

**Atlantic Regional Office  
Population and Public Health Branch  
Health Canada**

**ACTION PLAN FOR ADDRESSING HEALTH ISSUES  
OF ACADIANS AND FRANCOPHONES IN ATLANTIC CANADA**

The Atlantic Regional Office of Health Canada's Population and Public Health Branch (PPHB Atlantic) plays an important role in promoting the health of Acadians and Francophones by facilitating communication and action among interested partners. PPHB Atlantic's commitment to this role has grown steadily in recent years, with more French-speaking staff and a new position created for liaison with the Francophone community. These and other efforts have resulted in ever greater numbers of Acadian and Francophone groups receiving PPHB project funding. Earlier this year, a series of consultations was held with Acadians and Francophones in the four provinces. This document summarizes the results of the consultations, describes the population of interest and outlines PPHB's strategy for improving service in response to the consultations.

**CONTEXT FOR THE ACTION PLAN**

**Consultation Results**

Four provincial consultations were held in March 2001, in Summerside, Prince Edward Island; Moncton, New Brunswick; Dartmouth, Nova Scotia; and St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. Those invited included representatives of community groups and organizations concerned with health, provincial departments of health and provincial representatives of the Department of Canadian Heritage. A total of 51 people participated in the consultations.

While every meeting was different, 10 common themes arose in all of the consultations:

- Health and quality of life are essential for the development of the Acadian/Francophone community in Atlantic Canada.
- Acadians and Francophones do not know enough about PPHB programs, and requested that PPHB Atlantic establish regular mechanisms for both informing and consulting them.
- There is little data about the health of the Acadian/Francophone population, which makes it difficult to plan programs. It is important that funding be made available for research to provide specific data on this population.
- There is a shortage of health workers who speak French.
- Language policies of the provincial departments of health are a source of frustration. With a few exceptions in areas where Francophones are highly concentrated, health services are not available in French.
- Minority-language organizations do not have sufficient resources for health promotion.

- There is a lack of coordination and consultation around Francophone health issues, and the organizations involved are not operating with a common strategy.
- Acadian/Francophone organizations and community groups experience frustration with PPHB's funding criteria, complex administration systems and short-term funding programs.
- Specific health promotion programs are needed for seniors, women and youth.
- Acadians and Francophones are generally scattered over a very large geographic area. PPHB Atlantic programs need to take this into account.<sup>1</sup>

### **A Quick Portrait of the Population of Interest**

As stated in the consultations, there is little reliable information about the health status of Acadian/Francophone communities. However, the 1996 census does provide information about the demographics of this population, some of which reflect the determinants of health. This has been summarized below.<sup>2</sup> Table 1 shows the distribution of Francophones in each of the four provinces and the region as a whole.

	<b>French population</b>	<b>Total population</b>	<b>% French</b>
New Brunswick	242,408	729,630	33.2%
Newfoundland	2,440	547,151	0.4%
Nova Scotia	36,311	899,970	4.0%
Prince Edward Island	5,722	132,876	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>286,881</b>	<b>2,309,627</b>	<b>12.4%</b>

**Table 1: Population by mother tongue in Atlantic Canada**

Source: 1996 Census of Canada

#### ***New Brunswick***

The 1996 census reported that 242,408 New Brunswickers have French as their mother tongue, representing 33.2% of the total population. This number and proportion has remained fairly stable over the last 30 years. Francophones are mainly clustered in the Moncton area and in small rural communities along the coast in three areas: Madawaska, the southeast and the

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<sup>1</sup> JGV Consultants Inc., *Report on the Consultation Meetings with Acadian and Francophone Communities in the Atlantic Provinces*, prepared for the Population and Public Health Branch, Atlantic Regional Office, Health Canada, Halifax, 2001, pp 19 - 21.

<sup>2</sup> Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes du Canada, *Health in French: Improving Access to French-Language Health Services*, study conducted for the Consultative Committee for French-Speaking Minority Communities, Health Canada, Ottawa, 2001, pp 67-74.

Acadian Peninsula. The Francophone community generally has less formal education and a lower income than non-Francophones. They generally work in goods-producing industries such as agriculture, fishing and forestry, or in the processing sector. A significant proportion (23.6%) rely on government transfers for their income.

### ***Newfoundland and Labrador***

The 1996 census found 2,440 Newfoundlanders who said French is their mother tongue, making up 0.4% of the population of Newfoundland and Labrador. This population is found in three regions: the Port au Port Peninsula, St. John's and Labrador. The size of the population has fluctuated considerably over the past 50 years; however as a percentage of the total population, native French speakers have been declining since 1971. This population is better educated and has higher incomes than the non-French population. In Newfoundland and Labrador, Francophones more commonly work in the public sector and the service economy.

