

2023-2024 REVIEW REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PART VII OF THE *OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT*

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**Atlantic Canada
Opportunities
Agency**

**Agence de
promotion économique
du Canada atlantique**

Canada 

Tombstone Data

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Institution's name:

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

Institution's Code:

ACO

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Part VII of the OLA

Advancement of Equality of Status and Use of English and French

- 1. The institution ensured that positive measures were taken for the advancement of equality of status and use of English and French.**

ALWAYS (IN 100% OF CASES)

Check all that apply and provide details for each:

- 2. Promote and support the learning of both official languages**

YES

ACOA employees are actively engaged in fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French. ACOA internal training and Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) courses are available in both official languages.

Employees also take advantage of other French language training opportunities available to them, thus increasing ACOA's capacity to serve clients and the public in both official languages.

ACOA's Nova Scotia regional office supported a grassroots effort led by two employees to establish a monthly in-person coffee break for individuals wanting to practise their French and combat language insecurity. During Atlantic Official Languages Week, these two employees were recognized by the Atlantic Federal Council (AFC) for their leadership in spearheading these sessions and promoting official languages internally.

The AFC Official Languages Subcommittee (OLSC), with the Quebec Federal Council, launched the Language Maintenance Pilot Program for Managers via the Community of Practice on Access to Language Training. The pilot program received over 102 applications. In November 2023, an initial cohort of 40 managers was paired to hold weekly conversations to practise their second official language.

As part of this pairing initiative, on May 13, 2024, at the Official Languages Week kick-off event, the Atlantic Federal Council for Official Languages honoured the New Brunswick regional office's Diversity Committee with an Official Languages Award for Internal Services in recognition of its dedication to the promotion of official languages.

- 3. Foster an acceptance and appreciation of both English and French**

YES

To foster engagement, ACOA promotes the use of both official languages internally and externally.

ACOA regional office coordinators support colleagues during project development and monitoring to identify and monitor official languages measures in contribution agreements.

In 2023-24, ACOA's Nova Scotia regional office delivered three information sessions to employees on the modernized Official Languages Act, with a focus on Part V, Language of Work, and Part VII, Advancement of Equality of Status and Use of English and French.

About 120 employees across the four provinces participated in two key virtual events organized by the AFC OLSC to celebrate the 9th edition of Official Languages Week from June 19 to 23, 2023. Under the theme “Atlantic Official Languages Week: Values Identity Inclusion,” the following key events were held:

- A panel discussion on resilience and linguistic pride
- A presentation on Acadian history with Philippe Basque, historian at the Village Historique Acadien located in Caraquet, N.B.

ACOA employees also attended presentations by Heritage Canada, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Treasury Board Secretariat on key updates to the modernized Official Languages Act. Presentations were made to the OLSC in October 2023, the Networks in December 2023 and the AFC in February 2024.

4. Promote the bilingual character of Canada in Canada or elsewhere

YES

The Agency supported both domestic and international marketing activities by investing in the Congrès mondial acadien 2024.

In 2023-2024, ACOA approved \$225,000 in funding to enable the Société nationale de l’Acadie to launch the Stratégie de promotion des artistes acadiens sur la scène internationale for 2024-2025. This strategy aims to support the promotion of Atlantic Canada’s francophone artistic talent on a global scale. Among the methods chosen to achieve this objective, trade missions and fairs were favoured for their effectiveness in promoting local artists internationally.

5. Support the creation and dissemination of information in French that contributes to the advancement of scientific knowledge (If YES, specify the scientific discipline in the mandatory clarifications)

NO

Support sectors that are essential to enhancing the vitality of official languages minority communities (check all that apply and provide details for each):

6. Culture

YES

ACOA’s Nova Scotia regional office invested in the following:

- \$160,000 in an Acadian cultural project to engage expertise to redesign the Acadian Shores Interpretive Tour that runs through the Acadian communities of southwest Nova Scotia. Project activities include the design, fabrication and installation of 40 interpretive panels, script development and production of vignettes, mobile-friendly website development and marketing activities.
- \$150,000 in a project to promote Cheticamp’s Acadian culture through various events and festivals. Tourists will attend events in the community, and a community historical centre will offer tours to preserve and promote Acadian culture and official languages.

7. Education (from early childhood to post-secondary education)

YES

ACOA’s New Brunswick regional office approved \$120,000 in funding for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to support the implementation of a Centre of Excellence (COE) for Manufacturing and Skilled Trades.

