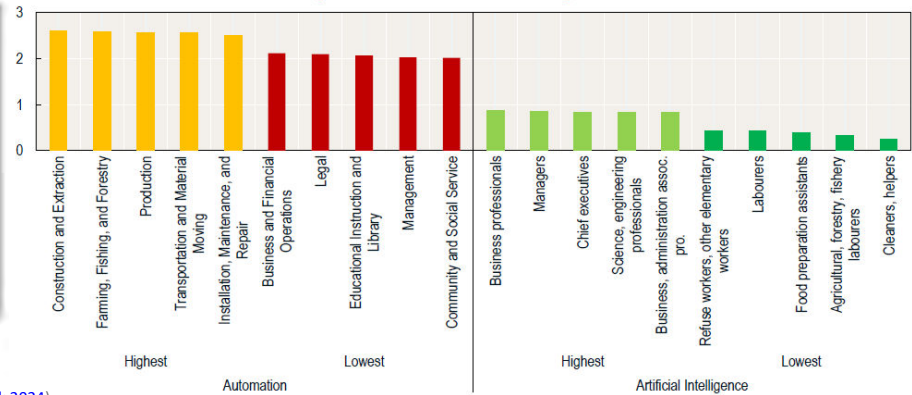


Many jobs and skill requirements will be affected by digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI)

The occupations with highest and lowest risk of automation and exposure to AI

Jobs at high risk of automation have increased from **14% to 27%** across OECD countries

In **Canada**, the share of **positions requiring AI skills** (e.g., computer & data science) increased by almost **10%** between 2019-2022



(OECD Skills Outlook 2023; OECD Employment Outlook 2024)

Source: OECD (2023), OECD Employment Outlook 2023: Artificial Intelligence and the Labour Market, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/08785bba-en>

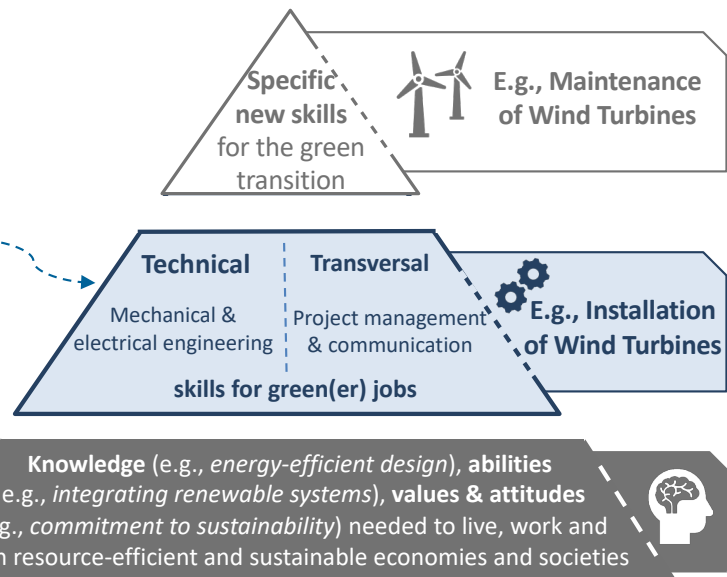
4



The green transition is changing skill needs across a broad spectrum of fields and jobs

More than a quarter of jobs will be strongly impacted by the net-zero transition
20% of workers across **OECD countries** are in green-driven jobs (incl. jobs that support 'green' activities)

(OECD Employment Outlook 2024)



Source: Based on the definitions of the members of the IAG-TVET working group on WBL, as agreed in 2022
doi:10.2801/69991

