

REVIEW ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES 2022-2023

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Atlantic Canada
Opportunities
Agency

Agence de
promotion économique
du Canada atlantique

Canada 

2022-2023 ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECTION 41

Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

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The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor

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General Information

Context

The Official Languages Act (OLA) requires the President of the Treasury Board to submit an annual report to Parliament on the status of programs in federal institutions relating to Parts IV, V and VI. It also requires the Minister of Canadian Heritage to submit an annual report to Parliament on the implementation of Section 41 of the OLA (Part VII) by federal institutions. The Minister of Canadian Heritage's official languages responsibilities are currently assumed by the Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) and the Department of Canadian Heritage (PCH) are working together to coordinate the collection of information required to prepare both annual reports to Parliament.

Instructions

This year, your institution is asked to submit a Review on Official Languages. Your duly completed review must be returned electronically by May 31, 2023:

- 1. The Canadian Heritage (PCH) questionnaire for part VII (Word version attached) will continue to be submitted by email to portail41-gateway41.pch@canada.ca this year.*
- 2. We will use your statistical data, which we will obtain through the Position and Classification Information System as of March 31, 2023.*

We would like to remind you that federal institutions are responsible for communicating their Review regarding the implementation of Parts IV, V, VI and VII of the OLA to the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (comm@clo-ocol.gc.ca), both Parliamentary Standing Committees on Official Languages (ollo@sen.parl.gc.ca and lang@parl.gc.ca), and to the main community stakeholders, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (info@fcfa.ca) and the Quebec Community Groups Network (info@qcgnc.ca).

Please note that institutions that do not submit a Review for 2022-23 to the TBS and to PCH after being called upon to do so, may be mentioned in the Annual Report on Official Languages 2022-23.

Part VII of the Official Languages Act

Enhancing the vitality and development of official language minority communities and advancing English and French in Canadian society

All federal institutions should answer all the questions. The information collected through this process is used by Canadian Heritage to prepare the Annual Report on Official Languages, the Best Practices Digests for part VII and various other tools to support federal institutions with the implementation of Part VII of the Official Languages Act..

Ongoing Dialogue

1. How does your institution ensure that it is aware of the priorities and needs of **French-speaking minority communities (outside Quebec) and **English-speaking communities** in Quebec?**

Please specify the methods used, list the organizations and/or communities with whom you were in contact, as well as how you took the priorities and needs of these communities into account when planning your activities.

As part of its internal Action Plan for Official Languages 2022–2023, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) implemented a number of activities that have enabled it to better understand the priorities and needs of official language minority communities (OLMCs) in Atlantic Canada.

- Over the past year, the Government of Canada, through Canadian Heritage (PCH), conducted extensive consultations with OLMCs for the Action Plan for Official Languages 2023 – 2028. ACOA’s Head Office (HO) Communities and Inclusive Growth (CIG) team actively participated in all consultations by identifying the Atlantic Canadian stakeholders in advance, attending as a member and facilitating a focus group.

On October 19, 2022, ACOA held a follow-up meeting with OLMC representatives from Atlantic Canada to ensure that their concerns were properly addressed.

Additionally, ACOA regional office staff ensured that they were informed of OLMC priorities.

- For example, ACOA New Brunswick (N.B.) regularly works and consults with OLMC organizations such as the following:

- Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick Inc.;
- Association des municipalités francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick;
- new entities created during municipal reform, the regional economic development boards;
- Fédération des jeunes francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick;
- University of Moncton and its three campuses (Moncton, Shippagan and Edmundston);
- Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (CCNB);
- CCNB-INNOV;
- Société de l’Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick;
- Société nationale de l’Acadie;
- Réseau de développement économique et d’employabilité (RDÉE) de Canada;
- a variety of non-profit organizations, including:
 - Véloroute de la Péninsule acadienne Inc.
 - Les Amis du Village Historique Acadien Inc.
 - The Hive Chaleur
 - EKKO.Acadie

- In the N.L. region during 2022-2023, the two main non-governmental organizations that ACOA worked with on French-speaking community needs were Horizon TNL and the Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador.

