



A COMMUNITY VISION:

Report of the
Symposium

"Francophones
and the Northern
Ontario School
of Medicine"

May 13th and 14th, 2005
Sudbury, Ontario



Northern Ontario
School of Medicine



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The Northern Ontario School of Medicine is a pioneering faculty of medicine. The School is a joint initiative of Lakehead and Laurentian Universities with main campuses in Thunder Bay and Sudbury, and multiple teaching sites across Northern Ontario. By educating skilled physicians and undertaking health research suited to community needs, the School will become a cornerstone of community health care in Northern Ontario.



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A Message from the Founding Dean

March 22, 2006

Dear Participants:

It gives me great pleasure to present the Report from the Northern Ontario School of Medicine's Francophone Symposium: "Les Francophones et l'École de médecine du Nord de l'Ontario" which was held in Sudbury on May 13th and 14th 2005.

The Symposium gave NOSM the opportunity to listen and learn from the Francophone peoples of Northern Ontario and learn more about the Francophone culture and the specific health needs that exist within these communities.

Based on the hard work and commitment of over 160 participants, a series of recommendations were compiled from the outcome of the symposium by the Francophone Reference Group, which will be taken into consideration by NOSM.

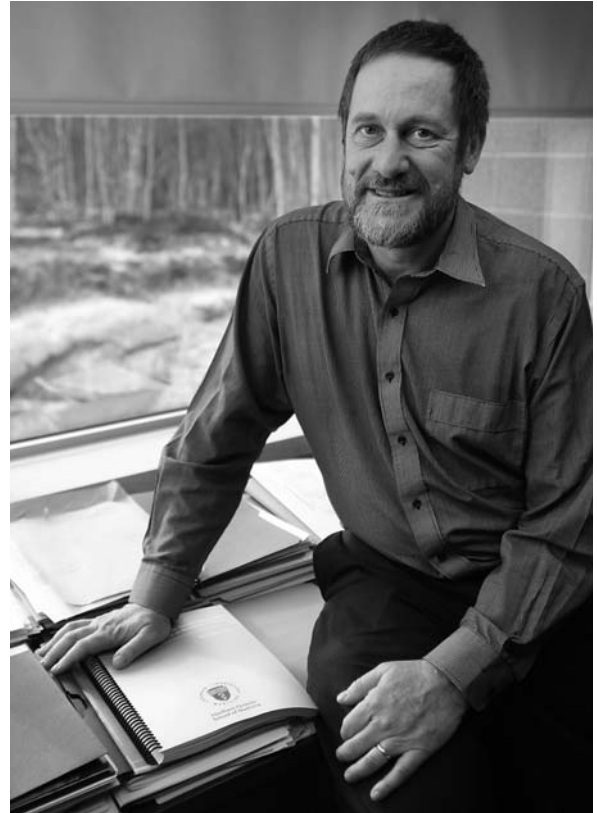
On behalf of NOSM, I thank the many individuals who contributed in making the Francophone Symposium a great success. I particularly would like to thank the NOSM Francophone Reference Group and all of the Francophone community participants of Northern Ontario as well as the Honorable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs, Dr. Peter Walker, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine – University of Ottawa, Dr. Aurel Schofield, Assistant Dean for New Brunswick at the Université de Sherbrooke and all other guest speakers who devoted their time to the event.

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine has been and will continue to be committed to its Francophone partners. We look forward to continuing to work with Francophone students, communities, groups and organizations towards addressing their needs, by responding as best we can to the recommendations presented to us.

Sincerely



Dr. Roger Strasser
Founding Dean and Professor



A Message from the President of the Francophone Reference Group

March 22, 2006



Dear Participants:

On behalf of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine's (NOSM) Francophone Reference Group (FRG), we are pleased to have contributed to the delivery of the Report from the Francophone Symposium that was held in May 2005.

The FRG was initiated in 2003 as part of the Medical School's commitment to identify, respond and meet the needs of the people of Northern Ontario, including Franco-Ontarian communities.

Based on the recommendations compiled from the outcome of the symposium, the Report truly reflects the needs of our northern communities and addresses key issues and concerns regarding the improvement of the quality of life and health of the Franco-Ontarian population.

The FRG and NOSM will continue to pursue partnerships and collaborate wherever possible. It is our commitment to help the School in accomplishing their goal of creating a Francophone-friendly institution with the overall goal of providing a medical education option that meets the expectations of all communities in Northern Ontario.

