

June 4, 2020

Jason Kenney  
Premier of Alberta  
307 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

Demetrios Nicolaides  
Minister of Advanced Education  
403 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

**Subject: Save Saint-Jean**

Premier Kenney,  
Minister Nicolaides,

The University of Alberta's Campus Saint-Jean is in a precarious financial situation that could jeopardize the very existence of the only post-secondary French language institution in western Canada.

If Campus Saint-Jean cannot access reserve funds and does not obtain adequate funding from the Alberta Grant Campus or federal emergency assistance, the institution will be forced to cut 44% of its course offerings for the 2020–2021 school year.

This would represent a reduction of 180 courses out of a possible 409. For a small institution, this represents a significant loss of programs that would impede the development and vitality of the Francophone community. This alarming situation is of great concern to us.

The Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones (FNCSF) would like to point out that the education continuum, which essentially rests on the fact that Francophones must be able to learn in French from early childhood to adulthood, is a major issue for Francophones in minority context. Post-secondary institutions play a key role in the development of Francophone communities.

The shortage of French language post-secondary programs means that French-language education does not benefit from conditions equivalent to those accessible to the majority.

Substantive equality in education is a right protected by section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and requires that official language minorities be treated differently, according to their situation and their specific needs, in order to ensure them a level of education equivalent to the majority of official languages. It is a question of equity.

Consequently, all the necessary provisions must be put in place to allow Albertans and Canadians elsewhere in the country to pursue their studies in French at Saint-Jean if they choose so therefore contributing to the sustainability of Francophone and Acadian communities.

Today, Alberta has more than 268,000 French-speaking citizens, a population that grew by more than 50% between 1991 and 2016. Campus Saint-Jean plays an important role in Alberta, and in both western and northern Canada, providing Francophone and French immersion students the opportunity to pursue their post-secondary studies in French.

I urge you to work jointly with the ACFA (French Canadian Association of Alberta) and Campus Saint-Jean in order to find a solution as soon as possible to preserve this valuable French language post-secondary institution.

Sincerely,



Louis Arseneault, President



Valérie Morand, Executive Director,

*The Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones (FNCSF) represents French-language school boards in Canada outside the province of Quebec. It comprises 28 school boards located in nine provinces and three territories. These French-language school boards are composed of 700 elementary and secondary schools that collectively serve more than 170,000 students.*

C.c.:

Honourable Leela Aheer, Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women and Minister responsible for the Francophone Secrétariat

Laila Goodridge, Parliamentary secretary responsible for Alberta's Francophonie