The project will develop resources and support tools to assist New Brunswick youth in both the anglophone and francophone school districts. It supports long-term talent development by exposing high-school-aged youth to career opportunities in the manufacturing and skilled trades sectors. Working with employers and stakeholders, the COE will educate youth on the broad spectrum of employment options in these sectors, as well as available post-secondary career pathways. Through a combination of workshops, employer interactions, micro-internships and developmental employment, the COE can help youth recognize their career interests and strengths while building workplace readiness skills. These efforts will support the health of New Brunswick's future ecosystem.

8. Health

NO

9. Justice

NO

10. Employment

YES

ACOA's Prince Edward Island regional office approved \$111,989.31 in funding for the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE) P.E.I. as part of a multi-year funding agreement to support and implement its summer employment program titled "PERCÉ" (Programme d'entrepreneuriat régional, communautaire et économique). The program connected students or recent graduates who lived in or originated from P.E.I. with a 12-week employment opportunity in their respective fields of study. The program also offered employers an incentivized opportunity to hire quality francophone/bilingual candidates.

The PERCÉ program aims to hire students under the age of 30 seeking quality work experience in their field of study who are actively searching the job market, want to return to P.E.I. for work, have francophone capabilities, and have completed or nearly completed of their studies.

11. Immigration

YES

In New Brunswick:

- Opportunities New Brunswick received \$498,400 in funding to improve the skilled labour pipeline in New Brunswick by retaining international graduates.

Through this project, ACOA and the province's Department of Post-secondary Education, Training and Labour are co-funding a three-year initiative called Study and Succeed in New Brunswick. This project supports international students at New Brunswick's post-secondary institutions in their efforts to remain in the province following graduation. NB Advantage offers international students access to critical employment resources and to training, mentoring and networking that will help them prepare for career opportunities in New Brunswick.

This project provides opportunities to work with international students across various levels of their post-secondary studies and to assist their efforts to find full-time career opportunities in New Brunswick. It offers a variety of learning, networking and

employment-related tools to help international students transition from full-time studies at provincial post-secondary institutions to full-time employment in the province. Detailed curriculum content is delivered through cohort-based training offered in both French and English, as well as a variety of resources available in both official languages. The interventions are designed to help immigrants overcome employment barriers by helping them improve their own level of employment readiness and supporting their efforts to find job opportunities and career pathways.

- The New Brunswick Multicultural Council (NBMC) received \$498,400 in funding to improve immigrant readiness to actively participate in New Brunswick’s labour force.

This project aims to encourage immigrant retention in New Brunswick and meet labour force demands by supporting the integration of newcomers who have encountered barriers to entering the local workforce. The NBMC is managing a province-wide project to support immigrants on the pathway to employment. The project addresses basic workplace knowledge and assists immigrants in preparing personal resumé, networking, learning how to approach the employment search in New Brunswick and preparing for job interviews.

The project addresses employment gaps for newcomers and provides connection opportunities so that participants can improve their official languages skills to succeed in New Brunswick’s job market. Immigrants who have encountered significant barriers to finding employment may participate in cohort-based sessions with a formal learning curriculum. NBMC has prepared its learning materials in both official languages and trained francophone cohorts in person in Bathurst, N.B., with a virtual option available to support francophone participants across the province.

A management representative of ACOA’s Nova Scotia regional office attends N.S. francophone immigration working group meetings and reports back to senior management.

- In Prince Edward Island, ACOA provided funding to La Société éducative de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard Inc. (Collège de l’Île) under a multi-year funding agreement (\$139,970) to undertake a project to enhance services to international students to support the francophone community. The project funded a customer relationship management (CRM) system between the Collège and international students.

Under the project, the Collège aimed to maximize recruitment and retention of new French-speaking students through a CRM database, allowing it to effectively manage student profiles and communication. The database allowed both the Collège and students to better navigate the enrolment process. The project allowed the Collège to maximize international retention efforts, thus expanding P.E.I.’s francophone and Acadian community. In the long term, the project will increase the availability of bilingual human resources and expand the rate of francophone immigration to P.E.I.

12. Protect and promote the presence of strong institutions serving official languages minority communities

YES

ACOA's New Brunswick regional office approved \$464,380 in funding to support Ability New Brunswick in developing and testing a provincial accessibility review service to support inclusive workplaces.

Ability NB is a provincial non-profit organization serving clients in all communities of New Brunswick. This project supports the full inclusion of persons with mobility disabilities in the New Brunswick labour force and in community economies. Ability New Brunswick is at the midpoint of a three-year project to improve the economic and social inclusion of persons with motor skills disabilities. With joint funding from ACOA and the Government of New Brunswick, the organization developed a physical accessibility review process that can assess whether an organization is prepared to accommodate the needs of customers and/or employees with physical disabilities. Ability New Brunswick employees received training to a recognized certification level and are now available to provide comprehensive reviews of an organization's physical space in order to make recommendations as to modifications that could improve access to and within a business environment.