Sincerely,

Nicole Ranger

President, Francophone Reference Group

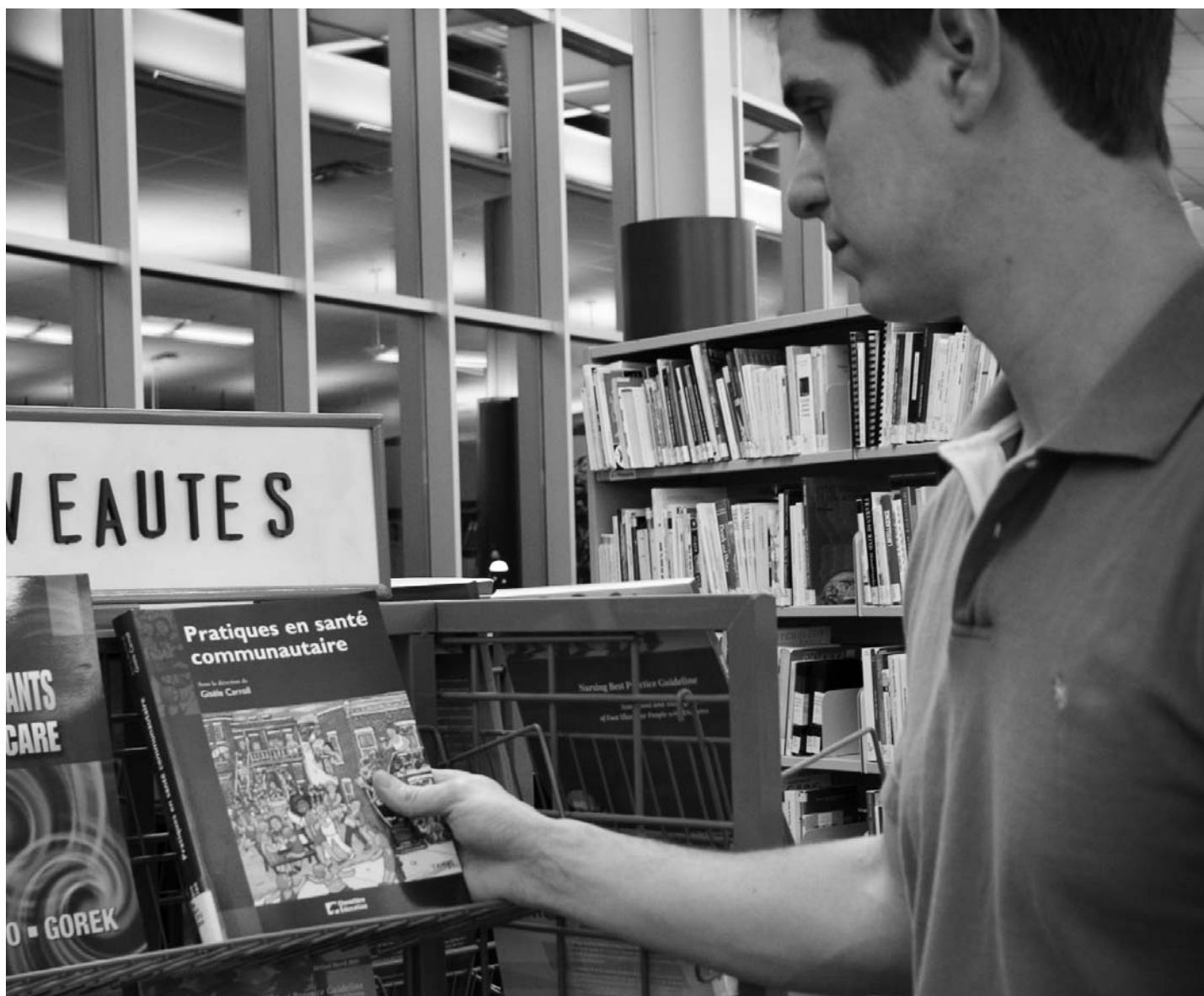
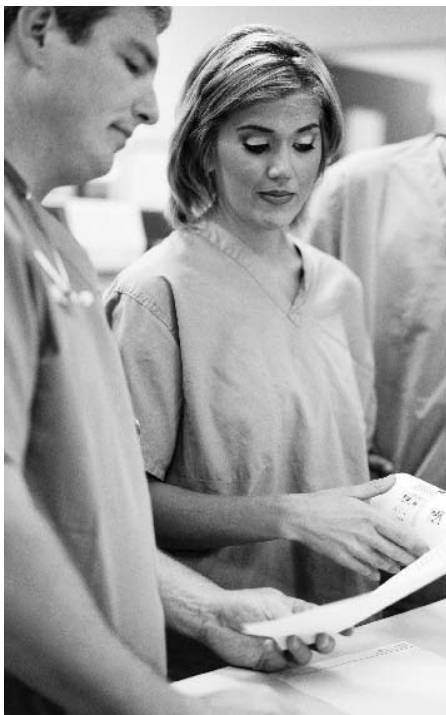


