

Engaging Francophone Communities

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The Ministry of Health Promotion has given the Healthy Communities Partnerships (HCPs) the important mandate of creating and maintaining an integrated community plan addressing six risk factors for chronic disease. These partnerships will also be responsible for mobilizing community partners to develop local/regional healthy public policies. Thus, the Healthy Community Partnerships are the key to ensure that local strategic plans are reflective of their communities in order to meet their needs.

The make-up of each community is different. They are composed of different cultural and ethnic groups and each of these groups has different realities impacting their health and well-being. It is therefore important that each Healthy Community Partnership identify the different groups in their catchment area before attempting to develop a strategic plan.

As recognized by the Ontario Public Health Standards, language and culture are determinants of health, on par with income and social status, education and literacy, biological and genetic predisposition, gender, social support networks, employment and working conditions, and health related lifestyle.

In this issue of *@ a glance*, we will focus on the largest minority group in Ontario: the Francophone community. We will look at some demographic information, the make-up of this eclectic community and where Francophones are found geographically. We will describe their health status as compared to the majority of Ontarians. We will also look at the French Language Services Act, what it means and how it impacts your work. You will also find a list of the designated French Language Service Areas (FLSA).

We are aware of the challenges of reaching the Francophone community and hope to offer you some guidance on potential new partnerships and highlight what each can contribute. Finally, we will provide you with a list of resources that will assist you in understanding the needs of the Francophone community and how to address them.

Based on the recent needs assessment conducted by the Healthy Communities Consortium, many are unaware that they have French designated service areas in the regions they serve. This *@ a glance*, will provide basic information that will assist you in identifying these areas.

Ontario's Francophone Community

Myths

Before painting the picture of the Francophone community in Ontario, we would like to address some of the persistent myths and misconceptions. The Special Report on French Language Health Services Planning in Ontario 2009 of the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner addressed this issue: http://www.flsc.gov.on.ca/files/Special_Report.pdf

The Commissioner stated that one such myth is that Francophones in Ontario are completely bilingual and don't really need French health services. Also sometimes people wonder why the French language should be treated differently from any of the hundreds of other languages spoken in Ontario.

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It is important to remember that French has special status in Ontario under the Constitution and a number of provincial statutes. French also has special status by virtue of the contribution that Francophones have made in the past, and continue to make today, to the fabric of Ontarian society. Rights entrenched in the French Language Services Act (FLSA) are not special privileges accorded to Francophones. There is also a tendency to forget that French is a “langue d’accueil” or second language to many newcomers.

Highlights from the Profile of Francophones in Ontario

<http://www.ofa.gov.on.ca>

- There are almost 600,000 Francophones in Ontario; they represent close to 5% of the province’s total population
- Two out of every three Francophones are born in Ontario (65.1%)
- Between 1996 and 2001, the Francophone population of Ontario increased by 6,600—a 1.2% increase in five years
- More than four out of every five Francophones in Ontario (81.5%) live in a region designated under the *French Language Services Act*
- Most (55.2%) Francophones from other countries settled in Central Ontario while 35.9% settled in Eastern Ontario

Highlights from the Profile on Francophone Racial Minorities

- In Ontario, 58,520 Francophones are members of a racial minority. This represents an increase of more than 40% between 1996 and 2001
- Racial minorities make up 10.3% of Ontario’s Francophone population. They represent one in three Francophones in the Toronto region (33.2%) and one in seven Francophones in the Ottawa and Hamilton regions (14.1% and 15.6%)
- Close to three-quarters of all Francophones who are members of a racial minority and who live in Ontario were born in another country (74.3%). These minorities come from the following countries: Africa (31.5%); Asia (30.5%); and the Middle East (18.0%)
- Francophones who are members of a racial minority are, as a whole, distinctly younger than Francophones in general. The percentage of those under the age of 20 years is twice as high (38.7% compared to 19.6%)



The Franco-Ontarian flag was created and raised for the first time at the University of Sudbury on September 25, 1975. This event has since become an important symbol for the Franco-Ontarian community and is celebrated each year.

Ontario Francophone Population (2006 Census – Statistics Canada)

Region	Francophone Population by Region (2006)
North-East	130,820
North-West	8,190
Central	167,235
South-West	34,395
East	242,055

Other important facts

<http://www.sdh.u.com/uploads/content/listings/seconreporthealthoffrancophonesON2005wcover.pdf>

- The Francophone population is older than the population of Ontario as a whole. The proportion of Francophones older than 35 years is higher than the rest of the population and this difference reaches 4 percentage points higher for the 45-64 year olds;
- Aboriginals represent 5-6% of the Francophone population of the North-East and North-West;
- There are more Francophones in rural areas (39%) compared to the whole of the population (27%);
- The level of education of the Francophone population has improved since 1996 but remains lower than the total population;
- Three out of five Francophones have serious reading and comprehension difficulties of French text. This situation is especially true for Francophones over the age of 56 and also those in the North or the West;
- The average family income of Francophones is lower than that of the overall population.

