

COMMISSION ON INCLUSION OF THE FRANSASKOIS COMMUNITY

FINAL REPORT

From Minority to Citizenship



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From Minority to Citizenship

Final Report

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COMMISSION ON INCLUSION OF THE FRANSASKOIS COMMUNITY

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FOREWORD

The Commission on Inclusion was established following certain events related to the question of inclusion. One such event was the 2005 Fransaskois Games/*Jeux fransaskois*: the *Association jeunesse fransaskoise* (AJF) decided to include students from immersion schools in the event. The *Division scolaire francophone n°310* (DSF) subsequently withdrew from the Games and organized its own event for its students. The difference between the two positions led to a public debate over the issues of inclusion and exclusion, of identity and belonging, within the Fransaskois community. These issues are constantly present for the Fransaskois, in their families, relationships, activities, community organizations – even in their celebrations.

The *Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise* (ACF) did not stop at simply reacting to the triggering event; instead of limiting its reaction to the issue of the Fransaskois Games, the ACF created the Commission on Inclusion. The Commission's mandate was to address the issues of identity, inclusion and exclusion for the Fransaskois community as a whole. Who is Fransaskois? Who is entitled to participate in Fransaskois activities? Where do bilingual Anglophones belong? What about francophiles – people who support the Francophonie but who do not speak French? What about Francophone newcomers to the province and the “lost generations?”¹ There are many questions relating to the issues of borders, identity, the definition of community and the sense of belonging.

The Commission on Inclusion studied these very questions, drawing on briefs submitted, opinions from participants heard during public hearings, and academic books and articles on the topic. Through their insights and discussions, the members of the Commission gained a sense of the complexity of the issues and the various aspects of their mandate. There are no magic or simple answers. Simple answers quickly become simplistic and should be avoided.

Inclusion seems to be an attitude to be cultivated among those who share the fundamental features of our being, such as our language. Yet, it is also a profoundly human attitude that respects anyone who shares the spirit of our struggles and our hopes. This attitude of openness therefore spreads to those who self-identify with the epic story of the Fransaskois people, its past and present struggles and its future as an integral dimension of what unites us all in the development of our civilization. Our collective future still resides in a specific time and place.

The attitude of inclusion and respect for others is based on a positive identity, is characterized by pride, and must lead to integration as a process of welcoming and accepting into our community anyone who identifies with it, who chooses to live in it and who contributes to its growth based on his or her individual abilities, including his or her linguistic ability. This integration must respect what is unique about the Fransaskois community: its history and its commitment to using the French language within a specific territory – Saskatchewan.

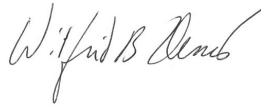
The objective of the Fransaskois community is not simply to survive, but to thrive. Fransaskois associations share the primary objective of bringing together people who wish to take part in this project and who chooses to contribute to the growth of our community and thereby the growth of our country and the world. The challenge or dilemma facing the Fransaskois community is to create unity while respecting diversity. Our ancestors were confronted with the same dilemma during the period from 1880 to 1920. Canada was faced with this dilemma again in the early 21st century. To overcome the dilemma, we need to define who we are and establish mechanisms that succeed in integrating this diversity. As is the case with Canada, the objective of the Fransaskois community is unity, not uniformity.

To reach the objective of unity through diversity, the Fransaskois must create a balance: on the one hand, we must include everyone who shares the spirit of our history without sharing our language, as well as everyone who shares our language without grasping the significance of our struggles; on the

¹ Those who no longer identify with the Fransaskois community or who no longer speak French.

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other hand, we must ensure the protection of institutions, organizations and events that are essential to our existence as a distinct community. To meet this challenge, the community must establish some guidelines to enable the integration on multiple levels of those who share this objective based on their degree of commitment, while obtaining their respect for what is vital to the Fransaskois community. It is not an easy challenge. Yet, this is the challenge that is underscored in the Commission's recommendations in an ever-growing initiative. The success of our contribution to Canadian society and to the world will follow. This is our common history: from oppressed minority to full citizenship.



Wilfrid Denis
Chair of the Commission on Inclusion

"...we need to adopt policies, strategies and structures to ensure all attempts at "inclusion" produce an environment in which the Francophone identity, language and culture are strong, not weak."

– Excerpt from the brief submitted by the *Division scolaire francophone n° 310*

INTRODUCTION

In early 2006, during the *Vive la différence* project², the *Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise* (ACF) initiated a dialogue on the issue of the demographic renewal of the Fransaskois community. The future of the Fransaskois community is not only a quantitative issue (to increase the number of Francophones), but also a qualitative issue. What does that mean? Since this community is surrounded by a much larger population of Anglophones, the dialogue must begin by redefining the Francophone community's relationship to the *other* to create a community dynamic that is more open to cultural diversity. It is better to be clear from the outset: the contribution of migrants and the numerous French-speakers is necessary, if not vital³, for the future of Saskatchewan's Francophone community. A new vision of what it means to be Fransaskois needs to be developed to more effectively attract newcomers from Canada or other countries.

To successfully carry out this ambitious and particularly delicate initiative effectively, the ACF created the Commission on Inclusion in the Fransaskois Community, which is chaired by Dr. Wilfrid Denis, an elected community representative and sociologist. The Commission appointed six commissioners from the community and academic sectors to analyze the views heard during the public hearings and to make recommendations to ACF representatives. These recommendations must enable us to come up with a vision of the future to ensure a viable renewal of the community itself and to ensure that Fransaskois associations and institutions are better equipped for the Francophone cultural diversity issues in Saskatchewan. These recommendations should help them focus their programming more effectively, to develop more appropriate recruitment and reception strategies, and, more generally, to learn to better understand a new social and cultural dynamic. New elements are also required to give new life to this community, which, by respecting its historical heritage, is evolving in its relationship with the province, other Francophone communities in Canada and with the international Francophonie. This vision for the future seeks to put an end to the perception that being part of a minority is a disability, even an obstacle, and assume the position of strength that the Fransaskois community can have in society, thus attracting those who would be interested in settling here.

