

Association canadienne des
professionnels de l'immersion

acpi



Immersion Journal

FINAL REPORT : CANADA-WIDE CONSULTATION



CAIP's Mission

The Canadian Association of Immersion Professionals (CAIP) is a professional organization with a mission to participate in the promotion and development of a bilingual Canada by bringing together immersion educators and partners from all regions of the country.

The cornerstone of French immersion in Canada, CAIP orients and enriches immersion pedagogy in Canada.

By offering professional development, research and networking services, it provides educators with strong support and numerous professional learning opportunities, as well as a pedagogical dialogue in French.

Our Partners



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Message from the President



Marc-Albert Paquette

“In April 2016, the Canadian association of immersion professionals (ACPI) was asked to provide a portrait of French immersion professionals across Canada. I am pleased to say today that we have accomplished our mission.”

Today ACPI is proud to submit its final report to cement its broad Canada-wide consultation. This overview draws on data from multiple research studies, the preliminary findings of the Canada-wide survey conducted in the fall of 2016, and the information compiled during the tour of consultation workshops carried out in 11 cities across the country in 2017. A number of instructive findings are presented in this final report and clearly set the tone for developing initiatives at the national, provincial, and local levels. Some of the approaches outlined will soon enrich the work environment, professional tools, and support for those active in French immersion all over the country.

Few studies focus directly on French immersion in Canada. ACPI's portrait of immersion, which draws on the extensive Canada-wide consultation efforts it launched in 2016 and recently completed, is firmly in line with ACPI's mission to actively contribute to the promotion and development of a bilingual Canada. The initiative was a chance for ACPI to rally immersion professionals as well as its partners all across Canada.

Armed with this new portrait of French immersion professionals based on ACPI's recent Canada-wide consultation, we must redouble our efforts to make our communities the driving forces of immersion.

Happy reading.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Marc-Albert Paquette".

Message from the Executive Director



Chantal Bourbonnais

“The Canadian Association of Immersion Professionals (ACPI) reached some 900 French immersion professionals to ask them about their situations, challenges, needs, and perceptions regarding the future of their profession. The report clearly illustrates the breadth and depth of our conversations as well as the tremendous level of growth we can expect for French immersion across the country.”

To gain a better understanding of the realities of French immersion in Canada, ACPI led a groundbreaking Canada-wide consultation. We asked for feedback from teachers, educational consultants, coaches, special educators, remedial teachers, administrators, college and university professors, partners, and ministerial representatives working in French immersion across the country. In all, some 900 professionals took part. Our goal was simple: to meet with members of the French immersion professional community to draw up a profile of them and identify their challenges and needs in order to better support them in their daily practices and target the specific issues of French immersion in Canada.

Our survey allowed us to delve deeper and clarify certain observations and raise other fundamental aspects of the situation for French immersion professionals in every region of Canada. We are excited to present you this report, which we believe will help guide the future of French immersion in the country.

Thank you for contributing so generously and happy reading.

*Chantal
Bourbonnais*

Introduction

The Department of Canadian Heritage tasked Canadian Association of Immersion Professionals (ACPI) with drawing up a portrait of French immersion professionals across the country. This extensive cross-Canadian consultation began in April 2016 and ended in December 2017. The survey had three major phases.

Phase One: The Survey

October 2016. More than 640 immersion professionals weighed in by answering the 46 online survey questions developed by ACPI. The survey covered a number of major themes to get to know the professionals, identify their needs, and better support them. The results were fascinating and led to an inspiring portrait of the realities of French immersion.

At this stage, the respondents identified the lack of immersion-specific resources and tools as one of the biggest challenges to French immersion today. They also cited “not having enough time” as another major daily challenge. In their opinion, the increasing value that Canadian families place on bilingualism is the undoubtedly a boon for immersion programs.

These early findings helped guide the rest of ACPI’s Canada-wide consultation. The themes addressed in the survey needed to be discussed in order to flesh out certain findings and explore new avenues.

Phase Two: Tour of 11 Canadian Cities

February 2017. The observations made in the survey had a big influence on the second phase of the consultation conducted by ACPI. We kicked off the Canada-wide tour in Montreal on February 8, 2017, meeting with a team of 25 representatives from Quebec. The discussions were productive and informative, and we analyzed each of the survey findings. Nuances soon emerged, and we were able to identify some issues that needed further review and others that would become essential to our activities.

The contribution of the 11 groups consulted was eye-opening and informative. Representatives from the Northwest Territories and provinces clearly expressed the desire to develop an action plan specific to French immersion for all professionals working in their part of the country. We came out of this tour with results hinging on three major challenges:



Montreal, Quebec

1. Lack of qualified French immersion teachers all across the country
2. Inconsistent language skill levels from one professional to another
3. Scarcity of teaching tools and resources designed specifically for French immersion teaching

Phase Three: The Consultation Report

January 2018. Thanks to experience of the ACPI board of directors, we were able to improve on the key findings from the consultation activities. A working meeting was held so each member could contribute to the final report's design by validating and contextualizing the results obtained to polish the work completed by the expert consultant selected we brought in.



Regina, Saskatchewan

After giving as many immersion professionals as possible a chance to weigh in on their field through this national consultation survey, ACPI is now proud to submit a final report detailing all the research data, survey results, and information collected throughout the tour. With this report, we hope to set the tone for future initiatives both within ACPI and in every province and territory across the country.

The following pages present the data we compiled, grouped around the major challenges facing French immersion professionals in Canada. We also look at the big picture of immersion (including a broad overview and certain details specific to particular provinces) based on each of the consultation findings. Then, we formulate a number of recommendations based on the many possible solutions that consultation participants identified in order to address the challenges they face. Lastly, the questionnaires, preliminary survey report, and proceedings of the workshops held as part of the tour are all archived online at www.acpi.ca.