Health Status

Second Report on the Health of Francophones in Ontario - 2005

This report done by the Institut Franco-Ontarien, the Public Health Research, Education and Development Program (PHRED) and Laurentian University defined “francophone” in terms of mother tongue and uses a determinant of health approach.

In this report, Francophones rated their health lower than did the general population of Ontario. They indicated that they needed assistance with at least one activity in their daily life more often than the provincial population. The 2000-2001 survey also introduced a new variable that impacts on health, the sense of community belonging. The Francophone and Allophone population reported a lower sense of community belonging than Anglophones reported.

There were significant differences in health behaviours between Francophones and other sociolinguistic groups. Among Francophones, there was a considerably higher proportion of daily smokers (27%) than Anglophones (23%), and a proportionately higher number of francophone non-smokers (31%) were exposed to second-hand smoke in the home (27% of Anglophones).

<http://www.sdh.u.com/uploads/content/listings/seconreporthealthoffrancophonesON2005wcover.pdf>

Regional differences should be noted, and they are particularly indicative of issues in the Northeast. A recent (2008) report of the Northeast LHIN indicated that a greater number of Francophones in this region report unhealthy lifestyle behaviours including tobacco (26.8%), heavy drinking (26.5%) and obesity 22.4%. Differences were noted in other regions as well. In the area of Champlain East, a larger proportion of Francophones has consulted a mental health professional (12% compared to 7% of the total population) These differences must be recognized in the planning of health-related policies and services.

French Language Services Act

The *French Language Services Act* (1986) (FLSA) guarantees an individual’s right to receive services in French from Government of Ontario ministries and agencies in 25 designated areas. The FLSA gives all persons the right “to communicate in French with, and to receive available services in French from”, any head or central office of a government agency, which includes all provincial ministries, and “agencies” as defined in the FLSA. Furthermore, this right can be exercised in respect of “any other office” (as opposed to just the head office) of a government agency that is located in or serves an area designated in the schedule to the FLSA.

The FLSA must be interpreted in light of the fundamental constitutional principle of respect for, and protection of, minorities. The Office of the French Language Services Commissioner was created in 2007. The Commissioner is French Language Services Areas

responsible for handling complaints relating to the FLSA, conducting investigations to ensure compliance with the FLSA, and submitting an annual report to the Minister that is tabled in the Legislative Assembly. (One voice, many changes - Annual report 2008-2009).

In his May 2009 report on French Language Health Services Planning, the Commissioner identified three key players responsible for French language health service planning. Naturally, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) and the Ministry of Health Promotion (MHP) play an important role. The creation of the new Local Health Integrated Networks (LHIN) has created a lot of expectations both from within communities and the MOHLTC. The Commissioner has recommended that the LHIN's current organizational structure be revised to create a French language coordinator position at the senior management level.

http://www.flsc.gov.on.ca/files/EN_flsc_annual_report_08_09.pdf

French Language Services Areas

There are currently 25 designated areas under the FLSA. For an area to obtain designation, Francophones must make up at least 10% of its population; urban centres must have at least 5000 Francophones.

The following is a list of the designated areas in Ontario

- *City of Toronto (All)*
- *City of Hamilton (All of the city of Hamilton as it existed on Dec. 31, 2000)*
- *Regional Municipality of Niagara; Cities of: Port Colborne and Welland*
- *City of Ottawa*
- *Regional Municipality of Peel: City of Mississauga, City of Brampton*
- *City of Greater Sudbury (All)*
- *County of Dundas: Township of Winchester*
- *County of Essex: City of Windsor, Towns of Belle River and Tecumseh; Townships of: Anderdon, Colchester North, Maidstone, Sandwich South, Sandwich West, Tilbury North, Tilbury West and Rochester*
- *County of Glengarry (All)*
- *County of Kent: Town of Tilbury, Townships of Dover and Tilbury East*
- *County of Prescott (All)*
- *County of Renfrew: City of Pembroke, townships of: Strafford and Westmeath*
- *County of Russell (All)*
- *County of Simcoe: Town of Penetanguishene, Townships of: Tiny and Essa*
- *County of Stormont (All) District of Algoma (all)*
- *District of Cochrane (all)*
- *District of Kenora: Township of Ignace*
- *District of Nipissing (All)*
- *District of Sudbury (All)*
- *District of Thunder Bay: Towns of Geraldton, Longlac and Marathon, Townships of Manitouwadge, Beardmore, Nakina & Terrace Bay*
- *District of Timiskaming (All)*
- *County of Middlesex: City of London*
- *District of Parry Sound: Municipality of Callander*
- *County of Frontenac: City of Kingston*

REACHING OUT TO FRANCOPHONES

Francophones living in Ontario may be difficult to reach for different reasons but when we open our doors to them they are a wealth of resources and can become an important ally.