ACOA N.L. has a long relationship with both organizations and regularly confers with and collaborates with the organizations to determine whether their projects and priorities are a fit for the economic development mandate of ACOA N.L.

- In addition to discussions and communication with OLMC members, ACOA funds projects to identify priorities and needs.
 - In NB, ACOA contributed \$266,000 to the CBDC Péninsule acadienne to support businesses in the Northeast to access cohort-based business accelerators, while developing a Business Accelerator and Incubator (BAI) model for SMEs in the Restigouche, Chaleur, Acadian Peninsula and Miramichi regions.

The project has two components. The first supports young businesses (i.e., startup to 5 years) to access accelerator programs offered in N.B. or elsewhere to facilitate the acquisition of advanced skills through high-level mentoring and successful business growth practices. The second component involves engaging a consulting firm to assist stakeholders in the startup ecosystem in Northeastern New Brunswick in the development of a BAI model tailored to the needs of regional businesses.

Preliminary exchanges between the Agency and the CBDC Péninsule on the needs of SMEs in these OLMC communities led to in-depth discussions and collaboration between the four CBDCs in the Northeast as well as Women in Business N.B. (WBNB), confirming the following:

- a) Accelerators offering mentorship and training to SMEs in the Northeast was lacking.
- b) The number of entrepreneurs who would subscribe to accelerator programs was between 30-38 annually in the Northeast.
- c) The minimum financial support required to incentivize entrepreneurs to use this accelerator service should be between 75-85% of program costs.

The Northeast BAI project was submitted by the CBDC Péninsule on behalf of the four CBDCs and WBNB. The invaluable collaboration of the three Regional Offices of Working NB is validated through financial support from the Province of New Brunswick for this project.

The project is directly aligned with ACOA N.B.'s 2022-2023 strategic priorities.

The expected results are:

1. 60 companies, over two years, complete an accelerator program.
 2. The creation of 120 jobs over three years.
 3. Development of a BAI model for the Northeast.
- In Nova Scotia (NS), ACOA staff engages directly and regularly with members of the OLMCs to discuss priorities.

Bilingual staff offer services to applicants regardless of their location by using video conferencing when a recipient chooses service in French and where there is insufficient bilingual capacity.

Account Managers are collocated with Francophone organizations in OLMCs such as Le Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse, and the Community Business Development Corporations (CBDCs).

ACOA staff also meet with Municipal Chief Administration Officers in OLMCs to discuss their priorities. Staff engaged directly with the Executive Director and board members of Congrès mondial acadien 2024, with the Conseil des arts de Chéticamp, La Société Touristique Bon temps d'Argyle, Le Village historique acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, and Société Mi-Carême.

The largest OLMCs in N.S. are the communities of Clare, Argyle, Richmond and Chéticamp. Investments were made in these communities as well as smaller regions such as Pomquet, and Chezzetcook.

Tangible Results

2. Please highlight positive measures taken by your institution to enhance the *vitality and development of official language minority communities.*

Please include activities taking place in the regions, if applicable. Please describe the initiatives, impacts, success factors, and results.

During the 2022–2023 fiscal year, ACOA supported numerous projects aimed at enhancing and developing OLMCs in Atlantic Canada.

- At the pan-Atlantic level, ACOA approved a sustainable development project titled “IMPACT, vers une économie responsable et durable en Atlantique” [IMPACT, towards a responsible and sustainable economy in Atlantic Canada] for the benefit of the four RDÉE organizations in Atlantic Canada. The cost of this project is \$1,600,000 over four years.

This project is focused on enabling businesses and organizations owned and operated by Acadians and francophones to grow and compete in the new national and global market realities.

The IMPACT project will provide essential training, structure, and tools to the four RDÉE organizations in Atlantic Canada so that they can provide strategic advice on sustainable business development.

