

Commissariat aux
services en français
de l'Ontario



Office of the
French Language Services
Commissioner of Ontario

**LOOKING AHEAD
GETTING READY**
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2017
2018



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This document is a summary of the 2017-2018 Annual Report of Office of the French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario. It outlines the principal sections of the report covering the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner's activities from April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018, and sets out the resulting recommendations.



SUMMARY

The Commissioner, through the assessment made in this Annual Report, seeks above all to enlist decision-makers to adopt practical measures for the provision of French language services tailored to the needs of the Francophone community. He also seeks to give communities tools and to involve them in equally strong collective initiatives.

It is in this spirit that the Commissioner invited seven experts to provide submissions on the challenges that affect the provision of French language services in the context of prospective demographics.

Based on three demographic scenarios, this report forecasts Ontario Francophonie in 2028. The finding is alarming. Despite the foreseeable growth of Ontario's Francophone population in absolute terms, it will continue to decline in proportion to the rest of the province's population. The Commissioner calls for action and dialogue in order to prepare the Francophonie for this scenario. He formulates 14 recommendations, including one to equip the province with an Action plan on the development of Francophone communities and the promotion of the French language in Ontario.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Demographic projections of Ontario's Francophonie in 2028

This year, the Commissioner focusses on anticipating the future situation of the Francophonie. In all of the scenarios presented, the proportion of Francophones in Ontario will be lower in 2028. There are many solutions to remedy this situation in the full report and they require the involvement of several key ministries.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Commissioner is recommending that the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs, together with her Cabinet colleagues, analyze the issue of the anticipated decline in the proportion of Ontario's Francophone population and identify strategies to turn the tide or, at the very least, minimize its consequences.

Francophone immigration in Ontario

By 2028, the proportion of Francophone immigrants will significantly increase from 22% to 26% of Ontario's Francophone population. However, the regional disparities will continue, which will probably only aggravate the demographic decline of these regions. After this broad overview of Francophone immigration, the Commissioner formulated seven recommendations.



RECOMMENDATION 2

The Commissioner recommends that the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, in conjunction with the federal Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, substantially increase the number of candidates that the province can nominate under the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program so that the Program can achieve its objectives and truly contribute to the development and vitality of Ontario's Francophone communities in the coming decade.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Commissioner recommends that the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade:

- a. explicitly name the initiative "Destination Ontario français" to put the emphasis on the Francophone component;
- b. make "Destination Ontario français" a permanent initiative;
- c. include Francophone organizations with knowledge of the issues in the Ontario delegation; and
- d. consider current trends in terms of promising pools and networks for the recruitment of Francophone immigrants in order to accurately target promotional activities, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Commissioner recommends that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities:

- a. commission a study to better understand the challenges that French-speaking immigrants face with regard to their integration into the job market and the potential impact of location of their studies on getting credential recognition;
- b. seize the opportunity offered by the creation of the “Université de l’Ontario français” in Toronto to establish new credential assessment services in French recognizing the education and work experience of immigrants, particularly through bridging courses developed in collaboration with professional associations.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Commissioner recommends that the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade:

- a. review the criteria of the Ontario Express Entry French-Speaking Skilled Worker Stream to remove the requirement for French-speaking candidates to speak English by 2019-2020. However, this should be accompanied by the communication of clear and accurate information for these candidates regarding the linguistic reality of Ontario and the language courses available;
- b. give additional points to French-speaking candidates with children who want to immigrate to Ontario with their family.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Commissioner recommends that the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services:

- a. review the funding formula for organizations that provide services so that it better reflects the reality of minority-language organizations and decrease the weight given to the number of clients served;
- b. commission a study in 2018-2019 to analyze the supply of reception, settlement and integration services offered in French by Francophone organizations throughout the province, and evaluate where the needs and the gaps are. Such a study is essential to better inform prospective immigrants and clarify what is being offered.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Commissioner recommends that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, together with the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and stakeholder organizations in the Francophone community, develop, in 2018-2019, a “Guide for the Francophone immigrant” to be included in a welcome kit given to all newcomers coming to Service Ontario to get a health card or driver’s license.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Commissioner recommends that the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services:

- a. develop, by the end of March 2019, an effective strategy on Francophone immigration for the promotion, recruitment, selection, settlement, integration, training and retention, including goals, specific actions and deadlines for each of these elements;
- b. include in this strategy a timetable for achieving and maintaining the 5% goal; and
- c. create within its Ministry an administrative unit for Francophone immigration.

Aging with dignity in french

The combination of age-related illnesses (such as dementia), isolation, and living in French in Ontario places a special emphasis on policies related to care and services in French that need to be put in place or strengthened in the next decade. The effects will be significant on the health system and society as a whole.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Commissioner recommends that the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility in partnership with the ministries of Health and Long-Term Care, Children, Community and Social Services, and the Office of Francophone Affairs focus on measurable objectives to be achieved and concrete approaches to dealing with the aging of Ontario's Francophone population.

Production and dissemination of French-language digital content

In Ontario, and in Canada, local media are losing their audience to multinationals that have significantly greater financial means, which is compounded by the loss of advertising revenues from ministries and government agencies in Ontario's Francophone media. Measures must be taken in the near future to mitigate these adverse consequences on the viability of French-language media in Ontario. The Commissioner therefore reiterates the recommendations formulated in his recent investigative report on that subject.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The Commissioner recommends that the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs, in 2018-2019, strike an advisory committee to provide guidance to the government in matters pertaining to the French-language media to develop, prioritize and recommend concrete measures to ensure the viability of Francophone media.

