

## Stakeholder Summary

### Limited French-language postsecondary education options could impact francophone culture

Not having enough French-language institutions across the province could be threatening the vitality of francophone communities according to a synthesis of current research from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO). Given the relationship between education and economic prosperity, says the @ Issue Paper, it is important that francophone youth have equal access to postsecondary education (PSE) and that francophone communities remain viable and strong.

### Project Description

*An Overview of Francophone Postsecondary Education Participation in Ontario* explores whether francophones in Ontario are participating in PSE at the same rate as their anglophone peers, whether the system allows francophones to pursue their studies in French and if students are actually choosing to do so.

### Findings

Over the past half-century, opportunities available for French-language instruction have increased dramatically. Yet there are still limitations on the availability of programs and the levels and locations of study. Francophones pursuing French-language PSE are restricted geographically – the majority of bilingual institutions are located in eastern or northern Ontario, with only one French-language college and one bilingual university campus located in Toronto, and none in western Ontario. While the government has started to attend to these geographical restrictions, announcing that all francophone institutions are eligible for funding to deliver French-language programs with partner institutions in southwestern and central Ontario, the @ Issue Paper suggests that the lack of geographical representation of French-language studies could be “the most significant restriction in choice and a key concern for maintaining linguistic vitality and communities.”

It appears that francophones in Ontario are accessing and graduating from PSE at a rate that is comparable to their anglophone peers. However, the data tend to exclude certain francophone groups or fail to address the diversity of the francophone population, and may not reflect the current status of all francophones pursuing PSE in Ontario.

Whether francophones choose to continue their studies in French is also unclear. Data collected from French-language school boards in 2003-04 show that 29% of secondary school graduates from French-language high schools chose to attend English-language PSE institutions, suggesting that a larger proportion go on to French-language PSE. However, these data do not distinguish between languages of study, meaning that a student may be attending a bilingual institution, but pursuing studies in English.

### Further Research

The authors suggest areas for further research including data on the experience of francophones in PSE, factors that influence the language in which francophones choose to study and whether this choice influences their participation in the linguistic community; factors that influence persistence in French or the decision to switch to English; and whether graduation rates differ based on language of study. The authors also suggest that further research be widely circulated and disseminated to ensure a more complete understanding of the needs of francophone students in Ontario.

*An Overview of Francophone Postsecondary Education Participation in Ontario was written by Hillary Arnold, Researcher at HEQCO, Anne Motte and Lindsay DeClou, Researcher at HEQCO.*