From March 30 to May 6, the Commission received thirteen briefs. Also, during public hearings held in Saskatoon on May 6, 2006, the Commission heard some twenty citizens speak for over eight hours. Fransaskois citizens were asked ten questions about inclusion and cultural diversity. The questions⁴ first sought to better define the community itself: **What is a Fransaskois or a Saskatchewan Francophone? Is it a hardship or a source of joy to be Fransaskois? How can we create a real collective space, a community culture that respects our individual differences and celebrates our common Francophone heritage? How do we create a real collective space that respects our individual differences while celebrating our Fransaskois heritage?**

Some questions regarding the inalienable features of identity and current community challenges were also included: **Can we identify elements of the Fransaskois identity and culture that should be protected above all? Is the community ready to include bilingual Anglophone partners, newcomers from other parts of the country or from other Francophone countries? Why do some people feel excluded from the community? How does a minority community adapt to the phenomenon of individuals belonging to more than one group?**

Finally, other, more specific questions on how we can integrate and include cultural diversity were added: **Are we able to identify the specific areas within the community in which programs should be implemented to improve the integration of cultural diversity? What conditions are necessary to successfully integrate newcomers and strengthen community institutions?**

² Project to increase awareness of the demographic reality of Francophone minority communities, initiated by the *Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada*.

³ See the demographic data in the Appendix.

⁴ The complete list of questions may be found in Appendix II.

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The idea of *community* is central to these questions. It is also apparent that a general definition of what *community* means is essential. This definition will serve as a reference throughout this document. The commissioners agreed to propose the following definition of community, based on the Fransaskois experience:

A community is much more than simply the sum of its members. It is a complete unit of civilization made up of people, families and institutions that are the basis of systems, agencies and organizations working together for the common goal of the well-being of all. The community is made up of individuals who, in their diversity and by their actions, strive for unity through a constant search for social and spiritual growth.

This report is divided into two parts. The first part will put the problem of inclusion and cultural diversity into context theoretically, comparing it to similar experiences in Canada and around the world. The Fransaskois experience is certainly not unique; similar situations exist elsewhere in the world. However, it is definitely original. Moreover, thanks to the Commission's report, the Fransaskois community can now make a valuable contribution to other communities in the same situation.

The first part will also summarily describe the sociohistorical context of the Fransaskois reality in order to identify certain dynamics of its relationship with the *other* and the consequences for contemporary reality. Over the years, the Fransaskois community has defined its own identity, which remains dynamic and changing while also carrying with it a specific history and culture. This composition forms the substance of an ever-developing collective identity.

The second part of the report consists of a series of recommendations divided into four polarities, which serve as a basis for the Commission's reflection. These topics correspond to four areas of tension and negotiation, located at the heart of the process of (re)defining the nature of inclusion and exclusion of the *other* by Fransaskois individuals, associations and institutions. These four polarities make up the features of an intercultural dialogue that can lead to the creation of a coherent *community ethical position* on cultural diversity. This position should allow for the identification of ideas and practices for "making community," while fully respecting the richness inherent in cultural diversity. These recommendations are intended to identify actions and policies that better meet the challenges faced by the Fransaskois community and its future generations.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY: CONTEMPORARY COMPLEXITY

The planetary unification of humanity, as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin called it, has led to a growing interlinking of societies, whether this interconnectivity be the result of economic globalization, the evolution of humanist ideas or information technologies. The traditional society that existed a century ago, based on a primary economy, rural life and manual technologies, has been radically transformed. Today's world, marked by an increase in dialogue and communication, is also characterized by frequent and complex social relationships. Changes in the social landscape are increasingly rapid. A "world-culture" is emerging and local identities are either growing stronger by opening up to international networks or feeling threatened and remaining entrenched in defensive, often isolationist, behaviour.

Globalization therefore raises the increasingly relevant issue of the vitality of cultural diversity: How are we to protect diversity in a world that tends toward uniformity. A basic principle must be observed here. The unity of a community or humankind cannot be interpreted as being uniform except in the context of its diversity. Diversity itself can lead to unity. Furthermore, the protection of cultural diversity has been the subject of international discussions led by UNESCO for many years. UNESCO recently developed a Convention on Cultural Diversity, which Canada signed in 2006. With regard to cultural diversity, the Director-General of UNESCO, Koïchiro Matsuura, emphasizes urgency. He stresses that cultural diversity "must not be perceived as being unchanging heritage but as a process guaranteeing the survival of humanity;" and that segregation and fundamentalism in the name of cultural differences must be prevented (UNESCO, 2001:2). He also emphasizes that the issue of preserving cultural diversity is likely one of the most complex problems that humankind now has to solve.

National initiatives also exist to address the numerous aspects of this social and cultural problem. For example, in Canada, the *Métropolis* research project brings together hundreds of researchers from Canada and around the world to look at ways of integrating the various cultures now present in the major Canadian cities, given the increase in international immigration. Closer to our reality, a number of Francophone minority communities have a different approach to the integration of newcomers. The growing immigration of Francophones to minority communities in Canada raises societal issues in all parts of the country.

While it is ultimately a factor of unity and a significant source of collective wealth, diversity is also a political challenge for nations or local authorities who must learn to work with a diversified and mobile society. Yet, this reality is not so new. Mixed populations have existed since human beings have been walking the planet and has been critical to the evolution of cultures and societies. The protection of cultural diversity is considered by UNESCO⁵ to be the recognition of the collective wealth it brings us. For the Fransaskois community, the challenge is to successfully think of and integrate diversity as a wealth rather than a threat, a factor of unity rather than a source of tension, without compromising its own cultural uniqueness. In light of the issues raised by international bodies, such as UNESCO, the issue of cultural inclusion raised by the Fransaskois community is an extremely complex societal issue.

