

University Level Activities and Programs  
for Francophones and Francophiles  
in British Columbia <sup>1</sup>  
A Call to Action

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Prepared for  
La Fédération des Francophones de la Colombie-Britannique

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## Acknowledgements

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## 1. Introduction

During the past four years, postsecondary education has become a priority for the French-speaking population in British Columbia. Following the report of the Working Committee on French-Language Postsecondary Education<sup>2</sup> completed in June 1998, and from the findings of a document entitled Post Secondary French in British Columbia, a key question was examined: What does the student body think? The preference among the respondents was to explore a new way of thinking about and identifying alternative approaches to deliver postsecondary education in French. (Appendix 1)

Drawing not only on the results of existing studies, but also on what is feasible and realistic, this document proposes a new direction and an action plan to address shortcomings in the current approach to university level French education in British Columbia.

The author has identified and interviewed key stakeholders at the university level who would be involved in the planning and implementation of the proposed initiatives, and has solicited and obtained their commitment and their support.

Our battle cry: *A call to action* forms the basis for the preparation and submission of this report.

## 2. National Context

Several elements in a 2002 report prepared by the Fédération des communautés francophones et Acadienne (FCFA), entitled Communities in Action: the Politics of Total Development<sup>2</sup> (La Politique de développement global), and a recent speech by the Hon. Stéphane Dion, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Privy Council, provide a national perspective on the hopes and aspirations of French Canadians living in minority communities<sup>4</sup>.

In his speech, *Strengthening Linguistic Duality to Benefit all Canadians*<sup>7</sup>, the Hon. Stephane Dion began by noting that Prime Minister Chretien has challenged him to co-ordinate the Government of Canada's official languages policy and, in the Prime Minister's words, "*consider strong new measures that will continue to ensure the vitality of minority official language communities.*"<sup>8</sup> These strong measures must also ensure "*Canada's official languages are better reflected in the culture of the federal public service.*"<sup>9</sup>

Minister Dion announced that he will submit an action plan in the autumn 2002 that will provide new impetus to the current official languages policy. *The plan will develop along three pillars: education, community development and the federal public service.*<sup>10</sup>

The Minister also acknowledges that creating accountability mechanisms, as suggested in the FCFA report, will provide a constant reminder to ministers and government officials that linguistic duality is a high priority. He also indicated that the plan of action in his report will reinforce the nine priority sectors identified by the FCF.

Addressing the first of the three pillars—education—Mr. Dion indicated to his audience that the federal government wants to increase accessibility to French language teaching at the university level, because, as he points out, *post secondary institutions have a catalytic effect on local business development and French entrepreneurial activity.*<sup>11</sup>

According to the government's figures, 24% of current young Canadian high school graduates know both official languages, but Mr. Dion challenges us to double that percentage within the next eight years. As he points out, *however nothing is possible in education without the involvement of the provinces.*<sup>12</sup>

Mr. Dion acknowledges that there is a growing teacher shortage across Canada that is particularly acute in specialised areas such as French immersion. At the same time, the demand for second language teachers already outstrips supply. Enrolment in second language programs has not grown in ten years, both for core programs in either language and specifically in French immersion programs. The situation is acute outside of



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managerial level is creating significant structural problems in the education, public administration and community development sectors.

Over the next eight years, more than 40,000 university professors will need to be hired to meet the demand. Considering that Canadian universities produce only 4000 doctorate degrees annually, and only half of them take up a teaching or research position at the university level, the shortage may be catastrophic. Similar scenarios exist in many parts of the public and private sectors, particularly among professional health care workers, speciality



The report from the FCFA (2002) Communities in Action: The Politics of Total Development points out that the federal government contributes close to \$300 million each year to the provincial governments and territories through the implementation of educational programs for both official languages. Among other things, this investment enables those governments to provide the youth population in minority language communities (of both official languages) with an education in their own language. As the authors of the report point out, this program *has been in operation since 1972, well before the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.*<sup>21</sup>

It signals also that the federal government is becoming more and more interested in the post-secondary teaching in French, particularly in areas of high demand such as health and training, although much still remains to be done.

Learners in minority Francophone communities must be able to receive the quality of education at least equal to that of the majority. This principle has significant funding implications, as it is not possible to provide the types of language programs at the recommended quality solely on the basis of a per capita funding mechanism. Funding should be based on a combination of quality and needs rather than on a strict headcount.