Goal, Objectives, and Methodology

The main goal of this Canada-wide consultation by ACPI was to meet with French immersion professionals active across the country as well as provincial and territorial stakeholders in order to:

- Draw up a profile of them and learn more about them
- Identify their challenges and needs
- Better support them in their daily practices
- Target the specific issues of French immersion in Canada

We asked Marie-France Gaumont, a strategic communications expert with over 20 years' experience working in education, to lead the Canada-wide consultation. So starting in April 2016, Marie-France managed and directed the entire consultation process on behalf of ACPI.

A number of steps were taken to carry out this nationwide consultation survey to draw up a profile of French immersion professionals and understand what they go through. The first step was to find out if any comparable surveys and complementary data were available. Then a survey was released in October 2016, and 641 respondents took part. The next step was to conduct an 11-stop discussion workshop tour with immersion stakeholders in different provinces and territories. Lastly, the ACPI board of directors validated and fleshed out the main consultation findings.

Survey

The expert consultant developed a questionnaire, which was then reviewed by a committee of eight representatives:

- **Ronald Boudreau**, Director of Services to Francophones, Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), Ottawa
- **René Hurtubise**, Director of French Programs, Prince Edward Island Department of Education
- **Christine Rees**, Elementary Consultant, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, Ontario
- **Marline Al Koura**, Vice Principal, Ottawa Catholic School Board, Ontario
- **Joseph Dicks**, Professor, Second Language Research Institute of Canada, University of New Brunswick
- **Josée Martel**, Senior Program Officer, Department of Canadian Heritage
- **Lesley Doell**, Past President of ACPI and French Immersion Facilitator and Instructional Coach, Foothills School Division, Alberta
- **Chantal Bourbonnais**, Executive Director of ACPI, Ottawa



Vancouver, British Columbia

The questionnaire used in the consultation survey included 46 questions and took 20 to 25 minutes to complete. Two versions (French and English) were available to respondents. The survey was tested by ten volunteer immersion professionals before it was released online. The questionnaire was disseminated via the site www.surveymonkey.com. It was open for 21 days, between October 3 and 23, 2016. It should be noted that the English and French surveys were combined in the results presented, unless there were significant differences.

The survey sample comprised 641 respondents in all. The participation rate thus exceeded the target of 500 respondents set by the ACPI board of directors. Moreover, 83% of the 641 respondents completed the survey in its entirety. To that effect, Bigot et al. (2010: 38)¹ point out that the ideal time for an online survey is 15 to 20 minutes. According to them, the effects of fatigue cause a lower variance in answers at the end of the questionnaire. This phenomenon may have led to a few dropouts at the end of the questionnaire, but the 83% survey completion rate is remarkable.



Halifax, Nova Scotia

Discussion Workshop Tour

A discussion workshop on the theme *In Solution Mode to Propel Immersion Forward* was designed to meet with French immersion stakeholders, present the results of the Canada-wide survey, reflect on the issues at stake, and identify concrete courses of action.

Each discussion workshop:

- Drew 25 people on average, including teachers, resource teachers, educational consultants, coaches, special educators, remedial teachers, managers, administrators, coordinators, executive directors, education directors, school principals, consultants, college or university professors, departmental representatives active in French immersion, union representatives, community partners (Canadian Parents for French), publishing house representatives
- Lasted five hours (either from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. or 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.)
- Was divided into three separate parts:
 - 1. Presentation of survey results
 - 2. Sub-group discussions on predetermined follow-up questions
 - 3. Identification of solutions based on main challenges or issues
- Generated a report and a list of the solutions identified by the group in question, which were systematically forwarded to the group leader after the discussion workshop

¹ <http://espace.inrs.ca/2678/1/Inedit02-15.pdf>

Here is the list of provincial and territorial meetings held as part of the tour.

1. February 8, 2017 – Montreal, Quebec – 24 participants
2. February 24, 2017 – Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island – 25 participants
3. April 12, 2017 – Toronto, Ontario – 25 participants
4. April 20, 2017 – Fredericton, New Brunswick – 22 participants
5. May 4, 2017 – Winnipeg, Manitoba – 27 participants
6. May 25, 2017 – Edmonton, Alberta – 21 participants
7. May 26, 2017 – Yellowknife, Northwest Territories – 12 participants
8. June 1, 2017 – St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador – 15 participants
9. June 17, 2017 – Vancouver, British Columbia – 24 participants
10. December 8, 2017 – Halifax, Nova Scotia – 28 participants
11. December 12, 2017 – Regina, Saskatchewan – 23 participants

In all, some 250 people took part in the 11 discussion workshops during the consultation tour. It should be noted that only two territories were not visited during the tour (Yukon and Nunavut).

Representativeness of Our Sample of Respondents

If we add the 641 online survey respondents to the 246 immersion professionals we met with during the tour, we get a total sample of 887 people. Based on SurveyMonkey.com² sample size calculations, since the immersion professional population is 17,200 and the confidence level in the responses obtained from our sample is estimated at 90% (based on the industry-accepted 3% margin of error), the ideal number of sample size for this consultation is 717. The sample of 887 respondents who participated in the ACPI Canada-wide consultation exceeds the ideal sample size estimated by Survey Monkey by 170 people and is therefore considered representative.

² <https://fr.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size-calculator/#>

Consultation by the Numbers – Representativeness

Participants	641 Survey respondents	246 Immersion professionals met with	
Representativeness	887 Total participants	17 200 French immersion teachers	+ 19,2 % (+ 170) More respondents than the ideal sample of 717

Province/Territory	% of the number of survey respondents who live there	Demographic weight of the province/territory as a % (2016)
Alberta	13%	11.7% (4,236,400 residents)
British Columbia	15%	13.1% (4,757,700 residents)
Prince Edward Island	4%	0.4% (149,500 residents)
Manitoba	11%	3.7% (1,318,100 residents)
New Brunswick	2%	2.1% (757,400 residents)
Nova Scotia	10%	2.6% (948,600 residents)
Ontario	24%	39.7% (13,976,300 residents)
Quebec	5%	22.9% (8,321,900 residents)
Saskatchewan	12%	3.2% (1,148,600 residents)
Newfoundland and Labrador	2%	1.5% (530,300 residents)
Northwest Territories	2 %	0,1% (44 600 habitants)
Yukon	0%	0.1% (38,100 residents)
Nunavut	0%	0.1% (37,200 residents)

Profile of Professionals

One of the primary objectives of ACPI's Canada-wide consultation was to draw up a profile of immersion professionals across the country. A number of interesting observations were made based on the survey and discussion workshop data.

