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Toronto's Francophone Voluntary Sector Under Pressure: The Challenges of Immigrant Integration in a Linguistic Minority Context

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ABSTRACT
The neoliberalization of Canada's immigration and immigrant integration policies has impacted how Francophone communities in English dominated provinces outside of Québec can develop and thrive. This article examines the challenges faced by Francophone community organizations in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in their efforts to successfully integrate Francophone immigrants. The GTA's Francophone voluntary sector has been affected by a "community government" mindset, which limits its ability to support the integration of Francophone newcomers into the local French-speaking community. We use public documents and interviews with representatives of key Francophone community organizations to document these challenges.

RÉSUMÉ:
Le néolibéralisme croissant des politiques canadiennes sur l'immigration et sur l'intégration des immigrants a eu un impact sur la manière dont les communautés francophones hors Québec dominées par l'anglais ont pu se développer et prospérer. Cet article examine les défis auxquels font face les organismes communautaires francophones de la Région du Grand Toronto (RGT) dans leurs efforts d'effectuer une intégration réussie des immigrants francophones. Le secteur bénévole francophone de la RGT a subi les effets d'une mentalité de « gouvernement communautaire » qui limite sa capacité à appuyer l'intégration de nouveaux venus francophones au sein de la communauté francophone locale. Afin de recenser ces défis, cet article utilise des documents publics et des entrevues avec les représentants d'organismes communautaires francophones clés.

Keywords / Mots clés : community government, Francophonie, immigration, Toronto, voluntary organizations / gouvernement communautaire, Francophonie, immigration, Toronto, organismes bénévoles

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INTRODUCTION

Canada is a bilingual, multicultural, and multinational state that has protected minority linguistic groups through constitutional provisions and legislative measures since the country's creation (Cardinal & Denault, 2007). These minority groups—Francophones outside Québec and Anglophones within Québec—enjoy formal protection through a rights-based approach. For instance, Section 41 of the 1988 *Official Languages Act* makes explicit Canada's obligation to promote the development of Francophone communities, notably by "enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada and supporting and assisting their development" (Canada, 1988, 41 (1) (a)). However, this framework has not prevented Francophone linguistic minority groups from struggling in their efforts to function in French within English speaking Canadian provinces, which has led scholars such as Nicole Gallant (2016) to observe that "language policy in Canada is not designed in a way that recognizes Francophone minorities as communities" (p. 177). As Gallant notes, this creates significant problems for integrating Francophone immigrants in these communities, as they depend heavily on social support provided by the voluntary sector. That is especially the case for groups such as Black Francophone immigrants, who face additional integration issues pertaining to racism and for those needing access to specific services in French, particularly healthcare (de Moissac & Bowen, 2019; Gaudet & Clément, 2005; Maddibo, 2006).

With its emphasis on "individualism, commodification and marketization" (Smith, 2005, p. 15), neoliberalism, as a political rationale, impacts how the Canadian state relates to linguistic minority groups, immigration, and the community sector. Within a neoliberal framework, the governance of issues related to linguistic minority communities has been reframed through the commodification of languages, making the ability to speak French an asset whose value is determined by its usefulness to the private sector (da Silva & Heller, 2009). This mindset is consistent with the impact of neoliberalism on Canadian immigration policy, which is increasingly structured through the "responsibilization" of "entrepreneurial and autonomous" (Walsh, 2011, p. 611) immigrants and the reframing of the community sector as almost exclusively providers of services that immigrants cannot access through the private sector (Evans, Richmond, & Shields, 2005).[1] In this view, Francophone immigrants are increasingly seen as linguistically competitive workers, supported in their integration through local community organizations. This framing is problematic not only because it limits how Francophone immigrants can contribute to Canadian society but also because of how it reduces the voluntary sector's ability to support their integration needs beyond helping them access the labour market.

This article questions these assumptions by examining the challenges faced by the community sector, which supports Francophone immigrant integration in a linguistic minority context. In the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), this sector has been affected by a "community government" approach to social programming, that is, a neoliberal framework of devolving public responsibilities to the community sector, but in ways that limit immigrants' integration into the local Francophone community (Ilcan & Basok, 2004). The GTA's Francophone voluntary sector has had limited success in this regard because of the need to tap into French and English networks for immigrants' successful integration into Canadian society, the geographical distance between where newcomers[2] live and where services are offered, and competition with English speaking community organizations in recruiting

Francophone clients. The neoliberal mindset impacts public policy, particularly in restricting its ability to cope with these challenges. It also limits the impact of the Francophone voluntary sector's efforts to support the integration of Francophone immigrants into the GTA, thereby also limiting the impact on local community development.

After a brief methodological note, this article discusses how to frame the role of Canada's voluntary sector in support of immigrant integration through a community government lens. It then zeroes in on the Francophone community sector in the GTA and documents three main challenges in the organizations' ability to support Francophone immigrant integration and scrutinize how neoliberal policy approaches, agendas, and landscapes limit the impact of their work.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Publicly available policy documents and community reports from 2011–2021, a period of continuous funding cuts to voluntary organizations that support immigrant integration in Ontario (Ontario Council for Agencies Serving Immigrants, 2016), were gathered and analyzed. Federal, provincial, municipal, and community sources from three distinct but intersecting public policy angles—immigration and settlement, Francophone community development in a minority context, and community service delivery—were examined. Four semi-structured interviews were conducted within the GTA's Francophone community sector between February and September 2019. These professionals were identified through a website search based on their experience with immigrant integration, service delivery, and volunteer management. They were invited by email to participate in one semi-structured interview (see Appendix 1 for an anonymized list of participants and Appendix 2 for the interview guide).

Due to the small number of interviews and the small size of the community, interviews were used heuristically to understand these organizations' perspectives on the opportunities and challenges facing the Francophone voluntary sector in assisting Francophone immigrants. Unfortunately, interviews were not secured from all current Francophone organizations in the GTA, and the representatives who were interviewed specialized mostly in only one aspect of this study, such as immigrant integration, service delivery, or volunteer management. Their insights guided the analysis of the public documents, academic sources, statistics, and grey literature, notably by sharing how key statistics, policies, and directives frame their work, shape how they see the mandate and activities of their organization, and offer a way to assess their achievements. Answers to the first two questions of the interview guide (see Appendix 2) were heavily relied on, as these insights directly addressed the information found in the various documents and provided a sound basis for comparison among organizations. This combination of methods was helpful to reveal productive intersections between the challenges experienced by the Francophone voluntary sector and Francophone communities in the GTA.

IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION INTO CANADIAN SOCIETY: A VOLUNTARY APPROACH

The quality of the voluntary sector's operations is often evaluated by how the targeted audience utilizes its services and how these services align with the sector's goals and expectations (Behnia,

2012). In this section, the concept of community government is used to discuss how the purpose and activities of Canada's voluntary sector, including related responsibilities for Francophone minority communities, have shifted in response to neoliberal pressure (Halseth & Ryser, 2007; Ilcan & Basok, 2004; Isin, 2000; Rose, 1999a). Specifically, this section explores the neoliberalization of the voluntary sector in immigrant integration as it intersects with changes in immigration policy and the delegation of responsibilities to voluntary organizations.

Voluntary organizations and the community sector

Key to the development of Western liberal societies, the voluntary sector is "a set of private organizations providing a wide variety of information, advocacy and services" (Salomon & Anheier, 1992, p. 130). This sector evolves locally to alleviate social problems not addressed by government organizations but often with government support and funding (Tarling, 2000). As Bourdillon explained more than half a century ago, "a voluntary organisation properly speaking is an organisation which, whether its workers are paid or unpaid, is initiated and governed by its own members without external control" (quoted in Brown & Osborne, 2012, p. 12), and even if it "undertake(s) work on behalf of a statutory authority" (quoted in Brown & Osborne, 2012, p. 12), it must remain independent in determining its activities and operations. The pressures to adapt to governmental demands is an essential feature of the struggles of such organizations, especially as neoliberal policies become more prominent and the welfare state more eroded (Dean, 2015; Mulé, 2011).

Neoliberal policies of privatization, decentralization, and withdrawal from direct social programming mark a shift in Canadian society away from the welfare state, with direct consequences for the voluntary sector (Jenson, 1997). As Wanda Vrasti (2010) argues, "[n]eoliberal government is not about less government, but about governing more efficiently with other rationalities, programs, and means" (p. 5). Shifting government priorities and strategies require voluntary organizations to take responsibility for the regulation of everyday life. Understood as "government through community," de-responsibilizing state structures means turning to individuals and voluntary organizations to address complex societal questions, such as how to reduce unemployment and how to better integrate immigrants (see Isin, 2000; Rose, 1999b). In this view, community government describes the relationship through which governments "define, shape, and orient communities" to socialize and "responsibilize certain groups of citizens for particular purposes and ends" (Ilcan & Basok, 2004, p. 130). Voluntary organizations have become transmission belts for individuals to learn the skills necessary to contribute to society within a neoliberal mindset. These same individuals are often asked to volunteer to contribute to the work of voluntary organizations (Wilson, 2013). Put differently, voluntary organizations perform two equally important functions: they "provide social services to disadvantaged individuals and simultaneously train community members to assume their moral duties" (Ilcan & Basok, 2004, p. 130).

Immigrant integration in neoliberal Canada

In Canada, the neoliberal turn to immigrant settlement and integration started in the 1990s with the formal offloading of federal responsibilities, the need to balance the federal budget, and a federal interest in closely monitoring the use of public funds (Abu Laban & Gabriel, 2002). Since the 2000s, the emphasis has been on improving results, which translated into additional planning and reporting mechanisms for any public investments in the voluntary sector, including settlement and

integration services. As Rebecca Pero (2017) notes about a 2008 federal government initiative, entitled Local Immigration Partnership, "CIC [Citizenship and Immigration Canada, now Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)] established a 'modernized approach to settlement programming,' to augment settlement outcomes for immigrants through 'greater flexibility, results-oriented programming with improved accountability, and better planning and coordination'" (p. 51). Through such initiatives, the federal government requires the voluntary sector to be more flexible, accountable, and efficient in delivering increasing services to newcomers, based on an understanding that the more power given to localized service providers, the better the integration experience (Pero, 2017).

As Suzan Ilcan and Tanya Basok (2004) indicate, "the Canadian voluntary sector has [evolved into] a 'community of service providers'" (p. 129), systematically attached to government priorities and procedures through funding received from governments. The authors note a significant shift in the operations and nature of voluntary organizations in Canadian society, especially the increasing neoliberal trends of privatization, decentralization, and state withdrawal from public and especially social affairs. The voluntary sector takes on tasks that are deprioritized by government agencies, and the dominant funding model is increasingly characterized by programmatic, contractual, and fiscally short-term relationships (Ilcan & Basok, 2004). This raises significant questions as to the sustainability of community work. As Laura Marie Ryser and Greg Halseth (2014) explain, such a model reduces "the ability of voluntary groups to secure stable resources for staff" (p. 45). This logic is particularly detrimental for organizations catering to marginalized groups, which not only operate "in under-resourced environments in terms of funding, personnel, volunteers, and time" (Mulé, 2011, p. 7) but also face additional challenges in raising awareness and funds and growing their clientele.

Community organizations both assist with the integration of immigrants and rely on those same immigrants for volunteer work, as a substitute for paid work, to provide these services. As a clientele, immigrants in Canada face many challenges related to the recognition and transferability of their skills because of the lack of foreign credential recognition and other biases against foreign accreditation and work experience (Guo, 2007). In 1999, when the federal government granted that volunteer experience could count as a form of work that immigrants could do to qualify for permanent residence (Vrasti & Montsion, 2014), community organizations gained a new option in how to reconcile their staffing needs and increasing responsibilities amid a more challenging funding environment. The federal approach is premised on the notion that immigrants needing integration services can volunteer to support the integration of their peers and reap benefits for their own permanent immigration status in Canada. Over the last 20 years, this rationale has been adopted by many actors, including governments, media, voluntary organizations, and newcomers, who see volunteering "as an effective strategy for immigrants to increase the market value of their human capital and gain valuable Canadian experience" (Wilson-Forsberg & Sethi, 2015, p. 95).