The FCFA also reiterates the need to assure more collaboration between Francophones and Francophiles by encouraging more networking between the two groups.

### **3. Provincial Perspective**

#### **3.1. Francophones and Francophiles in British Columbia**

According to the 1996 census, there are some 250,365 Francophones and Francophiles representing nearly 7% of the British Columbia population. This statistic is important as it represents the highest concentration of Francophones and Francophiles outside of Quebec, after Ontario (1,281,835) and New Brunswick (311,175) and ahead of Manitoba (100,635), Saskatchewan (51,115) and Alberta (180,120) (see appendix 2).



*has been expressed in establishing a system of post secondary education in French in British Columbia.*<sup>23</sup>

The findings of a study conducted by the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie Britannique in 2000, suggests that the first choice of Francophone respondents is for the creation of a Bachelor of Arts program (31%),

In the same vein, Saskatchewan with its relatively small Francophone population has always been better served than Francophones in British Columbia. The substantial investment over the years by the Federal Government in l'Institut linguistique de l'Université de Régina is a good example.

It is counter productive to point fingers or apportion blame. The aim of this report, above all, is to suggest substantive ways to rectify a regrettable situation and take significant steps toward responding rapidly to the university level needs and aspirations of the young Francophone and Francophile population in British Columbia.

### 3.2. University Level French in British Columbia

There is an identifiable gap between the ideal situation being advocated for Francophone and Francophile communities living in minority environments and the current pragmatic reality of what can be realistically achieved. At the same time, there is also a gap between what the respondents in surveys indicate as their preferences and the ability of post-secondary institutions to respond quickly to satisfy these preferences.

It would seem to make sense therefore to explore possible ways of using existing programs, institutional structures and the available infrastructure to expand the program offerings.

This approach to narrowing the gaps has been explored with representatives from the francophone and francophile communities, and considerable effort has been made to gauge the level of internal support among university stakeholders and externally. It is a bold initiative and it would be the first time that this particular thrust has been tried in British Columbia.

The conclusions from the various consultations suggest that it is important to have an identifiable "home" for this initiative within an existing university environment. The success of the proposed program will depend significantly on having an Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs created within the university to promote and nurture the program base and also to sensitise the communities to the significant benefits that will accrue.

The success of this venture will depend also on a significant investment in the areas of marketing, promotion and community relations. The proposal calls for a substantial financial investment. This will ensure that an adequate awareness campaign is realised through effective marketing and promotion both within the educational institutions as well as among the various Francophone communities. The proposed level of funding is also necessary to ensure the appropriate level of quality for the programs.

Justification for recommending the use of an existing program structure within Simon Fraser University has several components. Moving a new degree program through the formal approval process in any university is a time consuming process. It is far more expedient to obtain the necessary approvals and modifications to existing program structures. Therefore, capitalising on existing programs means that the proposed degree can be implemented in a timely manner.

Secondly, the existing Integrated Studies Degree program is reasonably well suited to the introduction of the proposed program content that centers on issues of public administration and community development. Support for this type of program was evident in the survey responses and is consistent with studies that point to the growing demand for workers in these sectors of the economy.

Finally, what is being proposed would be unique in Canada and a significant step toward realising the vision outlined by the FCFA and reflected in the remarks of the Hon. Stephane Dion, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

#### **4. Proposals**

A series of proposals is presented for consideration that reflect current



Education, and the acquisition of necessary funds from the federal government in order to bring the proposed activities to fruition and manage them over time.

#### 4.1. Proposals concerning Simon Fraser University (SFU)

##### 4.1.1.1. Host University

**We propose that Simon Fraser University become the lead university for French activities on a university level for Francophones and Francophiles in British Columbia.**

*Explanation and justification:* The heart of British Columbia's Francophone community is located within the area served by Simon Fraser University. Forty-five percent of British Columbia's Francophone population live in the Vancouver region. In addition, the current President and former Vice President Academic at York University (Glendon College), Dr. Michael Stevenson enthusiastically supports this new initiative for the benefit of Francophones and Francophiles in British Columbia. The acceptance by Simon Fraser University does, however, depend on the acquisition of necessary funds from the OLE Program.