French immersion professionals are highly educated compared to the Canadian average.

The basic requirement for obtaining a teaching and management position in education in Canada is a recognized bachelor of education degree. Not surprisingly, 92% of survey respondents have completed university studies. Compared to the 31%³ of Canadians who have a bachelor's degree or higher, this statistic is telling.

What is surprising, however, is that 33% of the French immersion professionals surveyed have a master's degree. In addition, more respondents from Nova Scotia (43%) and British Columbia (50%) have a recognized master's degree. Another interesting fact is that 5% of respondents have a post-bachelor's degree in education, a certificate, or a teaching certification in addition to their bachelor's degree. Lastly, 40% say they have taken courses in both languages or participated in a bilingual or immersive program during their post-secondary education.

For most French immersion professionals, English is their first language.

More than half (54%) say that English is their first language. This ratio is close to the 58%⁴ of Canadians whose mother tongue is English. Two provinces had even higher figures: Newfoundland and Labrador (100%) and Saskatchewan (70%). Only respondents from Quebec buck this trend, with 76% of the immersion professionals surveyed claiming French as their first language.

Interestingly, 40% of the immersion professionals surveyed have French as their mother tongue, which is almost double the 21%⁵ of the Canadian population. We note from this data that, for the time being at least and according to the results of our survey, only 6% of respondents from immigrant or ethnic communities with a first language other than English or French work in French immersion in Canada.

³ "31% [of Canadians aged 25 to 64] had a bachelor's degree or higher, in line with the OECD average of 29%)." Source: Statistics Canada, *Education indicators in Canada: An international perspective*, 2017

⁴ 20,193,335 Canadian residents had English as their mother tongue in 2016, or 58.1% of the total population. Source: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016011/98-200-x2016011-eng.cfm>

⁵ 7,452,075 Canadian residents with French as their mother tongue in 2016, or 21.4% of the total population. Source: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016011/98-200-x2016011-eng.cfm>



Edmonton, Alberta

Consequently, 59% of them affirm that they belong to the Anglo-dominant bilingual ethnolinguistic identity. However, two provinces stand out in terms of their ethnolinguistic identity: New Brunswick, which chose the Acadian identity (45%), and Quebec, which chose the Quebecker identity (40%). According to the French immersion professionals met with during the consultation, linguistic identity is defined by the peer group that best corresponds to their cultural experiences, values, culture, and way of thinking and acting.

Most French immersion professionals are women who work in elementary education.

The data is conclusive: the majority of immersion professionals are women (86%). Moreover, 72% of those surveyed say that they are teachers, while 45% work at the primary (elementary) level. Of this 45% of primary (elementary) teachers, 92% are women, while 76% of the respondents who teach at the secondary level are women. This is higher than the Canadian averages where 84%⁶ of primary (elementary) and 59%⁷ of secondary school teaching positions are held by women.

Strangely enough, 32% of the professionals surveyed have less than nine years of specific experience in French immersion, even though most are between 41 and 60 years of age. Only British Columbia stands out, with 22% of its professionals having 10 to 15 years of experience in immersion. Participants in the discussion workshops attributed this phenomenon to the fact that many qualified teachers initially work in first language (French or English) or French as a second language programs before making the leap into immersion. There is evidence to support this explanation: a survey conducted by the Canadian Teachers' Federation⁸ in 2014 demonstrated that respondents between the ages of 41 and 50 who taught first language programs had 11 to 20 years of experience (34%).

⁶ 84% — The proportion of women among all elementary school and kindergarten teachers in Canada in 2011. Source: Statistics Canada, *Education indicators in Canada: An international perspective*, 2017

⁷ 59 % — The proportion of women among all secondary school teachers in Canada in 2011. Source: Statistics Canada, *Education indicators in Canada: An international perspective*, 2017

⁸ Source: CTF, *Teachers in a Francophone Minority Setting: Exploring Themes*, 2014

Consultation by the Numbers – Profile

Level of education	92 % University		
Last degree earned	56 % Bachelor's	33 % Master's	3 % Ph.D.
Language of instruction	40 % English and French	32 % French only	27 % English only
First language	54 % English	40 % French	6 % Arabic, Italian, Spanish, etc.
Ethnolinguistic identity	37 % Anglo-dominant bilingual	12 % Anglophone	11 % French Canadian
Gender	86 % Women	14 % Men	0,5 % Other
Types of professionals	72 % Teachers	7 % Administrators	7 % Remedial teachers and resource teachers
Years of immersion experience	32 % 0 to 9 years	29 % 10 to 19 years	28 % 20 to 29 years
Age	30 % 41 to 50	28 % 31 to 40	25 % 51 to 60

Unique Situation

It is important to identify certain unique characteristics of the context in which French immersion professionals work in Canada. These characteristics not only present great opportunities for growth, but also major challenges that all stakeholders in provincial and territorial immersion programs face on a daily basis.

Canadian Families Increasingly Value Bilingualism

Of the professionals polled, 70% say that the increasing value Canadian families place on bilingualism is the biggest boon to immersion programs today. The most recent survey census by Statistics Canada⁹ proves them right. The data shows that French-English bilingualism hit a new peak of 17.9% in 2016 and is on the rise in most provinces and territories.

It also appears that, contrary to what was observed in the two previous censuses (2006 and 2011), all mother tongue groups contributed to the growth of bilingualism in Canada and that school-age children with English as their first language are increasingly bilingual. This phenomenon is no doubt related to the rising demand for French immersion programs observed in all communities visited during the Canada-wide tour.