Voluntary organizations in Ontario

As Canada's most populous province, which also hosts the country's largest immigrant population, Ontario underwent a "common-sense" revolution in the mid-1990s that matched the neoliberalization of Canadian public policy, starting with the federal government's cutting of funds for provincial social programs (Phillips & Levasseur, 2004). In this new sharing of responsibilities, provincial

governments were given more responsibility but did not receive increased financial transfers, which led to precarious service provision, especially in cities such as Toronto that are popular with newcomers (Pero, 2017; Simich, 2000). The federal cuts resulted in increased fiscal responsibilities for Ontario municipalities in integration matters. The Local Service Realignment program created a new provincial settlement program with less than half the funding available under the previous program, while "cutting the core funding of some settlement programs and switching others to less stable project-based funding" (Tolley, Biles, Andrew, Esses, & Burstein, 2012, p. 5).

This neoliberal mindset led to many social policy reforms, including Ontario Works, which was launched in 1997. Designed by the Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris, this reform led to increased suspicion by provincial agencies of the beneficiaries of social assistance (Peck, 2001). Groups who benefited the most from social welfare, such as women, poor and racialized people, had their motivations for requesting such assistance increasingly questioned and their claims monitored. As Jacinthe Michaud (2004) explains, workfare policies were put in place to address what was perceived as "an 'out of control' increase in the number of welfare recipients in categories such as youths and teenage mothers, mainly among immigrant women and/or among black women" (p. 138). By redefining these groups' access to and eligibility for social assistance, these reforms worsened the quality of life for various groups and disproportionally affected immigrant women, among others (Evans, 2007).

These reforms also initiated a change in Ontario's voluntary sector by creating a "competitive contract culture" (White, 2012, p. 202) to access government funding. Some organizations that were unable to get funding in this new environment simply disappeared. For "those that survived, no support was available for their traditional advocacy and capacity-building activities, which they had either to abandon or to maintain by taking on more volunteers, a strategy that was itself over-burdening" (White, 2012, p. 211). Agnes Meinhard, Lucia Lo, and Ilene Hyman (2016) call this environment "coercive isomorphism," as organizations converge in following a path set out by the government, including the same rules and expectations related to funding, accountability, and overall efficiency. The Ontario Council for Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI, 2016), an umbrella organization representing most immigrant-serving organizations, indicates that its members have experienced, on average, a 20 to 30 percent decrease of their funding in recent years. Since 2010, some have been completely defunded, whereas others had to reduce their number of employees, cut salaries, decrease working hours, or cut services (OCASI, 2016).

In line with the federal approach of recognizing volunteer work as the Canadian work experience of immigrants, the provincial government proposed that community organizations rely more on volunteers for service delivery, as it allows them to get the human resources needed to maintain their service offerings while also "strengthening" the community ties to immigrants. In its Partnership Grant Program 2016–2018, the then-Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration speculated that, in the near future, not-for-profit organizations will be able to rely efficiently on volunteers to help meet their mandate, while at the same time providing these volunteers with a valuable experience (Ontario, 2016). Such pressures on voluntary organizations to depend on unpaid labour to achieve short-term objectives reiterates a government approach based on a neoliberal logic of public disinvestment in community services.

Such a logic pits the perspective of funders against the perspective of voluntary organizations regarding what constitutes social integration, especially for linguistic minority communities. Whereas funders are concerned with short-term economic integration, voluntary organizations are interested in successful integration over the long term and in a more holistic way (Meinhard et al., 2016). The neoliberalization of immigration policy in Ontario, with its emphasis on tightening financial control and making immigrants "responsible" agents, has had lasting negative impacts on the province's Francophone communities due to their particular dependence on the voluntary sector for local community development.

FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION: THE CASE OF TORONTO

In 2012, the Government of Ontario adopted *A New Direction: Ontario's Immigration Strategy*, a strategic plan explicitly aimed at reaching five percent Francophone immigration province-wide. However, since this policy was adopted, Francophone immigration has fallen short: 2.5 percent in 2013, 2.2 percent in 2014, 1.9 percent in 2015, and 2.4 percent in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Between 2008 and 2017, Ontario received 13,295 Francophone immigrants, with approximately 60 percent of them settling in the GTA. For the *Assemblée de la Francophonie de l'Ontario* (AFO, 2017), an interest group dedicated to Francophones in Ontario, the main obstacle for Francophone immigrants is a disjointed, incomplete, and bilingual settlement process, which includes inadequate frontline services in French, including in the GTA.

This need for adequate services becomes clear when looking at the economic and geographic profile of Francophone immigrants in Ontario. Statistics Canada's (2021) Longitudinal Immigration Database shows significant differences between Francophone and Anglophone immigrants that settled in Ontario between 2008 and 2017. Refugees make up the largest share of Francophone immigrants to Ontario, while they comprise the smallest category among Anglophone newcomers (see Figures 1 and 2). Inversely, there are more Anglophone than Francophone immigrants as principal applicants in the economic immigrant category. These figures reflect other economic indicators. Francophone immigrants consistently have incomes lower than those of Anglophone newcomers, whether after one or many years post-arrival (see Tables 1 and 2).

Figure 1: Categories of immigration, percentage total from 2008–2017, Francophones

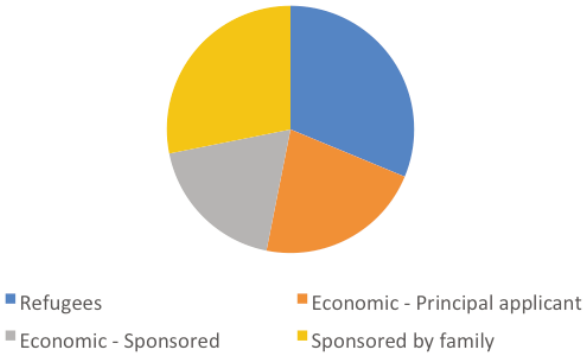
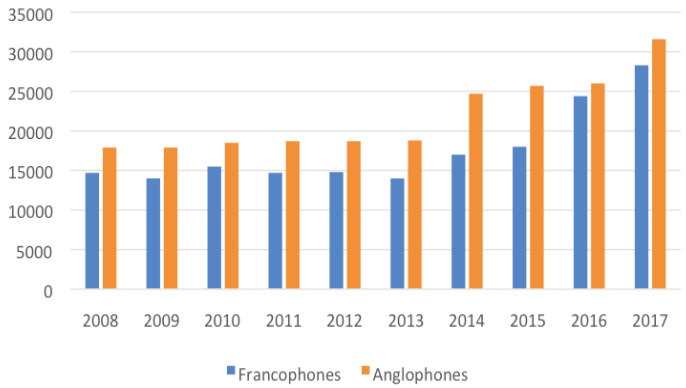


Table 1: Median income after one year of arrival



Moreover, the chances that an immigrant will require social assistance are significantly higher for Francophones than for Anglophones (see Table 3).