Additionally, the IMPACT project will provide training to 100 managers from 50 businesses in the Acadian and francophone communities over a four-year period for them to participate meaningfully in the implementation of sustainable business development processes.

- In New Brunswick, ACOA will provide \$456,325 over two years to INNOV, the Applied Research and Innovation Office of the Community College New Brunswick (CCNB) aimed at the introduction and transfer of vacuum infusion molding (VIM) technologies and lightweight resin transfer moulding (LRTM) to companies in various manufacturing sectors of New Brunswick and Atlantic Canada.

The strategic objective of the project is to increase innovation and productivity for the benefit of several manufacturing sectors in New Brunswick and Atlantic Canada in search of increased productivity and new, more efficient products. The project includes the establishment of additional capacity in terms of equipment and know-how in vacuum moulding technologies at the Centre of Expertise in Advanced Materials of CCNB-INNOV in Caraquet. This will be achieved through technical experts from France and then to transfer skills via practical workshops directly to companies.

Widely used in Europe, the United States and, more recently, in central Canada, VIM and LRTM are almost non-existent in Atlantic Canada. VIM is used in the aerospace industry, renewable energy (wind turbines) and shipbuilding sectors, while LRTM is attracting interest from the transport sector, including aerospace, mass transport and truck transport. These processes have many advantages such as the reduction of manufacturing costs, the protection of the health of workers, and the manufacturing of large complex geometry parts.

The project concretely mobilizes the introduction of new advanced manufacturing processes through tailor-made technical support for companies that currently have little capacity or no culture of innovation to integrate such processes or state-of-the-art equipment. These improvements can help companies to increase their productivity and profitability, as well as recruit and retain qualified employees.

As a result of this project, technical capacity was increased within the company. Upskilling the workforce took place via training workshops; health and safety protocols were developed; and the company expects to generate increased revenues from this technology transfer in the next three years.

- Another example is the Place aux compétences (PAC) project titled “Soutenir l’apprentissage expérientiel” [Supporting Experiential Learning], which is offered in francophone schools and funded by the ACOA N.B. office. Its

purpose is to support innovative projects in francophone schools across the province to improve the skills and abilities that young people acquire in school and that will benefit them in their lives and career paths.

The increasingly digital economy will cause disruptions in the labour market, particularly in Atlantic Canada.

The PAC project provides training and coaching to youth and stakeholders involved in the development of entrepreneurial and technological projects and promotes these projects. With the co-operation of several partners, the PAC project enables students in the francophone school districts of Northwestern, Northeastern and Southern N.B. to develop their skills.

This co-operation makes it possible for the PAC project to maximize the effectiveness, impact and reach of the support fund that contributes to the development of entrepreneurial and technological projects in New Brunswick francophone schools. It also improves the quality of learning, the involvement of partners and the skill level of New Brunswick students, teachers and school stakeholders. This project, which aligns with the Agency's priorities under the Atlantic Growth Strategy and the Innovation and Skills Plan, supports economically diverse communities that are resilient by encouraging youth to develop entrepreneurial skills.

The project also improves the quality of learning, partner engagement and skill levels of New Brunswick students, teachers and school stakeholders by providing over 100 teacher training sessions per year.

The project fosters public-private partnerships, keeps youth in the regions and exposes them to experiential learning through work experience as part of their school education. With more than 1,000 technology projects per year in New Brunswick's francophone schools and more than 75 youth entrepreneurial projects, the PAC project is a leader in working with all schools and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to equip youth with the skills they need to be ready for the future labour market.

3. Please highlight positive measures taken by your institution that have contributed to *fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.*

Please include activities taking place in the regions, if applicable. Please describe the initiatives, impacts, success factors, and results.

- To foster the full recognition and use of French in Canadian society, ACOA has supported a number of projects for the benefit of francophone communities through its various programs and regional offices.

In addition to its regular programs for which francophone community members are eligible, ACOA also implements the Economic Development Initiative, under which \$1.1 million is devoted exclusively to strategic francophone projects each year.