⁵ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

THE FRANSASKOIS IDENTITY AS A LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OTHER

Today's demographic reality, characterized by mobile populations and cultural pluralism, can be compared to the historic experience of Francophones in Saskatchewan, insofar as the French presence in Western Canada, from as far back as the French colonization in New France, has renewed itself through contact with other cultural groups. Throughout this period, notably, contact between the French and the aboriginal peoples in the region saw the birth of the Métis people. With the first Francophone settlements, their relationship with the *other* inevitably played a role in the history of how the West was populated and in the history of the Francophone identity in the West. This *other* varies from one period to the next and has many different origins: Aboriginal, Métis, English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh, German, Ukrainian, etc. These relationships have gone through times of co-operation and conflict, but they are the very foundation of the construction of the Francophone identity in the West. As Allaire (1999:163) points out, "This relationship with the *other*, this periodical redefinition of the *other*, is one of the primary ingredients of the Francophone community of the West, resulting in a continuous adjustment."

In the early 20th century, successive waves of immigrants also shaped the Saskatchewan Francophone reality. This province of immigration received French-speaking pioneers from Quebec, France, Belgium and the United States. This intercultural dynamic continues today with interprovincial and international migrations, thus changing the face of the Fransaskois community. Moreover, as Allaire (1999:185) points out, "the desire to last comes from the vitality of communities, which are continually redefining themselves. One of the ingredients of this survival is seen in the relationship with the *other*, in the form of actions and reactions." Today, these new outside community relationships still appear to be essential for the survival of the Francophone community in the West.

In the early 1900s, in Saskatchewan as in the rest of English Canada, an Anglo-conformity ideology was imposed (Friesen, 1983). At the time, Francophone cultures in Saskatchewan suffered from this cultural domination, which showed up in coercive and oppressive legislation on using and teaching the French language in schools. Francophones fought against the disappearance of their language (Denis, 1993, 1988, 1984). Yet, the experience of ideological domination, of social exclusion, brought on by the *Canadian*⁶ nationalism of the time, had a variety of major psychosocial consequences for the oppressed populations (Friesen, 1983). When an individual or an ethnic group experiences oppression, it develops defence mechanisms that show up, notably, as a more impermeable, more exclusive social organization that must, in theory, enable the group to protect and reproduce itself (Bourdieu, 1982). The Catholic Church was this necessary shield for the Fransaskois identity for a long time, thus preserving French life in the province. However, the clergy's failure to concentrate French-speaking populations in the West, particularly in Saskatchewan, clearly weakened the capacity of the French language to survive in the region (Viaud, 1999). The scattering and geographic fragmentation of Francophone settlement in the West undeniably led French-language communities to become isolated from one another. This dispersal contributed significantly to the lack of regional cohesion and reinforced the process of assimilation and withdrawal of the Francophone minority.

The exclusion and assimilation of Francophones in Saskatchewan resulted in many survival efforts that turned into political movements to defend the French language and culture, led in particular by the Catholic Church. During this period, the *Association canadienne-française catholique* (ACFC) was established in 1912 to represent Francophones in Saskatchewan. Struggles waged locally were also being waged nationally in other Francophone minority communities. These battles were not in vain. One such success was attained in the 1990s, when the Francophone community obtained the right to manage its schools (Denis, 2006).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the federal government created policies to protect French as an official language in Canada. Funds were also granted to Francophone organizations outside Quebec to ensure the development of Francophone communities in Canada. Though far from perfect, these policies made it possible to establish networks among Francophone institutions to protect and develop Francophone minority communities. From that point on, the Fransaskois community had a democratic governance system: a series of institutions to enforce the development of educational, cultural and economic services. The community also had the support of federal policies and some provincial initiatives, in addition to the significant legal support of jurisprudence under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The community was no longer living in the same social and political "survival" conditions as it had been in the early part of the century. Assimilation remained a constant threat; however, the community could now play an active role in the general development of Saskatchewan society.

⁶ In the context of the time, this term tends to be synonymous with Anglo-domination.

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The Fransaskois community has known many difficult political situations over the course of its history. It is possible to remain stuck in defensive or combative attitudes, or in the vision that the Francophone community is nothing but a bunch of “whiners.” However, the current political reality is different. The struggle is occurring on another field, which does not necessarily mean that it is easier. The Commission on Inclusion was established precisely to reflect on the current problem in order to propose solutions to help renew the Fransaskois community and maintain its vitality as it looks to the future. Considering the complexity and severity of the situation⁷ that the community is facing, the Commission identified four polarities which serve as the basis for the ideas and comments brought forward by the members of the Fransaskois community. Each topic includes two points, or poles, that define a certain number of individual and collective views on the future of the Francophone community in Saskatchewan. These four polarities are the basis of the Commission’s recommendations in response to their ten questions. They are as follows:

- Unity and Diversity
- Language and Culture
- Inclusion and Exclusion
- Community and Society

The Complementarity of Unity and Diversity

The Fransaskois identity is the central and certainly the most sensitive issue that the Commission must address. Built on a history of oppression, it is now considered in relationship with other cultural identities sometimes perceived as threatening. Defining this identity is also a problem. Can we or should we define what it means to be Fransaskois? It is important to remember that the term *Fransaskois* was coined at a specific point in Saskatchewan’s history. The Fransaskois identity is distinct from that of other Francophone minorities, such as the Franco-Manitobans or Franco-Ontarians. The term *Fransaskois* is original with respect to the other terms, as Mocquais (2006:3) points out: it is “... the product of several identities merged into a single one...” Behind the creation of the term *Fransaskois* lies a history of tragedies and joys, but also “a voluntary action with respect to oneself and to the other,” as Mocquais (2006:4) states.

Today, in order to define what it means to be Fransaskois, the history of the Francophone pioneers must be considered. These builders gave life to a unique cultural identity and forged it through their unceasing efforts to survive, to help each other and to work together in the face of adversity... Being Fransaskois may also have a symbolic meaning over and above their geographic location or a general Francophone culture and be derived from the experience of those who became Fransaskois through their voluntary actions.

It is also important to mention that being Fransaskois as described above has always been experienced through a dynamic relationship with the *other*. In that sense, cultural diversity is fundamental to the Fransaskois community. The Fransaskois community has always been composed of people from different backgrounds. The problem associated with fear of the *other* mostly comes from the history of oppression and discrimination experienced by a number of Fransaskois over the last four generations. It also lies in the political constitution of a “linguistic minority.” According to Monica Heller (1998), linguistic minorities are formed by dominant ideologies. Linguistic minorities therefore tend to imitate the nationalist logic to resist domination by the majority, by creating, for example, exclusive institutions for members of their community. This practice, which has marked the Fransaskois experience, in the same way that it has marked other Francophone minority communities, puts a strain on the experience of identity and makes it more difficult to strengthen the Fransaskois identity and build a positive relationship with others. A culture and an identity formed in reaction to oppression can be extremely static and impervious to change.

