



**PERT** PROVINCIAL  
EMPLOYMENT  
ROUNDTABLE

**Brief:**  
**Ministry of Finance**  
**Pre-Budget Consultation**  
**2025-2026**

# Context

The Provincial Employment Roundtable Table (PERT) is pleased to submit this brief and proposition to the Ministry of Finance's 2025-26 Pre-budget consultations.

In this brief, we identify three key axes for investment and strategic intervention that will not only improve the economic situation of English-speaking Quebecers but facilitate their integration into the provincial labour market and thereby enhance provincial labour productivity. Our evidence-based recommendations in the areas of employment assistance, poverty, and French language learning will address ongoing issues of labour and skill shortages, demographic decline, and problems attracting and retaining talent, and contribute to economic growth.

## Pillars of Economic Vitality

### Employment

The Government of Québec has consistently failed to address the heightened unemployment of English speakers in the province – who represent 14.9% of the population but 22.7% of its unemployed<sup>1</sup> – to the detriment of both the English-speaking community and the provincial economy. English speakers were not included as a targeted group in the 2023-2024 or 2024-2025 *Plan d'action des services publics d'emploi* put forth by the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, and were similarly overlooked in the dedication of targeted funds for employment services. As a result, the provincial government has no plan for nearly a quarter of the unemployed population with its current offerings, putting the efficacy of its over \$1 billion<sup>2</sup> spent annually on employment in doubt, in addition to perpetuating unemployment and losing out on the potential and skills of this group.

**Recommendation 1:** We recommend that the Government of Québec develop an evidence-based *Plan d'action des services publics d'emploi* or similar plan that includes English-speaking Quebecers with specific measures and initiatives which target them. This plan should be developed in consultation with English-speaking Quebecers and English-language institutions, with representation from the regions of Québec, and diverse groups including youth, women, and visible minorities.

**Recommendation 2:** We recommend that the Government of Québec collect regular data regarding language of service and linguistic preference for employment services through Emploi Québec, and share this data with stakeholders via an administrative data sharing agreement.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Statistics Canada. (2021). 2021 Census - 25% Sample Data, [custom table]. All statistics in this report are based on calculations derived from Statistics Canada data tables, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, "Rapport annuel de gestion 2023-2024," Gouvernement du Québec, September 2024,

[https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/adm/min/emploi-solidarite-sociale/publications-adm/rapport/RAG\\_MESS\\_2023-2024.pdf](https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/adm/min/emploi-solidarite-sociale/publications-adm/rapport/RAG_MESS_2023-2024.pdf).

**These recommendations are supported by the following context:** English-speaking Quebecers experience an unemployment rate of 10.9%, four percentage points higher than French speakers' 6.9%. If the unemployment rate of English speakers were brought into balance with that of French speakers, an additional 28,000 workers would be added to the labour market.

English speakers often report French-language proficiency as a major barrier to not only employment, but accessing employment assistance resources. Neither this language barrier nor the English-speaking community more broadly are reflected in the Plan d'action's \$959 million budget for 2024-25 for the Fonds de développement du marché du travail. This lack of inclusion is likely to result in nearly one-quarter of the unemployed population being under-served by labour market integration services. It follows that current funding and related programming are likely to reach and benefit only 75% of the unemployed population, indicating a significantly inefficient expenditure of funds.

## Poverty

The MESS has also published its *4e Plan d'action gouvernemental visant la lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale*, allotting \$4.3 billion to this goal. Despite the fact that 23% of Quebecers living in poverty are English speakers, the plan does not include English speakers as a targeted group, effectively missing almost a quarter of its target population.

**Recommendation 3:** We recommend that the government of Québec develop an evidence-based *Plan d'action gouvernemental visant la lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale in Québec* that includes specific measures and initiatives targeting English-speaking Quebecers. This plan should be developed in consultation with English-speaking Quebecers and English-language institutions, with representation from the regions of Québec and diverse groups including youth, women, and visible minorities.

**Recommendation 4:** We recommend that the Government of Québec adopt a linguistic lens to understand and analyze trends in economic precarity and poverty and advance solutions to combat poverty and social exclusion. This should include the development and implementation of a framework to regularly collect linguistic-based data on poverty in Québec.

**These recommendations are supported by the following context:** English-speaking Quebecers experience nearly double the rate of poverty of Francophones in the province, 10% as compared to 5.8%. Of the 449,090 individuals in Québec who live in poverty, 103,240 (23%) are English speakers. Poverty rates are higher among English-speaking demographic groups such as youth (16.8%) and visible minorities (15.1%).

