



# Federal Pre-budget Submission 2026

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THE PROVINCIAL EMPLOYMENT ROUNDTABLE

**SUBMITTED MAY 22, 2026**

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** That the federal government adopt a holistic and intersectional approach to employability programming for the ESCQ, acknowledging the importance of tailored programming that is responsive to the needs of both the population and labour market in question.

**Recommendation 2:** That the federal government enhance coordination with the Government of Québec to ensure the delivery of English-language employment services, skills training and French-language training within a for-us-by-us framework for English-speaking Quebecers.

**Recommendation 3:** The federal government scale up direct investments through various programming streams for provincially funded ESCQ employment organizations in Québec and utilize the amendment and renewal cycles of the LMDA to negotiate stipulations that ensure the money can flow directly without being blocked by M-30.

**Recommendation 4:** That the federal government allocate funding to improve the availability and quality of linguistic labour market data through the Labour Force Survey and Job Vacancy and Wage Survey, with a particular focus on underrepresented communities between census years.

**Recommendation 5:** That the federal government allocate \$2 million to increase community-based research capacity among organizations serving English-speaking Quebecers to identify and respond to regional labour market needs.

## Context

In its 2026 Spring Economic Update, the federal government announced plans for strategic investments that will improve productivity, economic growth and position Canada for long-term prosperity. Of note are Team Canada Strong and the Defence Industrial Strategy, two key initiatives which will have significant impacts on the Canadian labour market if they are successful. Labour will increasingly be important to meet our urgent priorities, such as diversifying trade, building better infrastructure and homes, and creating stronger communities. As the largest Official Language Minority Community (OLMC) with 1.25 million English speakers in the second-largest provincial economy in Canada, our community has a key role to play in supporting these federal initiatives. Yet key socio-economic indicators suggest the full contribution of this segment of the labour force is not being realized.

The Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT) is working to build a better employment and economic future for the ESCQ in alignment with the federal government's long-term vision for a stronger labour force and economy. We are pleased to submit our brief in advance of the 2026 federal budget in support of this vision.

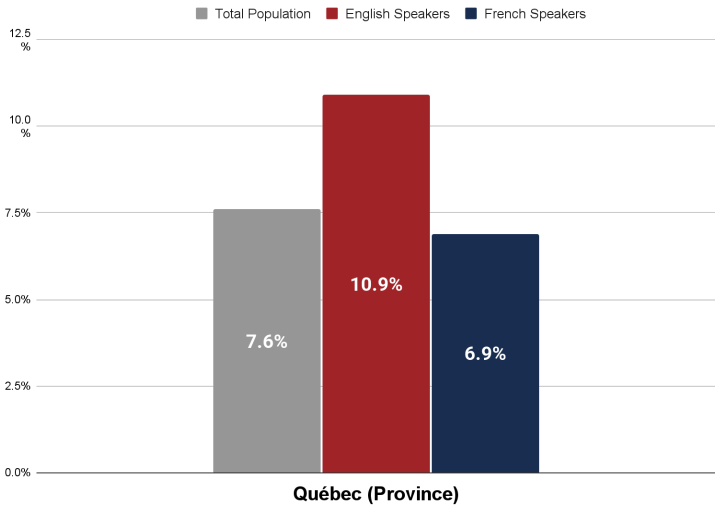
## Why English-speaking Quebecers?

English-speaking Quebecers occupy a vulnerable position in Québec's labour market. English speakers represent 14.9% of the province's total population, but 22.7% of its unemployed population and 23% of all individuals living in poverty.<sup>1</sup> They experience high unemployment rates and lower median incomes compared to the French-speaking majority across Québec.