Trained and experienced bilingual assessors are available to work with businesses and organizations in all regions and communities of New Brunswick, in the official language of their choice. The work aims to improve accessibility awareness among business organizations and increase inclusion of New Brunswickers with physical and motor disabilities.

- ACOA's New Brunswick regional office approved \$199,746 to help Groupe Ekko Acadie Inc. (an Economic Development Initiative project) support the activities of the Ekko Acadie accelerator.

The project supports the operating fund of Groupe Ekko Acadie Inc. for a period of three years, enabling it to consolidate its recent creation in 2021 and sustain its growth over the medium term. Ekko Acadie is a social enterprise that promotes the development of entrepreneurs by entrepreneurs. The organization's values and principles are based on community, collaboration, culture, consistency and complementarity. The organization's mission is to create a resilient and prosperous future for rural Acadian regions by leveraging entrepreneurs, their resources and their knowledge to ensure the sustainable development of our communities.

The project will enable Ekko Acadie to support the development of entrepreneurs by entrepreneurs and invest in the support of the people who wish to create this entrepreneurial wealth, create a resilient and prosperous future for rural Acadian regions by leveraging entrepreneurs, their resources and knowledge to ensure sustainable community development; foster increased business productivity; promote collaborative community and business projects; and promote a collaborative and innovative entrepreneurial culture through leadership in the northeast region. Expected outcomes include the creation of at least three collaborative accelerator cohorts in the northeast region of New Brunswick, comprising 22 participating companies over the next three years.

- ACOA’s Nova Scotia regional office employees collaborated regularly with key stakeholders of OLMCs. Two ACOA Nova Scotia employees are co-located with Université Sainte-Anne (USA) and the Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CDÉNÉ). Co-location provides a daily opportunity to consult and communicate with these key institutions and advise senior management on opportunities to support them.
- The Agency invested \$390,000 in CDÉNÉ in 2023-24 and is working with the USA on a project concept to invest in incremental innovation infrastructure.
- The Assistant Deputy Minister of ACOA Nova Scotia meets regularly with representatives of la Société Nationale de l’Acadie, la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, CDÉNÉ and the USA to consult on priorities and ensure alignment.
- On November 28, 2023, ACOA Nova Scotia management consulted with Atlantic Canada managers of the RDÉE network to learn about their needs, initiatives and best practices.
- On February 8, 2024, a senior management representative met with the Chief Executive Officer of CDÉNÉ to discuss ACOA’s priorities and opportunities for alignment with CDÉNÉ services.
- On March 13, 2024, an ACOA management representative consulted with official language minority community (OLMC) stakeholders across the region at an in-person meeting in Halifax. Effective communications with government officials and a simplified application process were identified as priorities during these consultations.

13. Other (Tourism and Clean Growth)

YES

ACOA’s New Brunswick regional office approved \$375,000 to help the Restigouche Regional Service Commission establish an energy alliance in northern New Brunswick to support the green economy. The project involves hiring consultants to develop a plan to establish a for-profit organization structure that is able to invest in renewable energy projects, that advocates for the collective interests of the northeastern communities and the Pabineau Falls and Eel River Bar First Nations, that will organize a wind energy forum in the winter of 2024 for elected community officials and will establish an organization ready to respond to future NB Power calls for proposals in collaboration with private sector partners.

Given the federal government’s priority to decarbonize society and accelerate the transition to a green economy, in addition to the Belledune Port Authority’s recent strategic decision to establish a green energy hub, the Restigouche Regional Service Commission is looking to conduct an in-depth examination of the possibility of northern New Brunswick municipalities establishing a structure similar to that of the Alliance de l’Énergie de l’Est Inc. in Quebec.

In 2023-24, ACOA’s Newfoundland and Labrador regional office provided Horizon économique de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador Inc. (HORIZON TNL) with \$93,176 in funding to revise and publish the new edition of the Guide touristique en français 2024 for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, with a print run of 15,000 copies, along with a digital version available online at

www.exploretnl.ca. This initiative will improve the resources available to visitors and residents and provide the tourism sector with related business opportunities to reach a new market. HORIZON TNL is currently the only organization in Newfoundland and Labrador to publish a complete tourist guide in French.