5



Aging societies highlight urgent need of investing in skills across all sectors

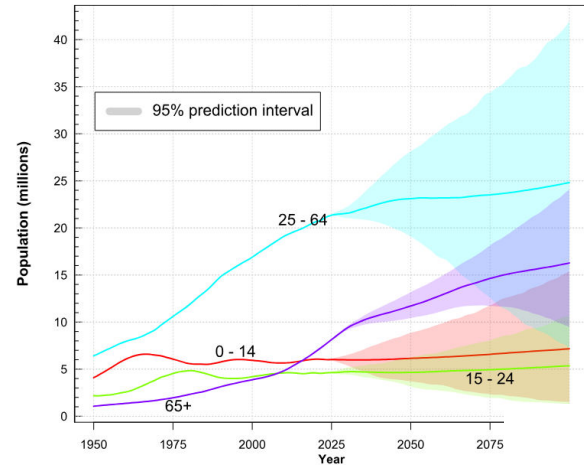
By 2080, persons aged 65+ (2.2B)
will outnumber children **under 18**

In around **10 years**, there will be
more persons aged **80+** than **<1 year**

A 2022 report by the International

[\(UN DESA/POP/2024\)](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/2024/)

Canadian population by broad age groups

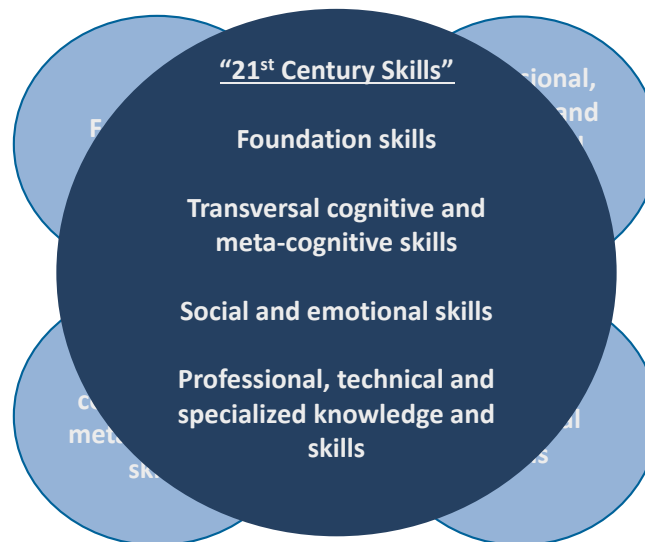


© 2024 United Nations, DESA, Population Division. Licensed under Creative Commons license CC BY 3.0 IGO. United Nations, DESA, Population Division. *World Population Prospects 2024*. <http://population.un.org/wpp/>

6



Fostering a comprehensive skill set is crucial for the future workplace and skills



Source: [Home | OECD iLibrary \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/)

1



New jobs often require a range of socio-emotional, communication and management skills

Top 20 Socio-emotional & Foundational skills in AI job postings by US top AI employers, 2022



Source: OECD (2023), OECD Skills Outlook 2023: Skills for a Resilient Green and Digital Transition, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/27452f29-en>.

Retraining gap between emission-intensive to new green-driven occupations

Skill proficiency by type of occupation, Index 0-100

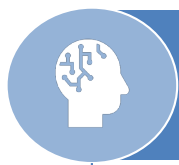


Source: OECD (2024), OECD Employment Outlook 2024: The Net-Zero Transition and the Labour Market, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/ac8b3538-en>.

7



Will the present and future workforce be prepared for the projected new jobs and skill demands?



(Despite risks) AI has the potential to drive productivity and have a positive effect on job quality

E.g.,

AI tools improved performance by **10% to 56%** in customer service, coding, writing, and consulting

AI could hold a future where work becomes **more flexible, tailored, diverse** and ultimately **more fulfilling** for some workers in some sectors

Filippucci, F., et al. (2024), "The impact of Artificial Intelligence on productivity, distribution and growth: Key mechanisms, initial evidence and policy challenges", OECD Artificial Intelligence Papers, No. 15, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/8d900037-en>.

Realizing these changes depends on...

workforce adaptability & holistic skill set

Increased focus on social & emotional skills

...to equip workers for an AI-compatible labour market

Source: OECD (2024), Social and Emotional Skills for Better Lives: Findings from the OECD Survey on Social and Emotional Skills 2023, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/35ca7b7c-en>.

