



2021 FEDERAL ELECTION: FOR AN ECONOMIC RECOVERY THAT RELIES ON THE ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR

Priorities of the arts and culture sector
in the Canadian and Acadian
Francophonie



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THE ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL SECTOR IN THE CANADIAN AND ACADIAN FRANCOPHONIE AND ITS SPOKESPERSON, THE FÉDÉRATION CULTURELLE CANADIENNE-FRANÇAISE

The arts and culture sector in the Canadian and Acadian Francophonie (outside Quebec) is fundamental to the socio-economic growth of our communities. Employing more than 26,000 people and generating more than \$1.16 billion every year, it is widely recognized as a key driver of development in Canada's Francophone minority communities.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has undermined the sector's vitality and its capacity to contribute to the economic and social well-being of Canadian society as a whole. With no definitive end to the crisis in sight, the FCCF and its network appreciate the resiliency and capacity for innovation demonstrated by artists, not to mention the determination with which cultural organizations have dealt with the side effects of the pandemic. The weakening of the arts and culture sector in the Canadian and Acadian Francophonie poses a twofold challenge. To begin with, organizations active in the field face a very uncertain future. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, the effects of the pandemic limit the prospects of a population committed to living its culture in French.

For more than 40 years, the FCCF has provided a unified voice for the arts and culture sector in the Canadian and Acadian Francophonie at the federal level.

Committed to the sustainable cultural development of Francophone minority communities, the FCCF coordinates a pan-Canadian network of dynamic arts and culture organizations, fostering strategic partnerships and identifying innovative practices that support action and maximize nationwide access.

THE FCCF'S NATIONAL NETWORK

The FCCF's national network encompasses **22 member organizations** based across Canada:

13 provincial and territorial organizations working in the field of cultural and artistic development

7 national organizations representing a range of disciplines: **media arts, visual arts, music, publishing and theatre**

1 pan-Canadian group of **performing arts presenters**

1 alliance of **community radio stations**

SUMMARY

The election priorities identified by the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française (FCCF) reflect pressing concerns for the arts and culture sector in the Canadian and Acadian Francophonie. They are informed by ongoing discussions with member organizations, as well as with various government, community and institutional partners. Our common focus is on obtaining concrete commitments from the major federal parties.

To foster economic recovery, the FCCF firmly believes that the next federal government will need to leverage the economic and social potential of the arts and culture sector. Given the lingering impact of the pandemic, the government must commit to continued support for our ecosystem.

With this in mind, we wish to highlight the following three election priorities:

OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE 2021 FEDERAL ELECTION

1

Ensuring that artists and cultural workers have access to a steady income during the pandemic and beyond, as well as a more inclusive social safety net. In particular, this would require the following measures:

- Extending income support programs such as the Canadian Recovery Benefit (CRB), the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS) for up to three months beyond the full lifting of government-imposed restrictions on gatherings. This would safeguard the recovery and relaunch of the arts and cultural ecosystem in the Canadian and Acadian Francophonie.
- Reforming Employment Insurance in a way that ensures the Canadian social safety net provides more equitable protection for artists and cultural workers.

2

Ensuring the introduction of a bill to reform the Canadian broadcasting system in a way that fully acknowledges the specific needs and realities of Francophone minority communities.

3

Ensuring the introduction of a bill to modernize the *Official Languages Act* (OLA) in a way that affirms the inextricable link between language and culture, while recognizing and supporting the capacity of community institutions to ensure the cultural development of Francophone minority communities.

LEVERAGING THE ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR AS A DRIVER OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY

PRIORITY 1

Ensuring that artists and cultural workers have access to a steady income during the pandemic and beyond, as well as a more inclusive social safety net.

1.1

Extending income support programs such as the Canadian Recovery Benefit (CRB), the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS) for up to three months beyond the full lifting of government-imposed restrictions on gatherings. This would safeguard the recovery and relaunch of the arts and cultural ecosystem in the Canadian and Acadian Francophonie.

1.2

Reforming Employment Insurance in a way that ensures the Canadian social safety net provides more equitable protection for artists and cultural workers.