As we have seen, the Francophone population of Ontario is spread across the province and in some areas is less visible and/or present than in others. Francophones are also very different depending on their ethno-cultural background. These various elements may present a challenge for organizations to reach out to them. The lack of knowledge of the language, culture and local Francophone resources are at the root of the problem.

The best strategy in reaching out to Francophone communities is to partner with the existing structures within the Francophone Community. The following is a short list of current networks and organizations that would be able to help you reach the Francophone communities in your catchment area. These groups/organizations/networks are also very knowledgeable about the needs of Francophones in their area.

Knowing where to start is always a challenge. Depending on your focus you may want to start off with contacting provincial organizations who have regional representatives*. They can probably direct you to organizations in your catchment area that work with Francophones. Even though the organizations might not focus on the same topic or group you need to reach, knocking on the doors of organizations/networks/groups that are already in contact with Francophones is a good idea. They may be able to direct you to the appropriate person or offer you guidance as to where to find and reach the group you are looking for. You may also want to consider going to meet with participants or members of some local associations such as Le Club Richelieu, seniors recreation club, the local student associations and churches to name a few. These groups are a direct link to the community and are a wealth of knowledge as to where Francophones are and on how to reach them.

L'assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario (AFO)

The AFO is a non-profit provincial organization lead by a board comprised of 24 members including representatives from the 5 regions of Ontario, 14 representatives of the community, 4 members of the racial minorities and ethno cultural Francophones plus one president.

The mandate of the AFO is to consult the Francophones of Ontario in order to:

- Advocate for the rights of Francophones;
- Promote the global development of the Francophone community and its right to grow.
- Represent the Francophones of Ontario on the municipal, provincial, national and international scene;
- Determine the collective priorities;
- Establish a strategic plan for the community.

<http://afo.franco.ca/>

Association canadienne française de l'Ontario (ACFO) *

This association has the mandate to promote the development and growth of the Francophone communities of Ontario. The following link will provide you with a list of regional offices that can help you to reach ACFO offices everywhere in Ontario. http://www.acfoottawa.ca/fr/ACFO_en_province_41.html

The Association of Ontario Health Centres (AOHC) *

This Association is the policy and advocacy organization for non-profit, community-governed, multidisciplinary primary health care organizations. Members are Ontario's Community Health Centres, Aboriginal Health Access Centres and Community Family Health Teams. They believe that effective primary health care must address the determinants of health, including shelter, education, food, income, a stable eco-system, sustainable resources, social justice, equity and peace. This encompasses primary care, illness prevention, health promotion, health education, community development, social action, building healthy public policy, and creating supportive environments.

The AOHC values Canada's francophone heritage and fully supports the efforts of francophone member-centres and emerging groups to protect and improve access to French language health and social services as guaranteed in Ontario's French Language Services Act. The following link will provide you with a list of the Francophone Centres: <http://www.aohc.org/aohc/index.aspx?ArticleID=148>

Les Clubs Richelieu

The Société Richelieu was founded in Ottawa with the goal of promoting cultural development through organizing activities such as: social events, workshops, discussion groups, conferences and contests. The organization also took on the mandate of protecting the intellectual, moral and physical health of children making it a philanthropic organization. Regular meetings usually offer a meal and a guest speaker.

Check to following link to the Clubs Richelieu Ontario to find a club in your area. <http://portail.richelieu.org/index.php?sectionId=5>

La Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario. (FAFO) *

FAFO is the association for Ontario's French speaking seniors and for those English-speaking seniors wishing to share experiences with French speaking seniors of Ontario. Their business language is French, but a majority of individual members are bilingual.

FAFO's mission is to promote quality-of-life for our seniors in every aspect. Their current preoccupation concerns services in French, especially in healthcare, justice and social services. They also actively promote French as an official language in Canada and carry out many projects, activities and events jointly with the Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments.

FAFO is comprised of 10,000 members, representing 150,000 French-speaking seniors across Ontario. The Province is divided into five FAFO "regions", specifically Ottawa, Eastern Ontario, the Near North, the Greater North and the Southwest. FAFO publishes a newspaper called "Vivre Plus" (distributed to members) and an electronic bulletin, "L'Estafette". This latter publication is free and one can subscribe directly on the website: www.fafon.ca. FAFO is always on the lookout for new partners, with the public or private sectors. To contact FAFO call them at 613-747-0469 or email them at info@fafon.ca

Fédération des élèves du secondaire franco-ontarien (FESFO)

The goal of this Federation is to represent Franco-Ontarian students, promote social and academic spirit; promote the cultural value of the Franco-Ontarian student and the importance of education in French. It plays a role in the establishment and maintenance of communication between Franco-Ontarian students. The FESFO is the voice of 25,000 young Francophones who attend one of the 86 French high schools in Ontario.

