

CPF *Canadian Parents for French*

SUBMISSION TO THE STANDING HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES
FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND THE ROADMAP

Check against delivery

1. Canadian Parents for French and the Roadmap

The Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality has provided Canadian Parents for French (CPF) with an opportunity to promote FSL education in Canada. In this manner, CPF has also helped Canadians appreciate the Roadmap's breadth and depth. We took part in the mid-term consultations for the Roadmap, and are pleased to be here today to follow up by speaking to its success and helping conceptualize a possible successor.

One of the objectives of the Roadmap is to allow all Canadians enjoy the benefits English and French have to offer. From our perspective, parents' increasing interest in choosing a FSL program - French immersion in particular – for their children is the most significant, grassroots expression of support for linguistic duality in English Canada. In other words, Anglophone and Allophone parents are demonstrating their support for linguistic duality by opting to give their children the chance to be bilingual in French and English. With French immersion numbers growing in the provinces of Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, to name four, the Roadmap's impact on FSL education can be deemed a success.

CPF, a not-for-profit parent organization now celebrating its 35th year, values linguistic duality and works to create, support and promote opportunities for non-Francophone youth to learn and use French.

Our three-tier structure allows our 25,000 members across Canada to engage actively with the school system from top to bottom, and with Francophone-minority Official Language communities outside Quebec. In the latter case, CPF is more often than not the preferred point of contact between the broader English-speaking community and the Francophones, especially in the west. CPF is seen to represent the point of view of 'Francophiles' – a currently popular designation for anyone who speaks French as a second or other language - as minority Francophone communities increasingly warm to the idea of integrating French-second-language speakers into their core communities. Preliminary data from Ontario suggests that there may be a correlation between higher enrolment in FSL programs and the presence of a strong Francophone community, so the relationship can be mutually beneficial.

On one level, the greatest significance of the Roadmap is that it is a strong public statement of intent on the part of the government to support and enhance Canada's linguistic duality. When you consider that in 2006, over three-quarters of Canadians stated their support for bilingualism for all Canada¹, a successor to the Roadmap with a

FSL focus is not only politically desirable but also provides an opportunity for government to define its legacy in nation-building through the enhancement of our linguistic duality.

How has CPF supported the development of FSL and consequently of linguistic duality? Our research, advocacy, support, guidance and youth programs have paved the way for parents to complement and protect their children's linguistic education at every level of our three-tier structure, be it local, provincial/territorial, or federal.

- A. Nationally, CPF helps inform policy-making through its biennial *State of French-Second-Language Education in Canada* reports, its FSL database, and targeted youth initiatives. The practicality of policies that support language education don't just enable parents to make the right choices for their children; they also help educators better access supports and teaching aids that benefit students, improve and define relationships between educator, student and parent, and help ensure the overall teaching environment is one that is adaptable to all student needs. CPF National also voices a unified national perspective on FSL education first by providing leadership to the entire CPF network, and subsequently through dialogue with other national organisations like the FSL Partner network – SEVEC, ACPI, CASLT, French for the Future and Canadian Youth for French.
- B. Provincially and territorially, CPF branches support and encourage Ministries of Education to enhance or increase their support of FSL. They also undertake socio-cultural initiatives like Bilingualism Rocks, a specially commissioned piece highlighting the shared historical experiences of official language communities in BC, Alberta and Yukon. This program alone gave 69 school performances, reaching an estimated 10,000 students, and leaving 20 schools in Alberta on a waiting list.
- C. At the school district level and even within individual school communities, CPF chapters actively support FSL through programming activities. For example, our Camrose, Alberta chapter reported that last year alone, its activities reached approximately 954 children.

2. *Enhancing support for linguistic duality through French second language education*

Un des résultats les plus inattendus de cette ferveur croissante du Canada anglophone pour la dualité linguistique par l'entremise des programmes scolaires de français comme langue seconde est celui de la transmission intergénérationnelle du français comme langue seconde. La première génération issue de l'immersion notamment envoie maintenant ses enfants au même programme scolaire, et dans certaines familles, il s'agit même d'une troisième génération d'apprenants. Selon nous, ce phénomène enlève l'apprentissage du français du domaine du choix personnel, de l'accomplissement individuel, pour le placer dans un courant socioculturel plus large, soit l'émergence d'une culture institutionnalisée d'apprentissage d'une deuxième langue officielle par une partie de la population canadienne de plus en plus nombreuse. Remarquons en passant qu'il y a

un phénomène parallèle du côté des enseignants, ou les produits de l'immersion deviennent à leur tour des enseignants en immersion.

De surcroît, cette transmission intergénérationnelle du français comme langue seconde démontre de la part du Canada anglophone un engagement envers cette langue, de ses cultures et de ses foyers en milieu minoritaire, ce qui pourrait entraîner une remise en question positive de la manière dont nous définissons au Canada l'identité linguistique de chaque citoyen.

