



BRIEF SUBMITTED AS PART OF QUÉBEC'S 2026–2027 PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS

THE PROVINCIAL EMPLOYMENT ROUNTABLE

Presented to the Minister of Finance,
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Executive Summary

In this brief, the Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT) identifies strategic investments in the English-speaking workforce as a critical lever to address the persistent employment disparities and language-learning barriers facing English speakers, as well as enhance Québec's overall productivity.

Our evidence-based recommendations aim to better integrate English-speaking communities into the labour market, which could add roughly \$1.5 billion to Québec's economy annually and help Québec close its standard of living gap with Ontario and the rest of Canada, projected to reach 9.9% and 13.7% in 2026.

We recommend the Québec government:

1. Include English speakers as a targeted group in the *Plan d'action des services publics d'emploi*.
2. Invest in a community-led 'by us, for us' model of employment service delivery in partnership with English-language organizations on the ground.
3. Create a dedicated strategy and action plan to promote French-language learning for English-speaking Quebecers. 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.
4. Collect new and regular linguistic and labour force data for English speakers in Québec.

Context

Québec is navigating a period of economic uncertainty. The 2025-26 budget highlighted instability, exacerbated by potential trade disputes and U.S. tariffs, underscoring the need for a more resilient and integrated workforce. With the government committed to restoring fiscal balance by 2029-30, strategic investments in the economy and human capital will be essential to stimulating wealth creation and ensuring a better quality of life for all Quebecers.

Pillars

1. Employment Service Delivery: A 'By Us, For Us' Model

English speakers are a vital part of the workforce, representing 15.8% of the labour market, but continue to face disproportionate labour market challenges. They experience higher unemployment and lower median incomes, particularly in the regions and among racialized

and youth populations. They also represent 23% of the unemployed population, to the detriment of both English-speaking communities and the province.¹

For years, English speakers have been excluded as a targeted group in the annual *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 targeted plan for nearly a quarter of the unemployed population with its current offerings, putting the efficacy of its almost \$1 billion² annual global budget for employment in doubt, in addition to perpetuating unemployment and losing out on the potential and skills of this group.

Recommendation 1: Include English speakers as a targeted group in the *Plan d'action des services publics d'emploi*.

We propose a 'by us, for us' model of employment support services, led by English-speaking organizations working in employment and delivered by their network. This model builds on existing initiatives and services that aim to address the employment challenges of English speakers. It also includes central oversight and coordination of employment support, ensuring the model aligns with the broader framework of employment services and delivers measurable outcomes. A 'by us, for us' model complements Québec's existing investments in employment programs, which are significant but often fail to reach underserved English speakers who face linguistic, geographic, and cultural barriers to accessing employment services. Investments in a 'by us, for us' model would also complement and multiply the returns on federal funds that have been allocated but not yet disbursed to the English-speaking community.³

Key axes of a 'by us, for us' model for employment support services:

- Targeted and adapted support: A network of local community partners from English-speaking community institutions to deliver employment support, such as career navigation, job search support (CVs and interview skills), and up-to-date labour market information, tailored to the specific demographic realities of each region.
- Integration and referral protocols: A framework integrating a "no wrong door" referral system in collaboration with Francophone employment service providers and government service points to refer and accompany English speakers in accessing

¹ 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.

² Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, *Rapport annuel de gestion 2024-2025*, Gouvernement du Québec, October 2025, https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/adm/min/emploi-solidarite-sociale/publications-adm/rapport/RAG_MESS_2024-2025.pdf.

³ The Canadian government has allocated funds for several projects and programs for English speakers, including employment assistance services, in recent years. These funds are currently blocked and have yet to be released as per the Québec government's Loi M-30 (Loi sur le ministère du Conseil exécutif).

existing employment services. This will improve the overall efficiency of Québec’s employment ecosystem and provide an opportunity to improve data collection on the language of service for employment services.

- Skills bridging: Formal partnerships with CÉGEPs and vocational training centres to create clear pathways for English speakers to reskill or upskill for priority sectors, including those vital to the green transition.
- Employer engagement: Proactive relationship-building with regional employers to improve the pipelines to employment for English speakers. Outcomes include work placements, internships, and matching pre-screened candidates with employers in priority industries.

