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**ONTARIO FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION COMMUNICATIONS
AUTHORITY
ORDER-IN-COUNCIL APPOINTMENT OF
DOMINIQUE GIGUÈRE ***

Prepared for:

Standing Committee on Government Agencies

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
ONTARIO FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY (TFO)	1
BACKGROUND	1
CURRENT OPERATIONS	2
Minister's Mandate Letter	2
FINANCIAL INFORMATION	3
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS	3
RECENT MEDIA COVERAGE	4
THE WITNESS	5
POSSIBLE QUESTIONS	5

INTRODUCTION

This paper was prepared for Members participating in the Committee's review of the Order-in-Council appointment of Dominique Giguère as part-time member of the Ontario French-language Educational Communications Authority, commercially known as Groupe Média TFO (TFO)¹. It describes the operation of TFO, presents information about the appointee, and suggests possible lines of questioning.

ONTARIO FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY (TFO)

Enabling Statute		Responsible Ministry	
<u>Ontario French-language Educational Communications Authority Act, 2008</u>		Education	
Agency Type		Most Recent Annual Report	
Operational Enterprise		<u>2020-21</u>	
Activities of the Agency			
The board has a mandate to provide a broad range of educational and cultural programs and services that reflect the dynamic and rich nature of French-speaking Ontario. The Authority governs TFO, the province's source for Franco-Ontarian educational and cultural multimedia products, and serves all those interested in knowledge, discovery, and learning.			
Board Membership			
Statutory Number of Members: 9 part-time members		Position	Remuneration
No. Appointed by Cabinet: All		Chair	Up to \$350 per diem
Term of Office: Up to 5 years, plus 5 year renewals		Vice Chairs ²	Up to \$250 per diem
		Members	Up to \$200 per diem
Position Requirements			
No members shall be public servants employed under Part III of the <i>Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006</i> .			

BACKGROUND

The Ontario Educational Communications Authority (TVO) was originally mandated to produce content serving the Franco-Ontarian community starting in 1966.³ In 2008, the Ontario French-language Educational Communications

¹ TFO stands for Télévision française de l'Ontario.

² The Lieutenant Governor in Council may designate one of the other members as Vice-Chair, and shall appoint a person other than a member of the Authority as Chief Executive Officer.

³ TFO, "[Our History](#)."

Authority (TFO) become an autonomous agency, following the passage of the *Ontario French-language Communications Authority Act, 2008*.⁴

CURRENT OPERATIONS

TFO provides French-language educational and cultural multimedia content and services through television and digital media including videos, video games, mobile applications, as well as subscription and social media platforms. TFO operates the TFO television channel (the exclusive French-language television service in Canada operating entirely outside of Quebec), IDELLO (an online learning platform for teachers, early childhood educators, students, and parents), BOUKILI (a collection of illustrated children's books in French), Mini-TFO (online videos and games for children 2 to 6 years), and le LUV (a production studio and incubator for digital content creation), among other programs.

TFO directly supports the Ministry of Education's French-language planning policy ([Politique d'aménagement linguistique](#)) and provides customized services and content for French and English-language school boards (including French as a Second Language programs) as well as other educational organizations.⁵

While TFO content is catered to Ontario and the Franco-Ontarian community, it is increasingly exported to global markets such as the United States.

Minister's Mandate Letter

In his October 8, 2021 [mandate letter](#) to TFO, the Minister of Education requested that TFO focus on several recommendations including that it:

- consult and work closely with francophone stakeholders and educational partners in the development and delivery of French-language educational content;
- support the Ministry of Education in delivering education in the unprecedented context of a global pandemic;
- prioritize learning recovery and renewal with particular attention paid to reading, literacy and math skills;
- increase digital presence through distribution channels;
- support a more coordinated, robust provincial online learning system; and
- support implementation and reporting on the Agency Modernization Initiative⁶

⁴ *Ontario French-language Educational Communications Authority Act, 2008*, S.O. 2008, c. 10.

⁵ Ministry of Education, [Published Plan and Annual Report 2020-21](#).

⁶ Ministry of Education, [TFO Mandate Letter](#), October 8, 2021.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Most of the Authority's funding comes from the Ministry of Education, with smaller contributions from revenue-generating activities (e.g., sale of signal subscriptions) and grants from the federal government and other provinces. Figure 1 summarizes the revenues and expenses from the most recently reported fiscal year.

Figure 1:
TFO Revenue and Expenses, 2020-21 (\$).

	2020	2021
Total revenue	38,965,187	40,768,062
Total expenses	38,882,654	40,765,678
Net actuarial gains	146,500	250,900
Excess of revenue over expenditures	229,033	253,284

Source: Ontario French-Language Educational Communications Authority, [Financial Statements 2021](#).