ACOA is continually reviewing, through working groups composed of individuals at various levels, the implementation of tools adopted to ensure that French is used as the language of information for any project that impacts the francophone community, whenever necessary.

Employees are encouraged to express themselves in the language of their choice and are accommodated whenever they need to improve their language skills.

The regional offices such as ACOA N.S. are committed to offering services in both official languages. This is achieved by making an active offer of service in the official language of the recipient's choice and by ensuring that the assigned ACOA staff member has the capacity to deliver in that language.

- In October 2022, ACOA and the Province of New Brunswick co-funded a project managed by the New Brunswick Multicultural Council (NBMC) to enhance employment supports offered to immigrants. NBMC proposed two separate support initiatives: one titled Skills Launch for Adults, and a second titled Head Start for Employment. These initiatives

are intended to support the rapid integration of immigrants into New Brunswick communities to accelerate their employment and settlement in the province.

The Skills Launch initiative is an intensive, cohort-based development program that supports immigrants who have faced significant obstacles integrating into the New Brunswick labour force. Supports include language skills upgrading, professional connections and mentoring, basic workplace essential skills such as resume development, simulated job interviews, and basic occupational health and safety training.

These services were piloted in a trial project led by NBMC in 2021-2022 that generated impressive results in supporting the participating newcomers and in assisting their efforts to find employment in the province to support their settlement and integration.

An expanded project launched in October 2022 included the adaptation and translation of training materials developed for the pilot and the addition of designated francophone cohorts designed to address the unique needs of francophone immigrants settling in New Brunswick communities – particularly the lesser populated communities in northern New Brunswick.

- During the 2022-2023 fiscal year, ACOA N.L. worked with Horizon TNL on an initiative that will provide programs and services to support francophone immigration to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Newfoundland and Labrador has significant demographic challenges associated with an aging population and declining birth rate. Retention of skilled newcomers has been identified as one solution to this problem.

The goal of the project is to fill existing labour shortages and enhance the cultural and social diversity of the province. \$137,178 in funding was provided by the Agency. The Province of N.L.'s Department of Immigration also invested \$60,846 in the project.

More specifically, this initiative supports the Government of Canada's Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Action Plan for Increasing Francophone Immigration and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's "Way Forward on Immigration" strategy, as well as the priorities of the provincial Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

With the support of ACOA N.L., Horizon TNL will engage an immigration resource officer in a full-time capacity to develop and implement a comprehensive suite of programs and services in support of francophone immigration. This resource will deliver targeted recruitment and retention efforts to employers in the province and francophone immigrants with the goal to increase employer engagement and increase the number of French-speaking immigrants settling in the province.

Horizon TNL will achieve this through the completion of the following activities:

(1) Employer Engagement

- Raise awareness among employers about the benefits of bilingual economic immigration and the hiring bilingual francophone immigrant candidates.
- Mentor and guide all participants through the recruitment and retention process.
- Propose workshops on multiculturalism in French and English.

(2) Participation in domestic and international job fairs and employment preparation

- Maintain participation in *Destination Canada* and the Salon Virtuel.
- Increased participation in job fairs and missions (sectors such as information technology, health care, education, manufacturing, and oceans).

(3) Customized employment recruitment support

- Organize customized and focused one-on-one virtual job fairs between interested candidates and N.L. employers.
 - 40-120 one-on-one sessions between 2022 and 2024.
- (4) Partnership opportunities and network development to:
- Foster more efficient and effective delivery of core programs and services.
 - Identify participants (potential immigrants and employers) for programs and services.
 - Promote the organization’s role in provincial immigration, strengthen RDÉE NL’s partnerships and visibility.
- Through ACOA N.S., a \$125,000 contribution was made to support la Fédération Culturelle acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse to host La fête nationale de l’Acadie on August 15, 2022. The event was hosted in Argyle, which is one of the two communities hosting the Congrès 9mondial acadien 2024. The event provided exposure that could translate into attracting more participants (French- and English- speaking) to the 2024 event.
- Furthermore, \$89,080 has been invested in Société National de l’Acadie to implement projects such as a trade mission between Atlantic Canada and Saint-Pierre et Miquelon. These activities demonstrate that Canada is a bilingual country and has the capacity to work in both official languages.
- In Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.), several projects were funded to foster the full recognition of both English and French in Atlantic Canada.