Table 1: Spending measures proposed to support the creation and implementation of a model for employment support services for the English-speaking community (in \$M)

Annual budget	2026 2027	2027 2028	2028 2029	2029 2030	2030 2031	Total
Delivery of employment programs and services for the English-speaking community	7.2	7.2	7.9	7.9	8.1	38.3
Coordination of the fund	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	7.5
Increasing the capacity of English-language organizations to deliver employment programs and services	1.3	1.8	1.1	0.9	0.9	6.0
Total	10.0	10.5	10.5	10.3	10.5	51.8

Recommendation 2: Invest in a community-led ‘by us, for us’ model of employment service delivery in partnership with English-language organizations on the ground.

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. When adjusted for age, gender, location (CMA level), highest level of education, immigration status, and industry, the gap narrows from 4.3 percentage points to 2.5 percentage points, but the gap is still statistically significant at the 1% level.⁴ English speakers also make \$5,200⁵ less than French speakers in terms of their

⁴ Social Research Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) and the Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT), *The State of Employment Among English-Speaking Quebecers*, 2025, <https://pertquebec.ca/reports/the-state-of-employment-among-english-speaking-quebecers/>.

⁵ Provincial Employment Roundtable, *Employment Profile of English Speakers in the Province of Québec*, June 2025, <https://pertquebec.ca/reports/employment-profile-of-english-speakers-in-the-province-of-quebec/>.

median annual income. When average earnings are adjusted and analyzed by relative differences rather than dollar amounts to reduce the effect of outliers (using log earnings), English speakers make 11.9% less in annual average earnings than French speakers.⁶

English speakers often report French-language proficiency as a major barrier not only to employment but also to accessing employment assistance. These challenges are not reflected in Québec's current employment strategy. This lack of inclusion of English speakers is likely to result in nearly one-quarter of the unemployed population being underserved by labour market integration services.

With the declining vitality of Québec's English-speaking communities, English-language community organizations, which comprise employment service deliverers, regional organizations, and local non-profits, are becoming increasingly essential to bolstering Québec's English-speaking communities. In many regions, these organizations are the sole providers of English-language programs and services, particularly when it comes to employment. Over 70 organizations across Québec provide vital support and services targeted to English speakers. Yet these organizations themselves are at a critical breaking point; they lack adequate funding and support to develop and deliver employment programs and services to their communities and have experienced reduced capacity as a result. Of the roughly \$239 million that the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale disbursed to community organizations to deliver employment services in 2023-24, only 2.8% reached organizations that deliver targeted English-language services.⁷

Empowering these organizations is key to improving the labour market outcomes of English speakers in Québec. Targeted interventions are needed to reduce the friction to labour market integration among English speakers, enhance their ability to contribute to Québec's economy and help mitigate labour shortages.

2. French Language Training for the Workforce

Proficiency in French is the leading barrier to employment for Québec's English speakers. In its most recent *2024 Plan pour la langue française*, the Minister for the French Language included no targeted plan for Québec's English speakers, even though they number almost 600,000 – 37.9% of adult language learners in the province.⁸ Instead, the plan focuses on recruiting Francophones to the province and valorizing French among existing Francophones, with few measures to support non-fluent French speakers, and no stated intention to mobilize the English-speaking community as a partner in protecting and promoting the French language.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Based on PERT's calculations of funds disbursed to community organizations by the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale in 2023-24.

⁸ 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.

Recommendation 3: Create a dedicated strategy and action plan to promote French-language learning for English-speaking Quebecers. 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 4: Collect new and regular linguistic and labour force data for English speakers in Québec.

In a 2021 survey of English-speaking Quebecers, PERT identified French as the leading barrier to employment among respondents.⁹ A 2024 report outlined the positive motivations to learn French among English speakers in Québec,¹⁰ which were echoed in a recent report from the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.¹¹ 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 for years, including bottlenecks and long wait times,¹² as well as funding cuts for part-time learners¹³ 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.¹⁴ The Government of Québec is thus undermining its own mission to promote French, and additionally undercutting the ability of English speakers who face language barriers to participate in the labour market.

⁹ Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT), 2021, *Employment Survey of English-speaking Quebecers and Organizations*, 2022, <https://pertquebec.ca/reports/2021-employment-survey-of-english-%20speaking-quebecers-organizations/>.

¹⁰ Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT), *User journeys of language learners navigating Québec's French language training ecosystem*, 2024, <https://pertquebec.ca/reports/user-journeys-of-language-learners-navigating-quebecs-french-language-training-ecosystem/>.

¹¹ 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>.

¹² 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.

¹³ “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.

¹⁴ Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT), *User journeys of language learners navigating Québec's French language training ecosystem*.