Have a look at their web site to see the list of schools that are members of the FESFO and their representatives in each of the 5 regions of Ontario. www.fesfo.ca

French Language Health Networks *

In total, 17 health networks were created by "Société Santé en Français" a national network who's goal is to improve the health status of Francophones living in minority situations in Canada. Their mandate is to improve health care services in French, promote the involvement of communities, define local health needs and bring together health professionals.

These networks are not focused on providing healthcare, their primary role is essentially that of a facilitator, providing leadership and support in developing French language health services. They are also playing an increasing role in health promotion.

Their objectives include, to:

- Provide a forum from which key stakeholders will be able to help influence the development of the Ontario health care system.
- Develop and/or facilitate the creation of partnerships in the health sector.
- Evaluate the current state of access and identify the needs in French language health (indent to align with line above) services.
- Participate in the planning of French language health services in the Network's service area.
- Identify, propose and support new initiatives and projects that will lead to improved access to French language health services.

There are four (4) networks in Ontario: Nord, Moyen-Nord, Sud and l'Est.

http://santefrancais.ca/index.cfm?Repertoire_No=-661868150&Voir=membre

RIFSSSO- Regroupement des intervenants francophones en santé et en services sociaux de l'Ontario

The purpose of the Regroupement des intervenants francophones en santé et en services sociaux de l'Ontario (RIFSSSO) is to improve the health of Ontario's Francophones by enhancing the accessibility and quality of French-language health and social services.

It is a growing network of stakeholders in health and social services that develops and supports professional leadership in its members. Its vision is to contribute to improving service access, quality, and delivery in the area of French-language health and social services in Ontario.

RIFSSSO accomplishes its mission by:

- facilitating cooperation and partnership;
- acting as a spokesperson for its members;
- providing support to its members;
- helping French-language professionals to get together.

They also provide a list of professionals who offer French-language services in the fields of health and social services. <http://www.rifssso.ca/rifssso>

French Language Health Services *

The French Language Health Services (FLHS) office supports and facilitates the delivery of French language health services and compliance with the French Language Services Act in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in Ontario's health care system. As of April 2009, the Provincial Coordinator of French Language Health Services at the MOHLTC was also serving as Provincial Coordinator of French Language Services for the Ministry of Health Promotion.

The FLHS office has new staff members to provide strategic and operational support in addition to supporting the implementation of the French Language Services Strategy at the Ministry of Health Promotion. Please check the Ministry website for more information including a list of French Language Services Consultants working within different regions in Ontario who help you respond to the needs of the Francophone community in your area.

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/flhs/flhs_mn.html

Breaking the barriers to engaging the Francophone community

This @ at glance provides you with some important knowledge about the Francophone context in Ontario especially if you pursue the enclosed links. Once you have a better understanding of this context, the most important step to breaking the barriers to engage the Francophone community is to get to know the Francophone stakeholders and the role they play in your area. The networks and service organizations outline in this resource are very knowledgeable about how to reach Francophones in their region, including their specific needs related to health promotion issues. It is imperative to form alliances with such community agencies that already have links to the Francophone community in your region. These alliances can also break the language barrier, since you can communicate with many of them in English.

Other useful Resources

Francophone Community Profile of Ontario (2009). Fédération des communautés francophone et acadienne du Canada

http://www.fcfa.ca/profils/documents/ontario_en.pdf

The Office of Francophone Affairs

www.ofa.gov.on.ca

Designated Agencies by LHIN (Local Health Integration Network)

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/flhs/designated_dt.pdf

About the HHRC

The Heart Health Resource (HHRC) anticipates and meets the needs of public health agencies and their communities in in community-based chronic disease prevention programming.

The HHRC was established in 1993 to support the community-based partnerships of the Ontario Heart Health Program. Currently, the HHRC supports 37 Healthy Communities Partnerships working within the Local Planning Stream of the Healthy Communities Ontario approach.

The HHRC is a project of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) and is funded through the Ministry of Health Promotion. The HHRC is a member of the Healthy Communities Consortium, a group of resource centres working collaboratively to support those within the Healthy Communities Ontario approach.

Heart Health Resource Centre

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Web Site: <http://www.hhrc.net>



Heart Health Resource Centre
Centre de ressources - Coeur en santé

ONTARIO PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION POUR LA SANTÉ PUBLIQUE DE L'ONTARIO