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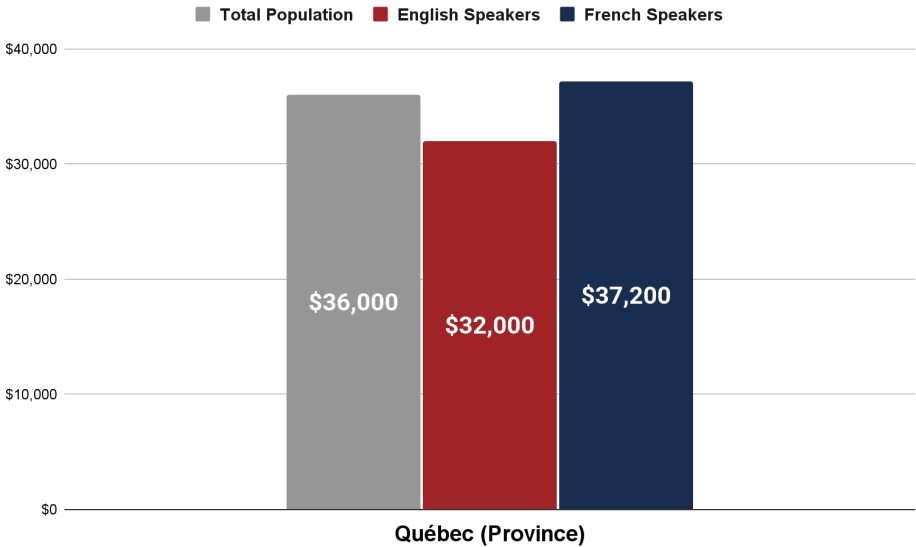
<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Statistics Canada. (2021). 2021 Census - 25% Sample Data, [custom table]. All statistics in this report are based on calculations derived from Statistics Canada data tables, unless otherwise indicated.

### Unemployment Rate of Linguistic Communities in Québec



Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada (2021)

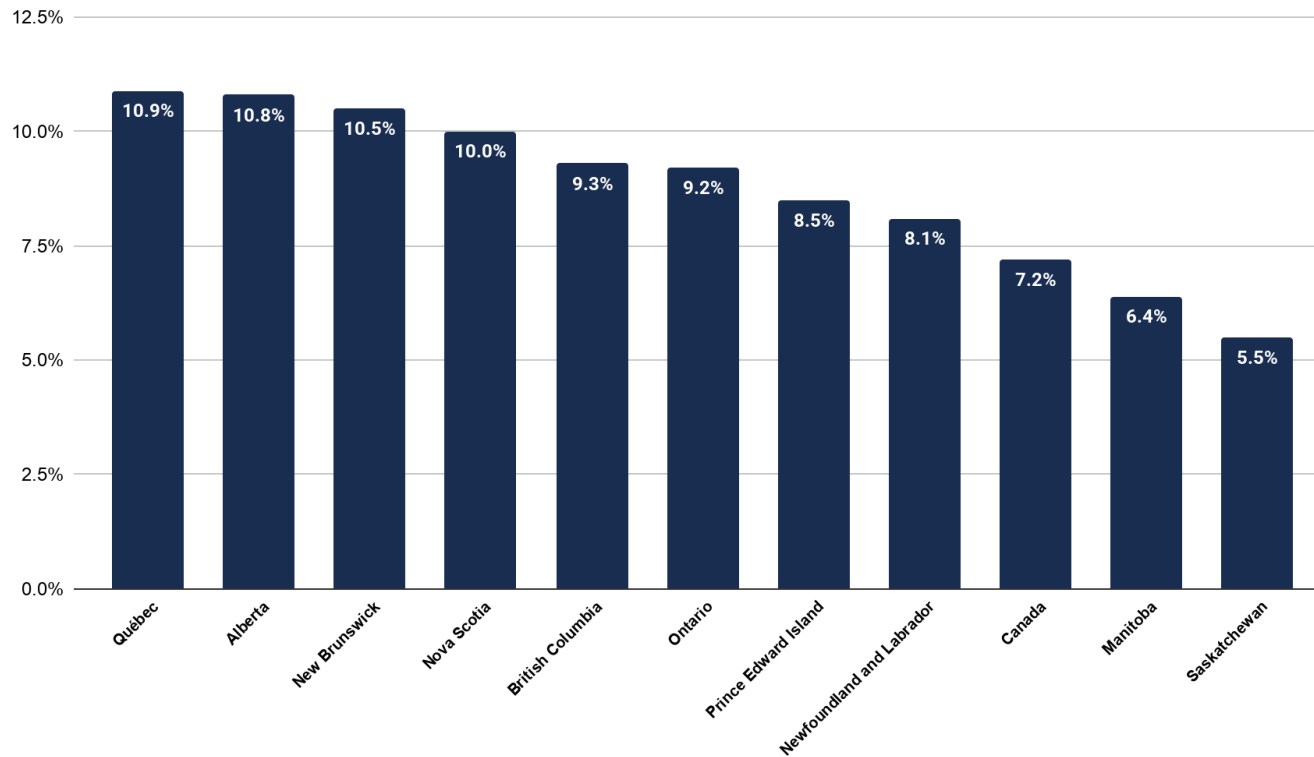
### Median Employment Income of Linguistic Communities in Québec



Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada (2021)

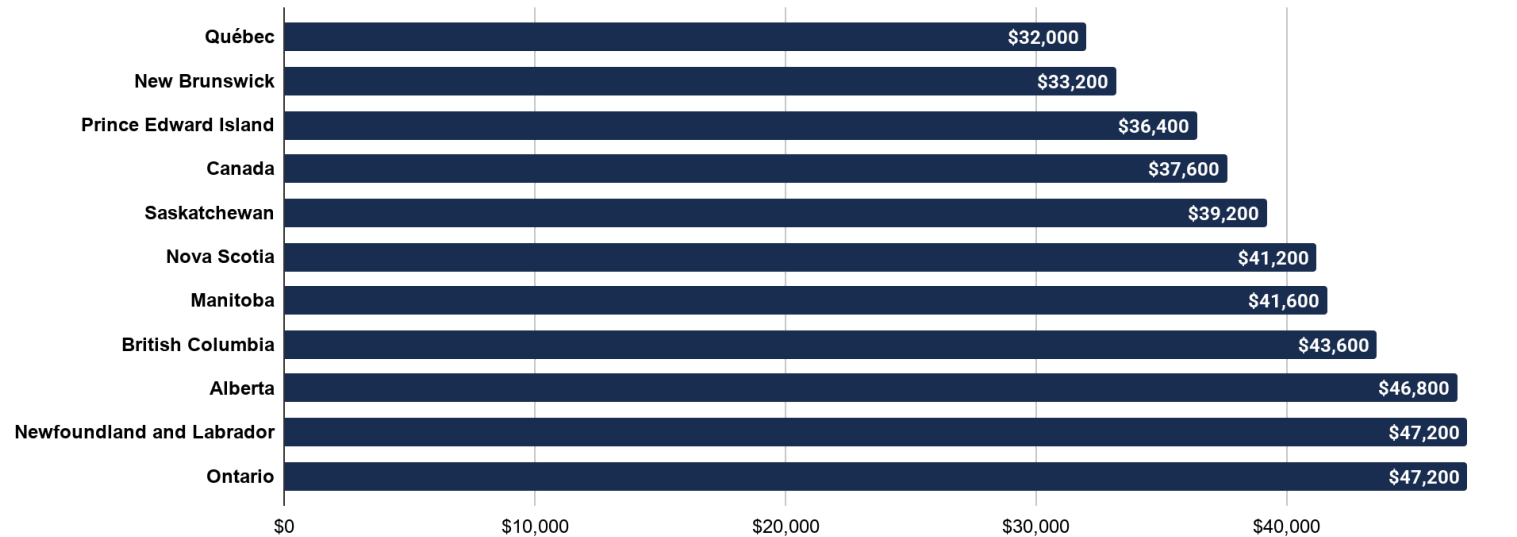
At the national level, English speakers experience similar disparities in comparison to other OLMCs, reporting the highest unemployment rate and lowest median income.

### Unemployment Rate of OLMCs in Canada



Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada (2021)

### Median Employment Income of OLMCs in Canada



Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada (2021)

English speakers tend to be highly educated and experience high rates of overqualification. This suggests that educational or skills gaps are not the primary barrier to labour market entry and promotion, but rather linguistic identity and French-language proficiency. Our research shows that language, access to French language training, and access to English language employment services are at the center of these disparities, as well as their solutions.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Provincial Employment Roundtable, “2021 Employment Survey of English-speaking Quebecers and Organizations,” 2022, [https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/PERT\\_MC\\_Design\\_SRQEA\\_CORE\\_EINR\\_D5R02\\_20220823\\_EN\\_Web.pdf](https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/PERT_MC_Design_SRQEA_CORE_EINR_D5R02_20220823_EN_Web.pdf).; Provincial Employment Roundtable, “Need to Know, Want to Know: Regional Québec English Speakers’ French Language Learning Experiences,” [Forthcoming].