- 14. When negotiating agreements with the provincial and territorial governments, including funding agreements, in areas of activity that may contribute to enhancing the vitality of official language minority communities, fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society, the protection and promotion of French or learning in the minority language, the federal institution had a mechanism in place to promote the inclusion in those agreements of provisions on official languages.**

ALWAYS (IN 100% OF CASES)

Funding applications were reviewed to determine if project activities could enhance the vitality of OLMCs and advance the equality of status and use of both official languages. The review is a formal process whereby a series of questions are asked and discussed with the recipient to determine if special official language clauses should be included in the contribution agreement. These requirements are discussed with the recipient, and projects are monitored to ensure adherence. Given that recipients are encouraged to take positive measures to enhance the vitality of OLMCs, resources are provided to allow them to do so without negatively impacting their budget and other deliverables.

- 15. The institution identified stakeholders from official language minority communities that are affected by the carrying out of its mandate or the implementation of its programs.**

YES

ACOA employees communicated and consulted with OLMC stakeholders to reassure them of ACOA's commitment to making investments in their communities.

Stakeholder groups include the following:

- New Brunswick: Université de Moncton (Shippagan Campus) – Centre de formation en robotique et intelligence artificielle; Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick – Bureau de recherche INNOV; Community Business Development Corporation (CBDC) Chaleur; CBDC Péninsule; CBDC Restigouche; Acadian Peninsula Regional Service Commission (RSC); Chaleur RSC; Restigouche RSC; Campbellton, Neguac and Rivière-du-Nord municipalities; Groupe Ekko Acadie Inc.; Festival Western de Saint-Quentin Inc.; Vélo Restigouche Cycling Inc.; Véloroute de la Péninsule acadienne; Valorès Coastal Zones Research Institute; Northern Hardwoods Research Institute
- Newfoundland and Labrador: HORIZON TNL
- Nova Scotia: Université Sainte-Anne; CDÉNÉ; Congrès mondial acadien 2024 Municipality of the district of Clare; Municipality of the district of Argyle; La Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse
- Prince Edward Island: RDÉE P.E.I.; La Société éducative de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard Inc. (Collège de l'île)

The institution's programs and services enabled it to (check all that apply and provide details for each):

- 16. Support and assist the development of official language minority communities**

YES

ACOA's New Brunswick regional office awarded \$31,473 to the Campbellton Regional Community to support a project to develop a revitalization plan for downtown Campbellton in support of tourism.

This project will enhance the tourist experience, ensure better coordination of activities and work in the downtown area, and make a central tourist point in the municipality more attractive. It is also an asset for the Atlantic Provinces, since Campbellton, as an OLMC, is one of the land access points to the Atlantic provinces. The region also welcomes many communities of interest, such as mountain bikers, hikers, fishing enthusiasts, skiers, snowmobilers and nature lovers. Members of these communities will be able to take advantage of a more diversified offer throughout the year and will be more inclined to extend their stay in the region.

The expected outcomes are a new trademark; a tourism and directional signage strategy, including an implementation plan; a guide to downtown development and promotion; a façade renovation program; and a communication and promotion plan.

The Chaleur RSC also received \$25,850 for its project to assess the feasibility of launching an artisanal crafts business in downtown Bathurst. The purpose of this innovative concept is to support the start-up of new businesses in a commercial space called the "Artisan District" and to help new artisan entrepreneurs by matching them with master artisans who are willing to pass on their knowledge.

The project is also aimed at revitalization and retention, with improved quality of life as a spin-off. The city centre should benefit from revitalization, since in the past artisanal crafts have attracted large numbers of people to the heart of downtown areas. Aspects of the project will help keep young people, locals, newcomers and visitors in the region by providing them with opportunities. The project is being implemented in an OLMC and will help this community diversify its economy, increase the number of small and medium-sized businesses and thus curb the exodus of young people.

In Nova Scotia, through the active offer of service in the official language of choice, ACOA provided services in French in communities that had traditionally received service in English only: Chezzecook, Tor Bay and Greenwood. The Greenwood inquiry resulted in a project.

Presentations were also delivered to local RDÉE N.S. staff and the community of Argyle, reconfirming ACOA Nova Scotia's commitment to making investments in OLMCs. The economic development initiative guideline was shared with stakeholders to encourage them to apply.

17. Foster the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society

YES

ACOA's head office and regional offices follow an official languages process allowing them to:

- apply an official languages lens to new initiatives
- take into account OLMCs in project development and implementation
- include specific official language clauses in contribution agreements and, if needed, provide for financial resources to ensure that public information is available in a bilingual format

18. Protect and promote the French language

YES

ACOA internal training and CSPS courses are available in both official languages.