⁷ Refer to Appendix I – Fransaskois Demographics.

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However, in today's reality, inaction is no longer a solution. Tension between *traditionalism* and *modernity* may emerge. The minority experience reflects this tension when it comes to the issue of identity. Being stuck in traditional values, however, will only accelerate its breakdown under the pressure of *modernity* and the demographic, ethnic and political changes that follow. According to Lapointe and Thériault (1999:197), "questioning one's own identity in a minority situation necessarily helps redefine social ties within society." The Fransaskois community's current approach addresses this effort to redefine social ties and seeks to free itself from the traditional confines of identity.

The following excerpts from the briefs submitted to the Commission and from notes taken during the public hearings illustrate this tension between the unity of the Fransaskois identity and the experience of diversity.

Excerpts from the briefs submitted to the Commission and from notes taken during the public hearings:

"A Fransaskois is someone who speaks French..."

"A Fransaskois is anyone who speaks French, lives in Saskatchewan and chooses to identify him- or herself as Fransaskois."

"Quebec distrusts the 'damn French,' while the Acadians distrust the 'damn Quebecers'... It seems to me that those who defend the differences among Francophones would be better off thinking in terms of unity and connection."

"If we wish to use the term *Fransaskois*, it must be a real birthright and not an institution. Otherwise it has no meaning."

"I do not want the term to be exclusive! It is a question of culture."

"A Fransaskois is someone who gets involved and who has the Fransaskois community at heart."

"Identity is a personally constructed experience."

"We are a special community rather than a minority community!"

"Let us stop being a minority group. We are better! Only fewer..."

"Speaking French is an act of Canadian citizenship; it is important for our national identity."

Certainly, identity is the basis of the entire issue discussed here; however, in order to understand its complexity, it must be understood in its relationship to diversity within society as a whole. It is also important to recognize that diversity is a global reality; cultural identities are increasingly flexible and easily influenced and therefore more complex and difficult to understand. In many respects, this diversity is perceived as a threat to the Fransaskois identity, particularly if it remains stuck in time from a folkloric perspective. A definition of the Fransaskois identity is therefore needed to determine where the social and psychological references lie in an increasingly complex world, where a vast number of identities meet and overlap. However, we need to avoid falling into the trap of coming up with a static (folkloric) definition.

The following recommendations focus on better defining the fundamental elements of the Fransaskois community identity. They also aim to better situate the polarity of diversity and unity within a

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constructive relationship with factors of diversity. The living, dynamic character of the Fransaskois community is also necessarily tied into a specific geographic area, Saskatchewan, and a linguistic reality, the French language.

Recommendations:

- 1** The Commission recommends that the Fransaskois community be defined in terms of territory and language. Two other facets also need to be taken into consideration. Being Francophone in Saskatchewan has always been a voluntary action, an affirmative effort and an effort to resist assimilation. However, Francophones in Saskatchewan have historically come from a variety of backgrounds. **The action of choosing to live at least a part of one's life in French in Saskatchewan is part of the definition of what it means to be Fransaskois: A Fransaskois is someone who identifies him- or herself with the Saskatchewan Francophone community, today or in the past, whether through birth, marriage or adoption or by identifying with the Fransaskois community, who contributes to the vitality of the French language as well as the growth and development of the French-speaking communities in Saskatchewan, while acknowledging that there are many ways to make a contribution.**
- 2** It is important to move away from the image of victim associated with the idea of an oppressed *minority* and think in terms of *citizenship*. It is therefore recommended that **the ACF and Fransaskois organizations promote the Francophone linguistic and cultural status in society as a determining element in the construction of the Canadian identity**. It must be emphasized that being Fransaskois is a privilege that enables one to participate in the civic activities of Canadian society. **Being Fransaskois is an act of citizenship!**
- 3** In the context of an increasingly diversified society in terms of culture and identity, it is always important for the individual to be able to identify with a community, a space, a group. It is therefore essential to encourage not only a team spirit among all the members of Francophone organizations, but even more so to encourage unity as part of diversity. In this regard, the Commission recommends that **a unified vision of the development of the community, the province and the country guide the community actions of the ACF and other Fransaskois organizations**.
- 4** It is understood that one of the key factors of a well-developed identity is the ability to embrace diversity from a unifying perspective. Cultural diversity being one of the key factors in Canadian unity, it must therefore be a key factor within the Fransaskois community. The Commission therefore recommends that the ACF, together with the relevant Fransaskois organizations, promote cultural diversity within the community and **create a program to celebrate the richness of the cultural diversity of the Fransaskois community**. This program could include a variety of activities (shows, conferences, fairs, etc.) and could integrate regular activities, such as the *Rendez-vous fransaskois* and the *Fête fransaskoise*.
- 5** In recognition of the cultural diversity both in Canadian society and in Fransaskois society, the Commission recommends that Fransaskois organizations adopt **a policy of promotion and respect of the cultural diversity** of people from linguistically mixed unions, immersion schools, and national and international immigration.

A Necessary Balance between Inclusion and Exclusion

The reflection on inclusion in the Fransaskois community is tied into the idea of exclusion, since one cannot exist without the other. At the outset, the relationship between the principle of exclusion and the principle of inclusion seem to be opposites and contradictory. Yet, these two principles are in fact

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complementary. Inclusion is not possible without exclusion. We therefore need to imagine a principle of inclusion/exclusion that, according to Morin (2005:15), “each individual lives for him- or herself and for others in open dialogue.” This recognizes the vital nature of unity (principle of exclusion) and the potential of being open to the other (principle of inclusion).