### ***Nova Scotia***

In the 1996 census, 36,311 Nova Scotians reported their mother tongue as French, representing 4% of the total population. These people live in Halifax, Cape Breton and western Nova Scotia. This largely rural population has been relatively stable since 1951, although it is declining as a percentage of the total population. In Nova Scotia, Francophones have less formal education than non-Francophones. They work in goods-producing industries, especially fishing, and in the processing sector. There is considerable reliance on government assistance; however, the average income of Francophones is relatively high when compared to that of the overall population.

### ***Prince Edward Island***

In the 1996 census 5,722 people listed French as their mother tongue, making up just over 4% of the total population of Prince Edward Island. This population is largely rural and lives on the western side of the Island. In a few towns in the Evangeline Region, Francophones are in the majority. The population tends to be older, less well-educated and to have lower incomes than the non-French population. More than half have not completed high school. Francophones tend to work in goods-producing industries (fishing, agriculture, hunting) and the processing sector. Over one-quarter rely on government transfers for their income. The population of native French speakers has been relatively stable since 1981 after a period of steady decline.

## **Goal and Strategic Objectives of PPHB Atlantic**

PPHB Atlantic has adopted five regional objectives to guide its work externally through to 2004. These regional objectives are intended to guide the overall work of the Office, and provide the context for the Action Plan for Addressing Health Issues of Acadians and Francophones in Atlantic Canada.

### ***Goal of PPHB Atlantic***

To help maintain and improve the health of Atlantic Canadians by influencing healthy public policies and programs that address priority public health issues and populations, within a population health framework, guided by the concept of social and economic inclusion.

### ***Objectives***

1. To enhance intersectoral collaboration in initiatives that promote understanding, acceptance and implementation of a population health approach in addressing issues related to the health and well-being of Atlantic Canadians.
2. To increase and support community capacity to address priority health issues, populations and determinants that reflect community needs.
3. To continue to define the work of PPHB Atlantic within the context of population health and public health.
4. To enhance the visibility of PPHB Atlantic's work in order to foster collaboration, influence policy and program development, and improve performance.
5. To enhance the capacity for and the use of evidence-based decision making in Atlantic Canada by using information from community initiatives, research and population health data to shape programs and policies.

### **Project Funding**

The principle means available to PPHB Atlantic for achieving these objectives is project funding. The Office administers federally funded health promotion programs in the region, including:

- Aboriginal Head Start
- AIDS Community Action Program
- Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program
- Community Action Program for Children
- Community Animation Program
- Diabetes Prevention and Promotion Contribution Program
- Falls Prevention Initiative
- Hepatitis C Disease Prevention, Community-based Support and Research Program
- Population Health Fund
- Rural and Remote Health Innovations Initiative.

The policies and procedures for administering each of these programs are developed nationally; however, PPHB Atlantic may identify regional priorities for project funding within each program.

In Francophone communities, projects funded through PPHB Atlantic may now also be eligible for funding through the Interdepartmental Partnership with the Official-Language Communities (IPOLC), a five-year program of the Department of Canadian Heritage. The program is meant to encourage partnerships between official-language minority communities and federal organizations, to ensure that programs, policies and services are supportive of these

communities. It does so by matching the funding of other federal departments for projects that support both community development and partnerships with government organizations.

In response to recent publicity regarding IPOLC funding, it is anticipated that PPHB Atlantic will receive an increased number of funding requests from Francophone communities and organizations. The priorities for funding shown in the following action plan are regional priorities identified by PPHB Atlantic that will guide the review of funding proposals from Francophone organizations.

## **ACTION PLAN FOR ADDRESSING HEALTH ISSUES OF ACADIANS AND FRANCOPHONES IN ATLANTIC CANADA**

### **Principles**

#### ***Inclusivity and collaboration***

The Acadian/Francophone community will have ongoing opportunities to contribute to the Plan and evaluate progress.

#### ***Partnership***

Objectives will be achieved through partnerships and teamwork, both within Health Canada and with external partners such as other federal government departments, provincial governments, and community organizations. All partners will be encouraged to identify the activities that they can coordinate and resource.

#### ***Evaluation***

Activities and outcomes will be evaluated in an ongoing manner to provide continuous information for decision making and redirection. Evaluation results will be disseminated and discussed with all key partners.

#### ***Complementarity***

Activities will complement existing programs and efforts rather than require the creation of new programs. Within PPHB Atlantic, they will contribute to the effectiveness of all program consultants in the delivery of their existing programs in Acadian/Francophone communities. At the same time, they will be consistent with PPHB's national and regional objectives, and recognize the limitations imposed by existing program mandates and available resources.

### **Time Frame**

Short-term activities will be carried out before June 2002. Longer-term activities will be completed by the end of fiscal year 2005/6.

### **Goal**

To help maintain and improve the health of the Acadian/Francophone population of Atlantic Canada by influencing healthy public policies and programs that address priority public health issues and populations, within a population health framework, guided by the concept of social and economic inclusion.

### **Objectives**

1. To increase the capacity of PPHB Atlantic to promote the health of the Acadian/Francophone population.

2. To increase the capacity of the Acadian/Francophone community to promote population health.
3. To increase collaboration on health issues of Acadian/Francophone communities in Atlantic Canada.
4. To increase access to information regarding the health of Acadians/Francophones in Atlantic Canada.
5. To increase communication between PPHB Atlantic and the Acadian/Francophone community.