Employees also take advantage of other French language training opportunities available to them, thus increasing ACOA's capacity to serve clients and the public in both official languages.

ACOA's New Brunswick regional office awarded \$20,000 to the Coopérative de théâtre l'Escaouette for a feasibility study on infrastructure upgrades to support tourism and greening.

The Coopérative de théâtre l'Escaouette is a professional Acadian theatre company founded in 1978. It has now been around for 45 years. The theatre's mandate is to promote and showcase Acadian theatre arts through theatrical performances, tours, workshops and other relevant activities. Its work has been presented on stages across the country, and the facility hosts shows by other companies touring regionally and nationally.

An assessment of the building's condition, design studies, acoustic studies and an energy audit will be carried out by a consulting firm to determine the feasibility of modernizing the theater. These activities will help the promoter make fiscally responsible decisions about the theatre's future. Future improvements to the theatre will foster an environment conducive to innovation, growth and competitiveness by offering Moncton-area residents and visitors a variety of high-quality, inclusive and accessible theatrical experiences.

19. Advance opportunities for members of English and French linguistic minority communities to pursue quality learning in their own language

YES

ACOA's New Brunswick regional office approved the following:

- A total of \$684,961 in funding for LearnSphere Canada for two projects: business training for small and medium-sized enterprises (ProfitLearn) and business training for non-profit organizations.

Through these projects, LearnSphere is able to deliver training workshops, customized training packages and one-on-one counselling that addresses timely and emerging skills needs of New Brunswick's small and medium-sized businesses and organizations, thereby enabling them to sustain economic pressures and equipping them with the knowledge and tools needed to increase their productivity and growth. Co-funded by ACOA and the Province of New Brunswick, these projects ensure that small businesses and non-profits have access to affordable training resources for traditional and emerging business skills.

Courses and customized training assistance are available throughout the province in either official language. In 2023-24, over 35% of training workshops for non-profit organizations were delivered in French, and 5 out of 11 clients receiving customized training support were francophone organizations.

- A contribution of \$999,760 was made to the NBMC pilot project to improve immigrant readiness to participate actively in the New Brunswick labour force.

In late 2020, the NBMC launched a pilot project designed to help immigrants throughout the province find local employment. The organization identified that immigrant newcomers experience significant barriers to settlement in New Brunswick such as a lack of Canadian work experience or local professional references, insufficient proficiency in the language of work, and a lack of knowledge of local business culture and practices with respect to employment. Under the pilot, the NBMC welcomed 140 immigrants (111 women and 29 men) to a program titled Skills Launch for Adults. The program offered intensive training to help newcomers facing significant barriers enter the local workforce. The program was delivered through a cohort structure to allow time for one-on-one learning opportunities. By mid-summer 2022, 84 participants had already secured full-time employment in the province, and three participants had opted to enter post-secondary education in the information technology field.

The pilot included a second program titled Head Start to Employment for Newcomers, which offered individual interventions to guide or assist newcomers who required modest support in starting their job search in a Canadian business culture. Training included advice on preparing resumés and cover letters, participation in simulated job interviews, as well as employment coaching and access to job fairs. More than 700 newcomers were served through this program, including 232 international students. This proposed project would build on the significant results of the pilot by extending the availability of services and introducing a new programming stream to support the unique needs of francophone newcomers.

This project will offer employment readiness training to francophone newcomers in the province's urban and rural communities. Participants will continue to have access to digital literacy support to facilitate their participation. Experiential learning and networking opportunities will be arranged to help newcomers settle and to increase employment prospects in New Brunswick. Businesses open to hiring participants will also be offered cultural competency training opportunities.

20. Other

NO

21. In developing a disposal strategy for a surplus federal real property or a federal immovable, the institution consulted the official language minority communities and other stakeholders to take into account the needs and priorities of the English or French linguistic minority communities of the province or territory where the federal real property or federal building in question is located.

N/A (DOES NOT APPLY TO YOUR INSTITUTION)

22. Give us one or two examples of best practices that your institution has implemented as part of fulfilling its commitment under Part VII of the OLA.

ACOA actively collaborates with francophone organizations.

Meetings are organized twice a year between the four RDÉEs, ACOA's regional official languages coordinators and ACOA's head office to increase ACOA–community collaboration on economic development in the Atlantic region.

Throughout the year, the regional offices collaborate with regional organizations and regularly consult them on economic development, in addition to helping them with projects to advance the French language.

For example, the Nova Scotia regional office has established a working group with representatives of Canadian Heritage, Acadian Affairs and Francophonie, and ACOA. Working group members meet as needed to discuss project proposals from OLMC community organizations. Members also share best practices.