This dynamic polarity may initially seem to be in total contradiction with the first polarity discussed in this report, unity and diversity. This is, however, not the case. Instead, it recognizes that the relationship between exclusion and inclusion must not be fixed, but rather dynamic. In other words, if inclusion and exclusion are indeed complementary notions, the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are constantly changing from the perspective of a tension towards unity, which not only respects diversity, but draws from its strength. The balance between inclusion and exclusion will therefore constantly evolve within a specific and dynamic framework (see above for our definition of what it means to be Fransaskois), as long as any organization that does not evolve is doomed to perish in the short term.

In the current context, the dynamic principle of inclusion/exclusion, as it has been adapted to the Fransaskois community, is a conceptual framework that serves to inform those who are involved directly or indirectly in community development. This dynamic principle must also be the basis of a new community culture, in which openness (inclusion) becomes a consistent value for the community in today’s world.

This search for a balance between openness to difference and the protection of a distinct identity is a common theme in the views received during the hearings and referred to in the briefs. Another common theme is that this dynamic balance must be reflected in the community between associations and their members. That said, an open attitude is not the sole responsibility of the community at any given moment in its history and its evolution. Newcomers must also adopt an attitude characterized by openness to difference that their new community represents.

Excerpts from the briefs submitted to the Commission and from notes taken during the public hearings:

“The term *inclusion* bothers me; inclusion is a factor in assimilation.”

“We have always included! We have not been vigilant enough in protecting our identity!”

“Absolute inclusion is impossible. There has to be a policy on exclusion.”

“The phenomenon of inclusion of (Francophones) has started us on the road to assimilation.”

“The newcomer’s desire to belong to this community is critical.”

“We have to stimulate dialogue among people, while recognizing the richness of diversity.”

“We must actively fight against the feeling and the practices of exclusion without renouncing our language.”

“We have to give our community representatives the time, power and finances to invest in welcoming newcomers.”

“It is our obligation to create a community that is able to bring people who love French together.”

The polarity of inclusion and exclusion lies with both the individual and the group as well as both within and outside the community. The Commission can only look at the issue from a community

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perspective. In that sense, Fransaskois community policies must encourage respect and openness towards cultural diversity among its members. Community employees have a responsibility in this matter. Moreover, all the necessary steps need to be taken to protect and promote the French language; this is critical to the functioning of the community.

Recommendations:

- 6** In order to promote and revitalize the Fransaskois culture and history, the Commission recommends that permanent or travelling initiatives be created to keep the Fransaskois memory and culture alive. This means ensuring that the Fransaskois heritage is transmitted to future generations and newcomers, to enable them **to identify with the Fransaskois spirit and history, without being a strict model for the future.**
- 7** The Commission recommends that the ACF and its associative network **review the statutes and regulations of Fransaskois organizations to ensure that French is the language of operation.**
- 8** With the aim of being more open to the world and to find a common ground in the struggle against assimilation, the Commission recommends that the ACF **focus on its ties with potential Fransaskois community partners:** Aboriginals, ethnocultural groups, francophiles, etc. The community should also seek **to facilitate the creation of places and opportunities for dialogue and sharing with other cultures.**
- 9** The Commission recommends that the entire Fransaskois associative network make **a special effort to encourage the integration of youth into the community** through activities, events and information networks (Internet) better adapted to their interests that they could subsequently take on as their own.
- 10** In recognition of the considerable role that education plays in the transmission of language, culture and identity, the Commission recommends that the *Division scolaire francophone n°310* (DSF) and the Fransaskois schools **take a strategic approach to better integrate parents from linguistically mixed unions and parents with a limited understanding of French**, while respecting their linguistic and cultural differences and seeking ways to help them participate in their children's education.
- 11** The Commission recommends that we **seek a way to extend the scope of Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms⁸ to French-speaking grand-parents and their descendants (the "lost generations") as well as to Francophones excluded by the Charter.**
- 12** The Commission recommends that the ACF **introduce a professional community code of ethics regarding how people (immigrants, the "lost generations," new partners, etc.) are received**, through hospitality, generosity and creativity.

A Relative Balance between Language and Culture

The French language is undeniably a central component of the Fransaskois identity. However, use of the French language is meaningless without the history and culture that are attached to it in the Saskatchewan context. The opposite is also true to the extent that history itself is not an end, but both a point of reference and an anchor. Formed through evolution, both past and future, history invites not only the Fransaskois *de souche* to identify their identity, but also invites newcomers who see themselves in the Fransaskois history and in the spirit that it conveys to do the same.

⁸ Refer to Appendix IV for Section 23 of the Charter.

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Thus, many views received clearly emphasized that the Fransaskois identity is much more than simply the use of a language. Although the language unites the Fransaskois, it is the community experience through its personal and collective histories and its committed members that reflect the Fransaskois culture, which has had a diverse background since its beginning. Nonetheless, without a doubt, using the French language gives people direct access to the Fransaskois culture. This close relationship between language and culture lies at the centre of the construction of the Fransaskois identity.

Excerpts from the briefs submitted to the Commission and from notes taken during the public hearings:

“Language without culture means nothing; language and culture go hand in hand.”

“Community carries culture, which is the product of experience.”

“In my mind, the language is the primary determinant of culture. I know that this principle is debatable, but when it is gone, and nothing remains except for the cooking, surnames and folk festivals, it seems to me that the culture disappears.”

“The practice of the Catholic faith in French must be protected!”

“It is important to encourage the promotion of learning a second language.”

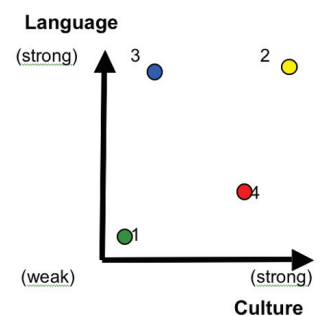
“Priority should be given to the youth and to quality French education.”

“Communicating in French is the Fransaskois population’s *raison d’être* and I have difficulty seeing how one would get around that.”

“It is very important to be able to offer French-language jobs in the community.”

The relationship between language and culture is relative, depending on how the community welcomes people with varying levels of language proficiency and an uncertain relationship with the culture who seek to fit into the community. For example, it is essential that the community show respect and openness towards a French-speaking person who has recently arrived in Saskatchewan and is unfamiliar with the Fransaskois culture. The following graphic illustrates the extent to which people may have varying degrees of knowledge of a language and of a culture.