Growing Popularity of French Immersion Programs in Canada

In 2015–2016, the number of students enrolled in immersion programs in Canada increased by 4.6% over 2014–2015 according to Statistics Canada¹⁰. In numbers, this means that approximately 430,000 students were enrolled in immersion programs where French was the language of instruction for all subjects, such as science and history. This follows a trend of similar annual increases since at least 2011–2012, while a 20% increase in enrollment has been observed in five years (from 356,000 students enrolled in French immersion in 2011–2012 to 430,000 in 2015–2016).

⁹ Source: 2016 Census - *English-French bilingualism reaches new heights* - <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016009/98-200-x2016009-eng.cfm>

¹⁰ Source: Statistics Canada, *Elementary–Secondary Education Survey for Canada, the provinces and territories*, 2015–2016



Winnipeg, Manitoba

In comparison, 5,068,587 students were enrolled in a public primary or secondary school in the 2015–2016 school year, an increase of 0.3% over 2014–2015. At 4.6%, the increase in the number of enrollments in immersion programs is considerably greater than for the country as a whole (0.3%). In addition, according to data compiled by Statistics Canada, many provinces

and territories experienced a decline in enrollment in French second language programs including core, intensive, enriched, and advanced French (decreases ranging from 1.3% to 4%), in parallel with an increase in enrollment in French immersion programs (increases ranging from 2.9% to 6.6%)¹¹.

A report produced by Canadian Parents for French (CPF) in 2016¹² is equally telling in this regard. While enrollments in immersion programs are increasing in all provinces and territories (except Quebec, which saw a decline of about 5,000 enrollments, and Nunavut, which does not have a French immersion program), enrollment in French second language programs is declining. CPF reveals that in 2011–2012 there were 363,316 students in immersion programs and 1,437,276 students enrolled in French as a second language programs (core, intensive, enriched, and advanced). On the other hand, in 2015–2016 the number of French immersion students grew to 428,304 (+64,988 students), while French second language programs saw enrollment reduced to 1,366,092 (-71,184 students).

Growing Pains

With such big growth comes the challenge of continuously adapting to the booming French immersion scene. It is a domino effect where the more students enroll, the more varied their needs are, and the more recruitment efforts are made to hire teachers and professionals, the greater the needs for space, specialists, and resources. Moreover, the greatest challenges that the French immersion professionals consulted face on a daily basis are a lack of time (73%), a lack of resources (71%), and difficulty handling the growing demands of their work environment (57%). To illustrate the pressure put on these programs, a report by Radio-Canada reveals that hiring difficulties come at a time when the number of French immersion students in British Columbia¹³ has increased by 72% over the past 10 years.

¹¹ Source : Statistique Canada, *Enquête sur l'enseignement primaire et secondaire pour le Canada, les provinces et les territoires*, 2015-2016

¹² Canadian Parents for French (CPF), 2016, *French as a second language enrolment statistics*, 2011-2012 à 2015-2016

¹³ <http://ici.radio-canada.ca/regions/colombie-britannique/2015/04/22/004-ecoles-immersion-francaise.shtml>

Consultation by the Numbers – Unique Situation

Strength of immersion programs	70 % of Canadian families value bilingualism		
State of bilingualism in Canada	+17,9 % 2016		
Enrollment in immersion programs	430 000 students 2015-2016	356 000 students 2011-2012	
Enrollment in Canadian schools	+4,6 % Immersion programs 2015-2016	-2,7 % French second language programs (core, intensive, enriched, and advanced) 2015-2016	
Daily challenges	73 % Lack of time	71 % Lack of resources	57 % Handling growing demands

Major Challenges for French Immersion

Given the situation described above, the issues are considerable. ACPI's Canada-wide consultation identified the three (3) most pressing issues that affect all professionals nationwide and that could undermine the French immersion boom in education.

General Shortage of Qualified Professionals

In 2016 there were 728,700 teachers and professors in Canada¹⁴, up from 600,000¹⁵ in 2012, or an increase of just over 21% in 4 years. Extrapolating the data, we estimate that 17,200¹⁶ of them are French immersion teachers, representing 2.5% of all teachers and professors in Canada in 2016 versus 14,240¹⁷ in 2012. This represents a 21% increase in 4 years. Given the significant annual growth in the number of students enrolled in a French immersion program, the number of French immersion teachers also has also increased considerably year after year. These ever-growing demands are precisely why the general shortage of qualified professionals is such an issue.

In the consultation, 71% of teachers said that it is difficult to fill positions in their workplace and 69% attributed this challenge to the glaring lack of qualified teachers. This issue is cited all across the country. In the western provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia) and Nova Scotia, those consulted even went so far as say there is an actual shortage of qualified professionals, while in Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador, they simply said they have a hard time recruiting qualified staff. Only Quebec (where 67% of those consulted described recruiting as easy) and the Northwest Territories (where 69% said recruiting is easy) seem to be spared by this shortage. The professionals we consulted had no trouble explaining these two observations. Since Quebec is predominantly French-speaking, finding potential candidates is easier. Many national and international travelers see the Northwest Territories as an exotic destination, so candidates from all over the French-speaking world volunteer to work there.



Toronto, Ontario

¹⁴ Source: Custom tabulation provided by Labour Statistics Division, Statistics Canada

¹⁵ Source: http://formation-profession.org/files/numeros/1/v20_n01_172.pdf

¹⁶ Data extrapolated from the number of students enrolled in a French immersion program in 2016 (430,000), divided by 25

¹⁷ Data extrapolated from the number of students enrolled in a French immersion program in 2012 (356,000), divided by 25

Since the fall of 2017, media outlets across the country (Radio-Canada in particular) have covered this situation and sounded the alarm. For example, on January 24, 2017, Radio-Canada looked at the popularity of French immersion and the shortage of teachers in the Franco-Manitoban School Division (DSFM).¹⁸ On December 6, 2017, it did a piece on the chronic teacher shortage for immersion schools in Alberta,¹⁹ and then on January 24, 2018, it followed up with a segment on parents worried about the shortage of immersion teachers in British Columbia.²⁰ TVA also did a story on November 6, 2017, about how the lack of teachers in Ontario is putting French immersion in jeopardy.²¹

When we met with immersion professionals during the consultations, they identified certain impacts of the shortage of qualified French immersion teachers. For example, when there are vacancies in a French immersion program, it is not uncommon for a school board to hire individuals who are not qualified teachers, are not immersion professionals, or do not speak French. Currently there are no rules barring school boards from doing this because there is no official recognition for French immersion teachers and no formal tests governing entry into the profession are systematically required.