Younger Canadians who became literate in both official languages see their ability to communicate and participate in both languages as their 'normal'. CPF sees the need to develop and implement legislation, policy and practices that started and should continue with the Roadmap as an opportunity to bring us closer to this reality for all Canadian youth and the expectation that these opportunities should be available to all students.

C'est grâce à la passion et au dévouement des parents de CPF que nombre de conseils scolaires à travers le Canada continuent à offrir, voire élargir l'offre, des programmes de français comme langue seconde, et ce, à une époque où les conseils font face à de graves pressions financières qui ailleurs ont mené à des consolidations d'écoles ou carrément des fermetures de programme.

Les actions de CPF - aider les surintendants scolaires à mieux comprendre l'utilisation du Guide de financement des ententes bilatérales, partager l'information pour faciliter le dialogue entre les parties prenantes du système scolaire - ont dans maintes instances débouché sur des solutions qui maintiennent des programmes scolaires dans nos écoles canadiennes.

Dans une veine semblable d'idées, et en lien avec la Feuille de route, CPF agit comme gardien bénévole des intérêts du fédéral quand il s'agit de l'emploi des fonds affectés aux ententes bilatérales découlant du Protocole des langues officielles dans l'enseignement. Plusieurs de nos sections locales exigent une plus grande transparence de la part des conseils scolaires dans leurs redditions de comptes, tandis que nos bureaux provinciaux encouragent les ministères de l'Éducation à faire preuve de plus grande exigence dans les rapports des conseils scolaires. C'est grâce ces efforts conjugués qu'au fil des ans il y eu une nette amélioration dans ce domaine.

3. A successor to the Roadmap: Building on FSL successes

What would a successor to the Roadmap look like, and what would be its goals?

The Commissioner for Official Languages has written that Official Languages rests on the notion that the majority of Canadians will remain unilingual. That may have been true 40 years ago; however, we are coming to realize that it may be time to rethink this assumption. Parents increasingly seek to ensure their children have the opportunity to learn both official languages by demanding or choosing that learning opportunity. Through a process of grassroots appropriation, many Canadians now interpret Official

Languages, and the underlying notion of linguistic duality, as meaning **individual** official language bilingualism. That to be truly Canadian is to be bilingual in both French and English. That access to programs like French immersion should be a right.

However challenging from a legislative and policy perspective, this last notion provides an unparalleled opportunity for government to display leadership on a number of fronts and to advance an ambitious agenda, even in a time of financial constraint. There are some pragmatic arguments to be made as well for a successor to Roadmap, including:

- Recruiting bilingual candidates for public service renewal;
- Building support for Official Languages among New Canadians, who already arrive in Canada with a positive attitude towards official language bilingualismⁱⁱ, through FSL opportunities for their young;
- Extending our success with FSL into the post-secondary area, particularly universities but not excluding colleges, so that bilingual high school graduates become bilingual working adults;
- Securing an adequate supply of qualified FSL teachers; and
- Using official language bilingualism as a springboard to individual plurilingualism in order to position our youth in a multilingual global economy.

4. Recommendations

In sum, Canada's Roadmap for Linguistic Duality has helped contribute to public recognition of the importance of official bilingualism. Support for Canada's official languages is on the rise, and with more youth engaging with linguistic duality across the country, this support is starting to manifest as support for individual official bilingualism and not just equal status for two distinct unilingual demographics. With this in mind, we offer the following recommendations for a successor to the Roadmap.

We recommend:

1. That the federal government plan for a successor to the Roadmap;
2. That a successor to the Roadmap build on the latter's successes in FSL education;
3. That the overarching goal of a successor to Roadmap be the gift to all Canadian children of the right to learn both official languages through the most effective program;
4. That future OLEP agreements focus on increasing the proportion of official-language bilinguals by:
 - a. Setting more aggressive targets for elementary and secondary program growth;
 - b. Increasing the "**Growth Grant**" within the OLEP school district funding formula to further incentivize the creation of new FI programs, especially where capping is limiting parents' ability to register young children in FSL programs;
 - c. Implementing of a process that would enable easier tracking of use of OLEP funds;
 - d. Extending opportunities for Allophone students to participate in elementary and secondary French immersion and other FSL programs;

- e. Making a knowledge of both official languages an advantage in college and university admissions processes;
- f. Enabling Anglophone colleges and universities to offer courses and programs in French;
- g. Increasing opportunities for Anglophones to pursue their studies at Francophone colleges and universities;
- h. Addressing the shortage of qualified FSL teachers by enhancing teacher mobility and exchanges within Canada and by speeding up the accreditation of immigrant teachers; and
- i. Increasing enrolment and retention in elementary and secondary FSL programs by encouraging the development and adoption of national French language proficiency benchmarks.

CPF is proud to be a supporter of the Roadmap and indeed the embodiment of what Roadmap is trying to achieve. We encourage you to build upon the Roadmap's success by ensuring that every young Canadian has the opportunity to fully engage in the Canadian experience of linguistic duality.

ⁱ http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/html/evolution_opinion_section_1_e.php

ⁱⁱ *The State of French-Second-Language Education in Canada 2010*