During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, ACOA Prince Edward Island and Tourism provided RDÉE Î.-P.-É. With \$246,750 in funding to implement its summer employment program titled Programme d’entrepreneurship régionale, communautaire, et économique (PERCÉ) in 2022 and 2023. PERCÉ’s goal is to repatriate P.E.I. francophone students to return to the province following post-secondary education and to retain those who remained in the province for post-secondary education. The program connected these students or recent graduates to 12 weeks of work in their respective fields of study. The program also offered employers an incentive to hire quality francophone/ bilingual candidates.

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

A selection committee, led by the client, accepted, and evaluated applications from post-secondary students. PERCÉ gave priority to students originally from P.E.I. but studying off-Island who had not accessed the program previously. Participants must be able to communicate in French; French communication skills are viewed as an asset in terms of serving an international market as well as the local market, which has a growing number of French-speaking immigrants.

In 2022, RDÉE identified 35 students or youth under the age of 30 and matched them with suitable employers. The selection committee also assessed applications from employers, with the aim of identifying those who could provide the best match to the program’s applicants. Among the top criteria for potential employers was their ability to provide permanent employment beyond the scope of the internship. Another consideration was to provide a qualified individual that met the long-term need of the employer, rather than merely supporting summer employment.

Once participants were selected, they were provided with week-long training that prepared them for the workplace. The training served to expose students to expectations of the workplace as well as to showcase the wide range of opportunities for employment on P.E.I., including site visits to employers. Following the training, the students began their internships. PERCÉ staff continued to provide support to both students and employers over the course of the 12-week internships and conducted evaluations at the conclusion of the program.

The project's overarching objectives as identified by the client included:

1. To help Island youth recognize economic opportunities within their communities.
2. To provide an opportunity for young people to get work experience in their field of study.
3. To establish a communication and promotion strategy to publicize existing RDÉE Î.-P.-É. Programs to improve students' employability in the eyes of employers.
4. To promote opportunities emerging from the tourism sectors, rural development, and the knowledge economy
5. To clearly demonstrate confidence in local youth's potential
6. To serve three clienteles: young francophone students, employers, and communities.

Key Collaborations

4. *Did your institution collaborate with **other federal institutions** or with **partners** (sectoral working groups, municipalities, provinces and territories, post-secondary institutions, private sector) on a program, project or other initiative to enhance the vitality and development of official language minority communities and/or the advancement of English and French in Canadian society?*

Please describe these collaborations and partnerships, the results achieved and the success factors.

ACOA works with a number of partners (federal, provincial and territorial governments, municipalities, post-secondary institutions, non-profit organizations, and the private sector) on an ongoing basis. These partners are consulted to conduct studies, develop strategies or programs, or jointly fund projects to enhance the vitality of OLMCs and promote English and French in Canadian society.

- In New Brunswick, ACOA contributed \$500,000 to the Carrefour COOP project, developed and managed by the organization Carrefour Coop Ltée of Lamèque on the Acadian Peninsula. The project aims to create an interpretation centre of the Acadian co-operative movement, the fishing industry and renewable energies, while offering multiple attractions and experiences on the educational, cultural, heritage, recreational and environmental levels. It will integrate the former UNI Financial Cooperative building in Lamèque as well as a heritage fishing warehouse built in 1886. The Centre plans to develop tourism offerings in collaboration with existing attractions throughout the Acadian Peninsula.

With a solid historical culture of co-operation, the region has supported this \$2.3 million project with community fundraising of \$760,000. The proponents also worked closely with ACOA, Heritage Canada (PCH), the N.B. Department of the Environment and Local Governments (MEGL) and the provincial Regional Development Corporation (SDR), to shape the project and secure funding.