Given the scarcity of qualified immersion teachers, the professionals we met with said that substitute teacher positions are often filled by unilingual anglophone teachers and that it is common for exceptional and at-risk students in French immersion programs to be served by English-speaking specialists. According to researcher Nancy Wise²², this phenomenon can take a troubling turn when English-speaking specialists wrongfully advise parents of children with learning challenges to have them focus on mastering English before tackling French as a way to justify their English-only approach.

¹⁸ <http://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1012678/popularite-immersion-francaise-penurie-enseignants-dsfm>

¹⁹ <http://ici.radio-canada.ca/premiere/emissions/le-cafe-show/segments/entrevue/50143/emploi-professeur-francais-penurie-recrutement>

²⁰ <http://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1080086/enseignement-francais-peril-parents--ministre-colombie-britannique-ecole-francophone-immersion-professeur-penurie>

²¹ <http://www.tvanouvelles.ca/2017/11/06/limmersion-francaise-en-peril-par-manque-de-professeurs-en-ontario>

²² <https://pei.cpf.ca/blog/whats-new/nancy-wise-french-immersion-should-be-for-all/>

Consultation by the Numbers – Shortage of Qualified Teachers

Number of teachers in Canada	728 700 teachers and professors in 2016	600 000 teachers and professors in 2012	+ 21 % teachers and professors between 2012 and 2016
Number of immersion teachers	17 200 teachers in 2016	14 240 teachers in 2012	+ 21 % immersion teachers and professors between 2012 and 2016
Recruitment of French immersion teachers	71 % Say that positions are very difficult to fill	69 % Especially due to the lack of qualified teachers	11 % Cost of living too high, fear of working in an English-speaking environment, lack of recognition
Impact of the shortage on immersion classes	Many applicants hired do not have teaching qualifications	Many teachers hired do not have immersion teaching qualifications	Many teachers hired do not speak French
	Unilingual anglophone specialists	Services for exceptional students provided in English only	Unilingual anglophone substitute teachers

Inconsistent Language Skill Levels Among Professionals

Inconsistency in the level of language proficiency demonstrated by French immersion professionals is clearly an issue that concerns all those who took part in the consultation (63%). Interestingly, most professionals cited this as the most troubling issue today when they think about the future of immersion programs (56%).

This is clearly due to the shortage of qualified French immersion teachers and the common practice of hiring unilingual anglophone professionals to fill these vacancies. In support of this finding, a report by Canadian Parents for French (CPF) maintains that 78%²³ of school districts believe that applicants do not have the required language skills. Moreover, the ACPI survey showed that most of the professionals polled assess their spoken French (64%) and French reading comprehension (68%) as very fluent²⁴. As for written French, 50% say they are very fluent and 42% fluent, making writing the lowest-rated language skill in the self-assessment administered during the consultation.

It should be noted that in two provinces people felt that their language skills are generally lower than the national average: Newfoundland and Labrador, where 67% of respondents rate their spoken French and reading comprehension as fluent, and Nova Scotia, where 51% rank themselves as fluent in spoken and 61% in written French. One province, British Columbia, outperforms the Canadian averages, with 71% of respondents identifying as very fluent in reading and 73% as very fluent in spoken French. The immersion professionals consulted stressed the fact that this is the only province with a mandatory language proficiency test for anyone applying for a French immersion teaching position.

Comparing these results with those obtained by the Canadian Teachers' Federation²⁵ (CTF) in its 2014 poll of teachers in first-language programs, there are gaps in reading (Very good at 89.3%) and spoken (Very good at 86.2%) skills. It is also noteworthy that, here too, the written component is the lowest-rated language proficiency (Very good at 79.8%). These differences tend to show that, in general, French immersion professionals are less proficient (writing, reading, and speaking) in French than their first-language counterparts. To that effect, Professor Joseph Dicks of the University of New Brunswick's Second Language Research Institute of Canada affirmed in a statement before Canadian Parliament that "... many teachers-in-training want to specialize in teaching French as a second language, but they do not have the language proficiency required. . . . Many of these are graduates of French immersion and a number have also completed majors in French at Canadian universities. Clearly, in order to reach a level of language proficiency to teach French, one needs to do more."²⁶

²³ <http://ici.radio-canada.ca/regions/colombie-britannique/2015/04/22/004-ecoles-immersion-francaise.shtm>

²⁴ The self-assessment used the following scale: Very limited – Limited – Fluent – Very fluent

²⁵ Source: CTF, *Teachers in a Francophone Minority Setting: Exploring Themes*, 2014

²⁶ <http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/hoc/Committee/412/LANG/Reports/RP6433979/langrp01/langrp01-e.pdf>

Improving language skills takes training and continuing professional development. The consultation revealed that only one in two immersion professionals (51%) say they are open (yes) to opportunities presented to improve their French language skills. The professionals surveyed in Newfoundland and Labrador buck this Canada-wide trend, with 89% saying they are open (yes) to honing their language skills. The main language skills respondents want to improve are spoken (50%) and written (47%) French.

In contrast, 71% of Quebecers and 22% of Ontarians answered no. The reasons given for this refusal to take part in training to develop or hone language skills are many. Either French is their mother tongue and they are already fully proficient in it, they deem their knowledge to be sufficient, or they consider their skill level to be appropriate for their work or work environment.

