

Derek Sloan, Leader of the Ontario Party

Considering the provincial election that will take place on June 2, 2022, ACFOMI aims to better understand the position of the various candidates in each riding of Kingston and the Thousand Islands to make them known to the related Franco-Ontarian community.

To find out where you stand on Francophone issues, our association would greatly appreciate it if you would take the time to answer the following three questions:

1. What would be your top priority for Francophones in your riding if elected in June?

The main issue identified to me by Francophones and stakeholder organizations like the Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, Conseil régional des Mille-Îles (ACFOMI) is ensuring access to quality healthcare in French. This can be more difficult in rural ridings of Ontario, but we can still ensure the resources and capacity are there to allow for these special service provisions. As Leader of the Ontario Party my government will work to make this a reality.

2. The new French Language Services Act allows the Minister of Francophone Affairs to designate government services under the French Language Services Act, including non-designated areas. Is there a government service in your riding that you will work on to have designated?

It's important to acknowledge that there is a feeling within Francophone communities that they have been attacked by indiscriminate funding cuts by the Ford government and this must be examined. First, I would take steps towards ensuring the best designated services possible in health care under the French Language Services Act, since it is necessary to improve the access to quality healthcare for our Francophone community.

I believe it is important to focus on Ontario's tourism sector and the areas where it intersects with provincial funding to see if there are ways to designate services and funds to promote not just our regional tourism opportunities, but also to maximize potential Francophone cultural elements across Eastern Ontario. Tourism is a major sector across Eastern Ontario, so this makes sense.

We would have to examine the education system as well to ensure we are seeing appropriate services being provided to our francophone community across the province.

3. The main obstacle to the Francophonie is the shortage of Francophone and bilingual workers. How do you plan to increase the pool of Francophone and bilingual workers in your riding?

I believe it goes back to the cuts in 2018 by the Ford government that negatively impacted the Francophone community. All governments should have a commitment to avoiding government largesse when it comes to funding but of course there are programs with very tangible benefits; cutting education, training, and other vital cultural funding programs for the Francophone community by Doug Ford was short-sighted. I believe a review of the 2018 funding cuts is necessary and when possible, restoring lost programs to better serve Francophone communities towards increasing and enhancing

services that help Francophone and bilingual workers should be done. I would ensure this took place at a provincial level given my role as Leader of the Ontario Party.