

# EMPOWERING THE FRANCOPHONIE WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We are a committee of French-speaking professors from different departments and faculties at the University of Windsor. With this memorandum, we seek to further develop the Francophonie within the University of Windsor community. Doing so would not only lead to greater social justice by giving more prominence to our cultural diversity, but also be an asset to our institution. To be clear, the Francophonie is not only important to the members of the francophone community on campus and in the Windsor-Essex region. It concerns all current and future students who wish to retain and improve their French speaking skills through their post-secondary education. Potential gains of developing the Francophonie include meeting the needs of the local workforce, boosting student enrollment, and attracting governmental funding, among others. To combat the current challenges facing the Francophonie on campus, this memorandum puts forward a series of concrete and achievable recommendations (itemized in greater detail in the final section of this memorandum):

- *Access governmental funding for Francophonie capacity-building*
- *Make the Francophonie visible on campus*
- *Identify the number of French speakers among UW faculty, staff and students*
- *Solidify existing French and bilingual programs and develop new ones*
- *Build institutional capacity in terms of recruitment and governance*

The longer-term goal is to give the Francophonie more vibrancy on campus and in the Windsor-Essex area. Implementing the above recommendations will allow the University of Windsor to create regionally relevant curricula, programs, and learning opportunities for all current and future students who wish to retain and improve their French speaking skills. The University of Windsor has the opportunity to become a pole of attraction by drawing Francophone and Francophile students not only from the Windsor-Essex area, but from all of Southern Ontario, the Detroit Metropolitan area and overseas.



# MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

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*We support efforts to increase courses and programs in French as well as the visibility of the Francophonie at the University of Windsor.*

# ENDORSEMENTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR FACULTY AND STAFF

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*Participants of Know Your Rights! A Community Symposium on the Charter in March 2022.*

# ENDORSEMENTS FROM THE WINDSOR-ESSEX FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY

Viamonde Public Schoolboard

Providence Catholic Schoolboard

Comité local en immigration francophone Windsor  
Essex-Chatham-Kent

Table Franco Info Windsor Essex-Kent

Centre communautaire francophone Windsor Essex-  
Kent

Réseau en Immigration Francophone du Centre Sud-  
Ouest de l'Ontario

Association des communautés francophones de  
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Réseau franco-santé du Sud de l'Ontario

Épelle-Moi Canada

French Avenir North America (FANA)

Club Richelieu Windsor

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Carmel Kalunga, Science

Tiziana Di Sienna Nikundana, Science

Chris Baillargeon, Organization of Part-time University  
Students

Ronnie Haidar, Argumentation Studies

Devlin Bauer, Social Work

*Franco-Ontarian Day 2023 in front of Windsor Town Hall.*



*Visit of the Honourable Randy Boissonnault Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages at the Carrefour Francophone in Windsor on January 24, 2024*

# THE CITY OF WINDSOR'S FRENCH ROOTS AND CURRENT FRANCOPHONE PRESENCE

The City of Windsor's French roots go back to the early 18th century during the European colonial expansion. French military entrepreneur Antoine Laumet de Lamothe Cadillac established Fort Pontchartrain on the north shore of the Detroit River, in what is now downtown Detroit.<sup>1</sup> In 1734, the King of France began granting parcels of land near the fort to French settlers from Quebec, and areas of the south shore were key to their subsistence (duck hunting on the River Canard, for example). In 1747, French Jesuit missionaries established a Huron/Wyandot mission on the south shore where the Windsor portion of the Ambassador Bridge now stands, and soon after land titles granted on the south shore resulted in the settlement of Petite Côte (now LaSalle) and parts of what is today downtown Windsor. The long, narrow form of these farm lots, with one end overlooking the river (known in English as "ribbon farms") extended over all of Windsor, from the Detroit River to the north to Cabana (originally Cabanat) Road to the south. The French-Canadian families living on these farms usually had many children, often more than ten.

