



IMPACT ASSESSMENT BRIEF

Considerations for the Impact and Implementation of Bill 84 in regard to English-speaking Quebecers

THE PROVINCIAL EMPLOYMENT ROUNDTABLE

Presented to the Minister of the French Language, Mr. Jean-François Roberge

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Context

On January 30th, 2025, Mr. Jean-François Roberge, Minister for the French Language, tabled Bill 84, *An Act respecting national integration*. The bill seeks to establish a set of core values that form the basis for common culture in Québec, as well as a “national integration model” to better foster the integration of immigrants and cultural minorities. Within this context, the French language is discussed as not only a core component of Québec culture, but the means by which all other components and values are expressed, and therefore the language of integration. The details of the integration model are otherwise vague, to be determined through future regulation. Bill 84 does specify, however, that the use of funds issued by government agencies, as well as the *Québec Charter of Rights and Freedoms* writ large, are subject to or must comply with the integration model and related notions of Québec culture and values.

Issues

Many communities and stakeholders across Québec have identified serious concerns with Bill 84, ranging from the subjugation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to as-of-yet undefined legislation, to the erasure of linguistic and cultural minorities’ presence in and cultural contributions to Québec. While we firmly believe these concerns warrant urgent attention, the comments in this brief will be focused on our area of expertise: the employment and economic situation of English-speaking Quebecers.

Integration and the inadequacy of the French language learning infrastructure in Quebec

Despite strong motivations – alongside external imperatives – to learn French, English-speaking Quebecers face significant barriers to accessing French language learning and practicing their French.

When surveyed, English speakers share strong social and economic motivations to learn or improve their French. This is also a stated goal of the Québec government, given their commitment to protecting and promoting the French language in Québec, and the further commitments to the French language laid out in Bill 84. Yet the 2024 *Plan pour la langue française* advanced by the Minister for the French Language has no plan for Québec’s English speakers, despite the fact that they comprise 37.9% of all adult language learners in the province.¹ Further, the existing French language learning apparatus in Québec is reporting significant shortfalls and issues across the province.²

¹ Based on PERT’s internal calculations using an inclusive definition. Language learners are defined as all non-immigrant English speakers plus all immigrants and permanent residents who do not speak French as their mother tongue.

² “Évaluation du déploiement de Francisation Québec,” Commissaire à la langue française, last modified May 2024,

https://www.commissairelanguefrancaise.quebec/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/RA_chap4_evaluation-EQ.pdf

To date, then, the Québec government has not meaningfully provided the French language learning resources necessary to facilitate genuine learning nor integration of linguistic minority groups in this province. But given that Bill 84 identifies the French language as the core or underlying element of both Québec's common culture and its national integration model, the government appears to be advancing legislation that is setting up its linguistic minorities for failure according to its own definition of successful integration.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: We recommend that the Government of Québec create a dedicated strategy and action plan to promote French language learning for English-speaking Quebecers, including designated funds for expanded French language learning. This plan should be developed in consultation with diverse English-speaking Quebecers and English-language institutions, with representation from the regions of Québec, and diverse groups including youth, women and visible minorities.

Recommendation 2: We recommend that the Government of Québec collect new and regular statistics regarding the needs of French language learners in Québec.

Justification

A 2024 report by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages established that English speakers desire to be liked and accepted by Francophones in Québec.³ Further, research undertaken by PERT demonstrates the willingness among English speakers to improve their French, as well as a broader understanding that French language proficiency is essential to labour market success.⁴ English speakers identify a lack of French-language proficiency as a leading barrier to employment,⁵ and the statistics bear this out. English speakers experience a higher unemployment rate as compared to French speakers (10.9% compared to 6.9%), while unilingual English speakers (i.e. those who have no French language skills) earn a lower median employment income in comparison to both unilingual French speakers as well as bilingual English and French speakers.⁶

Given the high motivation to learn French, coupled with the negative employment outcomes associated with a lack of French language proficiency, participation in French language training programs is an obvious go-to for English-speaking Quebecers and immigrants alike.

³ Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, "Building Bridges," Government of Canada, last modified June 2024,

<https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/sites/default/files/2024-06/building-bridges-perceptions-realities-2024.pdf>

⁴ Provincial Employment Roundtable, "User journeys of language learners navigating Québec's French language training ecosystem," last modified 2024,

<https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/User-journeys-of-language-learners-navigating-Quebecs-French-language-training-ecosystem-1.pdf>.

⁵ Provincial Employment Roundtable, "2021 Employment Survey of English-speaking Quebecers and Organizations," last modified 2022,

https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/PERT_MC_Design_SRQEA_CORE_EINR_D5R02_20220823_EN_Web.pdf

⁶ Comité consultatif des Québécoises et Québécois d'expression anglais, "Portrait of the clientèle," last modified 2024, <https://ccqea.ca/wp-content/uploads/ACESQ-Portrait-of-the-clientele-July-30.pdf>

Yet these groups face consistent barriers in accessing these trainings: internal reports from Commissaire à la langue française indicate that there have been considerable challenges in the rollout of Francisation resources, including reports of bottlenecks and long wait times for courses, which have raised concerns about the program's accessibility and efficacy.⁷ Other accessibility concerns include regional availability, lack of targeted marketing services to language-learning groups, availability of the platform in French only, and, most recently, funding shortages for programs designed for part-time learners⁸ as well as widespread cancellation of classes owing to budget shortfalls.⁹

Within this context, learners report difficulty converting their motivation to learn French into practice. Further, some English speakers report negative reactions to their French-language proficiency in public settings, or fear of the same, having left them feeling embarrassed or anxious.¹⁰ Second-language acquisition research demonstrates that a safe and positive learning environment is linked to higher motivation as well as better learning outcomes.¹¹ The current gap in resources to support the delivery of French language learning programs, as well as the qualitative research finding that experiences of both barriers to resources and negative reactions to intermediate French, challenges the intuition that Québec is a good environment in which to learn French.

⁷ Commissaire à la langue française, "Évaluation du déploiement de Francisation Québec," last modified May 2024, https://www.commissairelanguefrancaise.quebec/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/RA_chap4_evaluation-FQ.pdf

⁸ Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration, "Updates to financial assistance offered under the Programme québécois d'apprentissage du français," last modified September 13, 2024, <https://www.quebec.ca/en/news/actualites/detail/updates-financial-assistance-programme-quebecois-apprentissage-francais-58040>

⁹ Hénia Ould-Hammou, "Teachers criticize timing of Quebec's new ad campaign after budget cuts," CBC News, last modified September 17, 2024 <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-slashes-assistance-for-french-courses-1.7324714#:~:text=The%20Coalition%20Avenir%20Qu%C3%A9bec%20government.amounts%20allocated%20in%202020%2D2021.>

¹⁰ Provincial Employment Roundtable, "User journeys of language learners navigating Québec's French language training ecosystem."

¹¹ See Jason Moser et. al., "Mind your errors: Evidence for a neural mechanism linking growth mind-set to adaptive posterror adjustment," *Psychological Science* 22, no. 12 (Fall 2011): 1484, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797611419520>; Laurence G. Weinzimmer and Candace A. Esken, "Learning from Mistakes: How Mistake Tolerance Positively Affects Organizational Learning and Performance," *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science* 53, no. 2 (2017): 322, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886316688658>



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