



NEWS

THE FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES COMMISSIONER LETS COMPLAINANTS TELL THEIR STORIES

TORONTO, June 4, 2015 – French Language Services Commissioner François Boileau puts complainants front and centre in his 2014-2015 Annual Report, entitled *A Voice for the Voiceless*, submitted today to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Honourable Dave Levac.

In his report, the Commissioner presents some poignant accounts of deficiencies in French-language services. These actual cases reveal the human face behind the systemic problems that Ontario's Francophone and Francophile citizens encounter, sometimes at various levels.

“The cases illustrated this year should serve as a lesson for both MPPs and public service executives. Day after day, people choose to stay silent and not complain. They remain voiceless by failing to demand their services in French. The impact is immediate for complainants and their families. But it is also immediate for the government; deficiencies in offering and delivering French-language services simply generate additional costs,” said Commissioner Boileau.

“As an officer of the Legislature, if the story of one of these cases gets through to MPPs, the goal will be achieved in this, the year that marks the 400th anniversary of the French presence in Ontario. These collective gains are not worth much if, at the human and therefore highly individual level, a citizen cannot obtain the high-quality services to which he or she is entitled in a timely basis.”

The Commissioner also presents mixed reviews of the responses to his 2013-2014 recommendations. The establishment of a standing committee on French-language services in the Legislative Assembly is only at the initial discussion stage. The Commissioner is pleased that consideration of the proposal is under way, but insists on the 2016 deadline. With regard to the recommendation that the Office of Francophone Affairs submit a full, relevant annual report to the Legislative Assembly, the Commissioner received a commitment that this would be done, but another year has just ended with no action. The government agrees with the recommendation concerning the creation of a group of experts on Francophone immigration to ensure that the 5% target is achieved, but no announcement has been made. Only his recommendation regarding access to justice in French has made real progress, as a pilot project was recently launched at the Ottawa courthouse.

The Commissioner's eighth Annual Report also covers the following topics:

- In 2014-2015, 379 complaints were received, 285 of which were admissible. This is more than one complaint per business day. In the last eight years, the Commissioner's Office has received a total of nearly 2,500 complaints, 83% of which were investigated.
- Seven issues to watch, including the investigations on the governance of the Centre Jules-Léger and on designated services at the Penetanguishene General Hospital, which the Commissioner promises to keep a close eye on.
- Three agreements reached in collaboration with the Law Society of Upper Canada, Elections Ontario as well with the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada and TO2015.

QUICK FACTS

- The position of French Language Services Commissioner was created in September 2007 following an amendment to the *French Language Services Act*.
- The French Language Services Commissioner became the ninth officer of the Legislature on January 1, 2014, following the unanimous adoption of Bill 106.
- Under section 11(3) of the *French Language Services Act*, the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs is required to submit to the Lieutenant Governor in Council a report on the affairs of the Office of Francophone Affairs at the end of each fiscal year.
- In 2016, Ontario will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the *French Language Services Act*.

The Office of the French Language Services Commissioner reports directly to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Its principal mandate is to ensure compliance with the French Language Services Act in the delivery of government services.

-30-

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