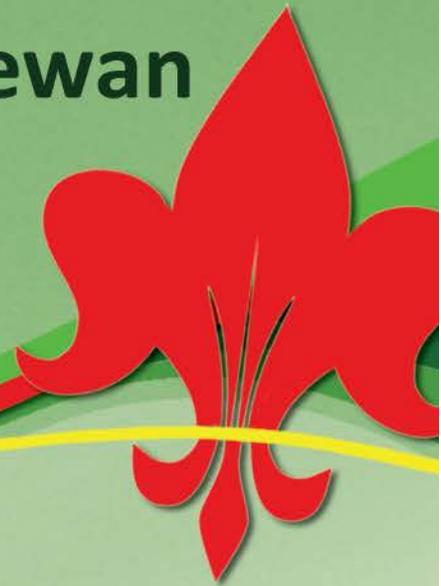


**Report of the
Advisory Committee on
Francophone Affairs
Government of Saskatchewan**



July 2017

French-language Early Learning and Child Care Services

Letter of Transmittal

The Honorable Nadine Wilson:

It is my pleasure to present this report of the Advisory Committee on Francophone Affairs following our meeting which took place on June 17, 2016, in Regina.

In order to better understand early learning and child care in French, we met with community organizations and senior representatives from the Ministry of Education. We discussed the importance of early intervention in the transmission of language and culture and the challenges that are faced by child care centers and early learning programs.

Studies have shown that linguistic groups living in a minority setting can lose their cultural and linguistic identity overtime unless children and parents are given access to quality services that enable children to learn French at a very young age. Francophone child care centres and early learning programs are the starting point of the linguistic vitality and a gateway to the French language.

On behalf of the members of our committee, I am pleased to present you with this report and the eight recommendations that resulted from our meeting. The committee hopes the recommendations encourage constructive collaboration and initiatives that will address the importance of French-language early learning opportunities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MDubé', written in a cursive style.

Michel Dubé
Chair of the Advisory Committee on Francophone Affairs

July 2017

Executive Summary

“Children develop language abilities in many ways. The environment that supports children’s language learning encourages them to use various means to represent understanding. It is important to provide an environment that invites children to use language in many ways”¹.

Studies have shown that the earlier a language is introduced to children, the easier it is for them to maintain this language. At the same time, studies have also shown that being bilingual or trilingual offers more opportunities in one’s professional career path. For Francophones living in a minority context, this issue is bigger than being successful professionally. It is a matter of linguistic identity, culture and heritage that if not maintained or promoted, can be lost in future generations.

Since children tend to identify with the environment they live in, one cannot deny how critical early learning is in a child’s development. In a predominantly Anglophone society, and without adequate services that support a Francophone culture and language, the child identifies with the Anglophone culture and language which leads to assimilation.

In Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Education is responsible for child care services, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs. The Early Learning and Child Care Branch of the Ministry of Education oversees the application of the law (*The Child Care Act, 2014 and the The Child Care Regulations, 2015*) and is responsible for child care services, consultations and the development of standards and training.

On June 17, 2016, Members of the Advisory Committee on Francophone Affairs had the opportunity to meet with representatives from the Ministry of Education. They also listened to several Francophone organizations as they discussed the challenges they face in regards to providing French-language services in early childhood centres and early learning programs.

The following are recommendations that were developed following these consultations:

Recommendations:

1. That the Ministry of Education, Early Learning and Child Care Branch, meet with the *Association des parents fransaskois (APF)* on an annual basis to discuss issues faced by French-language early learning and child care centres in Saskatchewan and how the government can help to respond to these issues.

