



**BRIEF SUBMITTED BY RDÉE ONTARIO IN  
CONNECTION WITH THE CANADIAN HERITAGE  
CONSULTATIONS ON THE NEXT ACTION PLAN ON  
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**TOWARDS FULL PARTICIPATION BY  
FRANCOPHONE ONTARIO IN ONTARIO'S AND  
CANADA'S ECONOMIC PROSPERITY**

RDÉE Ontario would like to thank the Government of Canada for providing the opportunity to comment, in connection with the consultations organized by Canadian Heritage, on the next action plan for official languages, which will succeed the current Roadmap for Canada’s Official Languages 2013- 2018.

In this brief, RDÉE Ontario presents a number of observations directly related to issues of interest to Ontario’s Francophone economic space, and recommendations for the Government of Canada.

**The Réseau de développement économique et d’employabilité de l’Ontario (RDÉE Ontario)** is a provincial network that, with its professional team, provides innovative solutions to economic development, entrepreneurship, employability and immigration. The organization involves all players in the French-speaking and bilingual economic sector in supporting Ontario’s and Canada’s prosperity.

RDÉE Ontario is a member of RDÉE Canada’s national network.

RDÉE Ontario focuses on two activity sectors: economic development, and employability and immigration, both of which are vectors of sustainable development for Ontario’s Francophone community.

### OUR AREAS OF INTERVENTION

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### EMPLOYABILITY AND IMMIGRATION

<p>RDÉE Ontario focuses its efforts on novel and promising economic sectors, and applies innovative projects to opening new markets (interprovincial- national-international).</p> <p>RDÉE Ontario effectively assists entrepreneurs with creation, growth and succession planning, and promotes an entrepreneurial culture among young people.</p> <p>RDÉE Ontario initiates business opportunities for Ontario’s Francophone and bilingual businesses and investors.</p>	<p>RDÉE Ontario offers a range of innovative services and practices in support of the latest economic market trends.</p> <p>RDÉE Ontario attracts Francophone talents to Ontario, and ensures their successful integration.</p> <p>RDÉE Ontario effectively assists the provincial and federal governments with Francophone immigration.</p>
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### FUNDING

RDÉE Ontario receives most of its funding from the federal government through two departments: Employment and Social Development Canada and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

In order to diversify its funding bases, RDÉE Ontario has set up two social enterprises:

**Vice Versa:** professional translation and interpretation services in both official languages.

**Thetis International:** a recruitment agency that matches French-speaking and bilingual candidates in Canada and abroad with Ontario employers.

## Francophone Ontario: an economic force that should be promoted.

- **Demographic weight**

In 2011, Ontario had 611,500 Francophones, which was close to 5% of the total population according to DIF. The data on the province's Francophone population had to be adjusted to some degree to take into account the approximately 50,000 Francophone immigrants. This is the largest French-speaking population outside of Quebec. Close to 18% of Ontario's Francophones are immigrants.

- **A diversified economic ecosystem**

Like its territory, Ontario's Francophone economy is vast and diversified, and Francophones have a definite impact on the province's economic activity. Their contribution is particularly significant in the following sectors:

- The public sector, which includes public administration, education and health care: according to Statistics Canada, in 2006, this sector hired more than 100,000 Francophones, which amounts to a little over one third of the province's French-speaking workers.
- The agri-food sector: a prosperous industry in Ontario, accounting for more than 52,000 agricultural operations. In 2013, the food products and beverages manufacturing sector represented 6% of Ontario's GDP, and close to \$37 billion in revenues. Agricultural producers include a large number of Francophones.
- Tourism: a major economic sector in Ontario, which leads all of the other provinces in terms of tourism revenue. Ontario's tourism industry accounts for more than 3% of the provincial GDP, more than the entire primary sector, including forestry and mining. 98% of the sector consists of small and medium-sized businesses. According to Statistics Canada's *Survey of Financing of Small and Medium Enterprises (2007)*, it is more likely that the mother tongue of the owner of an SME in the tourism industry will be French or another language than English, and more likely to be French or another language than in the case of the owner of a non-tourism SME. There appears to be a greater concentration of recently immigrated owners belonging to a visible minority in the tourism sector than in the non-tourism sectors. This means a tremendous opportunity for Ontario Francophones to offer popular and competitive tourism products, and to develop the related marketing.

