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JOINT STATEMENT **from the members of the Linguistic Security taskforce**

There are 10 million people who speak French across Canada. Yet many hesitate to speak it for fear of having their language or vocabulary mocked. As members of the Linguistic Security taskforce (taskforce), we declare that actions must be taken so that people who know French can feel welcome and confident to speak it.

To ensure a future for the French language, we must define and implement innovative and inclusive solutions.

The National Strategy for Linguistic Security: a social project

The National Strategy for Linguistic Security (SNSL) (<https://www.snsl.ca/en>), unveiled on March 20, 2020 by Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française (FJCF) for the International Day of La Francophonie, is the result of a thorough reflection and consultation process. The Strategy is built on three great tenets:

- Strengthening the sense of belonging, confidence and language resilience throughout Canada;
- Making all Canadians aware of the cultural, regional and language diversity among Canada's francophonie;
- Supporting and equipping Francophones that wish to lead a personal initiative to build their language confidence and resilience.

Collective action is necessary

Under youth leadership, the Taskforce wishes to clearly express the need to shake up the status quo and launch a transformative process in our society.

The taskforce invites citizens, companies, not-for-profit organizations, institutions and governments to pull together and implement winning conditions so everyone who speaks French can feel free to do so confidently.



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Possibilities abound, namely in education, in the workplace, in culture and the media along with public policy.

Building confidence within francophone living spaces and educational institutions, from kindergarten to post-secondary

It is essential to ensure access to quality French-language education throughout the country to those who desire it, from kindergarten to post-secondary.

We must multiply and strengthen ties between schools and other francophone living spaces to better integrate accessible francophone models.

We must increase the number of opportunities to speak in a safe and gratifying environment where confidence and resilience can be built, along with the tools to help parents accompany them in this process. This will help them learn to navigate between various levels of language, which are equally valid but can vary according to context.

Language confidence must remain a concern beyond the school environment to fully reap the rewards of the efforts made by the learners and the people who believed in them.

Active offer in French, so linguistic security becomes everyone's concern

Many young people wish to work in French once they've earned their diploma. Unfortunately, that's not always possible.

We must encourage companies to increase their capacity to offer their services in French by implementing incentive measures.

Furthermore, everyone has the right to request service in French, which in the long run could help companies realize that actively offering services in French contributes to customer satisfaction and company expansion. This will also help increase the chances of working in French, given a context where language skills will be a lucrative asset for a company and a satisfaction factor for employees.



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The importance of seeing and recognizing oneself in culture and in the media

Linguistic security must be cultivated outside of a school or work environment, namely by providing people with media and cultural content that speaks to them in the language they speak. Access to content and experiences showcasing francophone communities in a minority context across Canada, their artists, their accents and their realities should be a priority.

In their own way, artists act as ambassadors for the French language and all of its accents. Culture is the beating heart of Canada's francophonie. Concerts, festivals, publications and exhibits from francophone artists and artistic organizations each mark an opportunity to bring people together around the French language. Reading in French, listening to a podcast or watching a movie or TV series featuring our communities, hearing a local accent on the radio, on television or online brings us closer and strengthens our linguistic security and our sense of belonging to a borderless community.

For all of these reasons, we feel it is imperative that Canada adopt a true sustainable cultural development policy with consideration for francophone minority communities. Such a national framework would help tone, support and promote arts and culture in a sustainability perspective for Canadian francophonie, while simultaneously structuring foreign cultural diplomatic action.

Legal guarantees to feel safe, the role of public policies

There is no doubt that language insecurity is the result, namely, of the status a language holds in the public and political space and how the people who speak it see that status. Since the Official Languages Act (OLA) was passed in 1969, French holds a special place which grants it a symbolic, legal and political recognition in Canada. However, many changes have occurred in the last fifty years.

Section VII of the Official Languages Act requires that federal institutions adopt positive measures to promote official language minority communities. It seems essential that this section of the Act be updated so that such measures are taken systematically, in order to empower Francophones to take charge of their own development.

Not only is the introduction of a reviewed legislative framework necessary, its implementation is crucial. It is important to give the responsibility of the implementation of the Official Languages Act



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to a central government agency by defining the roles and responsibilities of various federal authorities in its application and confirming the repercussions for any public authority that wouldn't fulfill its obligations according to the *Act*.

This approach must be embraced at the federal level. It's important, however, not to neglect the impact of the consolidation and improvement of laws and measures that support linguistic security at the provincial, territorial and municipal levels, namely through an intergovernmental promotional strategy for official languages both in Canada and abroad.

Let's work together!

Under the leadership of Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française (FJCF), Association canadienne d'éducation en langue française (ACELF), Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne (ACUFC), Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA), Canadian Teachers' Federation/Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants (CTF/FCE), Fédération culturelle canadienne-française (FCCF), Réseau des cégeps et des collèges francophones du Canada (RCCFC), Commission nationale des parents francophones (CNPF) and Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones (FNCSF) have committed, in alignment with their respective missions, to implement this National Strategy for Linguistic Security.

Together, they invite you to join them and provide your input!

Visit snsi.ca/en to learn more about the strategies and actions you can implement today to drive this initiative to bring Francophones together.