Figure 2: Categories of immigration, percentage total from 2008–2017, Anglophones

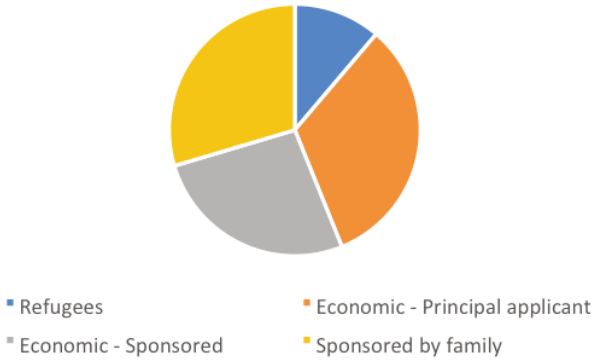
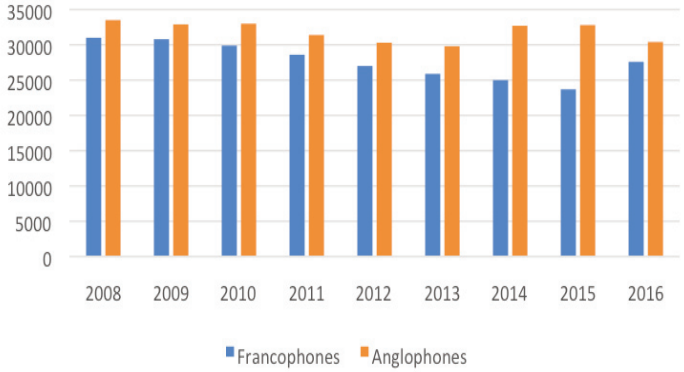
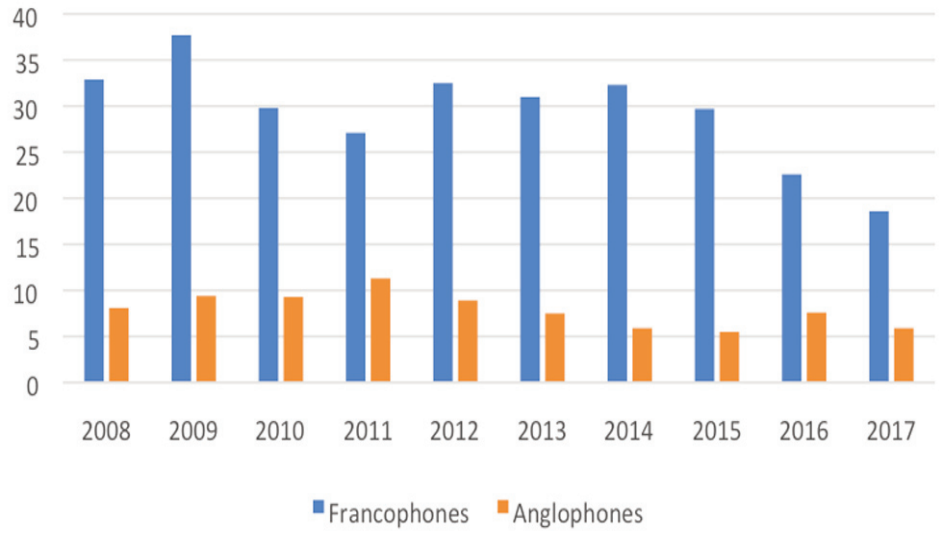


Table 2: Median income after multiple years of arrival (2008 after 10 years)



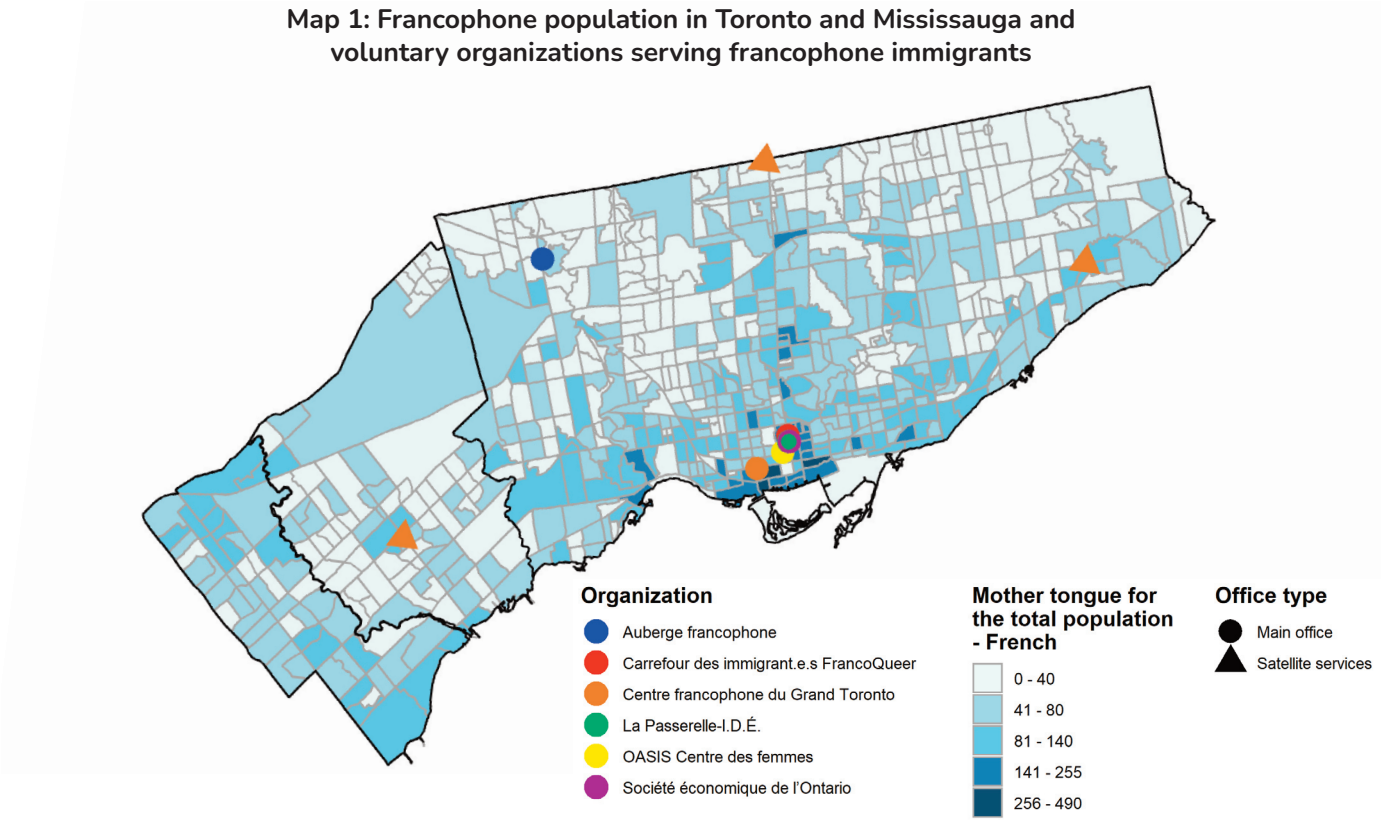
In sum, Francophone newcomers to Ontario are in a more precarious situation than their Anglophone counterparts; thus, they are likely to have a greater need for community services and assistance.