# Unlocking Potential

Unlocking the potential of Québec's English speakers represents an important opportunity to (1) improve provincial and national economic productivity, adding a potential 28,000 skilled English-speaking workers<sup>3</sup> to Québec's labour market and (2) create a framework to recognize and mobilize the capacities of other hidden talent pools in the country. We present three key axes, accompanied by recommendations, to accomplish these goals. These additions will reinforce Canada's advantage as a diverse and bilingual economic power.

## 1. A for-us-by-us approach

The Spring Outlook reinforces the need to upskill workers in high-growth sectors and sectors that support our long-term priorities, such as clean technology and housing. This will require leveraging local labour markets, drawing on workers' regional knowledge and skills. However, certain communities occupy a vulnerable position in the labour market, and our current ecosystem is ill-equipped to address their particular needs. The ESCQ is a unique community facing economic disparities: one-third of our population is visible minorities, and one-third are immigrants. Additionally, about a quarter of all First Nations and Inuit in the province speak English as their first official language. Our communities are geographically dispersed, with 45% living outside the Montréal region. Collectively, our community is distinguished by the disparities we face in economic and employment outcomes, which are exacerbated for specific demographic and geographic groups.

English speakers are highly educated and deeply motivated to pursue the training, language learning, and employment supports that would allow them to fully participate in the labour market.<sup>4</sup> However, due to a lack of targeted employment programs in Québec, English speakers often struggle to access these crucial services. Despite the clear benefits, the Government of Québec continues to overlook English speakers in its skills development and employment strategies. Québec's 2024 *Plan pour la langue française* had no plan for Québec's English speakers, even though they number almost 600,000 (37.9%) of adult language learners in the province. Similarly, for the last three years, English speakers have not been targeted in the government's *Plan d'action des services publics d'emploi*.

English speakers require tailored French-language training, skills training, and employment services. Skills training is of particular importance given the shortage of English-language adult skills training in the province. English-language vocational training is a significant need, given that only 5.6% of English speakers hold a vocational training diploma compared to 12.6% of French speakers.<sup>5</sup> Recently, the Canadian government announced

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<sup>3</sup> Based on if English speakers and French speaker.; However had the same unemployment rate.

<sup>4</sup> Provincial Employment Roundtable, "2021 Employment Survey.;" Provincial Employment Roundtable, "Need to Know, Want to Know."

<sup>5</sup> Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021).

the Team Canada Strong strategy. We welcome this ambitious strategy, however, for this strategy to meet its targets, it must mobilize all communities across Canada, including the English-speaking community of Québec.

In order to adequately respond to the employment needs of the ESCQ, the community requires a “for-us-by-us” employment service model. This model, designed and delivered by the ESCQ, can provide holistic employment supports, addressing persistent service gaps and guarding against exclusion from provincial labour market strategies. Advancing such a model will require stronger intergovernmental collaboration to ensure services are delivered equitably across the province. Federal leadership can play a pivotal role in cultivating the partnerships and frameworks that make this possible, ensuring that all Canadians, regardless of language, have access to the tools they need to contribute meaningfully to the economy.

To address these challenges and opportunities, the federal government should implement **Recommendations 1 and 2.**

## **2. Reinforcing the modernization of the OLA and improved bilateral accountability**

The 2026 federal budget comes at a unique time for Canada’s official languages policy framework. The federal government is conducting the implementation of the modernized *Official Languages Act (OLA)* and approaching the final years of the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2023-2028*. The OLA modernization provides a stronger legislative framework for OLMCs, including updating provisions for federal institutions to be legally mandated to take proactive positive measures to protect, promote and enhance the vitality of OLMCs. Notably, the updated Part VII regulations establish requirements for impact analysis, consultation, and documentation across decision-making processes for OLMCs but do not mandate any targeted outcomes or dedicated funding streams for OLMCs. Nor are there regulations that mandate federal-provincial funding agreements to protect the vitality of OLMCs.