The commissioner further recommends:

- amendments to the Communications in French Guidelines to include 1) an accountability mechanism and 2) the obligations pertaining to communications in French in the Advertising Content Directive and any other directives;
- adoption of a regulation on communications in French in 2018-2019;
- the annual publication of a report on the compliance rate with the new amended regulations and guidelines, beginning in 2019-2020;
- development of a new media-brief model¹ that clearly enforces compliance with the regulatory framework;
- training for employees and heads of communications sections in the public service and in advertising agencies on a regular and periodic basis, accompanied, as of 2019, by a report on the number of public servants and agencies trained;
- the introduction of a pilot Ontario French-language media financial support program; and
- the introduction of measures to stimulate the production and consumption of French-language digital content by young people.

¹ A media brief is a guide to help advertising agencies comply with the requirements and limitations established by a communications section of a government ministry.

Digital transformation of the government-citizen relationship

The optimal implementation of digital services by the government of Ontario could offer Francophones a broad range of advantages. However, a deployment of digital systems that do not consider cultural and linguistic differences within communities is an approach that is destined to fail. The absence of a language identifier on traditional identification (like the driver's licence and health card) is another example of a potential barrier. The Commissioner recommends a strategy in this regard.

RECOMMENDATION 11

The Commissioner recommends that the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs, with the help of Cabinet colleagues, provide a complete strategy that takes into account the cultural and linguistic differences of Francophone communities with regard to the deployment of digital systems, and opportunities for better services adapted and tailored to the Francophone community's needs everywhere in the province. The strategy must focus on the key sectors of health and long-term care, as well as direct services to the population, including through the use of a linguistic identifier on health insurance cards and drivers' licence.

Restructuring in-person services

The merger of public agencies and devolution to other levels of government or the private sector are new forms for service delivery that have the most impact on Francophones. The Commissioner looks at the challenges associated with this development while recognizing that the restructuring of in-person services is an important, inevitable, and almost irreversible process.

RECOMMENDATION 12

The Commissioner recommends to the government, the establishment of an interdepartmental working committee under the coordination of the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs in order to develop a guide for implementing alternative models of service that take into account the needs and specificity of the Francophone population of Ontario.

Tomorrow's workforce

In the next ten years, thousands of public civil servants and more than three-quarters of assistant deputy ministers will be eligible for retirement. Technological development, automatization and artificial intelligence will also have significant repercussions on jobs and the on providing French-language services in Ontario in 2028.

RECOMMENDATION 13

The Commissioner recommends to the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs that an interministerial strategy be developed with her Cabinet colleagues to ensure there is a competent and efficient workforce that is also bilingual in Ontario. It will have to propose innovative solutions for:

- an increase in the number of qualified teachers in french;
- the design of new programs in French, including for the North;
- the promotion and acquisition of bilingualism as a global employment skill; and
- the support of permanent immigration for international Francophone students.

Action plan on the development of Francophone communities and the promotion of the French language in Ontario

In Ontario, there is still no fundamental action plan that specifically presents the government's vision for the future of the development of Francophone communities. This is an ambitious project that would provide a framework for the government's policies and programs.

RECOMMENDATION 14

The Commissioner recommends that the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs work with Cabinet colleagues to initiate the process, including consultations, to provide the government of Ontario with an Action plan on the development of Francophone communities and the promotion of the French language in Ontario for 2020-2025 that includes measurable objectives, along with performance indicators.

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COMPLAINT STATISTICS

In 2017-2018, the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner received 315 complaints and information requests. It also established a client portal so that citizens can monitor the progress of their complaints, promptly communicate with the investigations unit, and proceed to file other complaints online.

Category	Total
Low impact	9
Information requests	38
Inadmissible	82
Admissible	186
Total	315

Inadmissible Complaints	Total
Other*	40
Federal	12
Private	12
Municipal	8
Outside of designated areas	5
Frivolous, vexatious, made in bad faith	3
Incomplete files	2
Total	82

* Complaints related to subjects that are outside the mandate of the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner.

Geographic Distribution of Complaints	%
Eastern Ontario	24%
Central Ontario	43%
Northeastern Ontario	9%
Northwestern Ontario	2%
Southwestern Ontario	2%
Other*	20%

* Complaints related to online services, toll-free numbers, and those involving undesignated areas.

Admissible Complaints by Service Type	%
Web sites and online services	21%
In-person services	36%
Documents	19%
Signage	3%
Social media	1%
Services by telephone	12%
Other	8%

Admissible Complaints by Institution	Total
Legislative Assembly*	4
Other institutions**	12
Ministry of Francophone Affairs	2
Ministry of Education	6
Ministry of Energy	3
Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development	11
Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change Resources	2
Ministry of Finance	15
Ministry of the Attorney General	31
Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry	6
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care	40
Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services	3
Ministry of Children and Youth Services	5
Ministry of Government and Consumer Services	15
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services	3
Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport	9
Ministry of Transportation	7
Ministry of Labour	4
Municipalities***	8
TOTAL	186

* Complaints related to agencies that report directly to this institution.

** Complaints related to institutions under the control of the provincial government. They are related to agencies created or mandated by various ministries to offer programs and services that, in cases of devolution, were previously delivered by the province.

*** Complaints considered admissible brought against a municipality with a by-law on providing French language services and municipalities that offer services on behalf of a government agency.