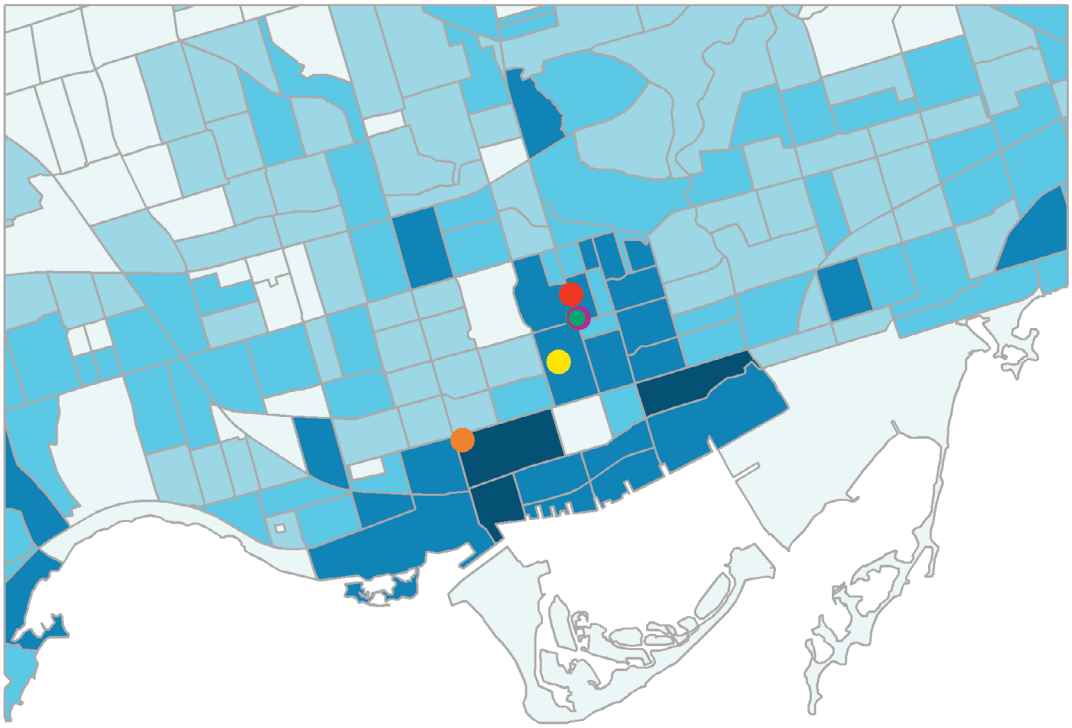
Table 3: Incidence of social assistance; percentage of chances to need social assistance



Supporting the integration of Francophone immigrants in the GTA is a complex task, in large part due to the particular demographic trends and geographic realities of the province's Francophone newcomers and their settlement preferences. While 63.5 percent of all Francophone immigrants in Ontario are visible minorities, the number is 78.2 percent for new immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2016). This marks a significant shift over the recent decades, as only 33 percent of Toronto's Francophone population were visible minorities as of 2001 (Frenette, 2014). Such increased diversity is lived differently throughout the GTA. Since the 1970s, Francophone communities have been scattered across the GTA, and this pattern continues today. The 2016 Canadian census shows that Francophones live in small concentrations across Toronto and Mississauga, whereas the main Francophone organizations providing integration services are located in Toronto's downtown core (see Map 1). Despite the efforts by one main organization, le Centre francophone du Grand Toronto, to disperse its services geographically, large areas where Francophones live are not in proximity to Francophone voluntary organizations, especially in poorer areas of the north and northwest GTA. This problem is partly explained by the diverse settlement preferences of Francophones and recent urban trends, including the rising cost of living in this region.

Map 1: Francophone population in Toronto and Mississauga and voluntary organizations serving francophone immigrants





Notes: Organizations depicted in Map 1 were selected due to their local importance in French speaking integration services for newcomers. There is no automatic link to be made between this list and the organizations where participants work or have worked. *Source:* Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population

An overview of the Francophone voluntary sector in the GTA

In the GTA, there is a relatively small and dispersed constellation of Francophone organizations that support the local community, including newcomers. Among the more than 200 OCASI (2021) members throughout Ontario, 19 operate in French, with 10 of them operating in the GTA. This section provides a brief overview of six organizations that are significant in terms of the integration and settlement services for Francophone immigrants in the GTA.