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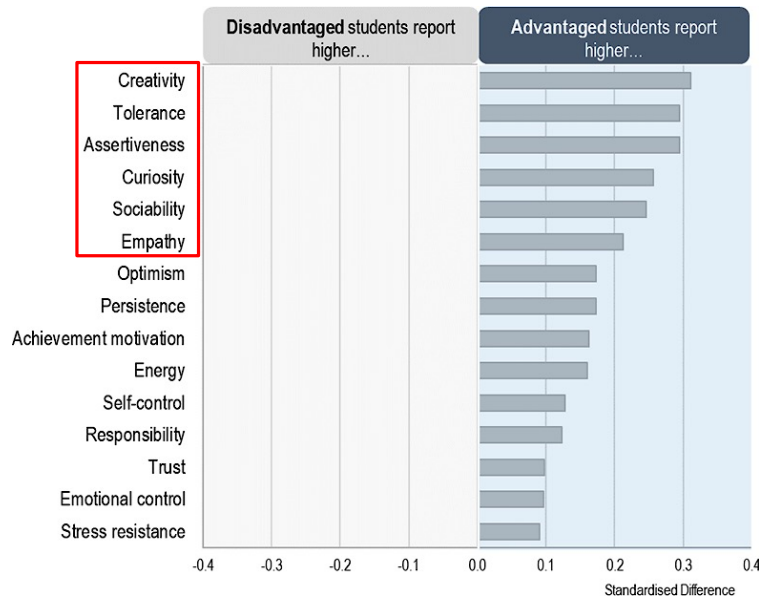


Socio-emotional skills are increasingly important; yet, not equally distributed among students

Average differences in skill levels are largest for **disadvantaged students** across all socio-emotional skills compared to their advantaged peers

(OECD Survey on Social and Emotional Skills 2023)

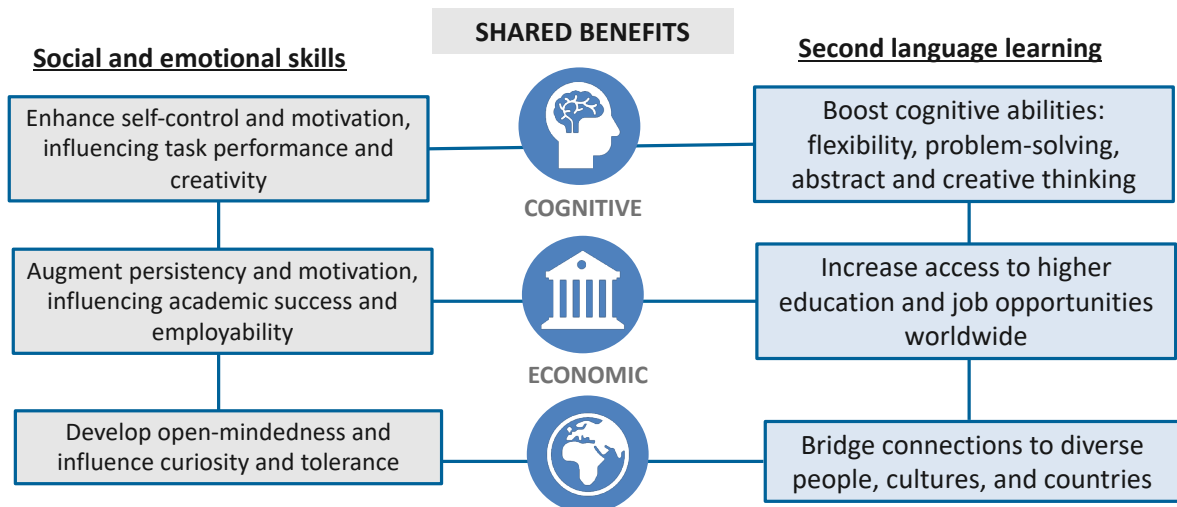
Source: OECD (2024), Social and Emotional Skills for Better Lives: Findings from the OECD Survey on Social and Emotional Skills 2023, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/35ca7b7c-en>.