According to TFO's Financial Statements, they received \$30.8 million in operating grants from the Ministry of Education in 2020/21.⁷ Operational expenses increased by \$1.9 million from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021. TFO lists the following as the main factors for the increase:

- Launch of the Online Elementary Course Development Project.
- Additional marketing and advertising expenditures to support quarantined families during the pandemic, updated IDELLO positioning, and investment to upgrade the television channel.
- Investment of resources to update broadcast rights contract management system (Mission Louise).
- Expansion of ONFR+ programming.
- Strategic evaluation of the online course mandate for high schools.⁸

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

As part of the [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020](#), amendments were made to both the [Ontario Educational Communications Authority Act](#) and the [Ontario French-language Communications Authority Act, 2008](#).

⁷ Ontario French-Language Educational Communications Authority, [Financial Statements 2021](#) (June 25, 2021), p. 28.

⁸ Groupe Média TFO, [2020-2021 Annual Report](#).

According to a government news release, the amendments broaden the mandates of TVO and TFO to allow them “to provide centralized administration, coordination and support for teacher-led online learning in the English-language and French-language publicly-funded education systems.”⁹ The overall purpose of the changes is to give secondary students more choices in online learning. TFO supports these amendments.¹⁰

On December 17, 2021, TFO announced a collaborative effort with the [Conseil scolaire public du Grand Nord de l’Ontario](#) to release 30 clips on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis history and heritage on TFO’s [IDÉLLO](#) platform.¹¹ On February 1, 2022, TFO, TVO, and the Ministry of Education launched the [Ontario Online Course Preview](#).¹² The new platform showcases online courses that are available to publicly funded school boards across the province.

RECENT MEDIA COVERAGE

On March 9, 2021, the TFO Board received a letter containing allegations against interim president Éric Minoli.¹³ An independent third-party investigation was initiated and TFO placed Minoli on administrative leave. The CBC reported, based on information it obtained, allegations including intimidation, sexual and psychological harassment, and conflict of interest.¹⁴ Some media coverage has pointed out that the organization has operated without a permanent president for multiple years and highlighted commentary from stakeholders asking for a permanent appointment to be made.¹⁵

A January 30, 2021 article by Radio-Canada reported that TFO had recently spent more than \$1 million to renew its brand image and overhaul its corporate website. A statement from TFO defended the decision as being in compliance with all provincial standards, and said that the rebrand helped lead to a 10% increase in subscriptions. However, a statement from the Ministry of Education noted the decision was made entirely by TFO and the Ministry had not been consulted.¹⁶

⁹ Office of the Premier, “[Ontario Starting Down the Path to Growth, Renewal and Economic Recovery](#),” news release, July 8, 2020.

¹⁰ Groupe Média TFO, “[OTELFO Bill Submitted to Queen's Park - New mandate for Groupe Média TFO](#),” news release, July 8, 2020.

¹¹ Groupe Média TFO, “[“Vous l’avez astheure”, a project to educate Canadian youth about First Nations history](#),” news release, January 12, 2022.

¹² Groupe Média TFO, “[Accessible, inclusif et équitable : TFO et TVO développent un aperçu des cours en ligne de l’Ontario centralisé pour accompagner les élèves du secondaire dans leur réussite scolaire](#),” news release, February 1, 2022.

¹³ Groupe Média TFO, “[Statement on the administrative withdrawal of Mr. Minoli](#),” announcement, May 12, 2021.

¹⁴ Natasha MacDonald-Dupuis, “[Ontario's French TV channel places interim CEO on leave amid workplace harassment allegations](#),” *CBC News*, May 12, 2021.

¹⁵ Émilie Pelletier, “[Groupe Média TFO: plus de deux ans sans direction générale](#),” *le Droit*, December 14, 2021.

¹⁶ Natasha MacDonald-Dupuis, “[Le diffuseur public TFO en Ontario a dépensé 1 million pour changer son logo et son site](#),” *Radio-Canada*, January 30, 2021.

THE WITNESS

According to the Office of the Premier, the witness, of Aylmer, is a Councillor for the County of Elgin, Deputy Mayor for the Township of Malahide, a Co-Founder and Co-Chief Executive Officer for Currents Group, a former Head of Learning Services for Doctors Without Borders, and a former Executive Director, Talent Management and Organization Effectiveness at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. The witness's community involvement includes serving as a board member for Elgin Stewardship Council.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

What has motivated the witness to seek this position?

Could the witness describe previous experiences that might be of assistance for undertaking this position?

What particular contribution does the witness hope to make?

In the witness's opinion, what is required to succeed in the face of challenges created by COVID-19?