Higher poverty rates among the English-speaking community reflect their higher rates of unemployment and underemployment: research has found a strong relationship between unemployment/underemployment and poverty,<sup>3</sup> and conversely, that access to quality

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Employment and decent work," United Nations, Accessed February 5, 2025,

employment with a secure work environment, benefits, and fair remuneration is effective in lifting individuals out of poverty.<sup>4</sup>

We have outlined above the justification and need for an employment strategy for English-speaking Quebecers, which would help to address unemployment and, therefore, poverty. There is also a need, however, to recognize English speakers as a vulnerable group when developing strategies to combat poverty and facilitate social inclusion. To this end, PERT submitted a [brief](#) to the 2023 Consultation publique pour le plan d'action gouvernemental de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale.

## French Language Learning

The 2024 *Plan pour la langue française* advanced by the Minister for the French Language has no plan for Québec's English speakers, even though they number almost 600,000 – 37.9% of adult language learners in the province.<sup>5</sup> Instead, the plan focuses on recruiting Francophones to the province and valorizing French among existing Francophones, with few tangible measures to support non-fluent French speakers, and no apparent intention to mobilize the English-speaking community as a partner in protecting and promoting the French language.

**Recommendation 5:** We recommend that the Government of Québec create a dedicated strategy and action plan to promote French-language learning for English-speaking Quebecers, including designated funds for expanded French language learning. This plan should be developed in consultation with diverse English-speaking Quebecers and English-language institutions, with representation from the regions of Québec, and diverse groups including youth, women and visible minorities.

**Recommendation 6:** We recommend that the Government of Québec collect new and regular statistics regarding the French language learning needs of non-proficient French speakers in Québec.

**These recommendations are supported by the following context:** PERT's [2021 Employment Survey of English-speaking Quebecers and Organizations](#) identified French as the leading barrier to employment among respondents. PERT's report [User journeys of language learners navigating Québec's French language training ecosystem](#) identified positive motivations to learn French among English speakers in Québec, echoed in a recent

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<https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/issues/employment-and-decent-work.html>.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Besma Belhadj, and Firas Kaabi, "The relationship between employment and poverty using fuzzy regression" in *Analysis of socio-economic conditions: Insights from a fuzzy multi-dimensional approach*, eds. Gianni Betti and Achille Lemmi (Routledge, 2021), 264-275, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003053712-17/relationship-employment-poverty-using-fuzzy-regression-besma-belhadj-firas-kaabi>;

OECD, "OECD employment outlook 2009: Tackling the jobs crisis," September 2009, [https://doi.org/10.1787/empl\\_outlook-2009-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/empl_outlook-2009-en).

<sup>5</sup> Based on PERT's internal calculations using an inclusive definition. Language learners are defined as all non-immigrant English speakers plus all immigrants and permanent residents who do not speak French as their mother tongue.

report from the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages,<sup>6</sup> which found a strong desire among English-speaking Quebecers to be accepted by their Francophone counterparts. There is a strong desire to learn French among English-speaking Quebecers, and a recognition that French-language proficiency is essential to their social, professional, and economic success in the province.

Yet French language learning resources in the province have been plagued by issues in recent months, including bottlenecks and long wait times,<sup>7</sup> as well as funding cuts for part-time learners<sup>8</sup> and the closure of service centres offering French courses. PERT research has demonstrated that these kinds of barriers to access can have a chilling effect on individuals' motivation to learn French.<sup>9</sup> The Government of Québec is thus undermining its own mission to promote French, and additionally undercutting the productivity of its labour force by failing to address barriers to labour market entry.

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<sup>6</sup> Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, "Building Bridges: Perceptions and realities about the English-speaking communities of Quebec and their relationship with French in Quebec and bilingualism in Canada," Government of Canada, last modified June 2024, <https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/sites/default/files/2024-06/building-bridges-perceptions-realities-2024.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Commissaire à la langue française, "Rapport annuel 2023-2024. Chapitre 4 – Évaluation continue du déploiement de Francisation Québec," last modified May 2024, [https://www.commissairelanguefrancaise.quebec/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/RA\\_chap4\\_evaluation-FQ.pdf](https://www.commissairelanguefrancaise.quebec/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/RA_chap4_evaluation-FQ.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> "François Legault – premier ministre du Québec," Le Devoir, Accessed February 5, 2025, [https://www.ledevoir.com/francois-legault?utm\\_source=recirculation&utm\\_medium=hyperlien&utm\\_campaign=corps\\_texte](https://www.ledevoir.com/francois-legault?utm_source=recirculation&utm_medium=hyperlien&utm_campaign=corps_texte).

<sup>9</sup> Provincial Employment Roundtable, "User journeys of language learners navigating Québec's French language training ecosystem," November 2024, <https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/User-journeys-of-language-learners-navigating-Quebecs-French-language-training-ecosystem-1.pdf>.



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*Secrétariat aux relations  
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Québec 

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