
COMMISSIONER RECOMMENDS THAT THE GOVERNMENT CLOSE THE LOOPHOLES IN THE *FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES ACT*

Under embargo until 10:00am June 17, 2008

Toronto, June 17, 2008– Ontario's French Language Services Commissioner, François Boileau, tabled his first annual report in the Legislature today. Entitled *Paving the Way*, the Commissioner's report describes the services currently being offered in French by the Government of Ontario. Covering the Commissioner's first seven months in office, from September 4, 2007, to March 31, 2008, the report contains three recommendations, including that the government close the loopholes in the *French Language Services Act*.

"The government must take the next step of adopting clear regulations for adequately governing the delivery of French-language services. At the present time, the government has contracts with third parties and public-private partnerships for the delivery of services on behalf of government agencies and ministries. These service providers are not always required to comply with the *Act*. As a result, Francophones do not get the services to which they are entitled. This must stop," stated Mr. Boileau.

The Commissioner also made a recommendation to the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs, that the role of the government's French Language Services Coordinators be revised. "Not all of the French Language Services Coordinators have an opportunity to participate in their ministry's strategic planning process. And yet these coordinators must be in a position to have an impact on the development of programs and services for Francophones," added the Commissioner.

In making this recommendation, Mr. Boileau added: "It is time to redefine Ontario's Francophone population. The government needs a more inclusive definition that reflects the new face of the province's Francophone communities with their linguistically blended families and newcomers."

In his first annual report, the Commissioner made a number of observations, in particular about active offer. He believes that French language services must be designed and delivered in a way that reflects the specific needs of Ontario's Francophones, and that if these communities are to prosper, they must have access to high-quality services in their own language.

Lastly, the Commissioner expects the government to respond positively to his annual report and to follow up on his recommendations.

"The McGuinty government demonstrated leadership in amending the *French Language Services Act* in May 2007. I hope that it will show the same level of leadership in responding to my report," concluded Mr. Boileau.

QUICK FACTS

- Between November 1, 2007, and March 31, 2008, the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner received 62 complaints. Of these, 43 were admissible and 19 were inadmissible. Since March 31, there have been an additional 42 complaints. Thus, to date, the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner has received 104 complaints.
- The Office of the French Language Services Commissioner has a mandate under the *French Language Services Act* to conduct independent investigations, either in response to complaints or on its own initiative, to prepare reports on its investigations, and to monitor the progress made by government agencies in delivering French-language services in Ontario.
- The French Language Services Commissioner took office on September 4, 2007. The Office team has been in place since February 11, 2008.

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