

Phase III Report

Meeting Labour Market Needs for French
as a Second Language Instruction in Ontario



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

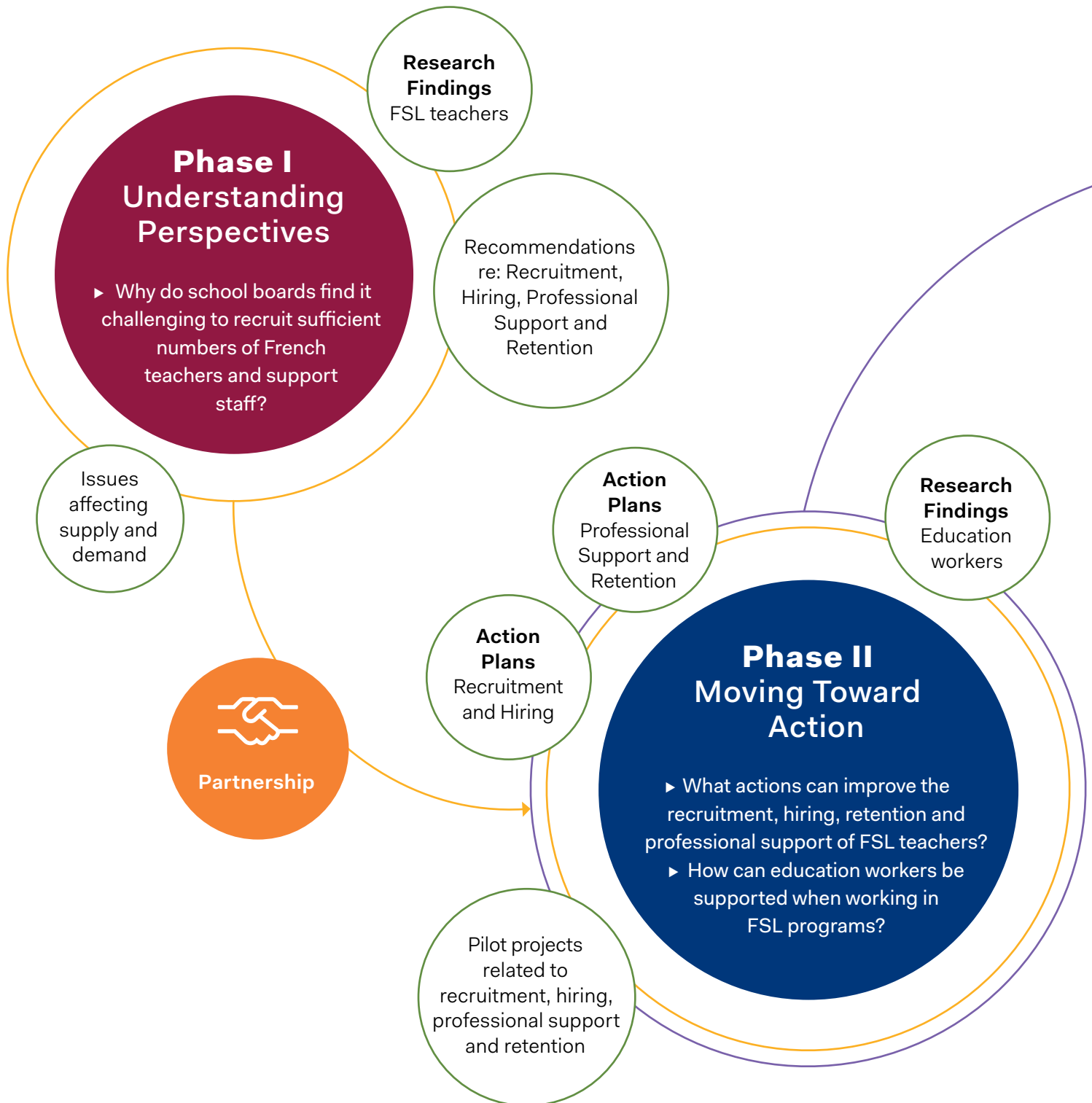
Executive Summary

Implementation of Evidence-Based Strategies



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History and Timeline of French as a Second Language Labour Market Partnership Project

In March 2016, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) submitted a proposal to the Ontario government to establish a three-year Ontario Labour Market Partnership project to study labour market needs for French as a Second Language (FSL) instruction in the province. This proposal was in response to concerns OPSBA member boards raised about the growing gap between the number of students enrolling in French language programs and the recruitment and retention of sufficient numbers of qualified FSL teachers and support staff. This issue has become an increasing challenge for school boards.

In May 2017, OPSBA received approval to proceed with Phase I of the initiative entitled *Meeting Labour Market Needs for French as a Second Language Instruction in Ontario: Understanding Perspectives regarding the French as a Second Language Teacher Labour Market Issue*. Phase I focused on the following:

- ▶ a review of background studies previously conducted by key stakeholders;

- ▶ a qualitative and quantitative study including surveys, interviews, and focus groups of recent French as a Second Language teacher hires and soon-to-graduate FSL teachers in school boards and faculties of education across the province to explore factors influencing their decisions to work in various boards in Ontario;
- ▶ the identification and description of policies and procedures currently used to address FSL teacher supply;
- ▶ an analysis of the reported impact of existing strategies and current recruitment practices;
- ▶ an analysis of intersection of research findings (factors influencing decision-making, effects of current policy/procedures, and recruitment practices on supply pipeline and job vacancy rate);
- ▶ recommendations for action based on research findings and stakeholder priorities.

In October 2018, OPSBA received approval for Phase II of the initiative entitled *Moving Forward with Understanding Perspectives Regarding the French as a Second Language Teacher Labour Market Issue*. Phase II focused on:

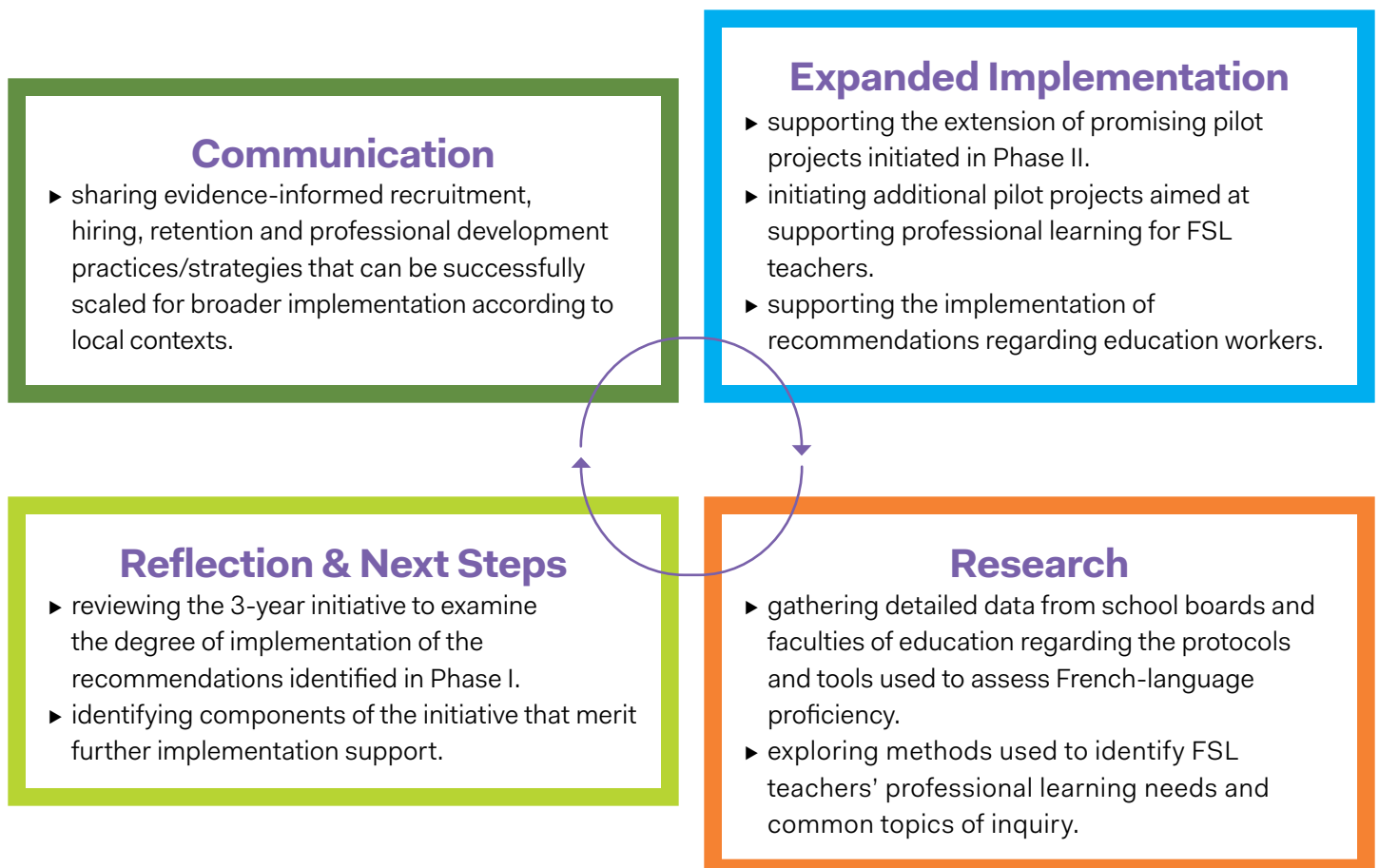
- ▶ action planning and facilitating the implementation of the Phase I recommendations - the action plans identified a number of pilot projects to implement evidence-informed practices and strategies covering the recruitment, hiring, development and retention of FSL teachers;



- ▶ field research exploring the recruitment, hiring, and retention of French-speaking education workers (e.g., Early Childhood Educators and Educational Assistants); and
- ▶ recommendations for action based on education worker research findings.

In January 2020, OPSBA received approval from the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development to begin Phase III: *Implementation of Evidence-Based Strategies*. The final phase of this complex initiative has had a province-wide focus with a view to share and deepen the implementation of the evidence-based strategies and approaches identified in the first two phases of the FSL-Labour Market Partnership Project. Specifically, the work in Phase III focused on the following four key objectives displayed in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1 Phase III Objectives



Framework and Partnerships

The framework for meeting the objectives in Phase III is structured through the work of three committees: the FSL-Labour Market Partnership committee (FSL-LMPC); the FSL-LMPC Steering committee; and the Education Worker committee. Each action plan committee established in Phase II continued with their implementation work through Phase III. The function and membership of each committee are outlined below.

FSL-Labour Market Partnership Committee

Partnership committee membership included representatives from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF), the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (ECCODE & PCODE), the Ontario Association of Deans of Education (OADE), the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO), Public and Catholic Supervisory Officers' Associations of Ontario (OPSOA & OCSOA), the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU), and the Ontario Council of Education Workers/Ontario Public Service Employee Union (OCEW/OPSEU), all publicly funded English-language public and Catholic school boards in the province through their trustee/school board associations (OPSBA & OCSTA), and the Ontario Ministry of Education. The FSL-LMPC serves as the key decision-making body of this project and is co-chaired by the Project Lead and Partnership Lead. This group operates on the principles of collaborative professionalism and makes recommendations linked to research and is respectful of collective agreements.

FSL-Labour Market Partnership Steering Committee

The Steering committee is chaired by the Partnership Lead and the Research Lead and includes members from the various sectors represented on the Partnership committee. The Steering committee is designed such that it can be consulted quickly on any issues or questions related to the project in order to speed up the turn-around time for any required action. These meetings occurred as required between the larger FSL-LMPC meetings.

Education Worker Committee

The Education Worker committee continued to guide the discussion relating to education worker recommendations developed in Phase II. The committee is co-chaired by the Project, Partnership and Research Leads and was responsible for co-developing the related Phase III communication and action plans.

Highlights learned from Phase III

A range of actions were undertaken in order to meet the objectives in Phase III. As noted above, these actions involved a combination of communication, expanded implementation, research and reflection and reinforced a number of key themes first identified in earlier phases of the initiative:

- **An inter-connected approach:** while work on implementation and research was often linked directly to FSL teacher recruitment and hiring, or retention and professional support, many successful pilot projects showed elements of both. For example, projects focused on one area of professional learning (e.g., improving educators' French-language proficiency) ultimately increased opportunity for educators to be hired into a wider range of FSL positions. Similarly, opportunities to engage school leaders in deeper understandings about FSL teacher retention necessarily included discussions regarding meaningful professional support.

- ▶ **Role of ongoing professional support:** throughout the initiative, opportunities to support professional learning, such as pilot projects, prompted enthusiastic responses from many organizations represented by the Partnership. While the range of professional learning topics was wide, many of the pilot projects focused on very specific audiences (e.g., early-career FSL teachers, teachers initiating new FSL programs, initiatives supporting specific learner groups in FSL programs). The breadth and depth of professional learning reinforced the importance of practice of timely, innovative and responsive professional learning for FSL teachers.
- ▶ **French-language proficiency:** identified as a recruitment and hiring challenge in Phase I, Partnership research into the assessment of French-language proficiency has created opportunities for future collaboration between school boards, between faculties of education, and between school boards and faculties, to review existing French-language proficiency protocols. Since most faculties of education and school boards already engage in some type of proficiency assessment at key points in the career path of FSL teachers, such collaboration may bring greater understanding to the French proficiency skills needed for FSL teaching.
- ▶ **Value of collaborative partnership:** all work accomplished during the three phases of the initiative resulted from the opportunity for stakeholder voices to be included in planning, decision-making, and implementation. Partnership members brought unique perspectives and knowledge to the initiative that was instrumental in shaping priorities, actions and next steps. While much has been accomplished since the Partnership was formed in May 2017, members have identified future work to be undertaken and committed to ongoing collaboration as a Partnership in order to fulfill the original mandate: the development of workable solutions to address the FSL teacher shortage issue.



Sections of the Phase III Report

Section 1 – Expansion of Actions from Phase II

Expanding implementation was identified as a key objective in Phase III. Successful pilot projects from Phase II were used as models for further implementation of strategies to support recruitment, hiring, professional support and retention of teachers and education workers in FSL contexts. Twelve additional pilot projects were supported in school boards and teacher federations to focus on the development of French-language proficiency with FSL teachers and education workers. These projects included support for:

- ▶ FSL teachers to enrol in specific language development courses (e.g., District School Board Ontario North East; Limestone DSB; Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation; Ontario Teachers' Federation; the Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene, and Renfrew County Catholic DSB);
- ▶ enrolment in Additional Qualifications courses in FSL (e.g., Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic DSB; Durham DSB; Rainbow DSB; Rainy River DSB);
- ▶ education workers' engagement in French language development and curriculum support (e.g., Algoma DSB and Greater Essex County DSB).

The Partnership also supported an additional 13 pilot projects that included a wide range of professional learning related to FSL teaching. These projects focused on:

- ▶ pedagogical strategies that support the inclusion of students with special education needs studying FSL (Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic DSB);
- ▶ translation of effective teaching resources into French (Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario);

- ▶ establishing learning networks for novice FSL teachers (Grand Erie DSB);
- ▶ developing/learning with teaching resources based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (e.g., Niagara Catholic DSB, Sudbury Catholic DSB);
- ▶ literacy development with emerging readers in French (Peel DSB);
- ▶ collaboration with FSL professional organizations (Renfrew County DSB; Windsor-Essex Catholic DSB);
- ▶ professional learning in mathematics using French resources (Toronto DSB; Durham Catholic DSB);
- ▶ cross-panel professional learning with a focus on struggling readers (Trillium Lakelands DSB);
- ▶ developing digital resources to demonstrate students' skill progression based on CEFR (Upper Grand DSB);
- ▶ program development for combined SK-grade 1 classes (York Catholic DSB).

Due to significant interest and commitment from education partners, the implementation of these pilot projects will continue through 2021 with outcomes collated and shared through OPSBA at a suitable time.

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Section 2 – Research regarding French-language proficiency assessment in school boards and faculties of education

Research conducted by the Partnership in Phase I and II indicated that most school boards and faculties of education routinely conduct French-language proficiency assessment for hiring or admission purposes. The research also showed that these assessment protocols vary considerably from one board/faculty to the next and that FSL teacher applicants identified these inconsistencies as problematic in their search for employment.

Results from school boards

Forty-four of 60 English-language school boards provided samples of their French-language proficiency assessment protocols for document analysis. Key findings from participating school boards suggest that:

- ▶ 84% of school boards conduct some type of French-language proficiency assessment as part of the FSL teacher hiring process, most often an assessment developed by the school board.
- ▶ Of those boards, 85% assess oral language and 48% assess written language directly.
- ▶ Oral language is most often assessed during a job interview where a French-speaking administrator asks an average of two or three questions in French.
- ▶ Written language is most often assessed during or following a job interview where applicants respond to one writing prompt.
- ▶ 82% of language proficiency evaluations are made without the use of analytic proficiency rubrics.

Results from faculties of education

Ten of the 13 Ontario faculties of education offering FSL teacher education provided survey data regarding the French-language proficiency protocols used to admit students into FSL teaching programs; 11 faculties provided similar information used to admit students into their FSL Additional Qualifications programs. Key findings from participating faculties of education suggest that:

- ▶ Tallying course credits in French is the most common form of language proficiency assessment for admission into FSL initial teacher education programs, followed by the use of internally developed proficiency assessments.
- ▶ The reverse is true when admitting teachers into FSL Additional Qualifications programs: the use of internally developed proficiency assessments is most common, followed by the use of cumulative course credits.

Collaborative opportunities exist for both school boards and faculties of education to reflect on current French-language proficiency assessment protocols. Using past and emerging research to strengthen existing practices while capitalizing on available resources and collective expertise will ultimately optimize the utility of these protocols and set the stage for ongoing support for FSL teachers at various stages in their careers.

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Section 3 – Recommendations into Action regarding Education Workers in FSL Contexts

Recommendations stemming from Phase II research regarding education workers in FSL contexts were:

1. education workers be provided with professional learning opportunities germane to supporting students in FSL programs, where possible;
2. school boards consider adjustments to their recruitment and hiring procedures for education workers to include inquiries about applicants' ability to speak French;

3. education workers' ability to speak French becomes a consideration when assigning EWs to work in FSL programs.

For Recommendations 2 and 3, additional communication was developed for school boards in order to invite discussion about the content of the recommendations and to plan accordingly based on local contexts. For Recommendation 1, a number of pilot projects described in Section 1 were supported specifically to include education workers in professional learning with FSL teachers. They are:

Project Title	Description	Board/ Organization
Supporting French-language learning in FSL programs	Partnership with Centre d'éducation et formation pour adultes to provide French-language learning opportunities for Anglophone Education Workers.	Algoma DSB
Supporting ESL and Special Education needs in FSL	Focus on the development of learning tasks shaped for ESL and students with special education needs	Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic DSB
Increasing Retention by Increasing Oral Proficiency	250 instructional hours with <i>Iboux</i> , online French-language development website us.iboux.com/	District School Board Ontario North East
Apprendre ensemble... à distance	An extension of the <i>Apprendre Ensemble</i> module for all K-12 FSL educators	Greater Essex County DSB
ECE French Fluency PD Opportunities	A variety of online French-language learning programs for those working in FSL Kindergarten settings.	Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation

“Most education workers expressed interest in pursuing professional learning to improve their French proficiency.”

Section 4 – Overall Phase III Project Summary, Reflections and Next Steps

Over three phases of research, recommendations, implementation and reflection, the FSL-Labour Market Partnership has explored in depth a number of previously identified issues affecting the supply and demand of FSL teachers in Ontario. Additionally, the work of the Partnership revealed new understandings of the complexity of these issues that has reinforced the need for a systematic, inclusive approach to generating workable short- and long-term solutions.

Additionally, the Labour Market Partnership committee, representing key stakeholder groups and all publicly funded English-language school boards in Ontario, engaged in a review of the cumulative work of all three phases of the FSL-Labour Market Partnership Project. This review examined the structure of the Partnership, the scope of current research and implementation, and the potential need for further research and implementation to fully satisfy the Partnership's original recommendations.

Based on the review, the Committee identified a number of areas where small-scale implementation should be expanded in order to effect more substantive long-term change in the recruitment, hiring, professional support and retention of FSL teachers in Ontario. These include:

- ▶ ongoing supports for FSL teachers, FSL teacher candidates and education workers to participate in opportunities aimed at enhancing their French-language proficiency;
- ▶ greater consistency and transparency among those engaged in determining French-language proficiency requirements for FSL teaching;

- ▶ ongoing support for responsive professional learning for FSL teachers and opportunities to share innovative practices from pilot projects;
- ▶ the development of a communication campaign that shares information about FSL teaching prospects with senior secondary and undergraduate students studying French or studying in French environments;
- ▶ further examination of circumstances that support FSL teacher retention.

Partnership members indicated their overwhelming support to continue with the implementation of long-term strategies aimed at addressing issues with the supply and demand of FSL educators. Key elements of the Partnership's work are already being extended into the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy in French Immersion and French Second-Language Programs. This multi-year strategy is supported in part by the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Ontario Ministry of Education which shares many of the aspirations of the FSL-Labour Market Partnership project but with a pan-Canadian scope.

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Please see full Phase III Report at www.opsba.org.

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