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A Community Vision: Report of the Symposium “Francophones and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine”

INTRODUCTION

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine's Francophone Reference Group (FRG) was established in 2003 to liaise between Francophone communities in Northern Ontario and to make their health care needs known to the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM). The members of the Reference Group, who represent these communities, are considered key partners by NOSM.

In this context, the FRG organized this symposium to facilitate dialogue with Northern Ontario Francophones, and as a discussion forum to learn about their ideas and suggestions in terms of guiding the future of NOSM.

NOSM is the only new school of medicine to be established in over 30 years in Canada. It has been working together with the FRG to meet the health needs of all Northern Ontario communities, “including Francophones and those whose language of work is French”¹.

NOSM's mandate is to contribute to improving the health of the people of Northern Ontario and to serve all communities, including Aboriginal, Francophone communities. In doing so, NOSM is encouraging local students and future health professionals through an admission policy that treats them preferentially.

This symposium was made possible through the financial support of NOSM and Health Canada, which provides funding to Laurentian University's Consortium national de formation en santé (CNFS).

We are also deeply grateful to all those who contributed to organizing and holding the symposium, to the speakers, facilitators and recorders, and to all others who made the event a success.

We also wish to thank Dr. Myriam Bals as well as recognize her contribution as the author of the unabridged version of this report.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SYMPOSIUM: Anchoring Northern Ontario's Francophone Communities in Today's Reality

Above all, this symposium was intended to establish dialogue between the community, the FRG and NOSM in order to increase awareness of the needs of Northern Ontario Francophones.

¹ http://www.normed.ca/about_us/comm_fr.htm

The Objectives of the Symposium

The symposium had the following objectives:

- Make recommendations to the FRG.
- Initiate dialogue between Northern Ontario's Francophone community and NOSM and at the same time gather ideas and suggestions to guide the work of the FRG.
- Give Northern Ontario's Francophone community the opportunity to tell people about its comments and suggestions.
- Keep Northern Ontario's Francophone community informed about NOSM programs.
- Give NOSM the opportunity to obtain information about:
 - The health needs of Francophones
 - The initiatives of the FRG



List of Guest Speakers

Dr. Pierre Bonin – Clinical Leader, Francophone Affairs and Section Leader (East), Family Medicine at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) - École de Médecine du Nord de l'Ontario - Aperçu du programme d'études (Northern Ontario School of Medicine – Overview of the Study Programme).

Renée Borkovich – High school student at Collège Notre-Dame in Sudbury - Ma vision de ce que notre école de médecine devrait offrir aux candidats francophones pour les inciter à poursuivre leurs études en français (My vision of what our medical school should offer francophone candidates in order to encourage them to pursue their studies in French).

Dr. Donald Dennie – Dean of the Laurentian University Faculties of the Humanities and Social Sciences - Les Francophones du Nord de l'Ontario (1600-2000) : Un survol (Northern Ontario Francophones (1660-2000): An Overview).

Suzanne Lambert-Giroux – M.Sc. student in the Laurentian University Human Development Program.

The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur - Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs and Minister of Culture – French Language Services in the Health Sector.

Dr. Gratien Allaire - Director of the Institut franco-ontarien and professor in the Laurentian University History Department and Louise Picard, Director of the Research, Education and Public Health Development Program (REDSP) of the Sudbury and District Public Health Department (excused) - La santé de la population francophone de l'Ontario : une mise à jour (The Health of the Francophone Population in Ontario: An Update).

List of Guest Speakers

Dr. Aurel Schofield – New Brunswick Francophone Medical Training Coordinator and Associate Dean for New Brunswick in the Université de Sherbrooke Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences:

Une communauté se prend en main pour sa formation médicale (A Community Takes Charge of its Medical Education).