In the second half of the 19th century, the farming landscape was slowly lost as Windsor urbanized.<sup>2</sup> Even so, in the City of Windsor and many parts of Essex County, French remained a

commonly spoken language until legislation in 1912 eliminated schooling in French (see below for more detail). Today, a significant part of Essex County's population has French-Canadian ancestry. More than 13,000 francophones live in the City of Windsor and its surroundings.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, more than 38,000 residents have knowledge of French.<sup>4</sup> The local francophone community also benefits from a strong institutional network. In addition to having a total of 52 full-French and French immersion schools, the Windsor-Essex region enjoys post-secondary education programs offered by Collège Boréal and the University of Ottawa (Windsor Campus - Faculty of Education). Other important francophone institutions include Radio-Canada, the Clinique bilingue d'aide juridique, the Carrefour communautaire francophone de Windsor-Essex-Kent, the Comité Local en Immigration Francophone de Windsor-Essex-Chatham-Kent, the Réseau des femmes du Sud-Ouest, the Club Rielieu de Windsor, and the Place du Partage de Windsor.



*Assumption College*

# THE UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR'S FRENCH ROOTS AND CURRENT FRANCOPHONE PRESENCE

When Assumption College, the ancestor of the University of Windsor, was established in 1857, it was actually called Collège de l'Assomption and it was run by French-speaking priests.<sup>5</sup> The Collège grew out of the paroisse Notre-Dame de l'Assomption, the first French-language Catholic parish in Ontario, founded in 1767 by French-speaking Belgian Jesuit priest Pierre-Philippe Potier.<sup>6</sup> In this region, such involvement of francophones in the early development of education was not unusual. Indeed, one of the three founders of the University of Michigan, established in Detroit in 1817 (before moving to Ann Arbor), was priest Gabriel Richard, originally from France.

Today, the University of Windsor has a dynamic French Studies program and a relatively new French specialisation in Political Science. It also boasts more than 40 professors in various departments who are fully proficient in French and who could offer courses in French. They come from many parts of the francophone world (Africa, Quebec, Europe, Ontario, Haiti, etc.) and have recognized expertise in local Francophonie history, language rights, and francophone minority communities. Vincent Georgie, a professor at the Odette School of Business is the Executive Director of the Windsor International Film Festival (WIFF), which offers an unparalleled selection of French movies. Several members of the ancillary academic staff are also francophones. A well-known example is Chantal Vallée, head coach of the women's basketball team. The proportion of francophones and francophiles in the student body is also significant.

# FRANCOPHONIE AS AN ASSET FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

## Meeting Local Workforce Needs

The County of Essex and the City of Windsor make up a French designated area under the province's *French Language Services Act*. As such, provincial agencies must actively provide services in French to the local population.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, shortfalls exist across many sectors. The province is only training 50% of the French teachers it needs annually to meet the growing demand for full French and French immersion schools.<sup>8</sup> In the legal sector, judges, lawyers, translators and interpreters who speak French are also in short supply.<sup>9</sup> The Blue-Ribbon Panel on Postsecondary Education Financial Sustainability has identified the need for "educated graduates fluent in French in the Windsor area, particularly in support of social services and healthcare."<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, federal agencies in the area such, as the Canada Border Services Agency, are obligated to provide bilingual services under the *Official Languages Act*.<sup>11</sup> By training French-speaking workers, the University of Windsor will meet Ontario's needs for a bilingual workforce.

## Boosting Student Enrollment

As provincial funding for universities in Ontario is steadily diminishing, the University of Windsor must rely on increased revenues from tuition fees. It would certainly boost its student enrollment by attracting local French-speaking students. Indeed, the County of Essex and the City of Windsor have four full French high schools as well as nine French immersion high schools.<sup>12</sup> Due to the lack of programs delivered in French, several students attending these schools decide to move away from the area to pursue studies in French at other institutions. Moreover, the University could tap into the pool of French-speaking international students from the Middle East and Africa. Some higher education institutions in Quebec and the University of Ottawa have already adopted this practice of recruiting francophones internationally to their advantage.<sup>13</sup>

## Attracting Governmental Funding

The Government of Canada has announced that up to 128 million dollars will be spent within 4 years, starting in 2024-2025, to counter the underfunding of postsecondary institutions servicing official language communities in a minority setting, with the francophone community in Windsor and Essex County being one such milieu.<sup>14</sup> During that same period, an additional 242.8 million dollars will be allocated for French as a second-language learning programs, with part of this funding going to universities.<sup>15</sup> Another 6.5 million dollars will be granted to help postsecondary institutions train bilingual health workers.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, the *French Language Services Act* of Ontario provides that with its consent, a university can obtain a designation of its services and programs of study in French.<sup>17</sup> It can thus specify which services and programs it wishes to offer to the French-speaking community and consequently receive a subsidy from the Government of Ontario to offer them.<sup>18</sup> Past governmental monies have been channelled to other institutions in Ontario and the University of Windsor has not been getting its share of the pie. By focusing on and further developing its francophone strength, the University of Windsor could attract governmental funding.



