

SPEAKER'S NOTES
for Commissioner François Boileau

Press Conference
Submission of the 2017-2018 Annual Report
LOOKING AHEAD, GETTING READY

Message to the Media
Wednesday, July 18, 2018
1:30 p.m.

Media Studio, Legislative Assembly, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario



(Thank the person who introduces you.)

Mesdames et messieurs, ladies and gentlemen,

Good day,

Thank you for being here today for the submission of my eleventh annual report.

I want to start with some good news about what was done in 2017-2018. My team and I are proud to have set up a Client Portal in 2017-2018. This new platform is an online tool that allows Ontarians to track and see the progress made on their complaints 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, no matter where they are, and communicate with investigators.

This is a significant improvement in our complaint handling process.

We have also developed new standards of service. They are intended to reduce complaint-processing times, provide constant communications with our clients, and increase their satisfaction.

The Office of the French Language Services Commissioner processed 315 complaints and inquiries in 2017-2018.

More than two-thirds of them were admissible.

For the complaints' complete picture, please see section 11 of the report.



Good moves also need to be commended. I reserved a section on best practices in French-language services and active offer. I chose 28 of them, which is excellent.

In addition, in my foreword, I congratulate the previous government for laying the groundwork for the Université de l'Ontario français, for implementing a successful project to improve access to justice in French at the Ottawa courthouse, and for agreeing to revise the process for designating organizations under the *French Language Services Act*.

One of the important roles assigned to me by the *Act* is to provide advice to the government, and that duty is the central pillar of this year's report.

I invited seven experts to write about issues affecting the delivery of French-language services, focusing on projections of the Francophone population in 2028.

In contrast to last year's report, which was a review of the previous 10 years, this report looks ahead at the Francophone population in 10 years, envisions the issues facing the Francophone communities, and considers how the government will have to revise the provision of French-language services in response.

To be clear, producing a demographic outlook does not help predict the future. But it helps you imagine the future.

So I invited those specialists to imagine what French-language services would look like in 2028.

Many demographic scenarios were provided.



Even in the best case, the scenarios show that by 2028, despite the foreseeable growth of Ontario's Francophone population in absolute terms, its size as a percentage of the province's total population will have continued to decline.

This conclusion is rather alarming. We have to get ready for this scenario, in which the Francophone population will face a serious need to play catch-up.

I am therefore calling on the government to get ready. Hence the title of my report, **LOOKING AHEAD, GETTING READY.**

Through advice and recommendations I offer the government, I attempt first and foremost to engage public decision-makers and encourage Francophone communities to take collective action.

I have 14 recommendations for the government, seven of them on immigration, a key issue for Francophone communities in the next decade.

By 2028, the proportion of Francophones would fall, settling somewhere between 3.9% and 4.0%. This would represent a decline from the 4.7% proportion of Francophones in Ontario observed in 2016, and a decline from 4.8% observed in 2011. On the other hand, the proportion of immigrants in the Francophone community will jump to between 22% and 26% of its population.

Regional differences will persist. This will probably exacerbate the demographic decline in those regions. We need to plan for it and take action.



The Francophone communities are going to lose demographic weight in the next decade – that is clear from the projections made by the experts. But without a concerted interministerial strategy for increasing Francophone immigration in cooperation with the federal government, that loss of demographic weight will be more serious.

The full development of Ontario's Francophone communities hinges largely on the courage of immigrants who leave their native countries, often to improve living conditions for their families, and move to our cities, towns and villages.

Now it's our turn to show a bit of courage and leadership and ensure that the immigration process is as fair and as transparent as possible.

I also make seven other recommendations, one for each of the areas affected by this 2028 projection of the Francophone population.

Population aging is one that's unavoidable.

With the combination of isolation, living in French in Ontario, and the diseases associated with aging, such as dementia, the public policies on French-language health services that need to be developed or enhanced in the next 10 years are particularly important.

The effects on the health care system and for society as a whole will be substantial.

I recommend that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, together with other ministries, set clear, measurable objectives for concrete ways of addressing the aging of Ontario's Francophone population.



In my report, I also look at the Ontario government's digital services and all of their potential for Francophones.

I realize that the restructuring of in-person services is an important, inevitable and almost irreversible process. But deploying digital systems without recognizing cultural and linguistic differences would be an approach doomed to failure. The lack of a language identifier on traditional pieces of identification (such as driver's licences and health cards) is another example of a potential obstacle. I recommend a strategy to deal with that.

In looking ahead to 2028, you have to think about tomorrow's jobs in French-language services. Technological change, automation and artificial intelligence will have major repercussions for jobs and the provision of French-language services in Ontario in 2028.

I recommend that the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs, with the support of her colleagues, develop a comprehensive human resources strategy for French-language services, for the benefit of Ontario's Francophones.

I also restate the findings and recommendations of my recent investigation report on the publishing of French-language digital content.

In Ontario, and in Canada, local media companies are losing audience and revenue to multinationals that have much deeper pockets than they do.

What's more, advertising by government ministries and agencies in Ontario's Francophone media has generated large numbers of complaints since the Commissioner's Office was established.



We need to curb this negative impact on the viability of Ontario's French-language media. But it goes much further It's about the impact on the vitality of our communities. I therefore reiterate the recommendations I made on the subject.

[PAUSE]

I close my annual report with a comprehensive solution in response to the demographic scenarios presented and the experts' forecasts regarding the need to keep pace with the new realities of the Francophone communities.

I recommend that the government initiate the process to provide itself of an Action plan on the development of Francophone communities and the promotion of French in Ontario.

In view of the demographic projections, the government must adopt an integral and interministerial strategy with milestones and concrete objectives. That would provide the ministries with a framework and indicate where we need to go collectively.

Even more importantly, the Francophone community must be consulted; there can be no better experts than Franco-Ontarians themselves.

I invite you to participate in the Symposium LOOKING AHEAD, GETTING READY on November 26th, 2018. This will be a unique opportunity to mobilize public decision-makers, experts and members of civil society and Francophone and Francophile leaders to think seriously about the key issues and to take strong measures to attenuate the sharp demographic decline in the Franco-Ontarian population.

The implementation of an Action Plan is an ambitious project, certainly. But it's absolutely necessary, and it's visionary.



These are my objectives for the action plan: comprehend the realities, interests and concerns of the Francophone communities, and put in place the appropriate public policies to, as stated in the preamble of the *French Language Services Act*, preserve the cultural heritage of the French-speaking population for future generations.

The new government, it would appear, is a government of action. The findings and issues relating to French-language services that I report on require just that – action.

Moreover, in its throne speech last week, the government said, “It will require a unity of purpose. A clear vision. And a lot of hard work. But Ontario has everything it needs to succeed. [Y]our government should be working harder, smarter and more efficiently to make life better for you.”

These promises could not have come at a better time.

So I intend to take the government at its word.

Thank you very much.

I will now take your questions in the language of your choice