¹ *Children First: A Resource for Kindergarten – 2009 Saskatchewan Curriculum*
<http://publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/11/89610Children%20First%20A%20Resource%20for%20Kindergarten.pdf>

2. That the Ministry of Education consider the creation of a permanent full time bilingual position within the Early Learning and Child Care Branch in order to ensure an ongoing liaison between the ministry and Francophone child care centres.
3. That the Ministry of Education include space for a child care component in the construction of new Francophone schools and for those renovating existing infrastructures.
4. That the Ministry of Education considers adding French language as criteria for the allocation of new child care spaces.
5. That the Ministry of Education consider developing the curriculum to offer French-language high school classes in Early Childhood Education (ECE) that can be transferred as credits towards the completion of an ECE certificate.
6. That the Ministry of Education consult with the Francophone community to identify and prioritize the translation of additional material that will facilitate the management of Francophone child care facilities as well as increase the number of tools available to educators.
7. That the Ministry of Advanced Education collaborate with the Collège Mathieu to increase French-language resources that can be used in the training of childhood educators.
8. That the Ministry of Education work with Regional Health Authorities and the Conseil des écoles Fransaskois (CÉF) to facilitate access to professionals needed for the early detection of special needs in children and increase access to services in French for these children.

Committee Mandate

In 2003, the Government of Saskatchewan adopted its French-language Services Policy. With this policy, the Government of Saskatchewan committed to “enhancing services offered to the Francophone community of Saskatchewan in support of the development and vitality of this community.”²

The policy is organized according to three areas:

1. Communication;
2. Development and delivery of services; and,
3. Consultation.

² Government of Saskatchewan French-language Services Policy :
<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/~media/files/executive%20council/bonjour/french%20language%20services%20policy.pdf>

The mandate of the Advisory Committee on Francophone Affairs is to advise the Provincial Secretary through the review and analysis of programs and policies to guide the implementation of Saskatchewan's French-language Services Policy.

Demographic Portrait

Francophone child care spaces

Since 2007, the Government of Saskatchewan has made a record investment in licensed child care, allocating funding for 4,935 new child care spaces across the province. Within the same period, the number of child care spaces in Francophone child care centres has risen from 175 to 293, an overall increase of 67 per cent.

As of June 2016, there are nine child care facilities in the CÉF schools accommodating a total of 293 children, while 258 children are on a waiting list.

Child care centres	Number of educators (full-time, part-time and on call).	Children placed in daycares 2015 - 2016	Children on the waiting list 2015 - 2016	License Date
Gard'Amis (Regina)	22	71	171	1991
Félix le chat (Saskatoon)	15	64	53	1995
Les étoiles filantes (Ponteix)	5	12	0	2006
Pomme D'Api (Moose Jaw)	7	28	12	2007
Les petits pingouins (North Battleford)	4	25	5	2010
Le Tournesol (Gravelbourg)	6	28	3	2010
La petite jungle (Vonda)	3	25	4	2014
Trésors du monde (Prince Albert)	5	20	10	2014
Les petits pois (Bellevue)	3	20	0	2015
TOTAL	70	293	258	

Funding and costs

When funding child care spaces, the province does not distinguish between Anglophone and Francophone centers. The language of care is not taken into consideration. Of the 293 child care spaces in the CÉF schools, 283 receive funding through standard grants that are also available to non-profit child care centres.

Current Challenges

The challenges mentioned by Francophone organizations are for the most part very similar to those faced by Anglophone organizations. The difference is that due to the added need for linguistic proficiency, some of the challenges are magnified.

Human Resources: For many reasons, training and retaining staff has become an increasingly difficult task over the years. Remuneration for educators is low and causes them to seek better paying opportunities.

Infrastructure: Francophone child care centres have seen a significant increase in demand, primarily in urban areas, but have not been able to develop the infrastructure necessary to offer additional spaces to accommodate them. As well, existing infrastructure is in need of renovations.

Francization: The transmission of the French language and helping children to identify with the Francophone culture in early learning centers play an important role in slowing down the rate of assimilation and even perhaps in re-introducing the language and culture to families that have skipped a generation.

Awareness: Families with young children looking for French-language learning opportunities, including exogamous³ couples and those who have newly arrived, are not always made aware of the opportunities that exist in our province.