# FRANCOPHONIE AS AN ASSET FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

## Being an international player

French is the fifth most spoken language in the world, and it is the only language with English that is spoken on 5 continents.<sup>19</sup> In 2022, 321 million people around the globe could speak French.<sup>20</sup> Almost 60% of French-speakers live in Africa. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the growth of French is more than 17% since 2014.<sup>21</sup> Internationally, the Francophonie relies on multiple multilateral organisations. Most notably, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie facilitates the cooperation of 88 countries and governments that use French as a working language.<sup>22</sup> As the University of Windsor prides itself on being a globally connected institution, it would benefit from positioning itself as leader of the Francophonie on the international scene.

## Fulfilling the University's Civic Duty

The constitution provides that Canada is officially a bilingual country: its federal institutions must function and offer services in both French and English.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the Government of Ontario identifies the City of Windsor and the County of Essex as a French designated area.<sup>24</sup> The University of Windsor, as a Canadian and Ontarian university, has a civic duty to provide French education. Indeed, the University of Windsor is committed to create regionally relevant curricula, programs, and learning opportunities.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, it aims to engage with local communities and support them in creating positive change, especially for historically marginalized communities such as the francophone community.<sup>26</sup>

## Promoting Diversity and Inclusion

The history of francophones in Windsor, Ontario and in Canada is one of pride but also of discrimination and assimilation. For the longest time, French Canadians were considered to be an inferior class of citizens within the country. They are still today the target of bigotry. In 1912, the Ontario government's Regulation 17 prohibited French education after the second year of elementary school. As a result of this discriminatory government policy, many families, including those in Windsor, were forced to partially abandon the French language. Although several rights for francophones have been constitutionalised in 1982 and receive protection from provincial and federal laws, much work remains to be done for those rights to be enforced.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, more than 5% of immigrants coming to Ontario in 2022 were francophones.<sup>28</sup> With the influx of francophones from Arab and African countries, the francophone community in the province has become highly diverse over the years.<sup>29</sup> Racialized francophone persons report that they experience increased forms of unequal treatment due to their accents, country of origin, and status as new immigrants.<sup>30</sup> In its quest for social justice and the promotion of diversity, as laid out in its strategic plan,<sup>31</sup> the University of Windsor should put in place various resources and services to promote and enable the Francophonie to flourish even more.



Visit of authors Didier Leclair and Edem Awumey for the 2023 Windsor Bookfest



EU Study Abroad Program day trip to Paris

*The Franco-Ontarian flag*

# CHALLENGES FOR THE FRANCOPHONIE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

The University of Windsor has a blind spot when it comes to its own francophone students, faculty and staff members. Though it has committed itself to report annually on metrics to respond better to racism and equity issues across all campus communities, it is not reporting on the Francophonie on its campus.<sup>32</sup> The lack of data on the matter prevents the University from having relevant programming. Other post-secondary institutions have understood the local need for French programming and are filling the gap. For example, the University of Ottawa recently enlarged its Windsor campus to increase its training of French teachers.

The Francophonie at the University of Windsor is faced with a chicken-and-egg problem. Existing French programming outside French Studies is asked to have courses with at least 20 students enrolled, which diminishes the number of courses being offered in French outside French Studies. In parallel, students wishing to pursue studies in French decide not to attend the University of Windsor because the course offerings are too limited. Revitalizing the Francophonie will necessitate investing resources. New funding could come from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (FAHSS) because it already offers French programming. However, considering FAHSS' deficit situation, other funding avenues should be sought.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR'S FRANCOPHONIE



## Attract governmental funding for Francophonie capacity-building

- Assign administrative staff to seek and obtain relevant funding from the federal and provincial governments for French programming;<sup>33</sup>
- Apply to obtain a designation under the *French Language Services Act* of Ontario for services and programs of study in French offered by the University of Windsor.<sup>34</sup>

## Make the Francophonie visible on campus

- Raise permanently a Franco-Ontarian flag on campus;
- Display interpretative panels on campus that explain the French roots of the University of Windsor;
- Rename a campus pedestrian route after a local francophone figure, event, or concept; and
- Ensure that the welcome page of the University of Windsor's website has a direct link to some webpages in French pertaining to French programming and support for the Francophonie more generally.

