

IECC Francophone Immigration Pathways Employer Brief

What Canada's Growing Francophone Talent Pipeline Means for Employers

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Francophone immigration is one of the clearest priorities in Canada's current immigration plan. Yet for most employers, it remains an unrecognized talent opportunity.

Ask why, and the answers tend to sound the same: it's a Quebec issue, an official-language obligation, or a demographic policy with no real bearing on hiring. Each of those has a grain of truth. The targets exist primarily to strengthen Francophone minority communities outside Quebec. However, they are also part of Canada's broader immigration plan, where economic priorities and labour market needs play a role. The link to recruitment may therefore not be obvious at first.

But underneath those targets is a workforce question employers haven't asked:

> *What kind of talent do these pathways actually bring, and where does it land?*

The answer points to an opportunity hiding in plain sight. Francophone pathways are bringing economically selected, bilingual, and often highly educated professionals into communities across the country, not just Quebec. For employers building recruitment strategy, bilingual capacity, or long-term workforce plans, that's a pipeline worth understanding.

What Francophone Immigration Is Bringing to Canada's Workforce

Francophone pathways are designed first and foremost to strengthen Francophone communities outside Quebec, whose share of the population has been declining for decades. Growing these communities is a federal priority, with the target for French-speaking admissions outside Quebec set to reach 12% by 2029, up from 9% in 2026.

New Brunswick illustrates the broader demographic pressures behind this priority. In 2025, deaths outnumbered births in 42 of the province's 46 census divisions, while immigration declined in 34. Across much of rural Atlantic Canada, there are approximately 400 residents aged 55 and over for every 100 children under 15, highlighting significant workforce replacement challenges. For rural Francophone communities facing similar pressures, attracting and retaining newcomers is important not only for sustaining language and culture, but also for supporting local workforce and economic sustainability.

The workforce impact, however, extends beyond that demographic goal. These pathways are bringing skilled, bilingual professionals into communities across the country. Express Entry remains the main route, selecting candidates against the same Federal High Skilled Program requirements as other economic immigrants. Provincial Nominee Programs and the Francophone Community Immigration Pilot provide additional pathways, many connected directly to local labour-market needs. French proficiency complements rather than replaces, the skills, education and work experience required for economic immigration.

> *For employers, this means access to candidates who can meet workforce needs while also bringing French or bilingual capacity to the workplace.*

TARGET FOR FRENCH-SPEAKING ADMISSIONS OUTSIDE QUEBEC

9%

2026

12% ↑

2029

At a Glance

01

A fast-growing pool of bilingual talent.

French-speaking admissions outside Quebec nearly doubled as a share in a single year, from 4.7% in 2023 to 7.21% in 2024 — representing more than 30,000 people.

02

A pathway designed with employers in mind.

The Francophone Community Immigration Pilot offers permanent residence in six communities across New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia, helping local employers recruit and retain skilled workers for critical roles.

03

Provinces are actively recruiting French-speaking workers.

Most provinces and territories operate a Provincial Nominee Program, and a growing number have built dedicated streams to prioritize French-speaking candidates for local labour-market needs.

04

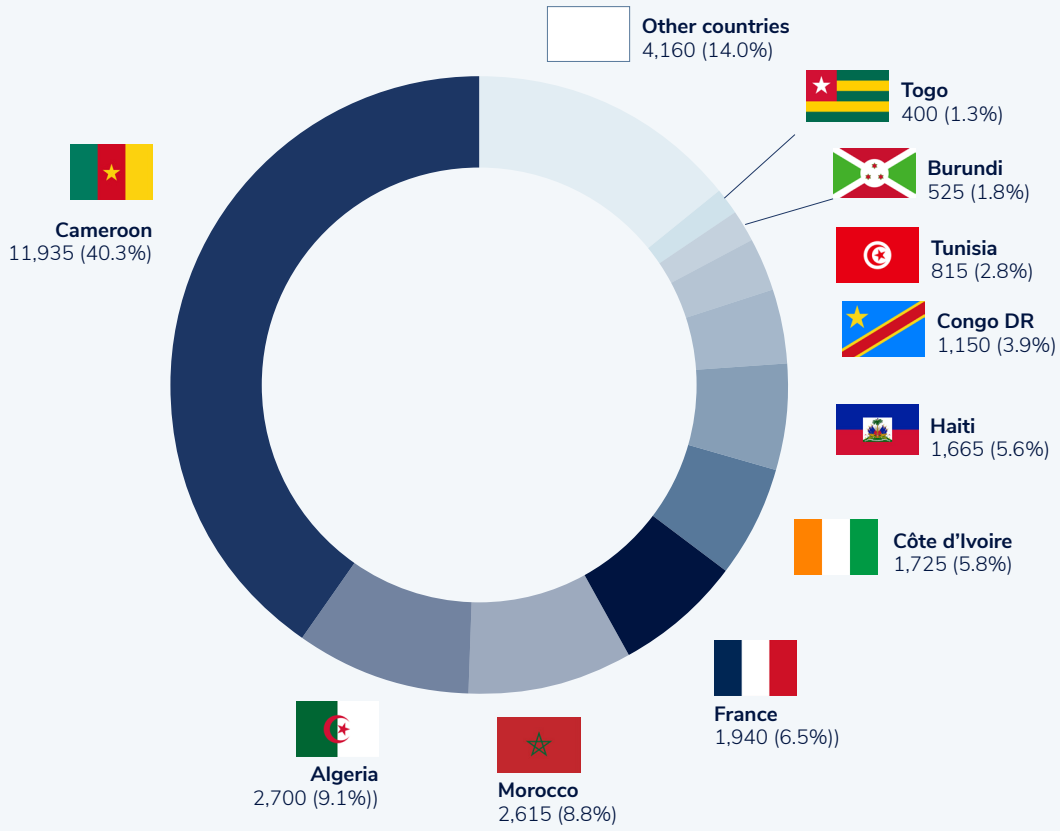
Francophone and Bilingual talent is reaching communities across the country.