The consultation meetings were a chance to flesh out these reasons by identifying a few recurring situations that may explain the lack of openness to such training opportunities. In one such situation, when employers suggest an opportunity for further training, teachers have to choose among all the subjects taught. Moreover, French subject instruction and French as a subject are rarely offered. Training opportunities are therefore not targeted to those who work in an immersive program and who teach specific subjects (mathematics, science, etc.) in French. As a result, teachers often choose a specific subject, even if it is poorly (or not at all) adapted to their own situation and offered in English only.

Another recurring situation is that it appears difficult to get teachers interested in improving their language skills. Many say they know just enough to be functional, which is enough for them. Others claim that they do not have enough time to make it a priority. Still others do not know where they will be assigned in the next school year, and this precarious situation undermines any desire they may have to improve their French.

Another interesting phenomenon related to the language skills of immersion professionals and directly tied to people in minority situations is that one in three immersion professionals (32%) consume cultural products (television, radio, theater,

movies, books, etc.) in French every day. What is more, this ratio changes depending on the province. In Saskatchewan and Manitoba, 33% consume cultural products in French one to five times a week, while in Ontario the frequency is rather one in five times a month. It is also interesting to note that respondents to the English questionnaire are more likely to say that they never choose cultural products in French (11%) or from one to five times a year (24%), whereas more of those who answered the French questionnaire say they choose a cultural product in French every day (45%). Since only a small number (one in three) have access to or make use of cultural products in French, opportunities to hear, read, or speak French are rather rare.



Fredericton, New Brunswick

Consultation by the Numbers – Language Skills

Major Challenge	63 % inconsistent language skills among French immersion professionals		
A troubling problem for the future of immersion	59 % level of language proficiency of French immersion professionals		
Self-assessment of respondents' language skills	68 % Very fluent in reading French	64 % Very fluent in spoken French	50 % Very fluent in written French versus Fluent (42%)
Openness to opportunities to improve their French	51 % Yes	27 % Maybe	22 % No
Priority language skills to improve	50 % Spoken French	47 % Written French	3 % Reading French
Use of cultural products in French	32 % Every day	27 % 1 to 5 times/week	22 % 1 to 5 times/month

Glaring Lack of Immersion-Specific Teaching Tools and Resources

Teaching tools and resources specifically designed to support instruction of all subjects in a French immersion program are rare across Canada. The lack of resources and tools tailored to the specific issues of immersion (71%) is one of the biggest daily challenges identified by those who took part in the consultation.

This dissatisfaction with French immersion educational resources is not new. In 2008 researcher Larry Vandergrift of the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities²⁷ presented research data highlighting the urgent need to produce teaching materials adapted to the level of French immersion students because the quantity and quality of existing resources was considered poor. Still today, 57% of those consulted say that French immersion-specific resources are hard to come by. The most pressing demand seems to be for tools and resources for students in the classroom (60%) as well as subject-specific tools and resources (68%). It should be noted that some provinces are looking for resources for children in difficulty: Quebec (41%), Alberta (41%), Prince Edward Island (78%), Northwest Territories (85%).

When we questioned the professionals during the discussion workshops, certain explanations were put forward to shed light on this scarcity of immersion-specific resources. Moreover, we noted that in the vast majority of the provinces and territories visited, the materials available for teaching the curriculum were usually designed and offered in English only. Often, even the curriculum itself is available only in English. That means it is up to the French immersion teachers to translate all materials and programs made available by government bodies or the school board. Obviously, this arduous task takes a lot of time.

But the extra time required does not end here. If immersion professionals opt to use educational materials developed by Quebec or a French-speaking country, they also have to take the time to adapt it all so the level is not too high for their students. In either case, they have to spend time and energy translating and adapting all the materials. It is therefore not surprising that the lack of time is one of the biggest daily challenges cited by immersion professionals (73%).

The professionals we met with say that all the extra time spent translating and adapting teaching resources is a major obstacle that burdens the entire network. They compare the requirements of their position with those of first-language teachers of the same level and believe that the blatant inequity puts them at a disadvantage. To explain this perceived

inequity, they suggest that administrators are generally unaware of the specific challenges and realities of French immersion. It appears that there are few or no guidelines to help them manage an immersion program and access quality resources, which leads to considerable inequality and inconsistencies from school to school and school board to school board.



Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

²⁷ Larry Vandergrift, *Les principaux défis liés à la recherche en langue seconde au Canada*, Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, 2008

In fact, 71% of the school leaders (principals, executive directors, coordinators, administrators, etc.) who answered the survey say that the difficulty of managing the growing demands of this field is their greatest daily challenge. The professionals we met with believe that having immersion programs managed by English-language school boards (53%) poses an additional challenge in some communities, especially in terms of access to resources. One thing is clear: many French immersion professionals say they want school administrators, coordinators, principals, and managers to take into account the complexity of their situation and how hard it is to get the resources they need and to fully support them in order to restore a sense of balance in the sizeable task they are expected to carry out.

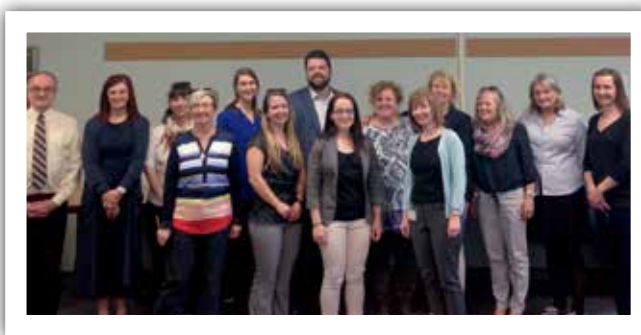
Another interesting fact that offers further insight into the position of some of the professionals consulted is that 40% somewhat agree²⁸ that they generally feel supported by their school management (principal, vice principal, coordinator, etc.). It is important to note that there is a difference between English survey respondents, 44% of whom say they agree that they feel supported by their school management, and French survey respondents, 48% of whom say they somewhat disagree. In the same vein, it appears that immersion professionals in the Northwest Territories (69%), Manitoba (44%), and Saskatchewan (44%) agree that they feel supported by their school management, which is higher than the national average.