9



Enhancing socio-emotional skills through second language learning (or vice versa)



Source: OECD (2024) Findings from the OECD Survey on Social and Emotional Skills 2023, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/35ca7b7c-en>.

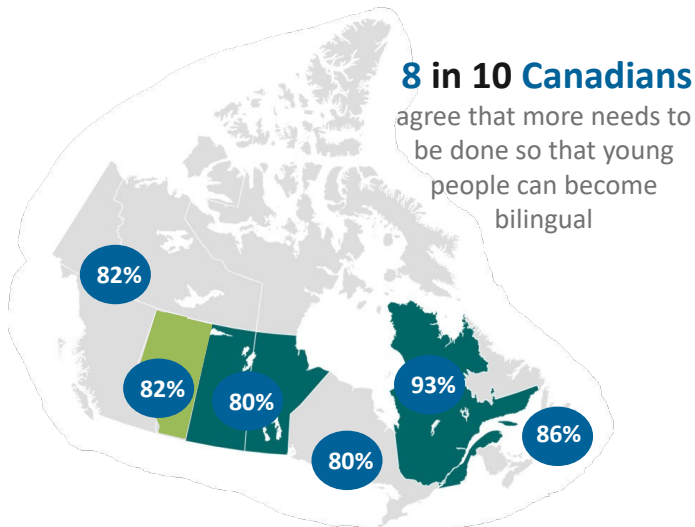
INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Source: OECD (2024) Foreign Language Learning Key Messages <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/foreign-language-learning.html>

10



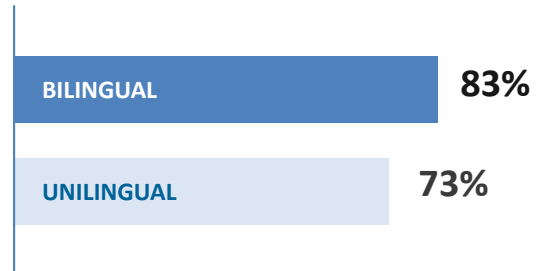
Official languages are critical for individuals to integrate in local societies & labour markets; yet...



Source: [The Commissioner of Official Languages \(2019\) "Accessing Opportunity"](#)

In general, both bilingual and unilingual Canadians support that:

"Provincial governments should make more spaces available in immersion programmes"



11



Bilingualism is crucial for Canada but (disadvantaged) individuals may face accessibility challenges

Most common barrier to learning second official language: **ACCESS**

1/3

of those not fluently bilingual cited a lack of access to language courses as the main barrier

Those who learned outside of the classroom did so by:



Socialising with friends



Watching TV or movies



Using it at work



Using it at home with family



Taking private lessons

Source: [The Commissioner of Official Languages \(2019\) "Accessing Opportunity"](#)

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Beyond information processing and abstract thinking to close skill disparities in the 21st Century

Focus should be in..

1.

Increasing access to second language learning & other skill development opportunities

By addressing disparities in skill development and inequalities in rewards associated with the skills individuals possess

[E.g., *OECD Skills Outlook 2025: Equity in and through 21st Century Skills* (forthcoming)]

2.

Developing a better sense of best practices in enhancing second language proficiency

In the **Netherlands**, bilingual programmes (Dutch-English) help students reach a higher level of proficiency

In **Portugal**, schools appear to actively seek opportunities for students to practice English outside lessons

[E.g., *The OECD PISA 2025 Foreign Language Assessment* (forthcoming)]

Source: OECD (2024), *How 15-Year-Olds Learn English: Case Studies from Finland, Greece, Israel, the Netherlands and Portugal*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a3fcacd5-en>.