French-speaking professionals, many of whom also have English skills, are entering labour markets from the Atlantic to the Prairies, expanding the talent pool available to employers outside Quebec.

The growth of these pathways is changing both the scale and composition of Francophone talent entering Canada's workforce outside Quebec. In 2025, more than 29,000 French-speaking permanent residents were admitted. They represent a diverse talent pool, coming primarily from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb, with more than half holding at least a bachelor's degree. The share of permanent resident admissions outside Quebec going to French-speaking immigrants has risen every year, from 2.0% in 2021 to 8.9% in 2025, reflecting the sustained federal commitment behind these pathways.



TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF CITIZENSHIP OF FRENCH-SPEAKING IMMIGRANTS IN 2025



Source: Dashboard on Francophone immigration outside Quebec – 2025

While Francophone talent is arriving across the country, admissions are concentrated in several key provinces, shaped by established French-speaking communities and provincial selection efforts. Ontario, New Brunswick, Alberta, and Manitoba receive the largest shares, as the distribution below shows.

	# of admissions, provincial/ territorial nominee program	# of admissions, express entry, intended destination
 NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR	50	45
 PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND	30	55
 NOVA SCOTIA	20	225
 NEW BRUNSWICK	1,315	1,730
 ONTARIO	395	15,920
 MANITOBA	415	625
 SASKATCHEWAN	45	130
 ALBERTA	55	2,850
 BRITISH COLUMBIA	20	855
 YUKON	10	25
 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	5	20
 NUNAVUT	0	25
TOTAL	# of admissions, provincial/ territorial nominee program: 2,360	# of admissions, express entry, intended destination: 22,505

Source: Dashboard on Francophone immigration outside Quebec – 2025

RDÉE Canada's experience across its member communities adds an employer and community perspective to this picture. Francophone and bilingual talent is contributing across sectors facing persistent labour shortages, with particularly strong demand in healthcare, education and early childhood education, where French-speaking professionals are also essential to delivering services in French.



Demand extends across mining, tourism, construction, transportation and logistics, manufacturing, agriculture, natural resources, public administration and other sectors.

The need is particularly significant in rural, remote and northern communities, where demographic pressures and limited local labour pools make recruitment more challenging. While Francophone immigration is helping address some of these gaps, there is still room to better connect available Francophone and bilingual talent with regional employer needs.

Barriers exist on both sides of that connection. Employers can face challenges finding qualified Francophone and bilingual candidates, navigating international credentials and licensing requirements, and supporting integration and retention. Francophone immigrant professionals report barriers including limited professional networks, delays in credential recognition and, in some cases, the need to strengthen their English-language proficiency for positions requiring advanced bilingualism.
Greater employer awareness, alongside stronger credential recognition, language, integration and retention supports, can help close that gap.

Despite these barriers, economic outcomes strengthen over time. French-speaking immigrants outside Quebec tend to start behind their English-speaking peers on earnings, then close the gap and move ahead of them within about seven years. Over their first decade, their median earnings grow by around 65%, well above the 44% for their English-speaking peers. This pattern points to talent that becomes more economically established over time, reinforcing the longer-term value of successful integration and retention.

Francophone immigrant talent brings more than strong qualifications and positive economic outcomes. It also expands access to a skill that remains difficult to source in many parts of Canada: professional capacity in both official languages. For employers serving bilingual markets and Francophone communities, that combination of professional expertise and language capacity can broaden access to talent while strengthening service to clients, customers, and communities.