Furthermore, Simon Fraser University has a long and distinguished history of commitment and involvement in academic activities in French offered through its Faculty of Education and its Department of French (Appendix 3).

depends as much on good advertising as on the quality of the personnel and activities. In addition, Francophones and Francophiles in British Columbia have some significant catching up to do compared with other provinces. (See Appendix 1)

**We propose that Simon Fraser University establish an Advisory Committee.**

*Explanation and justification:* Francophones and Francophiles want to have their say in the development and management of this project. The Advisory Committee (see Appendix 5) would report directly to the Academic-Vice President of Simon Fraser University and would work closely with the Director of the Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs.

The Advisory Committee would be comprised of the following:

- A representative of the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie Britannique;
- A representative of the Fédération des Francophones de la Colombie Britannique;
- A representative from the Fédération des parents francophones de la Colombie Britannique;
- A representative from Canadian Parents for French;
- Two students (a Francophone and a Francophile) registered at SFU;
- A representative from the Société de développement économique de la Colombie Britannique;
- The Dean of the Faculty of Arts at SFU or the Dean's representative;
- The Dean of the Faculty of Education at SFU or the Dean's representative;
- The Director of Continuing Education at SFU or the Director's representative;
- A representative from the French Department at SFU;
- A representative of Heritage Canada;
- A representative of the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education;
- The Director of the Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs at SFU (ex officio).

### 4.3. Programs

After the establishment of the Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs, the first two proposed activities would be the following:

*Degree in community development and public administration*

**We propose that Simon Fraser University offer Francophones and Francophiles an undergraduate degree program in community development and public administration delivered in French.**

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students who have finished five semesters of courses (75 credits) are eligible to apply for this intensive three semester program offered over the course of twelve months.

Graduate level programs in Education in French should be expanded and highly publicised. Professional development activities play an important role not only in the “training” of highly qualified teachers but also have a significant impact on different aspects of the profession from research to retention. The expanded programs both at the undergraduate and graduate levels would also make it possible to attract Francophone and Francophile students from abroad.

Undergraduate degrees in Business Administration and Nursing deserve to be considered for the future.

Availability of the different programs and program contentions, especially to students in non-urban regions, could be accomplished through co-operation between Simon Fraser University and the Canadian Virtual University.

#### 4.5. Marketing and promotion (internal)

Once the Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs is established and the two recommended programs are in place, the Director should be able to broaden its mandate to include additional opportunities for students to gain academically relevant experiences in the French language.

For example:



## 5. Conclusion

The proposals outlined in the previous section have been designed in response to specific economic and demographic contexts; they reflect the views and aspirations of francophone and francophile students in BC; and they have been crafted with significant input from leading Francophone authorities. Francophones and Francophiles in British Columbia at the university level have some significant catching up to do compared to other provinces such as Ontario, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta to name the most evident.

Canada is experiencing significant structural labour shortages and these are particularly evident in high demand sectors such as education, community development and the federal public service. British Columbia is no exception. Current data and trend projections point to a critical shortage of French teachers, and French immersion teachers. The situation is acute in many non-urban francophone communities across the province.

The demand for quality language services for minority populations, particularly at the university level is significant enough to warrant recommending the establishment of an Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs, which would be hosted by Simon Fraser University. It is further recommended that existing degree program structures and the supporting infrastructure be utilised in order to expedite the timely creation of the proposed language programs and services.

Once the Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs has been created, one degree program would be offered initially by bachelor's degree with a concentration in community development and public administration. In addition the undergraduate professional development program in education, for future elementary level French and immersion school teachers would be expanded along with the Master of Arts and Master of Education programs in French Education.

A cornerstone of the proposals outlined in this report is the premise that learners in minority francophone communities must be able to receive the quality of education at least equal to that of the majority. This principle has significant funding implications, as it is not possible to provide the types of language programs at the recommended quality solely on the basis of a per

capita funding mechanism. Funding should be based on a combination of quality and needs rather than on a strict headcount, and in order to ensure the success of the Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs and its programs, significant investment must be made in the areas of promotion, marketing and community relations.

The recommendations contained in the report are consistent with the federal government's stated priority as reflected in the Prime Minister's words "*consider strong new measures that will continue to ensure the vitality of minority official language communities.*"<sup>25</sup> They reinforce research findings and survey results by leading Francophone organisations, and they have the



## 6. Appendices

### Appendix 1

# POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN FRENCH IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: What does the student clientele think?

