

Janice Tepper
Director, Human Resources Strategy and
Policy Branch, People and Culture Division
Centre for People, Culture and Talent
Treasure Board Secretariat
2nd Flr, 315 Front St W
Toronto, ON M7A 0B8
janice.tepper@ontario.ca

1 Dundas Street West, Suite 2310
PO Box 72 Toronto ON M5G 1Z3

416.595.9000
Toll-free 1.888.262.7236

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Dear Ms. Tepper,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations related to the Ontario Public Service (OPS)'s French Bilingual HR Initiative. This feedback results from consultation regarding the initiative with AMAPCEO's Francophone Caucus. AMAPCEO's Francophone Caucus is composed of approximately 100 Francophone employees in the OPS who meet regularly to help advance the goals of the union, build community, and support each other in the workplace.

The suggestions that follow are aligned with the "Attract," "Retain," "Develop," and "Data" pillars, as outlined in the OPS French Bilingual Human Resources Initiative materials shared with bargaining agents in October 2023.

We want to preface these recommendations with a brief comment regarding compensation. AMAPCEO understands that adjustments to compensation for those working in Designated Bilingual Positions (DBPs) have been deemed out of scope of the current initiative. Accordingly, while we are not including specific recommendations regarding compensation below, we want to highlight that the status quo severely impacts the attraction, retention, and development of bilingual employees in the OPS. Members of the Francophone Caucus were clear that a successful strategy to promote bilingualism will require a compensation framework that recognizes the value of their linguistic proficiencies and technical expertise to the work of the OPS, and is better aligned with other orders of government who recognize the additional skills working in two languages requires.

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1. “Attract” pillar:

Members of the Francophone Caucus highlighted several initiatives that might assist with bilingual recruitment. These included the following:

- **Additional community engagement:** The OPS could strengthen recruitment efforts by actively engaging with additional Francophone-centric communities and locations, including community centres and networks where Francophone newcomers congregate upon their arrival in Ontario. Members indicated that beyond the use of digital networks, recruitment efforts should include French language print and radio media, Francophone community group newsletters, and Francophone student group publications.
- **Collaboration with educational institutions:** Establishing new partnerships with interns and co-op programs in French-language post-secondary education institutions could enhance recruitment efforts, as would creating new opportunities for Francophone internships and co-op placements within the current OPS internship and co-op programs.
- **Use of Career Portal and FORTE:** Enabling the Career Portal and FORTE could provide comprehensive listings to OPS employees proficient in French regarding all bilingual position opportunities.

2. “Retain” pillar:

Caucus members made the following suggestions regarding improving retention of bilingual employees:

- **Increase translation and bilingual services:** Caucus members report they are simultaneously overused for translation and linguistic services, while underused for their technical skillsets. This includes being asked to take on translation tasks at work that may not be within their job description. The Caucus recommended significant increases to the level of translation and bilingual services available to ministries in order to alleviate the unfair shouldering of this work by bilingual employees.
- **Invest in bilingual employee career mobility:** Challenges of working within bilingual positions in the OPS, including the concern that those working in DPS become “typecast” as Francophone or bilingual, has led to limited access to the career development opportunities available to their peers. Caucus members voiced concern that management can be opposed to letting Francophone staff explore development opportunities in other areas of the OPS, given how difficult it can be to replace their linguistic competencies.

This can lead to low levels of retention of bilingual employees, as well as the phenomenon of bilingual employees “hiding” their French proficiency.

Caucus members recommended resourcing Francophone-specific employee development streams to find meaningful ways for them to grow within the organization. Members cited the discontinued FLEX (Francophone Leadership Excellence) program as a model that could be returned to, and indicated a desire for programming the emphasized mentorship, access to senior management, and career-building learning and development opportunities.

3. **“Develop” pillar:**

Members of the Francophone Caucus noted that development of bilingual employee capacity should not be restricted to HR and hiring managers. They made the following recommendations for developmental strategies that would be inclusive of all bilingual employees:

- **Investing in French language learning:** Enhance French language training resources on platforms like LearnON and consider creating a funding pool to support employees pursuing external French language learning opportunities.
- **Mentorship and peer programs:** Establish a formal mentorship program within the OPS to foster connections and support for francophone employees, possibly building on the successful aspects of the FrancoGO initiative. Consider the reestablishment of “twinning” programs to link bilingual employees together and combat the isolation that bilingual employees can experience within the organization.
- **Prioritizing Francophone access to the Advancing Into Management (AIM) Program:** A concerted effort to improve bilingual career progression could be made by setting aside a minimum number of AIM program placements for French-speaking employees.

4. **Data Pillar:**

Francophone Caucus members made the following suggestions regarding data collection and transparency:

- **Tracking Francophone/bilingual work experience outcomes:** Caucus members suggested tracking the experience of Francophone/bilingual employees, including dispute and Workplace Discrimination and Harassment Program (WDHP) metrics to enable the employer to identify where French-speaking employees may be experiencing toxic workplaces.

Further, they suggested a closer tracking of career progression data for bilingual employees, including the degree to which they advance into senior positions within the organization, and conversely, whether the length of tenure of bilingual French-speaking employees in positions exceeds that of unilingual employees.

- **KPIs:** Define clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to designated bilingual positions and regularly update the OPS intranet to provide transparent information on the number of designated bilingual positions, their status, and recruitment outcomes.
- **Compliance with Data Directives:** Address the OPS's non-compliance with the Ontario Data Directive, update data regularly, and ensure transparency regarding the availability and distribution of bilingual positions.

We believe these recommendations would contribute to a more inclusive and supportive environment for bilingual employees within the OPS, and assist in attracting, retaining, and developing members in designated bilingual positions within the organization. We appreciate the employer's commitment to improving bilingual services and are hopeful that our suggestions will be considered in the ongoing efforts to enhance the OPS's effectiveness in this regard.

Should you have any questions about our advice, we would be pleased to meet to discuss.

Thank you,

Cynthia Watt

AMAPCEO Vice-President and Chair, Equity Committee

cc. Vincent Lavigne, Chair, AMAPCEO Francophone Caucus