Demand for that capacity extends well beyond occupations where French is the primary language of work. In the final quarter of 2023, nearly 14,700 online job postings in official-language minority communities outside Quebec required French-language skills, spanning healthcare, business, education and social services, sales, and other occupations.

Healthcare saw particularly strong growth, with bilingual job postings increasing 35.6% year over year. Public sector demand is also significant: in the federal public service alone, more than 50,000 positions serving the public require bilingual capacity, while federal institutions, Crown corporations, provincial governments, school boards and healthcare organizations have ongoing needs for bilingual professionals.

RDÉE Canada's direct engagement with employers reinforces what the data shows. Across its network, employers consistently report workforce needs for Francophone and bilingual talent, particularly in official language minority communities where bilingualism is often a key requirement. Healthcare is a particularly pressing example: Francophone communities continue to face shortages of French-speaking physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals, affecting access to services in French. At the same time, internationally trained healthcare professionals continue to encounter credential recognition, licensing and labour-market integration barriers.

Yet employer awareness of Francophone immigration as a recruitment channel remains uneven. Larger employers and organizations with



international recruitment experience are generally more familiar with available pathways, while many small and medium-sized employers have limited knowledge of the recruitment opportunities and supports available. Employers consistently identify a need for practical guidance on pathways, candidate sourcing, recruitment strategies and workforce integration, pointing to an opportunity to better connect employer demand with the Francophone and bilingual talent Canada is attracting.





The Retention Risk Employers Need to Understand

Growing the Francophone talent pipeline is only part of the workforce equation. Keeping that talent is just as critical. The data, however, reveals a significant retention gap: Canada loses 35% of Francophone immigrants to onward migration, compared with about one in five immigrants overall. The challenge is particularly pronounced in Ontario, which struggles to retain Francophone immigrants at the rate at which it receives them. Alignment with the job market; skills, experience, and education, determine if newcomers can find meaningful employment and career opportunities for long-term retention.

What makes this especially important is how early it happens. Francophone onward migration peaks just two years after arrival, compared with the five-year peak seen across the broader immigrant population. This makes the early years a critical window for retention and puts greater importance on creating the conditions for Francophone professionals to contribute their skills, build connections, and see opportunities to grow.

The evidence also points to what strengthens retention. Francophone immigrants who settle in official language minority communities outside Quebec are more likely to remain in their province, reinforcing the importance of community connections and belonging alongside meaningful employment. In smaller and rural Francophone communities, where newcomers may have fewer established networks, building these connections is particularly important to supporting long-term settlement and retention. Limited access to French-language services, transportation, and strong competition for bilingual workers can make both recruitment and retention more challenging. At the same time, strong local support networks can help newcomers establish roots and encourage them to stay.

Settlement organizations play a direct role in retention. Through pre-arrival information, case management, employment services, and community connections, they provide essential support during the early years after arrival, when the risk of Francophone onward migration is highest. Bilingualism can also be an asset for settlement and retention, beyond its value in the workplace. In smaller Francophone minority communities surrounded by predominantly English-speaking populations, English-language proficiency can help newcomers access services, build social connections, and integrate into the broader community. This reinforces the importance of language supports that respond to both employment and everyday settlement needs. Retention is therefore a shared responsibility, with employers, governments, settlement organizations, educational institutions, and communities all playing a role.

> *For employers, this means looking beyond recruitment to how Francophone and bilingual talent is integrated and retained.*



This includes better connecting with talent already in Canada, including newcomers, temporary workers, international graduates and those transitioning to permanent residence. Where local workforce needs remain, international recruitment can play a complementary role, with RDÉE Canada helping employers access qualified talent abroad through international promotion, Destination Canada and targeted recruitment missions. Whether talent is already in Canada or recruited internationally, meaningful work, career growth and community connections are critical to successful integration and long-term retention.

Engaging Francophone immigrant talent does not require employers to overhaul their workforce strategy. It starts with recognizing that this talent pipeline exists and considering whether current practices are positioned to reach it, recognize its value, and support people once they are hired.

For employers, a few questions are worth considering:

- **Are your recruitment channels reaching Francophone immigrant professionals?** Consider where roles are being promoted and whether connections with Francophone employment and community organizations could broaden access to qualified candidates.
- **Are you recognizing bilingual capacity as a workforce asset?** As Canadian businesses look at new markets and reduce their dependence on the U.S., French and bilingual skills can also be an asset for building relationships and doing business in many markets, including Francophone markets.
- **Does the experience after hiring support retention?** The first two years are particularly important for immigrant retention. Onboarding, opportunities to contribute skills, career development, and connections to local communities and supports can all shape whether talent sees a future with the organization and in the community.
- **Are you connected to organizations that can help?** Immigrant Employment Councils of Canada can help employers connect with immigrant talent and relevant workforce supports, while RDÉE Canada and its member organizations offer specialized support for accessing Francophone and bilingual talent. Their services span the recruitment-to-retention journey, including candidate referrals and matching, job promotion, local, national and international recruitment, workforce planning, employer training and HR resources, networking and job fairs, and integration, retention support, etc. Employers can also connect with the RDÉE Canada member organization in their province or territory for services and connections tailored to their region.