- **The power of bilingualism**

In Ontario's Francophone economic space, the power of bilingualism is a key asset when it comes to sustainable economic development. According to the Conference Board of Canada 2013 study entitled *Canada, Bilingualism and Trade*, bilingualism plays "a key role in trade relationships. (...) countries that share a common language tend to trade more with each other than those that do not (...)." Bilingualism provides a competitive advantage and access to new markets for Ontario's entrepreneurs and Francophone businesses. In Ontario, the average income of people who speak both official languages is 12% higher than the average income of those who do not. In Toronto, that number is 40% (according to the latest Census data). Province-wide, 89.4% of Francophones are bilingual, 8.2% of Anglophones and 6.8% of those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English. In 2011, 11% of Ontario's population spoke both official languages. More than 3 million people (approximately 27% of the population) living in Ontario reported a language other than English or French as their mother tongue. This clearly reflects the province's current cultural and linguistic diversity.



- **Opportunities for a Francophone economic space in Ontario**

Although bilingualism is a major asset, our main strength is clearly our Francophone community. With a culture and a language that we share with more than **274 million** people around the world, there is tremendous potential in terms of economic and business development opportunities, and in terms of unprecedented international expansion. The Province of Ontario has acknowledged the significance of its Francophone nature by requesting a seat as an observer on the Organisation de la Francophonie Internationale (OIF), which is a significant step forward and opens a unique opportunity for the province's Francophone entrepreneurs and businesses.

The current understanding between the governments of Quebec and Ontario and their political will to strengthen the Quebec/Ontario economic space and turn it into a pole of productivity, innovation and exports should definitely enable Francophone entrepreneurs and businesses to develop interprovincial and international markets, and to stand apart from competitors. All of this will mean economic and direct benefits for Ontario's Francophone community and for Ontario's and Canada's economies.

## ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### PRIORITY 1 | YOUTH

#### ISSUES

- Promote an entrepreneurial culture among youth in Ontario.
- Stem the flow of youth out of rural areas: a 2015 study on the migration of Francophone youth prepared by the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities (CIRLM) indicated that **12 regions in Ontario were facing significant negative net migration**. The challenges raised by the migration of young Francophones in Ontario are clear, and are directly related to the availability of employment in those regions. Several OLMCs in Canada are in the same situation.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Given the specifics concerning the exodus by young people from rural areas**, and in order to encourage them to return to their native regions after completing their studies, RDÉE Ontario proposes that the federal government set up a **special fund for young entrepreneurs in the regions** – In this regard, RDÉE Ontario would like to launch an innovative initiative (an entrepreneurship training pilot project with a Youth Business Centre (online services for young people in grades 9 to 12 and young adults aged 18 to 25). The Youth Business Centre would be based on UNESCO's experience with its Youth Citizen Entrepreneurship Competition. <https://www.entrepreneurship-campus.org>. This concept is to be adapted into French through a partnership with Stiftung Entrepreneurship.
- **RDÉE Ontario endorses the position of RDÉE Canada, and proposes that the federal government develop a national strategy ensuring a continuum of support services for youth, with a \$6.5 million allocation over five years.**

## PRIORITY 2 | FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION

### ISSUES

In Ontario, immigration is a lifeline for our Franco-Ontarian community's vitality and dynamism. Every new wave of immigration enhances the province's ethnic and cultural composition. Nonetheless, Francophone immigrants must often travel a path fraught with challenges before they can successfully integrate into the economy and society, and become full participants in our civil society. RDÉE Ontario has already shared many of its observations in this regard during consultations by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