Content in French: There is not enough resources available in French for childhood educators and directors of child care centres interested in professional development or for them to develop new programming.

Dialogue and consultation: Francophone organizations in this field would like to work closely with the Ministry of Education in order to include Francophone objectives in its annual planning.

Finance: Challenges of a financial nature remain among the most important obstacles.

Building Awareness and Ministry Capacity

First step toward a better understanding and stronger partnerships

Recommendation # 1

That the Ministry of Education, Early Learning and Child Care Branch, meet with the *Association des parents fransaskois (APF)* on an annual basis to discuss issues faced by French-language early learning and child care centres in Saskatchewan and how the government can help to respond to these issues.

³ *Exogamous: couples that are made up of a Francophone and a spouse who has another mother tongue or cultural background*

In the past, the APF has met with Ministry of Education's ELCC Branch, however, it is not a formal practice.

The Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association (SECA), represented at this meeting, meets with the Ministry of Education twice a year to discuss issues such as grants and professional development. The APF would like to have a similar opportunity for dialogue and consultation in order for the Ministry of Education to be aware of the ongoing issues the APF and its stakeholders are facing and to discuss the organizational goals it has set to achieve the desired annual outcomes.

Recommendation # 2

That the Ministry of Education consider the creation of a permanent full time bilingual position within the Early Learning and Child Care Branch in order to ensure an ongoing liaison between the ministry and Francophone child care centres.

The ELCC Service Delivery Branch is divided into three service areas, Southern, Central and Northern Regions, all three contain Francophone communities. While there is occasionally a bilingual ELCC consultant, this position is not officially a bilingual position nor is it a point of contact for Francophone organizations who work in the field of early learning or child care throughout the province.

In June of 2010, the advisory committee met with the Ministry of Education and the creation of a bilingual consultant position within the unit responsible for early learning and child care was recommended at that time as well. It was suggested it would ensure a consistent level of French-language services to both parents and institutions.

The number of Francophone child care centres has significantly increased since the report in 2010. The committee is re-submitting this recommendation as they strongly believe that relations between the Ministry of Education and the Francophone early learning and child care centres would benefit from the presence of a French-speaking employee that can communicate with directors in their first-language.

Building Capacity in the Sector

Recommendation # 3

That the Ministry of Education include space for a child care component in the construction of new Francophone schools and for those renovating existing infrastructures.

The Government of Saskatchewan announced the building of 18 elementary schools on nine joint-use sites in the communities of Saskatoon, Regina, Warman and Martensville. Students, teachers, parents, school divisions and community members were involved in

the design process to prepare the school designs. The P3 schools are also being designed with the community in mind, providing after school access to:

- The community resource centre
- Gymnasium
- Multi-purpose rooms

Each joint-use school will have a 90 space early learning centre - an additional 810 spaces across the province.

From a Francophone perspective, the committee would like the ministry to give the same considerations when negotiating with the CÉF for new infrastructure projects.

Although plans for Francophone schools built in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert and Moose Jaw included community and early learning spaces, the growth these schools have experienced has required the CEF to appropriate some of the space for additional classrooms, leaving less space for early learning and child care services.

The inability to offer these services causes an interruption in the language learning process. The schools in Regina and Saskatoon have the highest number of children waiting for spaces in a Francophone child care centre with 53 and 171 children respectively. If considerations are made, when building new facilities or expanding on current infrastructure, to accommodate a child care centre and early learning programs as part of the planning process, overcrowding and lack of space could be avoided to some extent.

Recommendation # 4

That the Ministry of Education considers adding French language as criteria for the allocation of new child care spaces.

Currently, language of care is not considered when deciding on the funding of additional child care spaces. When child care spaces are allocated in the budget each year, the Ministry of Education looks at factors such as:

- Community readiness
- Population Growth
- Population of children between the ages of 0-5
- Number of parents between the ages of 15-39 in a community

If language is not considered in the allocation of child care spaces, the number of spaces will not grow proportionally to accommodate children of parents whose preferred language of instruction is French. It is well documented that the best time to learn a new language is when we are very young. Enabling children to learn the language before

they enter the school system would also facilitate their transition into Francophone schools. Less time and energy would have to be placed on francization.