### **Strategic Activities to Achieve these Objectives**

#### ***Objective 1. To increase the capacity of PPHB Atlantic to promote the health of the Acadian/Francophone population.***

##### *Short-term activities:*

- Create a PPHB Atlantic work team, with representation from all current work teams, to guide the implementation, evaluation and further development of this Action Plan.
- Conduct an information session for all program consultants regarding this Action Plan, as well as funding opportunities for Francophone communities presented by IPOLC.
- Revise all program work plans to integrate Action Plan objectives and activities as appropriate.
- For every PPHB funding program, expand the list of Acadian/Francophone organizations that receive information about funding opportunities.
- Develop a formal process and instrument for screening translated documents (both French and English).
- Develop a process for screening and selection of translators and copy editors.

##### *Long-term and ongoing activities:*

- Conduct a yearly meeting with PPHB Atlantic's Executive Management Team to review progress on the Action Plan and identify new areas of potential interaction with Branch activity.
- Communicate progress on the Action plan to Health Canada's Regional Executive Committee on a yearly basis.
- Integrate Action Plan objectives and activities into PPHB's Regional Strategic Plan and each program work plan.
- Create a resource list of high quality translators and copy editors.
- Screen all translated documents that are distributed or disseminated by PPHB Atlantic (both French and English).

**Objective 2: To increase the capacity of the Acadian/Francophone community to promote population health.**

*Project funding priorities:*

Projects that build capacity for population health promotion.

*Short-term activities:*

- Collect quality French-language resource material on population health and each of the various steps in health promotion: assessment, planning, grantsmanship, partnership building, community development, evaluation, etc.
- Identify models of best practice in population health promotion from minority Francophone communities across Canada.

*Long-term and ongoing activities:*

- Create a resource list of French-language resource material on population health promotion and distribute it through the Web site, newsletters, list serves and workshops.
- Provide hands-on assistance for Acadian/Francophone organizations developing funding proposals for population health work, both for PPHB and other funders.
- Synthesize and disseminate information about best practice models through the Web site, newsletters, list serves and workshops.

**Objective 3: To increase collaboration on health issues of Acadian/Francophone communities in Atlantic Canada.**

*Project funding priorities:*

Projects that develop partnerships for health both horizontally (with other sectors) and vertically (with federal, provincial and local decision-makers).

*Short-term activities:*

- Meet with representatives of provincial departments of health and the Department of Canadian Heritage (IPOLC) in each province to develop mutual understanding of roles and activities related to the health of Acadians and Francophones.
- Work with PPHB offices across Canada to identify models of best practice in population health promotion in minority Francophone communities.

*Long-term and ongoing activities:*

- Promote the creation of an intersectoral working group on Acadian/Francophone health in each province.
- Work closely with IPOLC to maximize benefits to the community.
- In collaboration with PPHB offices across Canada, liaise with the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) and Statistics Canada to increase the availability of data on the health of official language minority populations.



**Objective 4: To increase access to information about the health of Acadians/Francophones in Atlantic Canada.**

*Project funding priorities:*

Projects that collect, analyze or disseminate information relating to population health.

*Short-term activities:*

- Conduct a scan of existing data (including raw data) on the health of this population, and possible ways of increasing available data.

*Long-term and ongoing activities:*

- Create a synthesis report of existing knowledge on the health of Acadian/Francophone communities and disseminate it through the Web site, newsletters, list serves and workshops.
- In collaboration with PPHB offices across Canada, liaise with CIHI and Statistics Canada to increase the availability of data on the health of official language minority populations.
- Provide opportunities for organizations to share learning from their projects with each other through the Web site, newsletters, list serves and workshops.
- Communicate information from projects to provincial and regional partners.

**Objective 5: To increase communication between PPHB Atlantic and the Acadian/Francophone community.**

*Short-term activities:*

- Mail-out the consultation report and the Action Plan to participants and disseminate these to others via the Web site and list serves.
- Identify existing mechanisms for communication such as list serves, newsletters and radio broadcasts in Acadian/Francophone communities.

*Long-term and ongoing activities:*

- Develop a communication plan for informing Acadian/Francophone communities about PPHB initiatives and opportunities, using existing French-language communication media.
- Conduct yearly workshops in each province with Acadian/Francophone organizations.
- Attend conferences and workshops relating to the health of Acadians and Francophones in Atlantic Canada.

## **REFERENCES**

Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes du Canada, *Health in French: Improving Access to French-Language Health Services*, study conducted for the Consultative Committee for French-Speaking Minority Communities, Health Canada, Ottawa, 2001.

JGV Consultants Inc., *Report on the Consultation Meetings with Acadian and Francophone Communities in the Atlantic Provinces*, prepared for the Population and Public Health Branch, Atlantic Regional Office, Health Canada, Halifax, 2001.