

L'Aquilon

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France Answer to Teacher Shortage

Canadian Parents for French says the agreement with France and the Action Plan for Official Languages could be the answer to the shortage of French Second Language teachers.

Denis Lord

The Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023 will help alleviate the shortage of French Second Language teachers in Canada. So said Nicole Thibault, the executive director of Canadian Parents for French (CPF), on a stop in Yellowknife.

“The Action Plan includes \$31 million for developing a strategy to recruit French Second Language teachers, and another \$31 million for teachers for rights holders,” she noted.

Thibault indicated that a meeting of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and the Minister of Canadian Heritage is scheduled for the end of June in Ottawa, and that CPF will be there to follow up on the issue.

An agreement signed on June 6 by the Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne and the Conférence des Présidents d'Université in France is also part of the solution. According to Thibault, the agreement provides initially that 50 to 100 teachers trained at six French universities will be coming to Canada to teach over the next 18 months.

The teacher shortage is already being acutely felt across Canada, and especially in Toronto, Halifax and Vancouver. “The teacher training program has gone from one year to two, which means we’ve lost a group,” Thibault explained. In addition, in British Columbia, a Supreme Court of Canada ruling that the number of students per French class be lowered to 22 has put upward pressure on the demand for teachers. “In Nova Scotia, not enough young people are enrolling in teacher education programs,” Thibault added.

“The shortage will continue to be felt over the next five years,” Thibault anticipates. “Things will get better in some regions. Care will have to be taken in selecting candidates for rural areas,” she said.

Cities such as Vancouver, with its high rental costs, are facing the same challenge as school boards across the province compete for teachers. In response, some boards are offering incentives, for example by covering moving costs.