Here is how some professionals we met with explain these differences in the perception of support: many respondents may have started as English first-language program teachers, some provinces provide more support for French immersion program managers, and some professionals feel isolated because they have a hard time communicating with their English-speaking principal.

In connection with the feeling of isolation, 45% of those surveyed somewhat agree²⁹ that they feel they are part of a network of immersion professionals. A similar proportion of respondents from the Northwest Territories (46%) say they agree, while 44% of those from Quebec say they somewhat disagree. In addition, they perceive that they have little access to opportunities to share practices (46%), which they think would help ease their feeling of isolation.

In addition to the scarcity of teaching tools and the feeling of isolation, the limited access to quality resources was also identified (54%). Those consulted from Nova Scotia, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia have a rather poor perception of the quality of the resources developed specifically for French immersion instruction. In contrast, 60% of respondents from Manitoba and Alberta have a fairly high perception of the quality of immersion teaching resources.

The participants we met with did point out that some sites do exist where resources and tools already adapted by immersion teachers can be shared. However, so far, no organizations or resource persons have consolidated, evaluated, or analyzed the resources in order to give professionals access to them and explain how to use them. This lack of oversight has a big effect on the quality of the resources available on these sharing sites. What is more, 41% of the immersion workers surveyed say they are not well-informed of research results and educational advances in immersion instruction, which makes them feel they are out of step with developments in their field of expertise.



St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

²⁸ Based on the following scale: Agree – Somewhat agree – Somewhat disagree – Disagree – N/A

²⁹ Based on the following scale: Agree – Somewhat agree – Somewhat disagree – Disagree

Consultation by the Numbers – Lack of Teaching Tools and Resources

Major Challenges	73 % Don't have enough time	71 % Don't have the resources and tools they need to deal with the specific challenges of immersion	
Availability and quality of resources	57 % Say that French immersion-specific resources are hard to come by	54 % Have limited access to quality resources	
Types of resources wanted	60 % Want resources for students in the classroom	68 % Want subject-specific resources mainly in French	59 % Want resources for exceptional students
Perceptions	41 % Are not well-informed of research findings and pedagogical progress in the area of French immersion	46 % Have few opportunities to share immersion practices	40 % Generally feel supported by school management
	48 % Generally feel supported by their colleagues (Somewhat agree) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39% of English survey respondents and 27% of French survey respondents feel supported by their colleagues (Agree) 	51 % Generally feel supported by parents/the community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42 % of English survey respondents and 19% of French survey respondents feel supported by parents/ the community (Agree) 	48 % Generally feel supported by school management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44 % of English survey respondents and 25% of French survey respondents feel supported by school management (Agree)

Recommendations

ACPI's efforts to carry out the Canada-wide consultation definitely made it possible to draw up a profile of French immersion professionals nationwide, identify their challenges and needs, and define the specific issues of French immersion in Canada. Given the ever-growing popularity of immersion programs, the three major observations outlined above—the general shortage of qualified professionals, the inconsistent level of language proficiency among professionals, and the glaring lack of immersion-specific teaching tools and resources—are all the more important.

These findings point to a real opportunity to innovate in the way immersion programs are run to better support immersion professionals in their daily practices and thereby contribute to the continued growth of French immersion programs. In this section, ACPI presents the results of its discussions with immersion professionals during the Canada-wide tour and offers recommendations and solutions that could help achieve these goals. These suggestions could be taken into account when developing federal, provincial, and territorial action plans or be used as part of a national strategy led by an organization identified as a leader in the field by all those consulted—like ACPI.



Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

General Shortage of Qualified Professionals: Pulling Together to Tackle the Shortage

Canadian school boards have simply not been able to fill the positions generated by skyrocketing enrollment (+20%) in French immersion programs over the past five years. To meet parents' growing demand for immersive French instruction and to ensure that Canadian families are not denied access to French immersion programs, we recommend tackling the problem with a solution that is innovative, sustainable, and easy to implement.

Rolling out a national campaign to promote the French immersion profession seems like an obvious solution to usher in a new generation of qualified professionals. This campaign could include multiple components to address the many aspects of this major challenge. Here is a brief overview of what it could entail.

1. National campaign promoting careers in immersion: "Immersion, une carrière parfaite pour moi !" (Immersion, a perfect career for me!)

- a. Viral video with two enthusiastic young teachers – Web placement of the video
- b. Short interactive virtual conferences with two enthusiastic young teachers – chat and blogs pushed by influencers
- c. National promotion campaign targeting secondary school students and students at university faculties of education – targeted promotions on social media, informative and attractive website, booth at job fairs
- d. Partnerships – Explore opportunities for collaborating with Canadian Parents for French (CPF), French for the Future (FFF), Association des Collèges et des universités de la francophonie canadienne (ACUFC), the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (OCOL), universities and French departments offering master's degrees in French as a second language (FSL), Réseau des CÉGEPs et des Collèges francophones du Canada, education ministries, the ACPI Consortium, and Fédération internationale des professeurs de français.

2. Recruitment campaign

- a. Recruitment initiatives –
 - At the local level with current FSL students who could later become immersion squads for their communities
 - In French-speaking countries, in cooperation with Fédération internationale des professeurs de français
- b. “Les stages de la relève” internship contest for the next generation of immersion professionals –
 - Give education majors (in both first- and second-language education programs) the chance to take part in a Canada-wide contest to land a French immersion internship in the Canadian city of their choice.
 - Partnerships – Explore opportunities for collaborating with Association des Collèges et des universités de la francophonie canadienne (ACUFC), Canadian universities, Réseau des CÉGEPs et des Collèges francophones du Canada, education ministries, the ACPI Consortium, and Fédération internationale des professeurs de français.

3. “TA CARRIÈRE EN IMMERSION” (Your career in immersion) Web Portal

A website that is open to all immersion professionals looking for a job and allows school boards to post vacancies for French immersion professionals, substitute teachers, etc. (like www.ameqenligne.com in Quebec).