According to RDÉE Ontario, a number of key issues remain to be addressed:

- **Francophone immigration:** OLMCs, in particular the Franco-Ontarian community, have some catching up to do. In 2012, Ontario set a target for Francophone immigration: 5% of its immigrants were to be Francophones. The current rate is more in the range of 2% to 3%. The figures are the same at the federal level.
- **Dynamism of Ontario's Francophone community:** the future of French and the community's key role in Canada's economic, political and social development depend on that dynamism. **Visibility equates with knowledge.**
- **Funding:** more funding is needed to properly meet the recurrent needs in the field and ensure our employability and immigration program's survival and success (**IRCC allocated \$448,000 for a team of five professionals whose activities cover the province (North, South-West and East sectors)**) - RDÉE Ontario's employability and immigration service provides essential assistance to newcomers with their integration into the labour force. Job search and business start-up services are provided to Francophone immigrants coming to Canada before they enter the country. The agency works closely with Francophone and Anglophone employers in Ontario to encourage them to hire Francophone and bilingual immigrants. Thetis International, our social enterprise, matches immigrant candidates and employers before the former arrive in Ontario. Thetis also represents certain Ontario businesses at Destination Canada in Paris and Brussels for the targeted recruitment of qualified workers with specific skill

sets.)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

RDÉE Ontario has identified a number of priorities for Francophone immigration:

- **A dedicated budget envelope for Ontario to put Francophone Ontario on the map and ensure proper national and international visibility.** Francophone organizations involved in immigration and in actively supporting the provincial government's efforts need reliable funding. In New Brunswick, the government of Canada provided \$10 million through the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) in support of Francophone immigration under the Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013- 2018. **Close to 70% of Francophone immigrants outside of Quebec are in Ontario. Yet, this is the only province that does not receive federal funding in support of Francophone immigration under the Roadmap. In its next action plan for official languages, the federal government should include Ontario and allocate a budget equivalent to that provided to New Brunswick.**
- **Additional investment to increase awareness and promote the Francophone community in Ontario.** In their dealings with the government before and after their arrival in Canada, French-speaking newcomers must be clearly informed about the French-language services and resources available in their host province.
- **Intensification of missions and job fairs along the lines of** Destination Canada's programs, with sufficient funds to enable agencies to take part. Every year our province gains from the benefits of economic immigration.
- **Larger budget allocations to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and to Employment and Social Development Canada for Francophone immigration.** Agencies working on Francophone immigration and the economic integration of newcomers need more funding.

Based on these recommendations:

**RDÉE Ontario requests that a specific fund be established for Ontario for Francophone immigration, equivalent to or greater than the one that was established for New Brunswick.**

**RDÉE Ontario endorses the position taken by RDÉE Canada in its brief in support of a national fund with \$45 million over five years dedicated to the economic integration of immigrants, specifically for the retention, adaptation and mobility of Francophone economic immigrants in the labour force.**

## **PRIORITY 3 | PERENNITY AND INNOVATION IN OUR AREAS OF EXPERTISE**

### ISSUES

- Continuously improve RDÉE Ontario's performance in constantly changing and more demanding environments, and ensure the continuity of its activities:** RDÉE Ontario would like to establish a more proactive and dynamic business culture, strengthen its capacity, and develop a wider range of activities given the skills and expertise of its human resources and in order to valorize and retain them.