In the 2023-28 Action Plan, the federal government committed an unprecedented \$208 million for the expansion of the Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities (EF-OLMC) program. This includes the introduction of a new Employment Assistance Services (EAS) stream, which is currently funding OLMC organizations to deliver employment support to their communities. However, despite this high-level commitment, serious operational and structural funding challenges persist for the ESCQ on the ground, with groups facing provincially imposed structural barriers that limit their access to federal

funds. A primary barrier is Law M-30, *An Act respecting the Ministère du Conseil exécutif*.<sup>6</sup> In practice, M-30 has created a structural bottleneck on the vitality and economic integration of the ESCQ, impacting community organizations' ability to participate in federally funded programs such as the EAS stream and leading to federal funds that would otherwise reach the ESCQ being absorbed into provincial strategic frameworks that do not currently target the ESCQ.

In his late 2025 evaluation report at the midpoint of the Action Plan, the Commissioner of Official Languages outlined how funding allocation delays and gaps, as well as administrative burden, are impacting the ESCQ.<sup>7</sup> Some of our organizations, particularly those that play a key role in providing employment support to English speakers across the regions, are in precarious operational situations year to year, have had to lay off specialized staff, and are running organizational deficits due to funding allocation delays and administration.

To help address this intergovernmental challenge and ensure that federal investments for employment reach the ESCQ, the federal government should leverage the Canada-Québec Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA). While the devolved agreement grants Québec operational flexibility to design programs suited to its labour market context, the federal government remains a primary funder and also remains accountable to the ESCQ under the modernized OLA. The federal government should utilize the amendment and renewal cycles of the LMDA to set negotiation stipulations with the Québec government that ensure that funding for employment for the English-speaking community can flow directly to the ESCQ without being blocked by Law M-30. Additionally, the federal government should utilize the built-in bilateral management committee cycles in the LMDA to introduce stricter joint evaluation frameworks and linguistic data reporting on how job seekers are being served by Québec's employment programs. This would provide greater transparency and disaggregated data reporting on ESCQ outcomes, allowing both governments to evaluate the intended outcomes of the current agreement; these outcomes include mobilizing individuals and labour market partners to take an active part in labour market re-entry and assist unemployed individuals with job re-entry. To complement this approach, the federal government should scale up direct investments through various programming streams for provincially funded ESCQ employment organizations in Québec.

To address these challenges and opportunities, the federal government should implement **Recommendation 3**.

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<sup>6</sup> Law M-30 prevents provincially funded bodies receiving 50% or more of their funding from Québec public funds from receiving direct federal funds without the written authorization of the provincial Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

<sup>7</sup> Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, *Taking Action for Strong and Resilient Communities: Observations at the midpoint of the Action Plan for Official Languages 2023–2028*, November 2025.

### 3. Linguistic labour market data & research capacity

A robust labour market strategy aimed at improving Canada’s productivity begins with access to high-quality data. Utilizing labour market information (LMI), we can identify trends and needs within communities and industries, and better tailor career guidance and skills training initiatives. For Québec’s English-speaking communities, the lack of regular and linguistically disaggregated LMI continues to hinder both government and community efforts to target programs effectively. Currently, we rely on the Census of Canada, which, while robust in the scope of data it collects, is only administered every five years.

As the federal government increases its focus on strengthening the economy, improving the quality and accessibility of LMI is a critical step. Expanding the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey and Labour Force Survey to include language-based data, mirroring the updates made to include visible minority identity in 2022, will help to identify the unique barriers facing English speakers and enable the development of tailored interventions.

As trusted service providers and partners in workforce development, community organizations serving the ESCQ require long-term and flexible research funding to identify local labour trends, evaluate programs, and inform public policy.

To address these challenges and opportunities, the federal government should implement **Recommendations 4 and 5.**

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## About PERT

The Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT) is a non-profit organization dedicated to addressing the employment challenges and opportunities of Québec’s English-speaking communities. We collaborate with regional and community organizations, educational institutions, employment service providers, employers, and government to conduct policy research, foster stakeholder engagement, and develop policies and programs. These three areas—research, engagement, and development—serve as PERT’s foundational pillars, guiding our efforts to build and strengthen employment support networks and ensure the long-term inclusion of English speakers in Québec’s labour market.

**TABLE RONDE  
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