Clearly, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the systemic challenges faced by the arts and culture community, depriving it of audiences and resources. These issues are particularly acute in Canada's Francophone minority communities, where artistic and cultural activities are fundamental to both community vitality and a strong Francophone identity.

It would be hard to overstate the importance of the arts and culture sector as a cornerstone of the Canadian economy. In 2019, it generated more than \$57 billion, or roughly 2.7% of the country's GDP. The figure fell to \$52.2 billion in 2020, a decrease of 9.2%.¹ In terms of employment, the sector was one of those most affected by the pandemic. The number of employed workers fell from 667,000 in 2019 to 588,000 in 2020. This significant decrease of 11.9%² needs to be addressed. It is important to note that these figures do not reflect the precarious situation, exacerbated by the health crisis, faced by the more than 158,000 artists in Canada. Nor can the end of the pandemic be predicted with any certainty; to varying degrees, it continues to impact all regions of the country. A return to pre-pandemic levels of cultural activity is not expected before 2023-2024. Among other factors, recovery will depend on the success of the ongoing vaccination campaign. From this perspective, the FCCF sees a pressing need to provide artists and cultural workers with access to a steady income, as well as a more inclusive social safety net.



1 - STATISTICS CANADA, *National culture indicators, first quarter 2021*, Ottawa, 2021. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210628/dq210628b-eng.htm>

2 - *Ibid.*

3 - STATISTICS CANADA, *2016 Census*, Ottawa, 2016, updated February 2021. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/index-eng.cfm>

1.1

Extending income support programs (CRB, CEWS and CERS) for up to three months beyond the full lifting of government-imposed restrictions on gatherings. This would safeguard the recovery and relaunch of the arts and culture ecosystem in the Canadian and Acadian Francophonie.

Alongside their benefits for artists and cultural workers, support measures have allowed cultural organizations to retain expertise. As a result, creativity continues to be fostered, innovative approaches continue to be developed and audiences are once again being entertained in pragmatic, diverse and imaginative ways.

1.2

Reforming Employment Insurance in a way that ensures the Canadian social safety net provides more equitable protection for artists and cultural workers.

Arts and culture professionals are highly educated: 43% hold at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 25% of the overall workforce.³ And yet, their incomes tend to be substantially lower. Meanwhile, they are much more likely to be self-employed.

Whereas 15% of the Canadian workforce is self-employed, the figure is over 50% for creative and performing artists, and over 40% for authors, writers, editors and journalists working in the sector.

ENSURING THAT THE CANADIAN BROADCASTING SYSTEM FULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF THE CANADIAN FRANCOPHONIE, WHILE PROTECTING CANADA'S CULTURAL SOVEREIGNTY

PRIORITY 2

Ensuring the introduction of a bill to reform the Canadian broadcasting system in a way that fully acknowledges the specific needs and realities of Francophone minority communities.



In November 2020, the government introduced Bill C-10 to modernize the *Broadcasting Act*. The proposed reforms are critical for strengthening and promoting Francophone identity, as well as for protecting Canada's cultural sovereignty. The FCCF is well aware of the important impacts these legislative changes could have on the fragile cultural ecosystem in the Canadian and Acadian Francophonie. For years, cultural stakeholders have been calling for this kind of fundamental reform of the *Broadcasting Act*. For instance, consider the impressive report⁴ released by the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review Panel in January 2020 (the so-called *Yale Report*), which discusses the need to better reach and serve Francophone minority audiences.

Thanks to effective horizontal work conducted with its members and partners, the FCCF was able to contribute to the parliamentary review of the *Broadcasting Act*. Indeed, key amendments proposed by the FCCF were adopted by the parliamentary committee responsible for the bill; amendments related to both the overall scope of the legislation and the powers vested in the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). Unfortunately, the constraints of the parliamentary calendar and political manoeuvres that ground committee work to a standstill prevented the bill from being passed.

