

December 10, 2018

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House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Monsieur le Député / Madame la Députée:

I am writing to you regarding an issue of significant importance for the Francophone community of British-Columbia: adding new questions to the 2021 Census to ensure, once and for all, that all citizens with a right to education in French are included in Statistics Canada's data. For decades now, there have been issues with the enumeration of right holders. We request that you personally intervene to prompt the government to take action to resolve these issues.

Since it was established in 1995, the CSF has been providing educational programs and services promoting the comprehensive development and cultural identity of the province's right holder students. A partner in the advancement of the Francophone community in British Columbia, the CSF now has nearly 6,100 students attending 41 schools – including 24 homogeneous French-language schools – and serves around one hundred communities throughout the province.

Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms sets three conditions for the right to education in the language of the minority. However, since 1982, the government of Canada has only ever gathered data on people who meet the first of these three conditions: those whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province in which they reside.

In an increasingly diverse society like ours, we can't continue to exclude tens of thousands of Francophones whose mother tongue is not French but who have received part of their education in that language or had one of their children educated in French.

The census does not currently ask all the questions to correctly enumerate right holders. As a result, schools built according to underestimated numbers are often filled to capacity two or three years after completion. They have no choice but to add portable classes or have child care services move out of the school because of lack of space.

The Standing Committee on Official Languages has also concluded that this situation is no longer tenable. In its May 2017 report, *The Enumeration of Rights-Holders Under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Toward a Census that Supports the Charter*, the committee made a total of six recommendations, one of which aimed at requiring Statistics Canada to include questions to the 2021 Census that would allow for the enumeration of all rights-holders under the conditions of Section 23.

New questions developed by Statistics Canada are already in the test phase and the clock is ticking. The upcoming census must give the government the tools it needs to correctly enumerate every citizen who has a right to French-language education under Section 23. We are counting on your support for this critical issue.

Any action you are willing to undertake to ensure that the new questions currently being tested actually make their way into the short-form census – for example, speaking or writing to your colleagues in Parliament, or rising to ask a question when the House reconvenes - will be greatly appreciated.

We thank you in advance for your support and the attention you will give this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hannah Sturges', is written over a large, light blue watermark of the word 'ÉLOA'.

Chairperson

C.c.: The Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development

Mr. Mario Pelletier, President, Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones

Mr. Jean Johnson, President, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes du Canada