According to the graphic, someone with little knowledge of the language and the culture is represented by the green circle (1). Conversely, someone with advanced knowledge of the language and the culture is represented by the yellow circle (2). The blue circle (3) represents someone who masters the language without being familiar with the culture, such as is the case with some immersion school students. The red circle (4) represents someone who knows the culture well, without being able to speak French. This graphic may help organizations and institutions better plan community activities intended to reach a variety of clientele, based on their understanding of the language and the culture.



The French language is likely the easiest element to share with international immigrants or Canadians. However, the level of French used may significantly vary. Some views expressed to the Commission insisted on the importance of looking at activities that respect these differences. Nonetheless, such an attitude must in no way threaten the French language or the Fransaskois cultural heritage. Moreover, it

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is important to encourage activities in which the level of language is relatively advanced in order to enable the expression of more complex ideas and concepts.

Recommendations:

- 13** The Commission recommends that **the primacy of the French language be respected and that special attention be paid to the welcome extended to non-Francophones** at every public event or activity organized by the community with other groups to bring the two closer.
- 14** Given the importance of enhancing the visibility and public promotion of the French language, the Commission recommends that **greater interaction be encouraged between students and teachers** in Fransaskois and immersion schools without affecting the specific educational objectives of each school system.
- 15** Given that the dominance of English may weaken the French language in a minority situation, the Commission recommends that **opportunities for language training be offered** to *Division scolaire francophone n°310* and immersion school personnel as well as to employees of Fransaskois institutions and associations.
- 16** The Commission recommends that Fransaskois organizations **create a variety of activities to meet the diverse needs of the Francophone community**, to enhance the community's attractiveness to a greater number of Francophones.

The Balance Sought between the Community and Society

This last polarity covers the most general aspect of the reflection on inclusion. It is easily comparable to the polarity of unity and diversity, though it gets away from the individual dimension to deal more with collective and political dynamics. The relationship between the Fransaskois community and the Anglophone society has been marked by much resistance and characterized by power relationships. Over the generations, however, this relationship has greatly evolved with the adoption of national legislation and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The relationship between the Fransaskois and the Anglophone society is much more constructive and respectful today than it ever was before. While discrimination may continue to exist, the Fransaskois community is considered to be a major partner in the development and history of the province. Built over the years, the relationship with the majority has turned into an important asset for the upcoming generation. Youth, newcomers and the community in general must move away from thinking in terms of a victimized minority and become leaders, builders, full Francophone citizens in the Canadian nation, within Saskatchewan society.

It is important to recognize here that, in the current dynamic of a bilingual and multicultural Canadian society, groups that are small in terms of their numbers but that have solid histories and cultures are able to make a dynamic contribution to the vitality of the majority and of society in general, insofar as their difference enables them to achieve their full potential. In this regard, a strong and vibrant Fransaskois community within society can be an important source of social changes. The Fransaskois community can fully confirm that it is part of the national and international Francophonie, provided that it breaks free of the perception that it has of itself as a minority. It must above all avoid isolating itself and consider implementing a community project that is tied into society on a local, national and international level.

The Fransaskois community can also become a leader by creating spaces and opportunities for dialogue and exchange with other “minorities,” such as the Métis and the First Nations peoples. Positive and constructive relationships between the Fransaskois community and these groups could be tremendously

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beneficial for the future. Learning to work together with the *other*, when objectives and the means of achieving them are aligned, may lead to collective success and progress.

This polarity of community and society also takes into account the mobility of the Fransaskois population. The obvious urbanization phenomenon, both internationally and nationally, also deeply affects the Fransaskois reality. Sociodemographic trends (low birth or immigration rates, out-migration from rural areas, higher education levels, the acceptance of bilingualism, etc.) are factors in identifying the community's strengths and challenges. Below are a few comments submitted to the Commission illustrating the issues around community/societal tensions.

Excerpts from the briefs submitted to the Commission and from notes taken during the public hearings:

“There is a lot of ignorance about our identity outside our community!”

“I don't see any colours; we live in a global community”

“Develop more marketing initiatives! What can Francophones offer the majority society?”
“Integration is a societal issue.”

“The Province must play a role in building the next generation population and in economic development. We cannot satisfy every need that newcomers have. The Province must be a partner to others.”

“Though demographics have changed, we are still nostalgic for the rural past.”

“Develop the reflex for openness; adopt an abundance mentality.”

“Promoting solidarity!”

“Being different is an asset.”

The dynamics between the community and society are particularly complex and extensive. The recommendations must, therefore, speak to the different aspects of this polarity. The issue that seems to stand out the most is the community's ability to fully participate in society by contributing to its development, which would increase the number of newcomers that participate in the Fransaskois community. The community must be recognized as a friendly social space for a greater number of people, without denying its specificity.

Recommendations:

17 The Commission recommends that the ACF and the associative network **develop a communications and marketing strategy plan based on a positive vision of itself**. This action plan must introduce the community to people in the Canadian and international Francophonie outside the Fransaskois network. This plan should promote the benefits of speaking and understanding French in Canada and in the world.

18 The Commission recommends that **a positive image of the Fransaskois community be developed, highlighting its originality, its vitality and the importance and the satisfaction of being Fransaskois**, to encourage people to live, get involved and work in their community.

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- 19** The Commission recommends that the community **create cultural events that are open to everyone in Saskatchewan and in Canada** to broaden the outreach of the community and its partners within society.
- 20** The Commission recommends that the ACF and other organizations **build close ties with the province with regard to recruiting, welcoming, immigration and the economic development** of the Fransaskois community.
- 21** The Commission recommends that **support for the development of Francophone businesses and institutions that create jobs** focus on attracting and retaining new Francophones to Saskatchewan and retaining its youth, thus stimulating the overall vitality of the community.
- 22** The Commission recommends that **new media technologies, such as the Internet, blogs and podcasting, be used to reach individuals everywhere** and to create new places and opportunities for provincial, national and international dialogue.
- 23** The Commission recognizes the dual problem resulting from urbanization: the migration of youth from rural areas to cities and the tendency of immigrants to settle in cities. The Commission therefore recommends that the ACF and its network join forces with rural communities **to establish a visible and easily accessible Fransaskois welcoming structure** to help Francophones from Canada and elsewhere settle in Saskatchewan.
- 24** Aware of the growing importance of immigration as a significant contribution to the population and to the provincial and national economy, as well as to the other Canadian provinces, the Commission recommends that **the ACF continue the dialogue and exchange of ideas between academics and the leaders of the community** on issues of the identity, inclusion and integration of Francophones in this age of globalization.