Le programme d'études et les objectifs d'apprentissage clinique en matière de santé des Francophones (The Study Programme and the Clinical Learning Objectives Relating to the Health of Francophones).

Dr. Peter Walker – Dean of the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Medicine – La médecine en français (Medicine in French).

The Workshops

Topic 1: The Francophone Community

Background: The purpose of this discussion group was to discuss the role of NOSM and the FRG with respect to the needs and commitment of Northern Ontario's Francophones. The group's role was to make comments and suggestions on the basis of the questions it was asked.

Topic 2: Promoting the Medical Profession and Recruiting Francophones

Background: In late May 2005, the first students selected for admission to NOSM were contacted. Of the approximately 2,100 applicants, 396 were interviewed and 56 admitted.² NOSM's goal was to have the classes reflect the demographics of the region so that graduates could serve and communicate with the population of all of Northern Ontario. The short list of applicants included: 70% persons who had lived for ten years or more in rural, isolated or northern communities; 17% Francophones; 16% bilingual persons (English-French) and 8% Aboriginal people. This small discussion group considered the promotion of Francophones and recruitment efforts vis-à-vis Francophones, as well as admission criteria.



2 <http://www.normed.ca/prospect/admissions/dates.htm>

Topic 3: Academic and Clinical Training

Background: In NOSM's innovative undergraduate MD program, students are taught in small groups, most of the time at learning centres in a variety of communities, using broadband information and communications technology. Programs of study are based on clinical scenarios, but will also ensure that the students acquire solid knowledge and core skills, including the basic sciences.

Topic 4: Financial Aid and Support for Medical Students

Background: A university education is a very expensive investment for the students and their families. Going to medical school can be even more expensive. This group will discuss financial aid, physical support and other methods that could be introduced to assist Francophone students in their training of the medical profession.

NOSM's Cultural and Geographical Context

Owing to its unique geographical and cultural context, NOSM is the result of cooperation between two universities: Laurentian University in Sudbury and Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. However, although NOSM's mandate is to serve all of the communities of Northern Ontario, including Francophones, the primary language of communication and teaching is English.

NOSM focuses on excellence in three major areas:

- 1) education and training
- 2) research
- 3) community and professional development

NOSM's deep roots in Northern Ontario, and its mission to meet the health needs of Northern Ontario's populations, give it specific responsibilities; NOSM will have teaching and research sites throughout Northern Ontario to meet the needs for quality health care in this region, which is affected by serious shortages of Anglophone and Francophone doctors to serve Aboriginal, Anglophone and Francophone communities in urban, rural and remote settings, as well as First Nations reserves and isolated communities. Northern Ontario Francophone students who want to study medicine entirely in French have to go to the University of Ottawa or outside the province. In his presentation, Dr. Walker pointed out that of the doctors who had been educated at the University of Ottawa's School of Medicine, 28% practise in Northern Ontario.

To counter this shortage and encourage future doctors to practise in Northern Ontario, they need to be trained in and for the specific context, even though practising medicine in a number of rural communities is not always under ideal conditions. Dr. Schofield presented the experience of the New Brunswick Program in Medicine associated with the Université de Sherbrooke. This presentation emphasized just how important it is to train future doctors in their home region, because it is to these regions that they will more often than not be returning once their studies have been completed. In addition, these doctors know the special features and medical practices specific to their regions.



As Dr. Allaire reminded us in his presentation, which quoted from the introduction to the Du-bois Report (1976):

[Translation] “It is very difficult – and often impossible, to translate emotions, personal needs, sorrows, joys, suffering and physical discomfort. It is difficult and often impossible to give advice, explain needs, or recommend ways to improve health to someone who does not understand the language.”

For these reasons, the challenge for NOSM is to adapt its medical teaching to the Northern Ontario environment. To do this, it is essential that the communities actively participate by welcoming the students to their communities during training periods, both in cities and rural communities, to work together on interdisciplinary teams. This approach will prepare future doctors to practise not only in towns, but also on First Nations reserves or in isolated communities.

The Role of the FRG: To Provide Advice to NOSM Concerning the Health Needs of Francophone Communities

The FRG was established to ensure that Francophones in Northern Ontario have a presence and that their interests are represented at every level of NOSM, not only in terms of recruiting Francophone students from the region, but also in terms of board members, staff and faculty. The Chair is Nicole Ranger, the Dean of Health Sciences at Collège Boréal.