## Identify the number of French speakers

- Include questions in the University census to permit reporting on the number of students, faculty, and staff members who speak French.

## Solidify existing French and bilingual programs and develop new ones

- Recognize that French is not a Modern Language in Canada, but an official language, and as such, the University should bestow on French Studies the same status and resources as on English and Creative Writing;
- Hire more faculty in French Studies to respond to teaching needs and identify French fluency as an asset for new faculty hires campus-wide;
- Remove the minimum enrollment of 20 students requirement for courses taught in French within FAHSS; and
- Strengthen and develop French and bilingual programming in other areas such as Social Sciences, Education, Law and Nursing, in collaboration with francophone community partners.
- In concert with members of the Francophone community on campus, develop partnerships with other francophone universities nationally and internationally that are mutually beneficial.

## Building institutional capacity

- Hire recruitment personnel who speak French and develop recruitment strategies and materials in French for national and international students;
- Institute a University Senate committee responsible for Francophone Affairs;
- Appoint a Francophone Affairs advisor in the Office of the President; and
- Identify French fluency as an asset for members of the University Board of Governors.





*Graduates of the Honours in Political Science degree with French Specialisation*

## THE LONG TERM GOALS

By implementing the recommendations enclosed in this memorandum, the University of Windsor will give the Francophonie more vibrancy on campus and in the Windsor-Essex area. Moreover, it will create regionally relevant curricula, programs, and learning opportunities for all current and future students who wish to retain and improve their French speaking skills. The University of Windsor has the opportunity to become a pole of attraction by drawing Francophone and Francophile students not only from the Windsor-Essex area, but from all of Southern Ontario, the Detroit Metropolitan area and overseas.

# NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Guillaume Teasdale, « Statut social et prestige aux marges de l'Empire : Lamothe Cadillac et le Détroit du lac Érié », *French Colonial History*, vol. 19 (2020) : 1-38.
- <sup>2</sup> Guillaume Teasdale, *Fruits of Perseverance: The French Presence in the Detroit River Region, 1701-1815* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019).
- <sup>3</sup> Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes du Canada, « Windsor », en ligne : <https://carte.fcfa.ca/windsor/>.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> Letter to Reverend Lefèvre de Detroit, Archives of the Archdiocese of Detroit, Michigan, Bishop Lefèvre Collection, Box 1.
- <sup>6</sup> Bénéteau, Marcel, « Father Potier's Glossary of Spoken Canadian French », Encyclopedia of French Cultural Heritage in North America, online: [http://www.ameriquefrancaise.org/en/article-308/Father\\_Potier%E2%80%99s\\_Glossary\\_of\\_Spoken\\_Canadian\\_French.html](http://www.ameriquefrancaise.org/en/article-308/Father_Potier%E2%80%99s_Glossary_of_Spoken_Canadian_French.html).
- <sup>7</sup> *Loi sur les services en français*, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.32.
- <sup>8</sup> Sandra Padovani, « Attirer les travailleurs en santé en Ontario : Entre espoir et scepticisme », ONFR+, 2 février 2023, en ligne : <https://onfr.tfo.org/attirer-les-travailleurs-en-sante-en-ontario-entre-espoir-et-scepticisme/>.
- <sup>9</sup> Chakkouche, Soufiane, « Pénurie d'enseignants francophones : de très minces résultats », ONFR+, 20 février 2023, en ligne : <https://onfr.tfo.org/penurie-denseignants-francophones-de-tres-minces-resultats/>.
- <sup>10</sup> « Une absence de services juridiques en français déplorée », Radio Canada, 2 December 2020, en ligne : <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1753859/absence-services-juridiques-en-francais-deploree-nord-ontario-sault-sainte-marie>.
- <sup>11</sup> Groupe d'experts sur la viabilité financière du secteur postsecondaire, « Assurer la viabilité financière du secteur de l'éducation postsecondaire de l'Ontario », Rapport présenté par Alan Harrison, Président, 2023, p.50, en ligne : <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnpbpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://files.ontario.ca/mcu-ensuring-financial-sustainability-for-ontarios-postsecondary-sector-fr-2023-11-14.pdf>.
- <sup>12</sup> *Loi sur les langues officielles* (L.R.C. (1985), ch. 31 (4e suppl.)).
- <sup>13</sup> Entièrement françaises : École secondaire catholique l'Essor, École secondaire catholique Lajeunesse, École secondaire catholique Pain Court, and École secondaire de Lamothe-Cadillac ; D'immersion française : Cardinal Carter Catholic Secondary School, Holy Names Catholic Secondary School, Ste. Anne Catholic High School, St. Joseph's Catholic High School, St. Thomas of Villanova Catholic High School, Belle River District High School, Sandwich Secondary School, Tecumseh Vista Academy, and W.F. Herman Academy.
- <sup>14</sup> Romain Schué, « De plus en plus d'étudiants africains francophones acceptés au Canada », Radio Canada, 5 décembre 2022, en ligne : <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1938205/etudiants-afrique-francophones-universites-canada-visa-etude>; Université d'Ottawa, « Équipe de recrutement étudiant à l'international », en ligne : <https://www.uottawa.ca/etudes/faire-demande-admission/equipe-recrutement-etudiant-international>.
- <sup>15</sup> Gouvernement du Canada, « Plan d'action pour les langues officielles 2023-2028 : Protection-promotion-collaboration », en ligne : <https://www.canada.ca/fr/patrimoine-canadien/services/langues-officelles-bilinguisme/plan-action-langues-officelles/2023-2028.html#a11a>.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> *Loi sur les services en français*, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.32, s 9(2).
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, s 9(1).
- <sup>20</sup> Organisation internationale de la francophonie, « Qui parle français dans le monde ? », en ligne : <https://observatoire.francophonie.org/qui-parle-francais-dans-le-monde/>.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> Réjean Bourdeau, « Le français progresse dans le monde, mais... », La Presse, 17 juillet 2023.
- <sup>23</sup> Université de Windsor, *Aspire: Together for Tomorrow: University of Windsor Strategic Plan*, 2023, p.7.
- <sup>24</sup> *Charte canadienne des droits et libertés*, ss 16-22, Partie 1 de l'Acte constitutionnel, 1982, Annexe B de la Loi de 1982 sur le Canada (RU), 1982, c 11.
- <sup>25</sup> *Loi sur les services en français*, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.32.
- <sup>26</sup> Université de Windsor, *Aspire: Together for Tomorrow: University of Windsor Strategic Plan*, 2023, p.19.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.
- <sup>28</sup> *Charte canadienne des droits et libertés*, ss 16-23, Partie 1 de l'Acte constitutionnel, 1982, Annexe B de la Loi de 1982 sur le Canada (RU), 1982, c 11 ; *Loi sur les langues officielles* (R.S.C., 1985, c. 31 (4th Supp.)) ; *Loi sur les services en français*, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.32.
- <sup>29</sup> Vachon, Pascal, « Pour la première fois, l'Ontario atteint sa cible en immigration francophone », ONFR, en ligne : <https://onfr.tfo.org/ontario-cible-immigration-francophone-5-franco-ontarien-ircc/>.
- <sup>30</sup> Selon les données du recensement, plus du tiers des immigrant-e-s francophones récent-e-s en Ontario proviennent d'Afrique (35 %). Gouvernement de l'Ontario, « Profil de la population francophone de l'Ontario-2016 », en ligne : <https://www.ontario.ca/fr/page/profil-de-la-population-francophone-de-lontario-2016>.
- <sup>31</sup> Commission ontarienne des droits de la personne, « Énoncé de politique concernant les Francophones, la langue et la discrimination », en ligne : <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/fr/%C3%A9nonc%C3%A9-de-politique-concernant-les-francophones-la-langue-et-la-discrimination>.
- <sup>32</sup> Université de Windsor, *Aspire: Together for Tomorrow: University of Windsor Strategic Plan*, 2023, p.17.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.
- <sup>34</sup> « À compter de l'année 2024-2025, le montant de l'enveloppe fédérale en faveur de l'éducation postsecondaire en langue minoritaire s'élèvera à 128 millions de dollars sur quatre ans. Sur la période 2021-2023, l'Ontario a reçu 38 % de ce financement. La province pourrait légitimement demander une part de 40% à l'avenir ». Voir Groupe d'experts sur la viabilité financière du secteur postsecondaire, « Assurer la viabilité financière du secteur de l'éducation postsecondaire de l'Ontario », Rapport présenté par Alan Harrison, Président, 2023, p.50, en ligne : <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnpbpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://files.ontario.ca/mcu-ensuring-financial-sustainability-for-ontarios-postsecondary-sector-fr-2023-11-14.pdf>.
- <sup>35</sup> *Loi sur les services en français*, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.32.