



# CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH

## CPF NETWORK POSITION MODERNIZING CANADA'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT (OLA)

- 2019 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Official Languages Act (OLA). The Act has undergone only one major revision 30 years ago, in 1988.
- The current OLA specifically outlines protections for the minority language community. Canadians identifying with the majority language group are not directly addressed.
- The Government of Canada has set an ambitious target, to increase our national bilingualism rate from 17.9% to 20% by 2036.
- Modernizing the OLA is an opportunity to ensure that it meets the needs of today's diverse Canadian society, responding to the increased demand for French second language learning programs across the country.

### VISION FOR A BILINGUAL CANADA

Our two official languages are an essential tool for inclusion and integration of all Canadians into our diverse society. Setting out an overarching vision within a modernized Official Languages Act will ensure the opportunity for all Canadians to learn their second official language and affirm the benefits of a bilingual and multilingual Canada.

#### **CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH recommends five amendments to the OLA:**

- A. Incorporating a new section to establish access to French second language (FSL) education as a right for non-rights holders
- B. Broadening the definition of "minority linguistic community" in Section 32(1)2(a) to be inclusive of Canadians whose mother tongue is not French but who are French speakers and have interest in accessing services in French;
- C. Expanding the Act to be more inclusive of and serve all Canadians, by modifying Sections 43(2) and 45 in order to guarantee consultation with organizations promoting FSL education;
- D. Expanding and strengthening the mandate of the Minister of Canadian Heritage (or designated Minister) (Section 43(1)e) to require and assist provincial governments to provide opportunities for French second language education; and
- E. Officially recognizing the role played by French speakers (rights and non-rights holders) in the vitality of minority language communities.

### CPF RECOMMENDATIONS

#### THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT (OLA)



# CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH

- A. Incorporate a new section specifically addressing education to establish access to French second language education as a right for non-rights holders:
  - include the right to access effective French second language instruction for all Canadians, in all provinces/territories, from early-childhood to post-secondary
  - provide access to second language educational options for immigrants in both official languages.
- B. Broaden the definition of minority linguistic community to:
  - be inclusive of Canadians whose mother tongue is not French but who are French speakers and have interest in accessing services in French.
  - recognize the impact of immigration and exogamy on both communities.
  - include the right of all Canadians to access services in the official language of their choice.
- C. Expand the OLA to be more inclusive of and serve all Canadians, strengthening the notion of linguistic duality and reflecting contemporary realities of Canadian society.
  - include a provision to review the Act every 10-15 years.
  - Include an obligation on the part of the designated federal Minister to consult with organizations promoting FSL education.

## MANDATE OF THE MINISTER

- D. Expand and strengthen the relevant mandate of the Minister of Canadian Heritage (or designated Minister) to:
  - mandate and assist provincial/territorial governments to provide opportunities for everyone in Canada to learn French.
  - enforce adherence to accountability measures related to Official Languages in Education Protocol (OLEP).

## ROLE OF THE COMMISSIONER

- E. Strengthen the role of the Commissioner of Official Languages to mirror and enforce the mandate of PCH Section 43 (see Backgrounder below):
  - Inform and educate all Canadians on their language rights including why our official languages are French and English and the benefits of a bilingual and multilingual Canada.
  - Recognize the role that French speakers (non-rights holders) play in the vitality of minority language communities.
  - Encourage cooperation between the federal and provincial/territorial governments in promoting official languages education and coordinating accountability efforts among Commissioner's representatives, Ministries of Education, Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) and the public.