The aspect of specific concern to the FRG is to ensure that future doctors are capable of serving Francophone populations, for a variety of reasons. On the one hand, the cultural factor is one of the determinants of health as defined by Health Canada, and on the other, health services in the French³ language have become a right in Ontario, ever since the introduction of the French Language Services Act⁴ in 1990. Furthermore, Minister Madeleine Meilleur (2005: 18) said in her speech that “[Translation] the government is determined to strengthen the institutional position of Francophones and to promote certain services in French.”



3 The French-language Health Services Office is responsible for assisting in the implementation of French services in all areas of activity (http://www.gov.on.ca/health/french/programf/flhst/mandate_mnf.html), including helping professional colleges to comply with sections 86(1) and 86(2) of the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*, by making it possible for them to communicate in French with their professional college (source: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/French/91r18_f.htm#BK1).

4 *French Language Services Act* – R.S.O. 1990, Chapter F.32 (source: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/French/90f32_f.htm).

Highlights of the Workshops

As the comments and points of view of participants are only applicable within the specific context of Northern Ontario Francophone communities, a number of reminders, comments and facts are useful at the outset.

The Place of French in Ontario

Official bilingualism, enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982), also has its place in all provincial institutions, including educational institutions and health services at all levels, to ensure that everyone can be educated and cared for in their mother tongue (English or French). Statutes and bills that provide Francophones with rights and funding to develop services in French should therefore grow increasingly in number as French acquires more respect. Health services in French⁵ have also become a right in Ontario since the *French Language Services Act*, 1990.⁶

Francophones represent at least 21% of the population of Northern Ontario, based on existing criteria and definitions⁷ for “first language” or “mother tongue”. Based on the 2001 Census figures, there is a disparity in the distribution of Francophones in Ontario. For example, the population of Hearst is 88.89% Francophone⁸, 26.9% in Sudbury, 38.2% in Timmins, 23.5% in North Bay, 4% in Sault-Ste-Marie and 4.3% in Thunder Bay (Statistics Canada, 2003). Statistics Canada (2002), states that “Ontario’s francophone population recorded a net gain of 7,700 between 1996 and 2001. Ontario’s francophone population reached almost 509,300, up 1.9%.”⁹

As the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur noted in her keynote address at the symposium, French and English can cohabit and mutually enrich one another insofar as there is a desire for this to happen, which is rooted in the communities, and provided that one does not disappear at the expense of the other.

5 The French-language Health Services Office is responsible for assisting in the implementation of French services in all areas of activity (http://www.gov.on.ca/health/french/programf/flhst/mandate_mnf.html), including helping professional colleges to comply with sections 86(1) and 86(2) of the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*, by making it possible for them to communicate in French with their professional college (source: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/French/91r18_f.htm#BK1).

6 *French Language Services Act* – R.S.O. 1990, Chapter F.32 (source: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/French/90f32_f.htm).

7 Mother tongue: According to Statistics Canada (2005), the “first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual at the time of the Census.” Consulted 19 May 2005 at <http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/defdemo11a.htm>.

8 This refers to Francophones in the “French only” category; other Francophones feel “bilingual”; whereas others are in the “French and English” category, or are included among those who have a different mother tongue, but who nevertheless speak French (for example, they were educated in French).

9 Statistics Canada (2002). Analysis series - Profile of languages in Canada – English-French bilingualism, consulted 27 May 2005 at http://www12.statcan.ca/francais/census01/products/analytic/companion/lang/bilingual_f.cfm.



Too Few Francophones at NOSM

One concern that came up at all of the workshops was the real role assigned to Francophones within NOSM. Francophones are under-represented at NOSM, with their numbers or the number of designated seats for them (for example on the Board of Directors) clearly below their percentage of the population.

Francophone Students at NOSM; Are They Wanted or Merely Tolerated?

A concern that came up several times was the participation of Francophones and their inclusion at NOSM:

- Selection of Francophone students.
- Presence of Francophones during selection.
- Is the selection of students equitable?
 - Francophone applicants had to complete a written test in French, about which they had very little information, whereas the Anglophone applicants did not have to undergo an English test.
 - These tests added unduly to the stress on Francophone applicants.
- The place of Francophones at NOSM; are they welcome?
- With Anglophone and Francophone applicants in competition, Francophones may be at a disadvantage because of their language:
 - Consequently, Francophones should only be in competition among themselves AND, this requires that a minimum quota be set for them.



