



Consulate General of Canada
in Boston



Consulate General of France
in Boston



Québec Government Office
in Boston



Consulate General of Switzerland
in Boston

Boston, April 19, 2011

Dear Sir or Madam,

As representatives of French-speaking nations with strong ties to New-England, we wish to express our concern regarding the continued strength and vitality of your French foreign language program. We would also like to highlight some of the invaluable advantages of teaching French to your students.

First, we are convinced that a strong French program will benefit your students when they apply for jobs, for example in Foreign Service, in business and in international NGOs. Spoken by approximately 220 million people, in over 50 countries and on 5 continents, French is an important language of the 21st century. It is the official language of 32 nations, and the third most frequently used language on the Internet. In particular, neighboring Canada has 9.2 million francophones, 6 million of whom live in Québec. Speaking French is hence a key skill to global business success, as Canada is the largest export market for the U.S., far ahead of China.

For instance, in 2008, the exchange of goods between the French-speaking province of Québec and the U.S. exceeded \$78 billion. As cross-border commerce is likely to increase through partnerships such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), companies will benefit from French-speaking employees. Moreover, the U.S. and France share a close business partnership; there are 2,800 French companies in the U.S. Other French-speaking countries like Switzerland have developed privileged business and scientific ties with New England. However, the strength and sustainability of those relations will depend on the ability of local partners to understand the French-speaking culture.

Second, the earlier students start learning another language, the more proficient they become, which allows them to reap countless academic, professional and personal benefits. With the rigorous and highly selective college admissions process, students who speak French will stand out with higher SAT test scores and will be ahead of the curve by satisfying college graduation requirements. Furthermore, learning French has been shown to help American students better understand, write, and speak English.

Beyond the practical, cultural, and economic benefits of studying French, one should not forget the importance of your country's Franco-American heritage. Two million American families speak French, making it the fourth most frequently spoken language in U.S. households. The Francophone communities in New England are vibrant, numerous and gathers people of all horizons, who contribute to the richness and the diversity of this region. This is certainly evident from the rich Francophone heritage right here in Rhode Island.

We appreciate your consideration of our support for French instruction to the students of your school.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick G. Binns
Consul General of
Canada in Boston

Christophe Guilhou
Consul General of
France in Boston

Jean-Stéphane Bernard
Québec Delegate to New
England

Pascal Marmier
Consul General of
Switzerland in Boston