The project creates opportunities for increased visitor retention and generates additional economic benefits for the tourism ecosystem, accommodations, restaurants and regional tourist experiences. Two direct jobs and ten indirect jobs through concessions are anticipated annually.

The Carrefour COOP Ltée and its members are working to revitalize the cultural and tourism offerings of the Islands. Overall, the project comprises five components:

1. Educational activities: various themes aimed at youth and the general public.
2. Heritage: contextualization of the co-operative movement in Acadie and the fishing industry over the last century, including various artifacts and digital reproduction in virtual reality.
3. Cultural: various cultural and artistic activities with on-site demonstrations of know-how and small regular shows by local and renowned artists.
4. Renewable energies: models and audiovisual presentations through the different forms of renewable energies, intelligent use of electricity and on-site educational games for young people in partnership with NB Power.
5. Tourism: several tourist activities are planned to include sea tours, bike rentals in connection with the Véloroute de la Péninsule acadienne and a gastronomic dimension featuring seafood and various local products

The creation of a co-operative Carrefour in Lamèque will highlight the history of co-operation in Acadie and the culture of the Islands and will enhance the tourist experience on the Acadian Peninsula.

- ACOA N.L. collaborates on a continual basis with the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador's Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, and has been extensively consulted with on all initiatives. It has been instrumental in working closely with the francophone groups to ensure that any activities align with the needs of the francophone community.
- In Nova Scotia, ACOA staff meet regularly with program staff at PCH to share best practices, and co-monitor projects such as Congrès mondial acadien 2024.

Nova Scotia Labour, Skills and Immigration and Acadian Affaires and Francophonie released a francophone immigration action plan on November 7, 2022. Agency staff attended the working group meetings and were invited to comment on the plan.

- A \$60,000 Tourism Relief Fund investment was made in a private-sector business in Chéticamp. The project is the only French Tourism Relief Fund agreement in NS. A bilingual project officer stepped in to provide virtual service in French.

COVID-19

5. Does your institution have measures in place to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic (including measures related to economic recovery)? If so, how have you considered the needs of official language minority communities and the advancement of English and French in the implementation of these measures?

Please describe your activities and the results.

In 2022-2023, a variety of pandemic recovery initiatives allowed ACOA to work with communities including OLMCs throughout the region to invest in key infrastructure and business enterprises.

- The Canada Community Revitalization Fund (CCRF) offered a unique opportunity for smaller, rural communities to access government funding to facilitate important infrastructure projects that leverage multiple stakeholders and funders. Under this program, ACOA has supported 10 projects for French-speaking communities with a value of \$748,814.
- The Tourism Relief Fund (TRF) was an important tool to assist the critical tourism industry in smaller OLMC regions to recover from the years of hardship brought on by COVID-19, and to build a stronger offering that will benefit OLMCs moving forward. ACOA supported a total of 15 projects for French-speaking communities, totaling \$1,121,288.
- Most recently, the Rediscover Main Streets Initiative also stimulated collaboration between stakeholders within communities, such as the municipal government, chamber of commerce, business improvement agency and property owners to revitalize downtown cores and drive traffic to local businesses. ACOA provided support for 6 projects presented by French-speaking communities for a total contribution amount of \$462,765.

As an example, one such project was an opportunity for the Greater Bathurst Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Bathurst Centreville and the City of Bathurst collaborate to reanimate main streets through a web and social media marketing strategy, event coordination, downtown block parties, a busker's weekend and a downtown New Year's Eve event.

These point-in-time, pandemic recovery programs, allowed ACOA the flexibility to support economic development in many smaller communities hosting projects that are ineligible under its regular programming. The investments made through these point-in-time programs facilitated consultation and collaboration among community stakeholders.

In addition to these recovery programs, the Agency adopted a hybrid client service model that now allows it to deliver services regardless of the location of the applicant.