The Centre francophone du Grand Toronto (2021) is the largest of these organizations. It presents itself as "the main gateway for all Francophones living or coming to settling in Toronto" (para. 1). Its newcomer services support newcomers throughout the integration cycle, starting with access to settlement counsellors upon arrival at Toronto Pearson Airport. The organization also assists with school, housing, and employment needs, and it offers services such as legal aid and interpretation. It is the only organization that provides fully funded settlement services, including multiple services for many Francophone immigrant groups through various service nodes.[3]

Other organizations are smaller and more specialized. They often focus on providing information on other services available, but have relatively limited resources, as compared to the Centre francophone. Moreover, none of these smaller organizations provide fully funded settlement services. For instance, the Société économique de l'Ontario (2021) offers newcomers information about the local labour market, professional guidance, skill development initiatives, and a professional mentoring program. As employment is seen as key for successful and rapid integration, it specializes in this aspect of immigrant integration, guiding newcomers even before they arrive in the GTA. Similarly, La Passerelle – Intégration et Développement économique (2021) is dedicated to supporting the entrepreneurship of Francophone immigrants in the GTA, with an emphasis on the opportunities for racialized newcomers and the challenges they face. Its main programs include leadership training and intercultural integration workshops, as well as financial competency and access to justice. Similar to the Société économique, it does not offer settlement services, but newcomers are directed to publicly available resources.

There are also organizations that support key demographics with particular integration and settlement challenges. For instance, Oasis Centre des femmes (2020), an organization dedicated to female survivors of domestic violence or abuse, offers counselling and family law services as well as transitional housing assistance. Any woman can access their services and resources. Specifically, it assists immigrant women with gaining access to social services and addressing their housing needs. Another organization is the Auberge francophone (2021), which specializes in helping racialized newcomers, particularly Francophone, Black, and refugee newcomers. It offers specific workplace-related and family law services, access to career orientation and networking initiatives, and information on existing settlement services. It also provides volunteering opportunities so that newcomers can acquire work experience (Muller, 2011). Finally, Carrefour des immigrants is an initiative of FrancoQueer (2020), a local organization that supports Francophone asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants, undocumented migrants, and temporary workers self-identifying as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) community. It provides limited settlement services in the form of professional and peer support activities, legal aid and support for asylum claims, medical services, and English language training.

Among these organizations, the Centre francophone's importance as the main service provider is noteworthy. Unlike smaller, specialized organizations, Centre francophone's centrality is partly explained by the fact that its immigrant services are fully funded by the IRCC and other government programs, including at the provincial and municipal levels. The Centre francophone's access to these funds comes with additional accountability requirements, but this reporting takes time away from advocacy work, engaging in policy deliberations, and defending the rights of clients. For smaller organizations, the main challenge is one of maintaining long-term capacity in delivering specific programs, especially if they support populations considered vulnerable who do not fit the eligibility criteria of the main government funding programs. For these niche organizations, current funds do not really cover the advocacy work needed to demonstrate the importance of the services they offer or the expansion of their services.

Francophone newcomer integration in an English dominated context

One of the key challenges facing Francophone voluntary organizations is that immigrants in the GTA need to learn English to fully integrate into society. Given the emphasis on the economic aspects of immigration, organizations recommend that immigrants improve all the skills necessary to find employment, including language skills. While this is not surprising, participant #1 clearly mentioned how English proficiency remains a significant and immediate challenge for Francophone immigrants:

> [New immigrants] often arrive in Canada with the idea that it's a bilingual country, and then it's really a shock, even when they arrive at the airport and all the services are just offered in English. … Work in French in Toronto is also very rare. … There are the Francophone schoolboards, the Centre francophone, and a few other community organizations, but when all the positions are filled … bilingual positions exist, but you need to be bilingual, you need to speak English. … If your English is not that good, it's going to be hard to integrate into the labour market.

This observation echoes the insights of this study's other participants, as well as the literature on the topic (Edwards, 2020; Sall, 2019). As participant #4 confirmed: "A tip that I share with all newcomers: we can't settle in Toronto and limit ourselves to the Francophone community and remain solely within Franco-Ontarian circles. That's a big mistake."

For the Francophone voluntary sector, this additional requirement has resulted in the need to collaborate with community organizations operating in English. As this participant explained, Francophone organizations need to adapt to this reality to best support their clientele's efforts to integrate into Canadian society. Participant #4 indicated: "They also need to work with Anglophone organizations, especially for English courses [and] for offering volunteering experience. … They should send the newcomers in Anglophone organizations to volunteer, so [the newcomers] can speak [English]." While Francophone community organizations can provide primary services to Francophone immigrants in French, they realize that successful integration requires English proficiency. As such, some Francophone organizations offer French-English discussion groups while others hold English language courses. Adding language-specific services complicates the integration process, as they contribute to reducing the connections between immigrants and the local Francophone community. By providing services to better integrate immigrants into an English dom-

inated society, these organizations create and maintain a distance between their clients and local Francophone networks.

This tension was unacknowledged in conversations with participants. The need to integrate immigrants into the Francophone community is part of these organizations' mandates, but it is subordinated to the goal of successful individual integration. The language barrier is a significant issue for the integration of Francophone newcomers and is framed as a matter of individual immigrants' employability. It is not seen as a matter related to the reproduction of the local Francophone community. Such organizations are mandated to contribute to the vitality of the local Francophone community, but their support of immigrant integration is narrowly constructed as integrating individuals into English dominated labour markets.

In line with the goals of a community government approach to service delivery and immigrant integration, Francophone voluntary organizations are, therefore, left with the responsibility of producing bilingual citizens. Limited by a neoliberal mindset in which economic integration is a necessary step to a successful social integration, language acquisition is mainly framed as a skill valued by employers. Bilingualism becomes the main path for Francophone immigrants' integration into the GTA, which results in a paradoxical situation for the Francophone voluntary sector. Even if these organizations are not mandated with socially integrating bilingual individuals, the requirements of the local labour market in English dominated contexts in Canada compel them to address this situation so newcomers can become self-reliant agents. In order to be successful in supporting Francophone immigrants' integration, these organizations have to evolve in ways that are at odds with local Francophone community development.

The dispersion of clients and services

Francophone organizations and their clienteles are often geographically distant. This reality adds complexity to issues of visibility and access to community services, especially for a diverse Francophone clientele in specific social conditions. Simply reaching out to and being known by Francophone immigrants is challenging in such a wide territory. Participant #3 observed: "There are people who have been in Toronto for two or three years without knowing that [we exist]. So, we try to get these people and say we're here, we exist, and we provide services." This issue of visibility is exacerbated by the geographical dispersion of a small client pool across the GTA. As participant #1 explained further:

> Francophone immigration in Toronto is relatively small in terms of community organizations that provide services. It's not like on the Anglophone side, where there are plenty of services that are provided through a neighborhood approach instead of at the city level.

While Anglophone organizations are embedded in the localities and neighbourhoods of their clienteles throughout the GTA, Francophone organizations deliver services at the regional level, which adds to the difficulties of connecting clients with services.

In recent years, some Francophone organizations, such as the Centre francophone and l'Auberge francophone, have tried to decentralize their services across the GTA to better serve newcomers in their neighbourhoods. Such efforts remain limited due to the lack of resources available to cope

with the specialized demand in specific neighbourhoods and, notably, in the suburbs, where there is a need for childcare, family services, and employment training. Participant #1 observed:

> Most services remain in the downtown offices. … [Services to] newcomers and youth are decentralized … [but] it would be better if all services would be decentralized, so then everybody in a specific region could have access. In the north of the city, there are no services at all for newcomers. There are Francophone schools in that area who called [us] … but we couldn't help them because it's not in our mandate, like doing workshops, meeting with parents, and so forth.

In addition to questions about being able to meet specialized demand in particular locations, dispersion interacts with various forms of oppression. The lack of physical access to services in one's neighbourhood builds on gendered, class-based, and racialized hierarchies, deepens structural inequities, and encourages further marginalization (Gingrich, 2003; Wilson-Forsberg & Sethi, 2015).

The lack of proximity is especially challenging for organizations catering to a segment of Francophone immigrants that is considered vulnerable, and such a spatial dispersion can exacerbate marginalization and social exclusion. For instance, FrancoQueer has difficulties in reaching and supporting immigrants and refugees self-identifying as members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Participant #3 indicated:

> The problem of FrancoQueer is the lack of visibility … community partners-apart from lawyers-don't really refer clients to [the organization] … some clients are not necessarily at ease with their sexual orientation or gender identity, so they won't tell either the Centre francophone or the other organizations … this clientele does not [necessarily] live in downtown Toronto because of the price of housing. Clients may live with roommates in the city, but they are dispersed. They are kind of everywhere.

The geographical distance between FrancoQueer and its clientele adds to the difficulty of doing outreach with members of the LGBTQIA+ community, which includes safety and confidentiality concerns (Envisioning Global LGBT Human Rights, 2015). Bearing in mind the challenges of supporting members of the LGBTQIA+ community, the inability to deliver services in neighbourhoods where several Francophone newcomers settle contributes to the invisibility of LGBTQIA+ realities outside of the downtown core (Bain, Podmore, & Rosenberg, 2020).

While some Francophone organizations such as the Centre francophone recognize the need to decentralize their services across the GTA, there are significant financial limitations to achieving geographical reach. The current funding model, based on short-term and programmatic objectives, does not take into consideration the geographical and socio-economic diversity of Francophone immigrants, which means that community organizations cannot adapt to this widely recognized situation. A neoliberal mindset maintains an artificial gap between how the objectives of these organizations are designed and how the funds are allocated and the diverse backgrounds and dispersed locations of Francophone immigrants in the region. This gap leads to a key limitation in applying a community government approach to service delivery: the responsibility lies with Francophone immigrants themselves to find and access the services they need. A community gov-

ernment approach, which greatly reduces the ability of Francophone community organizations to proactively recruit newcomers, does not allow them to consider aspects other than language in their service delivery, especially not the geographical and socio-economic and cultural diversity of their clientele. This results in highly differential experiences and coverage for Francophone immigrants in the GTA, making the most vulnerable, especially poor immigrants living in suburbs far from the downtown core, even more marginalized and excluded from accessing services in French.

Competition within the voluntary sector

In line with a neoliberal approach to funding, Francophone organizations also compete for funding with Anglophone organizations that see Francophone immigrants as a potentially attractive pool of new clients. The fact that Francophone immigrants are not systematically directed to Francophone organizations to access integration services has been documented (AFO, 2017; OCASI, 2016). Francophone immigrant women coming to the GTA often use the services of shelters run by Anglophone organizations to escape domestic violence or homelessness, for instance, while interpreters are used to connect with newcomers in different languages, including French. Participant #1 noted:

> First, we need to really be able to get to all Francophone newcomers in Toronto. We lose some in the shelters, we lose some at the arrival, and we lose a lot [to Anglophone organizations]. We need to be able to demonstrate that there are more Francophone immigrants to show that we need more services. … Francophone immigrants have the services, but not all the services, and they're not all accessible near their homes, and if they're not close to home, well, they'll go to Anglophone organizations, that's for sure. They'll come once or twice, but then they'll say, "no, I'll find another way."

Reliance on Anglophone organizations facilitates a more sustained integration of these Francophone immigrants into an Anglophone mainstream society.

The competitive mindset of the voluntary sector as a whole has led Anglophone organizations to consider Francophone newcomers as clients, allowing them to access more public funds in exchange for a minimal adaptation, namely, providing some services in French. Participant #4 explained:

> Anglophone organizations are saying, "we, too, can provide services in French in our organization," but Francophone [organizations] are fighting so that all French speaking services are delivered by Francophone organizations. It's always a fight.

The local Francophone clientele is a new market for Anglophone associations, but this transfer threatens the holistic integration of Francophone immigrants and weakens the role of Francophone organizations as connectors to the local community. Although they offer limited services in French, such as interpretation services for access to healthcare, Anglophone organizations do not meet the other needs of Francophone immigrants, including access to social networks, cultural resources, and economic opportunities in French. A lack of access to support and connections in these areas makes Francophone clients collateral damage in organizations' competition for funding while also weakening Francophone organizations' position in the voluntary sector landscape. Within a neoliberal mindset, however, it is advantageous for Anglophone organizations to extend their services

to Francophones, even if it is to the detriment of Francophone organizations and overall community development.

This reality is further enabled by the lack of collaboration among Francophone organizations. While some bigger multi-dimensional service organizations routinely refer clients to smaller niche organizations, the ways public funds are allocated under neoliberal governance have led to a short-term and turf mentality, fuelled by the anxiety of losing funding. Participant #1 observed:

> In Francophone organizations, we know it, everybody fears that the other will take away from them, so it creates small, pointless fights because of the government funding … everybody fights to get each client, even if they don't offer the same services. … If these organizations work together, we could fill existing service gaps.

Such collaborative solutions are obscured by a neoliberal competitive funding environment, which favours institutional siloing (Evans, Richmond, & Shields, 2005). By setting up a process through which each organization needs to compete for funding to survive, collaboration for the betterment of the local Francophone community remains secondary. In fact, a community organization may strive to access more funds by framing its services as broadly as possible. This is more economically advantageous than sharing funding with other organizations, but it encourages siloing and a turf mentality. Some Francophone organizations, such as the Centre francophone, have maintained their market share against Anglophone organizations by developing a broader approach to service delivery. In a context of limited public funds, however, it is unrealistic for all organizations in the Francophone voluntary sector to aspire to such a model, even if a neoliberal mindset presents it as the best option to survive.

CONCLUSION

The neoliberalization of immigration and integration policies, coupled with additional challenges experienced by the voluntary sector in a linguistic minority context, has created an environment in which the work of Francophone community organizations that support the integration of Francophone immigrants in the GTA has limited impact on local community development. This is seen through the ways in which the Centre francophone is offering settlement services, while smaller organizations focus mainly on newcomers' immediate needs and their integration into the labour market. Voluntary organizations are caught in a neoliberal paradox of having to provide services in French to Francophone immigrants, as per their mandate and funding agreements, while directing these migrants to English speaking networks in order to ensure their successful integration. Working in collaboration and coexistence with the Anglophone voluntary sector in supporting Francophone immigrants is a necessity that derives from the geographical dispersion and demographic diversity of the Francophonie in the GTA, but the neoliberal environment increases the competition between these organizations. It works to the advantage of the Anglophone voluntary sector, as Francophone organizations are smaller, more dependent on funding, and have fewer incentives to collaborate. The Anglophone sector also benefits from a neoliberal understanding of successful immigrant integration, as the emphasis on both the newcomer's economic contributions and French language as a competitive advantage centres integration to the English dominated society. In this view, a systematic study of the structural inequities and relationships between Anglophone and

Francophone organizations in the local voluntary sector landscape could illuminate such dynamics further, if only to map and assess the most effective service pathways for Francophone immigrants.

The challenges facing Francophone community organizations in the GTA signal some changes that can be made by municipal, provincial, and federal governments for more effective support of communities in a linguistic minority context. As it now stands, the integration of Francophone newcomers in the GTA is framed in ways that juxtapose their integration into mainstream society, notably for employment purposes, against their potential contributions to the local Francophone community. Rather than being framed as an epiphenomenon of immigrant integration, community development can be relocated at the core of program design, funding schemes, and services offered to Francophone immigrants. To ensure that Francophone immigrants are not indirectly and unintentionally integrated into English dominated contexts, French must be conceived as a cultural and identity marker rather than just a linguistic right. Governments can assess the multidimensional positive impact of supporting the immigration to Francophone communities as part of their support for community development in a linguistic minority context and provide funding accordingly. To support Francophone communities, they can prioritize community development and resilience over employment. Integration into the local labour market is a necessity, but this goal can be the result of a model in which community development is the core mandate of the Francophone voluntary sector. Smaller Francophone organizations do not provide IRCC-funded settlement services and are often excluded from the eligibility criteria of existing programs, even though their support for vulnerable Francophone newcomers is essential. One solution is to return to a core funding model, in which Francophone organizations are funded as a whole rather than receiving funds for specific activities. Core funding gives organizations discretion and flexibility in addressing the needs of their clientele and achieving their mandates while reducing the workload associated with reporting on each activity or program.

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NOTES

1. A neoliberal mindset refers to a specific form of political rationality for how societal realities are interpreted, agendas and policies are determined, and solutions are limited (see Brodie, 2010). This notion highlights how key ideological principles, such as the preference for technicalizing societal questions, are experienced, adopted, and contested by various individuals and voluntary organizations.
2. For the purposes of this article, immigrant and newcomer are used interchangeably, as their respective meanings are similar enough to be treated as such (see Chui & Chow, 2021).
3. The Centre francophone is the only service provider among these organizations that is required to ensure that all of their clients meet IRCC's criteria before accessing settlement services (see Canada, 2019).

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APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Participant #1, former director of a Francophone community organization in the GTA. Interview in Toronto on February 13, 2019.

Participant #2, project manager at a Francophone community organization in GTA. Interview in Toronto on May 6, 2019.

Participant #3, project manager at a Francophone community organization in GTA. Interview in Toronto on September 4, 2019.

Participant #4, director of a Francophone community organization in GTA. Interview in Toronto on May 21, 2019.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

1. Please tell me about your organization and the position you hold. When was the organization created and for what purposes? What are some the best features of what you offer Francophone newcomers to Toronto (or the GTA), and what are some of the most important challenges in facilitating their integration? What could be done to improve the services and resources offered?
2. What are the specific challenges in supporting the Francophone community in Toronto (or the GTA)? How do the unique features of this community allow or limit your ability to reach out and support specific groups within the community? How do you advocate on behalf of this community and their needs?
3. How does work experience (paid or unpaid) play in the integration process of Francophone newcomers to Toronto (or the GTA)? How do you support them in getting work experience? Do you or have you ever hire(d) or ask(ed) assistance from some of the newcomers coming to you as clients to host events and deliver services? How so? Under what circumstances? What are some of the benefits and challenges of such practice?
4. What are the relations between your organization and other community organizations, including institutions like faith groups and schools, and public officials at all three levels of government? How are these relationships organized and when to you interact with them? How do they facilitate the integration of Francophone newcomers?