

March 2018

Report to CAUT Council

CAUT's Third Francophones' Conference

CAUT's third *Francophones' Conference* was held in Ottawa on February 23 and 24, 2018. The theme of the conference was *Francophones in the face of post-secondary austerity measures*.

The conference was a resounding success and a showcase for high-level presentations and discussions, drawing an impressive turnout with forty-eight delegates from all ten Canadian provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia).

Delegates were invited to reflect on the impact of austerity measures on francophone academic staff in Canada's colleges and universities, and many important questions were raised. For instance, what impact have austerity measures had on courses offered in French? Furthermore, following the various cuts in universities and granting bodies, where do francophone researchers fit into the research community picture here in Canada? What are the challenges they are facing? And how do libraries fit into the picture? What are the impacts on contract academic staff? These are just some of the questions that were raised in the conference plenary sessions, round table discussions or group break-out sessions.

The event also provided a forum for discussion on the various initiatives francophones across Canada have spearheaded to take *concrete action* against the cuts and austerity measures.

Finally, this third conference represented an opportunity for us all to reflect on the *potential courses of action CAUT might take* to stand by francophone academic staff in years to come. Please find enclosed a summary of the key issues raised by delegates during the following conference proceedings:

- 1) The impact of austerity measures on teaching
- 2) The impact of austerity measures on research
- 3) What CAUT can do to support francophone academic staff
- 4) Acknowledgements

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

1) The impact of austerity measures on teaching

Here is a summary of the *observations* reported by delegates at the third *CAUT Francophones' Conference*:

- Three universities—Université de Moncton, Laurentian and Saint-Boniface—were reported to have initiated course viability or course prioritization processes.
 - In all three cases, the initiatives consisted of overhauling a significant number of courses deemed to be unprofitable.
 - And in all three cases, only the concerted efforts of professors and senate members prevented the proposed changes from going through.
- Some universities have been rolling out initiatives to usher professors into early retirement. Take Concordia University, for example, which has lost 44 of its 1,050 professors, though the rector has assured they will be replaced. At Université de Moncton (Edmundston), the university administration has offered a golden handshake to professors age 59 and over, without any commitment to hiring replacements.
- Delegates reported that it can be difficult to obtain up-to-date and affordable teaching materials in French; therefore, some professors are forced to teach in French using English textbooks.
- The conference also heard how precarious small French and modern languages departments in some anglophone universities are becoming as student numbers decline.
- Also, French as a second language courses in many anglophone universities, for instance in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador, are constantly under threat of cuts, while many jobs—full-time but contractual—are also precarious. Another observation was how many faculty members teaching French in anglophone universities are forced to take on a greater workload just to keep their jobs.
- Delegates felt the university funding model should be redesigned to help smaller departments that offer general courses and not only departments that deliver vocational courses. This is especially important for francophone universities in minority language environments and bilingual universities.

Issues for francophone students:

- Francophone students in minority language environments are often forced into exile if they want to pursue post-secondary education in French through certain specialized courses (e.g., economics, philosophy, geography) due to the limited options available in their language. Course offerings in French in anglophone universities are often limited to French language, culture and literature.

Faculty-led initiatives to combat austerity measures in education:

- Université Laval's faculty association (Syndicat de professeur(e)s de l'Université Laval – SPUL) has formed a *faculty association committee* to oversee the *fair distribution of new positions*. The faculty association is working to promote the interests of small departments in the face of cuts at the university.

- To combat austerity measures, job cuts and the contractualization of faculty members, some universities (Laval and Concordia) have determined an *employment floor*, i.e., a minimum number of positions the university is required to maintain. If the floor is breached, fines will apply.
- Course viability processes were halted at Université de Moncton and Laurentian University by organizing *consultation meetings* between faculty members of the senate before academic senate meetings. Meanwhile, it was the concerted efforts of faculty members to rally together that brought an end to the course prioritization process and subsequent cuts at Université de Saint-Boniface.
- Maintaining a strong *collaborative relationship between faculty associations and student associations* proved to be a winning strategy at Laurentian University, with the academic staff garnering the overwhelming support of students during their strike.