I. Fransaskois Demographics

According to Statistics Canada's 2001 Census, a little over 18,000 people in Saskatchewan identified French as their mother tongue (1.9% of the province's total population). It should be pointed out that the percentage of Francophones in the province has continually dropped since census records were first established in the 1950s. In 1951, 4.4% of people in Saskatchewan identified French as their mother tongue; that percentage dropped to 3.4% in 1971 and yet again to scarcely 2.2% in 1991. Since 1951, the percentage of Francophones (people whose mother tongue is French) has therefore dropped every twenty years by about 1%. At that rate, it is possible that Francophones will disappear sometime in the next forty years, particularly since the demographics of the Francophone population are characterized by an aging population. Of the 18,000 Fransaskois, over half (54%) are aged 50 and over. Just under 30% of the Anglophone population, however, are aged 50 and over⁹. Population aging is a widespread phenomenon in Canada; yet, for a community in a minority situation, it is an even greater concern. There are four times more elderly people aged 65 and over than there are youth aged 15 and under.

The natural renewal of the Francophone population is no longer enough to guarantee that the French presence will continue in Saskatchewan. The transmission of the language also plays a role in this demographic situation. The rate of assimilation of the Fransaskois is high at 61%; this means that only 39% of Francophone parents transmit their mother tongue to their children (FCFA, 2005). The percentage of Francophones who speak French most often at home has dropped. In Saskatchewan, in 1991, 32.3% of Francophones spoke French most often at home, compared to 25.2% ten years later. Francophones are experiencing a decline in demographics as a result of a mostly aging population and a low birth rate; as a result, the future of the community is increasingly uncertain.

Most Francophone families in Saskatchewan include one non-Francophone parent. The linguistically mixed nature of these families has a definite impact on the parents' language choices and, as a result, the language of socialization for their children (Landry, 1997). Western Canada has a particularly high percentage of linguistically mixed couples (82%) compared to the Atlantic Provinces (38%) and Ontario (65%)¹⁰. According to the last census, it was estimated that only 42% of children from linguistically mixed couples knew French, while 95% of children from families where both parents are Francophones knew French. The last census also showed that 70% of linguistically mixed families where the non-Francophone parent speaks French are successful in transmitting the French language to their children. When the non-Francophone parent does not speak French, only 32% of families are successful in transmitting the French language to their children. The significantly higher number of linguistically mixed couples in Western Canada becomes another major issue for the survival of the French language in the region. Education in French plays a key role in ensuring a high rate of transmission of the French language from one generation to the next and in helping non-Francophone parents learn the language. However, in her study on French schools in minority communities, Angéline Martel, in 2001, only 18.8% of children eligible to attend a French school in Saskatchewan chose to exercise that right. Despite the fact that the number of children attending French schools has significantly risen since 1986, the majority of eligible children attend English-language or immersion schools. The presence of linguistically mixed families is therefore both a challenge and a hidden potential, according to Rodrigue Landry and Allard, since "the objective of a strong additive bilingualism among children from linguistically mixed families is fully attainable if there is an increase in the use of French at home and in school" (1997:567). In this context, the linguistically mixed nature of families is not the worst threat for Francophones, but rather an opportunity for renewal! This study also shows, however, that the weaker a group's vitality, the greater the risk of the community opening up to an English-language clientele. A community's ability to welcome and be open can therefore be an educational initiative to promote "*additive bilingualism*."

⁹ Profil statistique des personnes âgées francophones du Canada. Assemblée des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada, mars 2005.

¹⁰ Statistics Canada, 2001.

The current demolinguistic situation in the Fransaskois community is, in a sense, rather bleak from the standpoint of the natural renewal of Francophones. However, if “French-speakers” are counted among the population, the situation is no longer as dramatic. On the contrary: in Canada, the number of “French-speaking” Anglophones has doubled in the past 50 years; in other words, five million more people speak French. In 2001, approximately 31% of Canadians were French-speaking Anglophones, making them a strong, even essential, social force in keeping the French language alive outside Quebec. Also, these citizens are sometimes the majority of Francophones in provinces such as Saskatchewan, where nearly 3% of the population is considered French-speaking Anglophones. With these two groups taken together, more than 49,000 people are able to speak French in Saskatchewan (FCFA, 2005)!

This demolinguistic picture would not be complete without mentioning the role that Francophone immigration plays in the renewal of the Fransaskois community. The percentage of new Francophone Canadians is still low at 4% of the Francophone population in Saskatchewan (Canadian Heritage, 2004). However, national, provincial and community officials are already looking at immigration as a preferred area of action in the renewal of the active population. Moreover, in Francophone minority communities, the number of newcomers is growing faster than the population with French as a mother tongue. International or interprovincial immigration is the second highest source of renewal of Francophones outside Quebec, after “French-speakers.” The reception, integration and retention of these Francophones continue to be a problem. Between 1999 and 2001, the total number of immigrants to Canada rose from 161,000 to 214,000. Among the latter, in 2001, only slightly more than 6,756 Francophone immigrants settled outside Quebec. In 2002¹¹, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages estimated that 50% of these immigrants will permanently settle in their host province. It appears, therefore, increasingly urgent to develop a better network to welcome immigrants to the Fransaskois community, the objective being to encourage them to permanently settle in Saskatchewan and contribute in a lasting way to the vitality of the Francophone community.