September 2000

## Executive Summary

In recognition of Canada's growth as a bilingual country, the Francophone population in British Columbia has been working toward the development of a system of post secondary education in the French language. In its efforts to make this dream a reality, the *Fédération de francophones de la Colombie-Britannique* (FCB), has put together a project which examines in detail the aspirations of Francophone as well as French Immersion students coming out of high schools in the British Columbia area. This project has looked at many of the different aspects *which* with post secondary education including students' intentions with regard to post secondary education, their interest in receiving this education in French, their preferred programs, and the delivery modes most likely to interest them.

A total of 5,474 questionnaires were administered in 84 schools and 2,077 responses were received. The results of the survey suggest that 84% of the student population is planning to attend a post secondary institution. Of this 84%, at least half of the students want to continue their studies in English, 32% in both French and English, and 1% would like to continue their post secondary education in French (17% of the students were undecided). Among this 1%, almost half of the respondents would be more interested if the program existed in British Columbia. When the 32% who expressed an interest in both languages were asked the same question, 41% of the respondents were favourable.

When the students were asked if they would be interested in a French program if it existed in British Columbia, the vast majority answered in the affirmative. The disciplines that students seemed most interested in included

Bachelor of Arts (31%) Bachelor of Science (17%) Medicine (11%) and Law (4%).

The study also looked at the various modes of learning that the students seem to be most interested in. 81% responded that they would prefer the delivery of post secondary programs by teachers in the classroom. When the students were asked about their preference of a combination of teachers in the classroom as well as videoconferencing and the Internet, 49% of the students preferred a combination of teachers in the classroom as well as videoconferencing and the Internet.

Table 1

**Francophone and Francophiles in Canada,  
by Province and Territory (1996)**

<b>Province or territory</b>	<b>Francophones</b>		<b>Francophiles</b>	
<b>Canada without Quebec</b>	<b>1,005,475</b>	<b>(4.7%)</b>	<b>1,302,610</b>	<b>(6.1%)</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	2,600	(0.5%)	18,815	(3.4%)
Prince Edward Island	5,890	(4.4%)	8,850	(6.7%)
Nova Scotia	37,600	(4.2%)	47,750	(5.3%)
New Brunswick	245,095	(33.6%)	66,080	(9.1%)
Ontario	520,860	(4.9%)	760,975	(7.2%)
Manitoba	50,565	(4.6%)	54,070	(4.9%)
Saskatchewan	20,745	(2.1%)	30,370	(3.1%)
Alberta	58,305	(2.2%)	121,815	(4.6%)
<b>British Columbia</b>	<b>60,675</b>	<b>(1.6%)</b>	<b>189,690</b>	<b>(5.1%)</b>
Yukon	1,230	(4.0%)	2,030	(6.6%)



## **Department of French\***

### Historical perspective

Since the opening of the university in 1965 there has been a strong program in French leading to the **B.** and M.A.

Between 1974-1984 a professional Master of Arts in French ~~for~~ ~~service~~ French teachers was offered by the Faculty of Arts with an average intake of 30 students per cohort for three consecutive intensive on-campus summer sessions of fulltime coursework, covering aspects of linguistic analysis applied to the study of the French language. Over the 10 years in which the program was offered 40 students graduated. This program was very successful but was abandoned due to university financial ~~constraints~~.

The present











**Year five**

Office of Francophones and Francophiles Affairs	\$596,665
Program Offers	\$1,250,000
Funds for the development of new activities	\$200,000
Sub Total	\$2,046,665
Total	\$7,615,478

Note: Budget estimate for the Office of Francophones and Francophiles Affairs are based on a yearly increase of 5%.

The costs related to the program offers will stabilize at \$1,250,000 per year.

Compared to the Université Laurentienne whose programs have existed for decades, and that receive more than \$7,000,000 per year for the 750 students enrolled in its French programs or \$9,934 per student, the cost of this request is, after five years, at \$1,946,665 for 160 learners or \$12,166 per learner.

Appendix 7

**Budget estimate  
for the Office of Francophones and Francophiles Affairs**

Expenditure	Personnel		
	Salaries and benefits	Director	\$85,000
		Recruiting agents (2)	* \$110,000
		Executive Secretary	\$45,000
		Sub Total	\$230,000

Operating Expenses

Promotion and marketing	\$20,000
Transportation	\$70,000
Office space	\$20,000
Telephone	\$12,000
Miscellaneous (software,	

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## Appendix 8

### **Additional Suggestions**

The following suggestions are not in the report *Le postsecondaire en*

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La Fédération des Français de la Colombie