Inconsistent Language Skill Levels Among Professionals: Tightening Up Requirements

Given the shortage of qualified French immersion teachers and the common practice of hiring unilingual anglophones to fill vacancies, it is only natural for French immersion professionals to have varying levels of language proficiency. Moreover, many employers do not require proof of French proficiency for new hires or impose skills development plans. Given the lack of requirements, the shortage of immersion-specific training courses, and the fact that subject-specific training courses are often not given in French, immersion professionals are less inclined to continue developing their language skills. In addition, their workplace activities, discussions with colleagues, and cultural product experiences are often in English.

Multiple solutions are needed to tackle this major program quality challenge. Here are a few that could be very promising.

1. Introduce a diagnostic test students must pass to get into university-level education programs

- a. Provide opportunities for students to upgrade their language skills as part of their initial training
- b. Introduce a certificate in French-second-language education for students
- c. Offer a certificate of immersion studies in addition to the bachelor’s degree to students who meet language proficiency requirements

2. Require a diagnostic test for new hires

- a. Add a contractual provision requiring new employees to upgrade their language skills (e.g., every two years)
- b. Offer diplomas of French language studies (DELF) so teachers can be certified

3. Earmark funds for national and local scholarships

- a. Provide financial assistance to facilitate access to internships, conferences, refresher courses, and practice-sharing opportunities aimed at language skill development

4. Develop projects in cultural communities to give people opportunities to use their French

- a. Implement a French mentorship program
- b. Open a dialogue with francophone communities in Canada and abroad

5. Raise school administrators' and managers' awareness of the unique situation of French immersion

- a. Create videos on French immersion aimed at school managers
- b. Suggest pairing or mentorship initiatives between managers and administrators across the country
- c. Develop a variety of skills development opportunities specific to managing immersion programs (conferences, workshops, webinars, university courses, etc.)

6. Provide all new teachers with an Immersion *française* virtual kit

- a. Draw up a charter for immersion schools (examples of inspiring practices, teaching tips, explanation of the specific context of immersion education, profiles on Canadian teachers, etc.)
- b. Put together a list of resources recognized by ACPI
- c. Make a list of activities
- d. Compile the contact information of resource people across Canada

Glaring Lack of Immersion-Specific Teaching Tools and Resources: Create a Centralized Hub to Assist Teachers and Guide Them to Approved Resources

Teaching tools and resources specifically designed to support instruction of all subjects in a French immersion program are rare and of inconsistent quality across Canada. Much of what is available to immersion teachers is either offered in English only, at a level too high for immersion students, or adapted by others and of questionable quality. In all cases, the extra time immersion teachers must put in to create, adapt, and translate materials is daunting and creates a perception of inequity vis-à-vis their colleagues in first-language programs.

This lack of tools and resources developed specifically for French immersion creates a feeling of isolation, of not having access to the same opportunities for sharing, and of being overlooked by management, which often is unaware of the specific context of immersion. A number of solutions must be considered to compensate for this lack of resources and its impact.

1. Create a provincial or national educational portal or resource center

- a. Moderate the portal and create content under the direction of a pedagogical advisor specialized in immersion
- b. Group resources into a directory to provide easier access to them
- c. Provide professionals with live, online support and assistance Monday to Thursday from 3 to 6 p.m. (similar to Allô prof – via text, chat, phone, or LEARN, a free online tutoring service offered to the English-speaking community)
- d. Offer a variety of communication options (video, podcasts, webinars, special reports, etc.)
- e. Establish resource sharing mechanisms between provinces and territories to encourage all professionals to take part
- f. Develop a seal of quality (e.g., an Approved by ACPI stamp)
- g. Provide direct access to research and, more importantly, plain-language information on pedagogical advances – Clic-recherche videos
- h. Use Manitoba's educational resource the center (DREF) as a model

2. Provide administrators with professional development opportunities in French immersion

- a. Target administrator organizations such as the Council for School Leaders, as well as ACPI-ici pour administrateurs forums, regular school board meetings, conferences, U-Lead, and subject-based associations (math, science, etc.)
- b. Create promotional pieces (video and written) to highlight the added value of immersion programs in schools
- c. Suggest criteria for hiring someone from school management to head a French immersion program

3. Demystify immersion education and educate school boards about these programs

- a. Initiate information sessions by school board
- b. Put together a reference kit (paper and virtual)
- c. Create a series of informative videos
- d. Develop and disseminate newsletters and Did you know? pieces on important facts about French immersion
- e. Identify expert administrators by district or school board who could become immersion ambassadors
- f. Develop a national campaign to raise administrator awareness

Conclusion

This report is the final phase of the Canada-wide consultation process. Since April 2016, we have met with a lot of people, traveled many kilometers, and heard countless stories. ACPI would like to sincerely thank everyone who took the time to complete the survey, attend one of our consultation workshops, and share their comments and opinions throughout this nationwide initiative. Thanks to you, we now have a better understanding of the French immersion professionals working across the country, a clearer picture of the scope of the challenges they face, and some ideas on how to do more to help them every day. Thank you for giving us food for thought and for your heartfelt dedication to tackling the big challenges affecting you all.

French immersion is undeniably the cornerstone of bilingualism in Canada. The professionals in our field are its true ambassadors. And we must make sure that decision-makers at every level support them by taking into account their needs for professional recognition, careful recruitment practices, professional support at all times, a wide range of outstanding professional development options tailored to immersion, tools and resources designed specifically for them, and innovative new ways to manage and develop immersion programs. Going forward, the main findings of this report will set the pace for ACPI's strategic initiatives. Expectations are high but well worth the effort. The bilingual future of current and future generations is at stake. It is up to the federal and provincial governments and school boards to take up the call and support the initiatives recommended by Canada's largest French immersion community, led by ACPI. Let us all, in our own way, become the driving forces of French immersion!

Appendices

The appendices of this report are available on ACPI's website at www.acpi.ca.

A French language version of this report is also available at www.acpi.ca.

To receive a paper copy, please send your request to bureau@acpi.ca.



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