II. Complete List of the Commission’s Questions

1. What is a Fransaskois or a Saskatchewan Francophone? Should there be a distinction between a “Saskatchewan-born Fransaskois” and the “others?” If so, why?
2. In order to accept new Fransaskois faces, is the community willing to include Francophones who return to the community after having lived elsewhere or outside the community for many years for any number of reasons? This includes bilingual Anglophone partners in linguistically mixed families, newcomers from other Francophone regions or countries (Acadia, France, Quebec, Mali, Senegal, Belgium, etc.) and non-Fransaskois individuals, French speaking, etc., who wish to participate and contribute to the Francophone community.
3. Are we able to identify the common interests that would encourage people such as those mentioned above to want to integrate into the Fransaskois community? How can we create a real collective space, a community culture that respects our individual differences and celebrates our common Francophone heritage?
4. Why do some people feel excluded from the community? Why do others feel right at home and succeed in helping the community to thrive? What are the practices or methods of exclusion of “outsiders” and what are the means and forms of inclusion?
5. Are the reasons for resisting the inclusion of newcomers the same in both rural and urban communities?

¹¹ FCFA (2005)

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6. Can we identify elements of the Fransaskois identity and culture that should be protected above all? Can we identify some basic principles or features that define the Fransaskois community's raison d'être?
7. Are we able to identify specific areas within the community in which programs should be implemented to improve the integration of cultural diversity? If so, what should such programs look like?
8. How does a minority community and its members adapt to the phenomenon of belonging to more than one group? (More and more, people have several facets to their identity and add more throughout their lives, such as when they change jobs, move from one region or country to another, enter into one or more linguistically mixed marriages, learn another language, etc.).
9. Is it possible to determine which conditions foster the integration of newcomers while strengthening community institutions and to distinguish them from the conditions that, while promoting this integration, weaken these institutions? Are we able to balance the benefits and the risks?
10. Is it a source of joy and celebration or rather a hardship and an obligation to be Fransaskois? If it is primarily a hardship or an obligation, how can we change it into a source of joy and a celebration?

III. Recommendations

The following recommendations are not listed in order of priority, but simply in the order in which they were discussed in the report. They are numbered for reference purposes.

Unity / Diversity

- 1** The Commission recommends that the Fransaskois community be defined in terms of territory and language. Two other facets also need to be taken into consideration. Being Francophone in Saskatchewan has always been a voluntary action, an affirmative effort and an effort to resist assimilation. However, Francophones in Saskatchewan have historically come from a variety of backgrounds. **The action of choosing to live at least a part of one's life in French in Saskatchewan is part of the definition of what it means to be Fransaskois: A Fransaskois is someone who identifies him- or herself with the Saskatchewan Francophone community, today or in the past, whether through birth, marriage or adoption or by identifying with the Fransaskois community, who contributes to the vitality of the French language as well as the growth and development of the French-speaking communities in Saskatchewan, while acknowledging that there are many ways to make a contribution.**
- 2** It is important to move away from the image of victim associated with the idea of an oppressed *minority* and think in terms of *citizenship*. It is therefore recommended that **the ACF and Fransaskois organizations promote the Francophone linguistic and cultural status in society as a determining element in the construction of the Canadian identity**. It must be emphasized that being Fransaskois is a privilege that enables one to participate in the civic activities of Canadian society. **Being Fransaskois is an act of citizenship!**

- 3** In the context of an increasingly diversified society in terms of culture and identity, it is always important for the individual to be able to identify with a community, a space, a group. It is therefore essential to encourage not only a team spirit among all the members of Francophone organizations, but even more so to encourage unity as part of diversity. In this regard, the Commission recommends that **a unified vision of the development of the community, the province and the country guide the community actions of the ACF and other Fransaskois organizations.**
- 4** It is understood that one of the key factors of a well-developed identity is the ability to embrace diversity from a unifying perspective. Cultural diversity being one of the key factors in Canadian unity, it must therefore be a key factor within the Fransaskois community. The Commission therefore recommends that the ACF, together with the relevant Fransaskois organizations, promote cultural diversity within the community and **create a program to celebrate the richness of the cultural diversity of the Fransaskois community.** This program could include a variety of activities (shows, conferences, fairs, etc.) and could integrate regular activities, such as the *Rendez-vous fransaskois* and the *Fête fransaskoise*.
- 5** In recognition of the cultural diversity both in Canadian society and in Fransaskois society, the Commission recommends that Fransaskois organizations adopt **a policy of promotion and respect of the cultural diversity** of people from linguistically mixed unions, immersion schools, and national and international immigration.

Inclusion / Exclusion

- 6** In order to promote and revitalize the Fransaskois culture and history, the Commission recommends that permanent or travelling initiatives be created to keep the Fransaskois memory and culture alive. This means ensuring that the Fransaskois heritage is transmitted to future generations and newcomers, to enable them **to identify with the Fransaskois spirit and history, without being a strict model for the future.**
- 7** The Commission recommends that the ACF and its associative network **review the statutes and regulations of Fransaskois organizations to ensure that French is the language of operation.**
- 8** With the aim of being more open to the world and to find a common ground in the struggle against assimilation, the Commission recommends that the ACF **focus on its ties with potential Fransaskois community partners:** Aboriginals, ethnocultural groups, francophiles, etc. The community should also seek **to facilitate the creation of places and opportunities for dialogue and sharing with other cultures.**
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- 11** The Commission recommends that we **seek a way to extend the scope of Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms¹² to French-speaking grand-parents and their descendants (the "lost generations")** as well as to Francophones excluded by the Charter.

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- 12** The Commission recommends that the ACF **introduce a professional community code of ethics regarding how people (immigrants, the “lost generations,” new partners, etc.) are received**, through hospitality, generosity and creativity.

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IV. Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*

23. (1) Citizens of Canada

- a) whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province in which they reside, or
- b) who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province, have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province.

(2) Citizens of Canada of whom any child has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in English or French in Canada, have the right to have all their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the same language.

(3) The right of citizens of Canada under subsections (1) and (2) to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of a province

- a) applies wherever in the province the number of children of citizens who have such a right is sufficient to warrant the provision to them out of public funds of minority language instruction; and
- b) includes, where the number of those children so warrants, the right to have them receive that instruction in minority language educational facilities provided out of public funds.

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