- **Invest more in innovation and new technologies:** RDÉE Ontario wishes to maximize the competitiveness of its services, consolidate its strategic position, and strengthen the capacities of its activity sectors by **focusing its efforts on innovative and growing economic sectors**, making optimal use of digital and multimedia platforms, to yield more effective results at the local, regional, provincial, national and international levels.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Increase multi-year funding to RDÉE Ontario** to enable the agency to do more in its field and to adequately respond to the new market trends. **RDÉE Ontario is seeking to increase its current funding.**
- **RDÉE Ontario endorses RDÉE Canada** in its recommendation that the next action plan on official languages should include an annual budget of \$25 million over five years to cover the activities of RDÉE Canada's national network in 12 provinces and territories.
- Over the past few years, RDÉE has worked on becoming more financially self-sufficient, specifically through its two social enterprises, Vice Versa (translation) and Thetis International (immigration), and would like to continue its efforts to meet the goals set by its main funders.
- **Strengthen capacity:** The RDÉE Ontario team consists of 25 employees, including six at headquarters, 14 economic development agents, and 5 employability and immigration specialists. **It is essential that multi-year budgets be increased so that we can hire more staff, retain them longer, optimize our capacity in the field and consolidate our unique expertise.**

- **Optimize our use of new virtual and multi-media platforms in our activities:** RDÉE Ontario would like to make more use of the WebSphere and new virtual platforms. It would like to develop initiatives that would be particularly beneficial to its clients, whether in terms of economic development through the creation of an entrepreneurial space (virtual incubator, interactive virtual platforms for entrepreneurs, including young entrepreneurs, etc.) or employability and immigration through virtual job fairs (the one in which RDÉE Ontario participated with RDÉE Canada cost \$50,000 for two days), intensive production of videos, etc. This is a recurrent need at RDÉE Ontario as well as in other Francophone and Acadian community sectors across the country.

**RDÉE Ontario recommends that the federal government create a specific digital fund of \$20 million that would enable the Francophone and Acadian communities to fully benefit from these new virtual platforms while at the same time increasing the use of French in the WebSphere in order to encourage more use of digital technology and strengthen competitiveness so that our activity sectors can become more innovative.**

- **Stronger positioning in promising and innovative economic development sectors:**

### **Green economy - Eco West**

RDÉE Ontario wants to consolidate and strengthen the competitiveness of Ontario's Francophone and bilingual economic space by investing in the green economy and joining the Eco West project to reduce greenhouse gases. This project, supported by RDÉE Canada, aims to help rural economies commercialize clean technologies and implement sustainable infrastructure projects.

**RDÉE Ontario supports RDÉE Canada's recommendation for \$2.205 million annually for this initiative.**

### **Tourism**

RDÉE Ontario is recognized for its expertise in tourism in Ontario (Route Champlain

development), and wants to develop initiatives to promote sustainable tourism, in particular the first North American edition of ECORISMO Canada in collaboration with RDÉE Canada. **RDÉE Ontario endorses the position of RDÉE Canada in support of creating a program dedicated to the development and marketing of innovative French/bilingual tourism marketing products in order to make them more attractive and competitive with a national envelope of \$15 million over five years.**

## **CONCLUSION**

This brief by RDÉE Ontario identifies the agency's priorities. It explains the gains to Ontario from the economic benefits generated by RDÉE Ontario's work and innovative projects in creating a competitive business climate that is open to new markets (inter-provincial, national and international). RDÉE Ontario renews its commitment to working with the federal government in a spirit of openness and constructive dialogue to ensure that the next action plan for official languages is articulated around a strong, engaging and responsible "economic vision" with strategic directions that will actively support the economic fabric of our Francophone regions, and at the same time convey its pertinence to today's and tomorrow's Francophone community in Ontario.

## **SUMMARY OF INVESTMENTS PROPOSED BY RDÉE ONTARIO FOR ONTARIO**

### **YOUTH**

- **Fund for young entrepreneurs in the regions** **\$2 million over 5 years**

### **FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION**

- **Creation of a specific fund in support of Francophone immigration in Ontario** **\$10 million over 5 years**

### **PERENNITY AND INNOVATION**

- Increased funding for operations** **\$12 million over 5 years**

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**TOTAL** **\$24 MILLION OVER 5 YEARS**



## **RDÉE ONTARIO NATIONAL PROPOSAL**

- **Digital fund initiative**

**\$20 MILLION OVER 5 YEARS**