Highlights of the Workshops

The Marketing of NOSM to Francophones

Like all medical schools, NOSM does not need to make a recruitment effort to attract students. However, it is essential to have a targeted recruitment plan for Francophones.

- QUALITY has an important promotional asset.
- The fact that NOSM is new makes it possible to use terms such as “challenge”, “advantage”, “revolutionary approach”... to attract more Francophones.
- BILINGUALISM is another aspect that must not be overlooked:
 - Francophones must feel that they are welcome, that the learning environment and lifestyle will be attractive for them, a place where they will receive the support they need to succeed.
 - The quality of teaching must meet their needs as Francophone students.
- Francophone third- or fourth-year students who succeed brilliantly at NOSM could serve as models for younger medical students.
- These same promising students could promote the profession to students at the primary, secondary and college levels of Francophone or French immersion institutions.

Will the Needs of Francophone Students Be Met?

At the moment, NOSM does not appear to have the required conditions to educate Francophones in their mother tongue. This could discourage a number of promising applicants who want to study in French not too far from home.

What are the chances of success for Francophones if no action is taken on their behalf:

- There needs to be teaching in French.
- Francophone students need to be able to write their exams in French to avoid failing.
- What level of academic and medical supervision will they have in French? Have enough human resources been identified to do this?
- Does NOSM know about existing Francophone resources?



An Inadequate Response to the Shortage of Francophone Doctors in Northern Ontario

There is a shortage of Francophone doctors. Failing to train them would constitute a major problem for the communities.

The presentations given by the various guests raise important and sometimes worrisome points concerning the health of Francophones in Ontario, which is not as good as the health of non-Francophones, as well as about their ability to receive care in their language, or simply to have access to services in French, particularly in rural and northern regions.

Increasing Awareness at the Provincial Government Level

As the provincial government is the main source of funds, it was suggested that NOSM needs to make the Ontario government aware of its multicultural reality in order to obtain further special funds.

PARTICIPANTS' RECOMMENDATIONS

The success of NOSM is largely the result of its roots in the communities, including Francophone communities. These roots will grow deeper only if these communities can actively participate with NOSM, at all levels. The Francophone community would therefore like NOSM to become bilingual.

The following recommendations summarize the discussions held in the workshops.

- Making NOSM's Commitment to Francophones a Reality
- A Clear Commitment to Attract Francophone Students to NOSM
- Guarantee Equal Opportunity for the Admission of Francophones in Northern Ontario to NOSM
- A Bilingual Faculty of Medicine to Meet the Needs of Francophones
- Making All Students Aware of the Needs of Francophones
- Ongoing Coordination and Cooperation



Conclusion

This symposium is only one expression of the motivation of Francophones, and the FRG would like NOSM to acknowledge the political determination of the provincial government to give Francophones and the French language the place they deserve.

In a country that has English and French as official languages, the 21st century must be characterized by the mutual recognition and appreciation of both languages. Ontario Francophones have rights that must be respected, rights that have acquired protection in recent years under statutes and which are likely to receive further strengthening.

This symposium enabled the more than 160 participants to review Francophone representation within NOSM and to discuss the admission process for Francophone candidates as well as what measures would be taken or ought to be taken to ensure the equity of their chances in the selection process and in the course of their education.

NOSM has just barely opened its doors and has a promising future, thanks to the multicultural context in which it will develop, and in particular to the partnerships that should result to enrich and strengthen its unique position in Northern Ontario.

The presentations of the experiences at the schools of medicine of the Université de Sherbrooke, in cooperation with Moncton and at the University of Ottawa, show that the teaching of medicine in French meets a real need of the Francophone population, even though it may be in a minority situation. Success also has to do with the French language. Hence Francophone students need to be provided with the physical, financial and human resources they need to succeed in this Anglophone environment.

The Moncton experience has shown that the more time Francophone students spend in their community (which has a shortage of doctors), the more likely they are to return to practise there once they have their degree. Such an investment is, therefore, a very promising avenue for helping to deal with the crying need for doctors in Northern Ontario. That is why it is not only important but essential for NOSM to recruit Francophones on a priority basis, because only they can meet such needs in the near future, and at the same time help NOSM to fulfil its mission and *raison d'être*.