What IECC and RDÉE Are Watching:

Where We Go From Here



The opportunity is clear: a growing pipeline of skilled Francophone talent is reaching communities across Canada, but its workforce impact will depend on how effectively employers can access, integrate, and retain it.

At the national level, the IECC Network, together with RDÉE, translates the data, anecdotes, and work being done on the ground to identify where opportunities are emerging, where gaps persist, and what strengthens access and retention. By bringing these perspectives together, the network can help employers better connect with Francophone talent and support stronger workforce outcomes across Canada.

Stay Engaged

Explore the IECC Learning Hub for practical employer tools and resources, and subscribe to the IECC Newsletter for emerging workforce trends and employer insights from across Canada.

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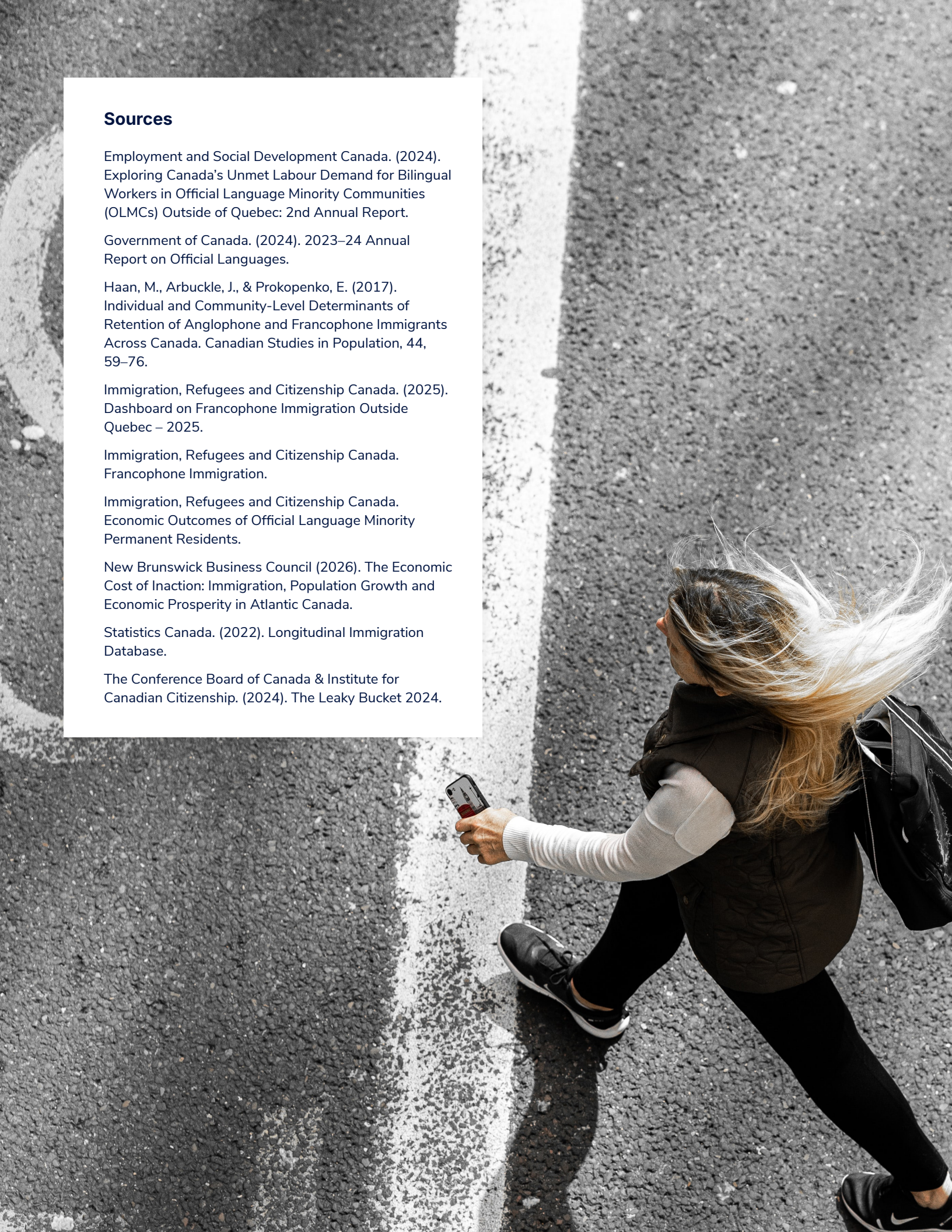
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