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El-Iza.MOHAMEDOU@oecd.org



[@ElIzaMohamedou](#)

Thank you



www.oecd.org/en/about/directorates/centre-for-skills.html

Ministry of Francophone Affairs of Ontario

Ontario's Francophone Economic Development Strategy

MCCF Agora

August 2024

Ontario 

Origins of the strategy

Genesis

When she took office in 2018, Minister Caroline Mulroney made Francophone economic development one of her priorities.

Consultations

Round tables were organized in 2018 and 2019 to identify the challenges faced by Francophone businesses.

REPORT

Based on the results of these round tables and the recommendations of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Francophone Economic Recovery Post COVID-19, the Ministry developed a government-wide strategy in 2020.

2

Ontario 

Current state of the Francophone economic landscape

The Ontario Francophone economy represents:

- Over 30,150 businesses with at least one Francophone owner:
 - 4.3% of Ontario SMEs
 - 50% of Francophone businesses outside Québec
- Francophone and bilingual workers represent 11% of the workforce in the province and generate 12% of Ontario's gross domestic product (over \$80 billion).
- 63% of Francophone and bilingual employees have a university degree.



3

Source: [The Franco-Ontarian Economy: White Paper](#), based on Statistics Canada data. June 2022.

Ontario 

Key objectives of the strategy

1. Increasing the Francophone economic footprint.
2. Improving access to a qualified and bilingual workforce.
3. Creating jobs and expanding market opportunities for Francophone businesses and organizations.