Recommendation # 5

That the Ministry of Education consider developing the curriculum to offer French-language high school classes in Early Childhood Education (ECE) that can be transferred as credits towards the completion of an ECE certificate.

As mentioned in the Commissioner of Official Languages Annual Report 2015-2016⁴, one of the key challenges in developing early childhood services within Francophone minority communities is finding French-speaking staff trained in early childhood education, particularly in rural areas.

The committee encourages the Ministry of Education to continue to work closely with the Collège Mathieu, the only post-secondary institution that offers an accredited ECE program in French in the province, as the demand for more educators continues to increase.

One of the possibilities that the committee suggests to help promote a career as an early childhood educator is adopting a French version of the ECE Dual Credit courses.

In 2015, the Government of Saskatchewan announced that it would be expanding its dual credit partnership with Saskatchewan Polytechnic to offer high school students three more courses that will be recognized as a credit toward both high school graduation and an Early Childhood Education certificate or diploma.

The courses are available province-wide to all grade 11 and 12 students. A similar program should be developed for Francophone and French Immersion schools, allowing students to explore the field as a career path before finalizing their post-secondary education plans.

Recommendation # 6

That the Ministry of Education consult with the Francophone community to identify and prioritize the translation of additional material that will facilitate the management of Francophone child care facilities as well as increase the number of tools available to educators.

The translation of the *Child Care Act* had been a long standing request by the community. Bilingual legislation, *The Child Care Act, 2014* and *The Child Care Regulations, 2015*, were proclaimed on June 15th, 2015. The community now has

⁴ <http://www.officiallanguages.gc.ca/en/publications/annual-reports/2015-2016>

access to regulations in French and Francophone child care centres have forms and information that they can use when dealing with Francophone parents.

Child Care centres would now like the government to focus on developing additional tools and resources that can be used by educators, parents, and other stakeholders when working with children in care.

To further support this recommendation, the Government of Saskatchewan's Services Centre *Bonjour!* team has been conducting a provincial tour in an effort to create dialogue and see how the Francophone Affairs Branch could better respond to the needs of the Fransaskois community. Among the many recommendations heard in these meetings, the request to have more information regarding programs and services available in early learning and child care in French was brought up in most consultations held so far (e.g. Child Care Subsidy Application, Child Care Licensee Manual).

Recommendation # 7

That the Ministry of Advanced Education collaborate with the Collège Mathieu to increase French-language resources that can be used in the training of childhood educators.

In order to ensure that educators receive an education comparable to those learning in English, the committee encourages the Ministry of Education to work with the Collège Mathieu to develop supplemental resources in French for these courses as they are often hard to find.

Recommendation # 8

That the Ministry of Education work with Regional Health Authorities and the Conseil des écoles Fransaskois (CÉF) to facilitate access to professionals needed for the early detection of special needs in children and increase access to services in French for these children.

When a child with special needs requires the attention of a medical professional (speech pathologist, child psychologist, etc.), they are referred to their RHA where services are often only available in English.

The committee feels it is important for a working relationship to be established between the ministry, RHAs and the CÉF to determine how these Francophone children with special needs could be evaluated in their first language and then receive services in French. This would improve the accuracy of diagnosis, the productivity of interventions and the ultimate outcomes for these children.

Conclusion

In Saskatchewan, the Early Learning and Child care programs of the Ministry of Education support high-quality care for children in healthy, safe and nurturing environments. Good quality child care services are described by the ministry as supporting the social, emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual development of children. There are a number of questions that parents ask when choosing a service provider for their children. For Francophone families, the question of language and culture also come into play. In order to create an environment that is safe and nurturing that also supports the social and linguistic development of Francophone children, the committee feels it is important to work together to increase the availability of early learning and child care opportunities, the number of well-trained early childhood educators and the resources that will be used to provide these services.

