

PRESENTATION

to the

House of Commons Standing Committee
on Official Languages

November 1, 2016
Ottawa, ON



CEDEC

INNOVATE. GROW. PROSPER.

Mr. Paradis, Mr. Boissonault, Mr. Nater and Mr. Choquette, and members of the Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to share our thoughts and CEDEC's recommendations regarding the action plan for official languages.

I am John Buck, Chief Executive Officer of CEDEC, and I am pleased to be accompanied today by my colleague Grant Myers, Provincial Development Officer of CEDEC.

ABOUT CEDEC

On behalf of English speakers in Quebec, CEDEC works with a broad range of national, provincial, and local public, private, and civil society actors to help businesses grow and workers succeed in the communities in which they live. In fact, collaborative community economic development is at the heart of everything we do. It involves mobilizing citizens to take full advantage of the unique linguistic, cultural, social, and economic assets of their milieus. Collaborative community economic development (a) strengthens and expands unique community capacities and assets, (b) makes communities more attractive and productive in an increasingly global economy, and as a result (c) contributes to improving the quality of life and the sustainability of these communities.

As the Secretary General of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) noted in his Report to Ministers in 2016, the focus of future public policy must be centered on enhancing peoples' well-being. Given the important contributions that the linguistic, economic, and community dimensions of Canadians' lives make to their individual and collective well-being, CEDEC believes that Community Economic Development should be recognized and funded as a pillar of the next Action Plan for Official Languages. In addition, it believes that every effort should be made to link the next Official Languages Action Plan, especially its community economic development component, to the government's complementary policy priorities, for example: its innovation and economic development agenda. This approach would help to ensure that Canada's Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs) are full participants and partners in building Canada's prosperity into the future.

SOME INITIAL STEPS IN THIS DIRECTION

Languages are more than demographic or cultural characteristics. Canada's official languages are gateways to new markets, innovative partnerships, and strategic business and labour market information. Canada's two official languages and the bilingualism and multilingualism of many of its citizens are critical economic assets that provide us with a competitive advantage in the global marketplace. Canada's two OLMCs are major contributors to this economic advantage.

Given this reality, CEDEC and RDÉE Canada, and its members, have partnered with Employment and Social Development Canada to develop and lead the Economic Action Network. The Network has two main objectives:

- To support the creation of innovative growth-oriented companies
- To ensure the availability of skilled, productive workers

These objectives have been documented in our *Canadian Plan for Economic Development of Official Language Minority Communities*. The Economic Action Network is a space for economic leaders in government and the private sector to develop innovative, practical initiatives that stimulate interprovincial partnerships and commercial opportunities for businesses. This is an unprecedented opportunity for the Government of Canada to invest in a truly national, collaborative venture that is drawing on the strengths of Canada's OLMCs while contributing to the reinforcement of their economic future.

BUILDING CANADA'S ECONOMY THROUGH THE NEXT OL ACTION PLAN

CEDEC supports entirely the measure proposed by RDÉE Canada to create a "sizeable leveraging fund through a public-private partnership (PPP) to support the launch, succession and expansion of

businesses from Francophone and Acadian communities.” A national capital fund supporting investments in high-growth businesses would be welcomed by both Official Language Minority Communities. In addition, CEDEC is recommending federal investment in a dedicated fund to directly assist Quebec businesses to pursue markets in the rest of Canada, as well as assist small and medium sized businesses across Canada to establish themselves in Québec and operate effectively there. In this regard, it is important to note that Québec is Canada’s second largest domestic market.

This type of commercial activity would assist companies from across Canada to take better advantage of Canada’s internal markets while simultaneously contributing to the vitality of communities across the country, including OLMCs. The initiative would promote stronger economic and business ties and networks within Canada, promote bilingualism in a context sensitive manner, and contribute to the vitality of a number of communities, including OLMCs.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Successful and competitive businesses in Quebec require talented, skilled and bilingual workers. Quebec’s English-speaking communities, especially through its educational institutions, have substantially increased the rate of bilingualism among English speakers in Quebec. In 2001 the rate was 67%, up from 37% in 1971. Despite this advantage, an increasing number of young, educated English speakers are leaving Quebec to pursue employment elsewhere.