The FCCF would like to take this opportunity to reiterate its position and call on the support of all parties for the following:

2.1

Ensuring that the broadcasting policy for Canada acknowledges the specific circumstances of official language minority communities (OLMCs), as well as the challenges and issues they raise and the need to address such challenges and issues.

This proposal is directly inspired by recommendation 53 of the *Yale Report*, which aims to ensure access to Canadian Canadian content by the Canadian population, including minority language communities.

2.2

Clarifying the mission of the CRTC in this regard.

There is a considerable asymmetry in the resources and expertise available to ensure full participation of official language minority communities in the CRTC's consultation and representation processes.

2.3

Addressing the unique situation of French in Canada by expanding the objectives of the *Broadcasting Act* with regard to original French-language content.

Given the precarious situation of French in Canada and the US, the acceleration of digital technology and the challenges this poses for the French language, it is essential to amend certain provisions of the *Broadcasting Act*. The Francophone linguistic minority must be taken into account and supported in a coherent manner to ensure its cultural development.

2.4

Empowering the CRTC to issue mandatory distribution orders that require online distribution companies to promote equitable access to French-language content.

Given that the CRTC's orders can ensure that Francophones have access to content in their language, the agency's role must not be constrained. The ever-increasing popularity of online companies makes it even more important not exempt certain content.

Foreign distribution services operating online and offering Canadian services generally limit their offerings to English-language channels. Bill C-10, in its current state, would not allow the CRTC to compel them to include a minimum of French-language broadcasting services in the channel packages offered to Canadian consumers.

4 - Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review Panel, *Canada's Communications Future: Time to Act*, Ottawa, January 2020, 260 pages.

TABLING A MODERNIZED OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT THAT PROMOTES ACCESS TO CULTURE AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF FRANCOPHONE MINORITY COMMUNITIES

PRIORITY 3

Ensuring the introduction of a bill to modernize the *Official Languages Act* in a way that affirms the inextricable link between language and culture, while recognizing and supporting the capacity of community institutions to support the cultural development of Francophone minority communities.



June 15, 2021, was a momentous day for the Canadian and Acadian Francophonie. The government tabled Bill C-32, *An Act to amend the Official Languages Act*, with the aim of modernizing the *Official Languages Act* (OLA) some 50 years after its adoption and in light of somewhat mixed results.

This ambitious and historic legislative reform set out to reaffirm the equality of French and English as a key component of our common vision for Canadian society, while acknowledging the inextricable link between language and culture. The FCCF recognizes the critical importance of a modernized OLA for the Canadian Francophonie's entire artistic and cultural ecosystem. The FCCF and its network therefore urge the next federal government to introduce legislation similar to Bill C-32 that includes the following provisions:

3.1

Ensuring that a modernized *Official Languages Act* provides for measures to support and protect key institutions based in official languages minority communities, especially in Part VII and in the Preamble.

It is essential to properly include organizations of the associative network of the Canadian and Acadian Francophonie in the legislative definition of an institution in order to ensure their sustainability. These associations boast expertise and capabilities that allow them to contribute to front-line community development. Their role as stakeholders deserves to be recognized and properly supported in the context of a modernized *Official Languages Act* focused on sustainable cultural development in Francophone minority communities.

3.2

Formulating the legislation in a way that explicitly recognizes the inextricable link between culture and language—a key factor for the protection, promotion and continued vitality of French in Francophone minority communities.

These two elements are inseparable: cultural strength depends on a strong language, and vice versa. Recognition of this fact would provide the framework necessary for supporting our local and regional institutions, while ensuring the capacity of our community network to provide for the ongoing implementation of measures to support development on the ground.

3.3

Expanding the objectives laid out in Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*, by specifying the latter's critical and leading role in supporting federal institutions mandated to protect, promote and contribute to the sustainable development of Francophone minority communities.

There is a pressing need for a modernized *Official Languages Act* (OLA) to explicitly recognize the vital role played by the state in supporting Canadian institutions active in sectors key to the vitality of Francophone minority communities, including culture, immigration, education, health and justice. The OLA must set objectives related to the achievement of sustainable cultural development.



Feel free to contact us if you have questions
or would like to set up a meeting.

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