If all the partners show determination and the communities become deeply involved in the process of developing and training future Francophone doctors, NOSM will, in turn, be just as successful as Moncton and Ottawa.

Far from being a waste of time and money, "the School's commitment to training Francophone professionals is a rich vein that needs to be mined." (Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, 2005: 5).

There is a great deal of catching up required in terms of Francophone doctors in Northern Ontario, as they account for only 5% of all practitioners for a Francophone population of at least 21%. The best way for NOSM to make up the gap will be to fulfill its mandate as much as possible, and this requires acknowledging the values and needs of Northern Ontario Francophones by beginning to offer bilingual medical education as soon as possible.

The current report as well as its unabridged version is available on the NOSM Website at www.normed.ca.

Following the Symposium, the FRG presented recommendations to NOSM based on the participants' recommendations.

Recommendations

1	More Francophone members on the Board of Directors Considering that the Board of Directors of the NOSM is composed of 35 members, the FRG recommends that a minimum of seven (7) seats on the Board be reserved for Francophones, including one Francophone member from the northwest region; this number would proportionately represent the Francophone population of Northern Ontario.
2	More Francophones within the faculty and administration in order to meet the needs of Francophone students It is recommended that three (3) members of the FRG be asked to sit on the NOSM Human Resources Committee to review hiring policies and identify positions which should be designated bilingual.
3	Increase staff awareness of the needs of Francophones The FRG recommends that NOSM develop an action plan for educating staff about Franco-Ontarian culture and making staff members aware of the specific needs of Francophone students.
4	Create an inventory of Francophone professional resources In order to provide appropriate francophone clinical environments for its students, the FRG recommends that NOSM develop an inventory of Francophone doctors and clinical settings, and continue to develop Franco-phone clinical environments.
5	Make Francophones aware of the existence of NOSM The FRG recommends that NOSM develop a recruitment plan aimed at Francophone students which specifically includes intermediate level pupils, i.e. grades 7 and 8.
6	Inform the Francophone community about the evolution of NOSM The FRG recommends that NOSM develop a communication strategy to inform and increase awareness among the Francophone community and northern municipalities, about the evolution of NOSM.
7	Ensure equal admission opportunities to NOSM for Francophones It is recommended that NOSM, in cooperation with members of the FRG, review its admission process and criteria, in order to ensure equal access for Francophone students.
8	Set aside seats for Francophone students The FRG recommends that a minimum of twelve (12) seats in the School be set aside for Francophone students, preferably from Northern Ontario.
9	Establish financial aid geared specifically to Francophones 9.1 The FRG recommends that scholarships designated for Francophone students be established within NOSM's scholarship programme. 9.2 That two (2) members of the FRG participate in drawing up criteria with NOSM, for scholarships designated for Francophones.
10	Teaching and learning tools The FRG recommends that NOSM obtain the necessary tools (e.g. a lexicon of medical terminology) to offer French linguistic training to students and faculty with the goal of better serving francophone patients.

11	Continuing Education The FRG recommends that NOSM offer continuing education opportunities in French to members of the faculty and health professionals.
12	Group all Francophones in academic, clinical, and associative activities The FRG recommends that NOSM create opportunities which will enable Francophone students to work and meet together.
13	Create a mentorship and academic advisor system The FRG recommends that NOSM ensure that every Francophone student be paired up with a Francophone doctor who will act as a mentor starting in the first year; each Francophone student should also have a Francophone academic advisor.
14	Ensure Francophone placements in francophone communities The FRG recommends that NOSM offer placements in Francophone environments to all students.
15	Ongoing cooperation and dialogue: performance indicators for evaluating the evolution 15.1 The FRG recommends that it develop, in cooperation with NOSM staff, a three-year strategic plan with performance indicators and with short-, medium-, and long-term objectives which should be reviewed annually in order to measure and evaluate progress. 15.2 The FRG recommends that it organize another symposium in two years, in cooperation with NOSM staff, for an update on the evolution of NOSM and its progress with regard to the goals and recommendations which came out of the 2005 symposium.
16	Communications in French The FRG recommends that NOSM modify its marketing/communication plan to ensure that Francophone communities receive information simultaneously in both official languages; this would include the information on NOSM's website.
17	A bilingual medical faculty to respond to the needs of Francophones The FRG recommends that NOSM become a bilingual medical faculty.