The next Action Plan should provide support to Quebec’s English-speaking community so that it can play a leadership role focused on inspiring bilingual graduates and young workers to stay in Quebec and contribute to the economic growth of their communities. This initiative would mirror and complement the Quebec government’s immigration strategy, which is targeting international students and encouraging them to stay and support the development of Québec.

CEDEC’S RECOMMENDATIONS

As you discuss and consider the next Action Plan for Official Languages, CEDEC would like to offer the following recommendations:

1. **PRIORITIZE COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEXT ACTION PLAN FOR OFFICIAL LANGUAGES:**
 - The modest economic growth forecasts for the coming years and the globalization of economic activity require that our communities build upon and take full advantage of their linguistic, economic, and community capacities and assets to remain attractive, competitive, and sustainable.
 - Link the next Official Languages Action Plan, especially its community economic development component, to the government’s complementary policy priorities, for example: its innovation and economic development agenda.
2. **INCREASE INVESTMENTS IN EXISTING PROGRAMS DEDICATED TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGE MINORITY COMMUNITIES:**
 - Double the investment in the Enabling Fund (ESDC)
 - Double the investment in the Economic Development Initiative (Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions) for Official Language Minority Communities, indexed according to inflation.
3. **INVEST IN HIGH GROWTH BUSINESSES:**
 - Create a capital fund to invest in high growth potential businesses in OLMCs.
 - This fund should be community managed and self-sustaining with an initial investment from the Government of Canada and private partners.

4. **STIMULATE INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE, ESPECIALLY BETWEEN QUÉBEC AND OTHER PROVINCES:** The Government of Canada should fund CEDEC and RDÉE Canada as intermediary organizations to
 - Assist Quebec-based businesses to recognize the commercial potential of markets in the rest of Canada and deliver programs and services aimed at helping them reach these markets.
 - Better promote business opportunities in Quebec to SMEs and entrepreneurs across Canada and deliver business services to help access the Quebec market.
5. **ADDRESS INTER-PROVINCIAL BARRIERS:**
 - Ease or eliminate barriers to inter-provincial trade and the recognition of professional qualifications.
 - These barriers not only limit OLMC commerce, but seriously impede labour mobility for bilingual workers.
6. **FOCUS ON RETAINING TALENTED YOUTH:**
 - Support a significant campaign within the English-speaking communities of Quebec to retain talented, educated bilingual post-secondary graduates.
7. **GENERATE COMPREHENSIVE LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION:**
 - Invest in targeted data gathering and analysis, forecasting and modelling that match emerging employment opportunities with the future labour supply of workers in OLMCs
8. **INVEST IN TOURISM:**
 - Fund a national brand and marketing strategy for OLMC tourism.
 - Cultural tourists tend to stay longer and spend more during their stay. OLMCs have the potential to capitalize on this through unique, high quality tourism products and experiences that can complement Canada's existing tourism offer.
9. **DEVELOP FLEXIBLE AND MEANINGFUL PROGRAMS THROUGH COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**
 - Ensure that a community economic development approach and lens is applied to programs to enable greater federal and provincial collaboration in supporting "*local solutions to local problems*". A community economic development approach would:
 - make government program adaptable to local realities, capacities, and assets
 - focus the Action Plan for Official Languages on enhancing peoples' well-being through a community-led and supported process
 - add flexibility and improve coordination from different levels of government, as well as economic sectors such as employment, economic development, entrepreneurship and the social economy
 - link the Action Plan for Official Languages to other government programs and ensure they are equipped to actively enable and support the unique linguistic, economic, social and cultural contributions of OLMCs.

Thank you, once again to all members of the Standing Committee for Official Languages for this opportunity to share CEDEC's recommendations for the next edition of Canada's Action Plan for Official Languages.