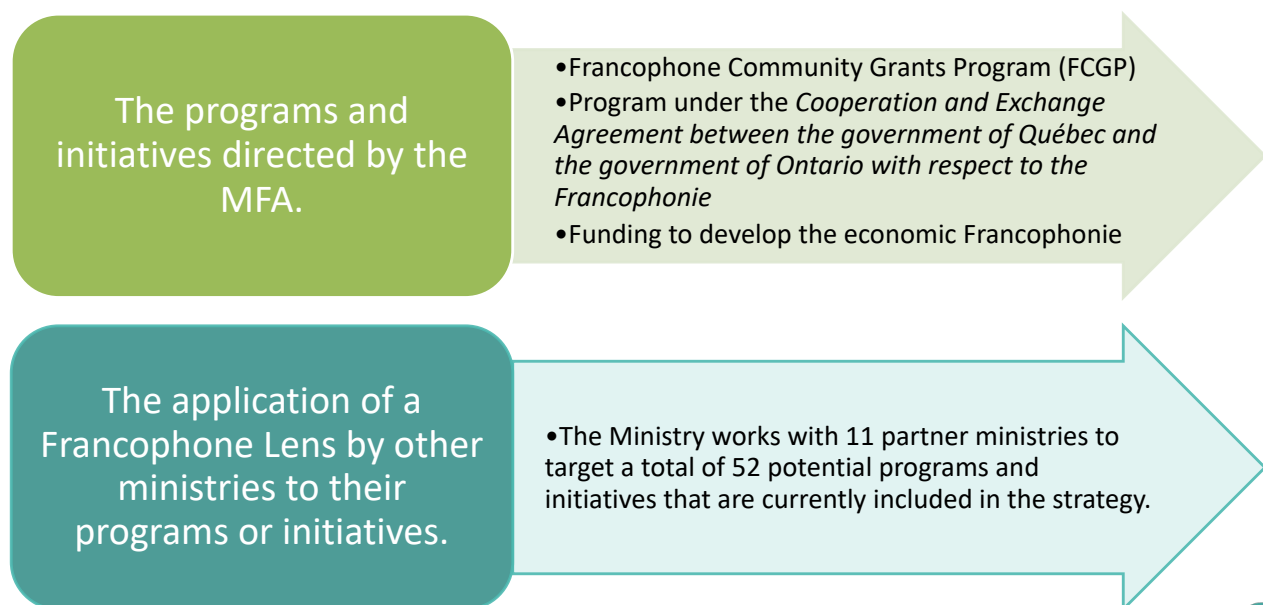
4

Ontario 

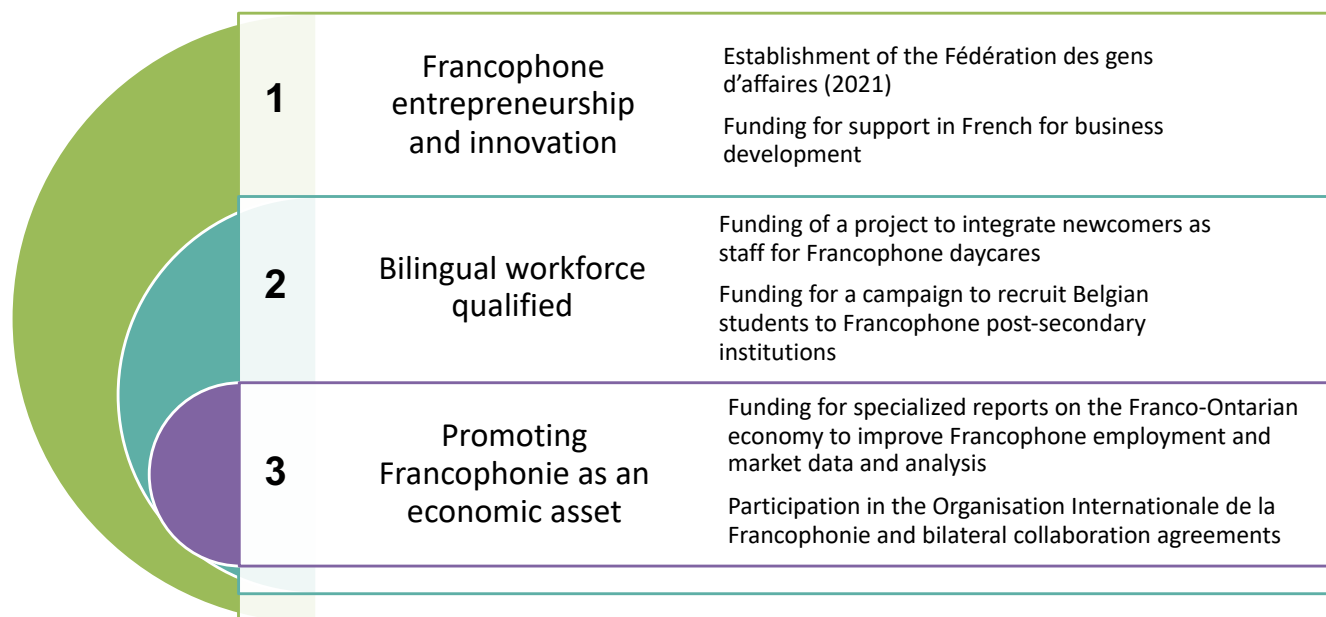
The strategy is based on three pillars



To take action, the Ministry has two levers:



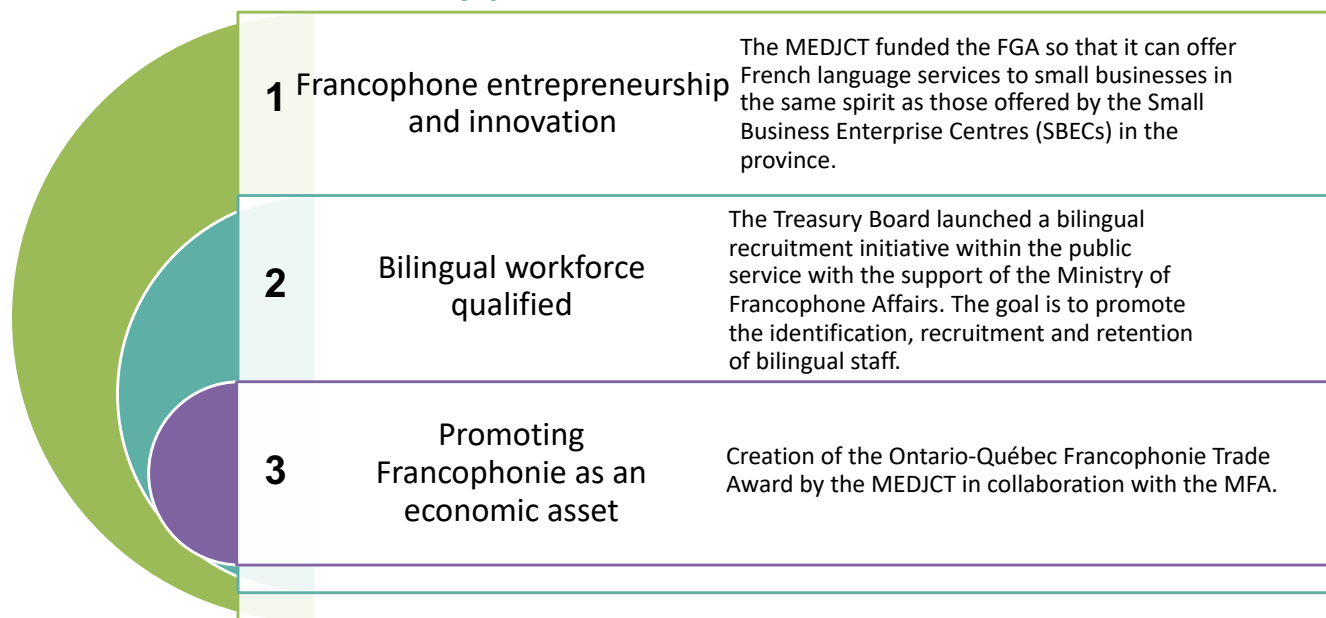
Some MFA-led initiatives



7

Ontario 

Some initiatives led by partner ministries



8

Ontario 

Data and performance indicators

The Ministry of Francophone Affairs has established **two performance indicators** to monitor the progress of initiatives:

- Total value and proportionality of the Francophone projects funded under the program;
- Number of Francophones or Francophone projects benefiting from the program.

Next steps

Maintain the three strategic pillars to target efforts

Continue gathering data to monitor trends and guide policies

Promote existing government support and initiatives to Francophones

Strengthen partnerships with key partner ministries and other jurisdictions for whom La Francophonie is an asset, in Canada and internationally

Lessons learned

- The importance of identifying the opportunities offered through the initiatives of partner departments. Programs must be identified and promoted to Francophones.
- The importance of supporting entrepreneurship and recognizing the importance of funding training and support for business start-ups.
- The importance of a unifying body that allows the business sector, which is diffuse in of itself, to speak with one voice.
- The importance of intergovernmental partnerships such as cooperation agreements to maintain the momentum of growth by grafting concrete exchanges.

11

Ontario 

Appendices

- Appendix A: The Francophone economic landscape in Canada

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The Potential of the Economic *Francophonie*

3rd
Business
language in the
world

320
Million speakers
worldwide



In 2050

750
million speakers worldwide



85% will be African

14%
of global reserves
of mineral and
energy resources

20%
of global
merchandise trade

16%
of global gross
national product



• Francophonie of the Americas

33 million
Francophones and
Francophiles



ÉTATS-UNIS
ESPACE CARAÏBE
AMÉRIQUE LATINE

UNITED STATES
CARIBBEAN
LATIN AMERICA



Courtesy Translation

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• In the United States

Working and doing business in French, an added value!

French is the third most requested foreign language by employers.

Demand for French-speaking workers doubled between 2010 and 2015.

25% of U.S. businesses have suffered losses due to a lack of foreign language skills.

Large companies in all fields are looking for candidates who are fluent in French.



Source: *Making Languages Our Business: Addressing Foreign Language Demand Among U.S. Employers*, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

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• 33 million business opportunities in the Americas

Labour pool that can be quickly integrated

Potential market of people who understand French and/or are interested in Francophone culture

Business network to **which you already belong**



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Francophone Economy



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