2) The impact of austerity measures on research

Here is a summary of proceedings regarding the *challenges faced by francophone researchers* who attended the third *Francophones' Conference*:

- Conducting research in French in English-language universities involves a greater workload and effort that goes largely unrecognized. Even if research is conducted in French, projects must be translated in order to obtain internal grant funding and navigate the ethics process often inherent to research. It is difficult to form research groups in French on anglophone campuses, and presentations to university colleagues must be delivered in English. Recruiting francophone students at the masters and doctoral level can be impossible as there are often no postgraduate courses in French.
- In anglophone universities, the availability of grant-application writing resources in French is zero.
- Applications for funding in French are often misunderstood by external reading committees.
- Publications in French may be devalued in comparison to English publications, as there is a more limited choice of journals in French.
- Depending on the field of research, our francophone colleagues tend to lean towards publishing in English to up the greater impact factor of their work and stack the odds in their favour for funding applications. Some only publish in English to make sure they are understood. For more information, see the article *The Dominant Language of Science* in the February 2018 *CAUT Bulletin*, which explains how francophone researchers tend to write in English to improve their chances of getting published.
- Even if postgraduate students write their thesis in French—as is the case at Université de Moncton—they must often publish their papers in English to make a name for themselves in their research field. One important area for improvement would be the distribution of research in French as there is a serious lack of specialized journals in French in some fields.
- Some universities, such as York University, allow for research to be done in both languages.
- An erosion of French has been observed in bilingual universities, where governance tends to most often be done in English.

- The round table to discuss the impact of austerity measures in *libraries* highlighted the inequity in resources made available to francophones in some so-called bilingual universities. For instance, it was pointed out that 98% of the database budget at Laurentian University was allocated for English, leaving just 2% for French. Students are complaining they are unable to find articles in French. It is important to consider that if the numbers of students and research professors dwindle, so will the numbers of library loans and references—which will only continue to erode budget allocations.

3) What CAUT can do to support francophone academic staff

Here is a summary of the *suggested courses of action* to emerge from the discussions:

- Prepare and send out a questionnaire to gather ideas, concerns, suggestions and priorities from the francophone CAUT community.
- Provide a space on the CAUT website where francophones can submit questions, make suggestions and share information with the *Francophones' Committee*.
- Ensure a greater presence for French in CAUT activities and forums by introducing *simultaneous interpretation*.
- Offer all training in French that is currently available only in English.
- Raise awareness on CAUT's *Equity Committee* that language may be a potential discriminating factor in universities and colleges.
- Encourage the formation of *francophone committees or task forces* in anglophone and bilingual universities tied to local faculty associations and steering committees in order to promote discussion among francophone colleagues and a sharing of resources so they can present a united front regarding the status of French on campus and in their careers.
- Do a better job of promoting CAUT's bank of collective agreements in French. Members are often not aware this resource exists.
- Present a united front together with student associations across Canada. Organize regular meetings to share information and encourage discussion. There is strength in numbers!
- Conduct an in-depth study to assess the cuts to programs and courses in French in anglophone and bilingual institutions.
- Conduct research to further our understanding of the situation for academic staff teaching French as a second language in anglophone and bilingual institutions. Build a glossary to clarify the different employment statuses (lecturer, permanent lecturer, instructor, teaching assistant, etc.). In the same vein, also look at the situation for academic staff teaching English as a second language in francophone and bilingual institutions to determine whether there is any language-based inequity.

4) Acknowledgements

As the president of CAUT's Francophones' Committee, I would like to thank the members of the Committee for their outstanding and consistent work throughout the 2017-2018 academic year:

- Georges Akhras: Royal Military College of Canada
- Jacob Atangana-Abé: Université de Saint-Boniface
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- Suzanne Huot: University of British Columbia
- Marc Lamoureux: Saint Mary's University
- Lynnda Proulx: Collège La Cité
- Chantal Sundaram, CAUT staff member

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Respectfully submitted by,
Blanca Navarro Pardiñas, Chair