Next meeting

Members of the committee meet approximately three times a year. It is the committee's intent to produce a similar report following each theme meeting with recommendations for the Provincial Secretary responsible for Francophone Affairs. The committee has renewed its mandate and has introduced four new members to its panel.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FRANCOPHONE AFFAIRS
LIST OF APPOINTED MEMBERS (June 2016)**

Michel Dubé (Chair), Prince Albert

Mr. Michel Dubé was born in Duck Lake, Saskatchewan. He has been involved with the Fransaskois community for a long time, notably in community development and education. He was a member of the board of the Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise (ACF) from 1999 to 2010, first as community representative from the Prince Albert district and then as president from 2006 to 2010. He is currently the president of the Société canadienne-française de Prince Albert.

Mr. Dubé has been a journalist, consultant and entrepreneur. He has owned several businesses including a produce farm and a fishing lodge. He is now owner of a small store featuring local goods and operates a bison farm north of Prince Albert.

Élizabeth Perreault, Hoey

Ms. Élizabeth Perreault and her husband own and operate a farm in Hoey. Ms. Perreault has volunteered within many organizations in her community, including the local Francophone association and the Francophone school in her area. She has represented the St-Isidore school district (Bellevue) on the Conseil scolaire fransaskois since 2008.

Martin Prince, Delmas

Mr. Martin Prince is one of the owners of Prince Valley Farm Ltd., a family farm operation. He has a Bachelor of Arts in political science and history from the University of Ottawa and a Bachelor of Science (agriculture business and food management) from the University of Alberta. He sat on the Provincial Youth Advisory Committee between 2001 and 2003. Mr. Prince volunteers with his local parish, the Francophone community centre and Francophone school. He and his wife have four children.

Luc Leblanc, Regina

Mr. Luc Leblanc was raised in New Brunswick where he earned a diploma in sheet metal fabrication and later earned his Red Seal Journey Person Certification. He is currently the president of Luxury Mechanical/LMC Projects, a business specialized in residential mechanical ventilation systems. As a volunteer, he sits on the board of directors at Centre éducatif Gard'Amis (a Francophone child care centre) and is a ringette coach. Mr. Leblanc and his wife have worked with youth facing substance abuse issues. He is a regular speaker at Portage Atlantic Adolescent Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program Center and its parent support program.

Jean Nepo Murwanashyaka, Regina

Mr. Jean Nepo Murwanashyaka has lived in several countries and in several regions of Canada before settling in Saskatoon. He is now living in Regina. Working with a firm of engineers in the mining sector, he has developed knowledge and expertise in project management, process engineering and problem analysis. Mr. Murwanashyaka is also very active in the French-speaking African community of Saskatchewan.

Guylaine Patenaude, Saskatoon

Ms. Guylaine Patenaude was born in Manitoba but moved to Saskatchewan at a very early age. She worked for more than 10 years with the Association jeunesse fransaskoise (youth organization) and just recently received her certification in special events coordination. In 2010, she was awarded the Prix Jeune femme remarquable du Canada by the Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne (alliance of Canadian Francophone women).

Joanne Perreault, Hoey

Ms. Joanne Perreault worked for more than 10 years with the Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise (ACF), several years of which as deputy director. Living in Hoey, Ms. Perreault is self-employed, providing consultation and coordination services, and continues to be involved with the Fransaskois community.

Françoise Sigur-Cloutier, Regina

Originally from France and established in Saskatchewan for more than twenty-five years, Ms. Sigur-Cloutier has worked within the Francophone community both at the provincial and national levels. Having completed postsecondary studies in philosophy and education, she has also studied in the area of administration. Ms. Sigur-Cloutier worked as director of communications for Radio-Canada and is presently employed as a consultant. Ms. Sigur-Cloutier is president of the Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise.