

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE 2014 TORONTO MUNICIPAL CANDIDATES

ACFO-Toronto

1. Languages of the candidate

Are you able to communicate with Francophone Torontonians in their language? For example, can you give a television interview in French?

Yes [], No []. Comment:

2. Bilingual Staff

If you are elected, will you hire a director of communications (or ward assistant) who can communicate with Francophone Torontonians in their language?

Yes [, No []. Comment: **Strong consideration would be given to a French speaking assistant, as it is an official language of Canada.**

3. Community engagement

The City of Toronto is home to hundreds of Francophone public institutions, community organizations, and private businesses. Our organizations need the support and active engagement of their municipal representatives.

Have you attended at least one activity held by a Francophone organization or met with at least one leader of a Francophone organization?

Yes [], No []. Comment:

4. Representation at City Hall

After 30 years in existence, the City of Toronto's French committee (CFVT) was abolished by the mayor in 2011. When the CFVT disappeared, the community lost its voice at City Hall. It could no longer provide advice on the delivery of French services, which are funded by the province but provided by the City of Toronto.

In December 2013, the municipal council created a new Francophone advisory subcommittee. This is a step in the right direction, but the subcommittee's main function is to support Toronto's activities in the Association française des municipalités de l'Ontario (AFMO, the French association of Ontario municipalities). To ensure that Francophone Torontonians are effectively

represented, the next municipal council should retain the subcommittee, expand its mandate and schedule its meetings more frequently.

Do you support retaining the Francophone advisory subcommittee and expanding its mandate?

Yes , No . Comment:

5. French translation of important municipal documents

The City of Toronto only provides a tiny proportion of its informational documents, forms and web content in French. Because of this, Francophone Torontonians lack access to information in their own language on how to participate in municipal elections, access public health and social housing, pay taxes or fines, and other important topics. They also have no way to obtain the procedures and forms of the *Provincial Offenses Court* and the *Toronto Licensing Tribunal* in French.

Do you support translation into French of municipal documents that provide information on essential services for Toronto citizens?

Yes , No . Comment:

6. Francophone immigration

Over the past 15 years, more than 18,000 Francophone immigrants have settled in Toronto and that number continues to grow. The province recently adopted a 5% target for Francophone immigration in Ontario, and Toronto attracts the majority of these newcomers. This will increase the diversity and size of our community, which will create a greater demand for services in French.

Unfortunately, the unemployment rate among Francophone immigrants is more than three times that of other Torontonians. In addition, Francophone newcomers who find work here earn an average of \$18,000 less per year compared with non-Francophone immigrants.

To overcome this problem, a number of Francophone organizations (RDÉE Ontario, Centre francophone, Passerelle-I.D.É, Collège Boréal, etc.) have established programs to assist Francophone immigrants with economic integration in Toronto. At the moment, the City supports these programs only indirectly and its contribution is minimal.

Do you support increasing municipal funding to programs that facilitate the economic integration of Francophone immigrants in Toronto?

Yes , No . Comment:

7. Maison de la francophonie

Toronto is home to 125 Francophone organizations and businesses. Although these organizations are well established and their services are in high demand, they are dispersed

throughout various parts of the city. This fragmentation complicates citizens' access to services in French, creates additional operational costs and reduces Francophones' visibility in Toronto.

Since 2006, several key players (RDÉE Ontario, Collège Boréal, ACFO-Toronto, Centre francophone, etc.) have expressed a desire to bring their resources together under one roof and create the Maison de la francophonie de Toronto, a hub for Toronto's Francophone community. The Maison would provide one-stop shopping for services in French, achieve economies of scale and boost the presence of Francophone culture in the city. Similar centres have already been established in Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg and Hamilton, with excellent results.

Once established, the Maison would be self-sustaining, but the cost to purchase a suitable building is estimated at \$25 million. The project's promoters have raised \$100,000 from the community and are now requesting contributions from the three levels of government. For instance, the City of Toronto could extend their support by providing a subsidy or an exemption from municipal taxes.

Do you support a contribution from the City to help establish the Maison de la francophonie in Toronto?

Yes [, No []. If yes, what kind of contribution? **A reduction in, or exemption from, municipal taxes could be the form of assistance.**

8. Francophone arts and culture

Toronto is home to numerous Francophone artists who enhance our city's diversity, quality of life and tourism industry. The Francophone community strongly supports its artists, as evidenced by the scope and breadth of French-language arts organizations in Toronto. These encompass theatre (Théâtre français de Toronto, Tangente, Canafrique, les Indisciplinés), visual arts (The Laboratory of Art, Gallery Celine Allard, Glendon Gallery, Gallery Pierre-Leon), literature (Éditions du GREF, Salon du livre), film (Cinéfranco) and music (Franco-Fête, Alliance française, Francophonie en Fête, Festival Kompa Zouk).

In 2013, only four of these organizations received Toronto Arts Council grants and this support represented a paltry 1% of the total funding allocated that year by the TAC. These numbers fail to reflect the significance and impact of Toronto's Francophone artistic community. One of the reasons for this is that Francophone artists must compete with and be assessed by unilingual Anglophone colleagues when seeking their fair share of public funds.

The Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts recognize this reality and have established equity programs and mechanisms specifically targeting Francophone arts. Unfortunately, the Toronto Arts Council has no equivalent program.

Do you support creating a program for Francophone arts?

Yes [, No []. Comment: **Support of the “Arts” by Toronto Arts Council must be “open and fair” to all Torontonians, and any special regard for one culture must also be extended to all cultures.**

9. French-language schools

The Viamonde School Board and the Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud are crucial for Francophone Torontonians. They educate our children, transmit our language and culture, and serve as a hub for the entire Francophone community. More and more children are enrolling in Toronto's French-language school systems and our school boards are renovating, expanding, and building new schools.

Do you support exploring ways for the City of Toronto to expedite the required construction and renovation licenses for Francophone school boards?

Yes [, No []. Comment:

Kindly return this questionnaire to us
by email (francophone.toronto@gmail.com)
before August 8.