

French-language Services: Past, Present, Future

Since the late 1960s, the Government of Ontario has adopted a series of measures to create or enhance the provision of French-language services. On the occasion of the French Language Services Act's 25th anniversary, the Office of Francophone Affairs has prepared the following chronology which highlights some of the key steps of this process.

FRANCOPHONE AFFAIRS

- 1972**
 • Adoption of a government policy on the delivery of French-language services (obligation to translate documents intended for public distribution, to respond in French to written requests for information in French, creation of the first designated areas).
- 1977**
 • Beginning of bilingual signage in government buildings; appointment of French-language services coordinators in some ministries.
- 1985**
 • The Office of the Provincial Coordinator of French Language Services becomes the Office of Francophone Affairs.
- 1986**
 • Enactment of the French Language Services Act (Bill 8), which consolidates existing policies and recognizes the right of Francophones to receive government services in French and to communicate with the Ontario government in French.
 • Establishment of simultaneous interpretation services at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.
- 1988**
 • Designation of the first 47 agencies under the French Language Services Act.
- 1989**
 • On November 19, 1989, the French Language Services Act comes into effect, guaranteeing the right to receive services in French.
- 1990**
 • Placement of bilingual signage on provincial highways.
- 2001**
 • The Franco-Ontarian flag becomes one of the province's official emblems.
- 2003**
 • Licence plates display, on request, the Franco-Ontarian flag.
- 2004**
 • Designation of Brampton and Callander under the French Language Services Act.
- 2005**
 • Creation of the *Ontario Francophonie Awards* to recognize Francophones and Francophiles who have made a significant contribution to the advancement of the French fact in Ontario.
- 2006**
 • Designation of Kingston under the French Language Services Act.
 • Signing of the Ontario-Quebec Cooperation Protocol on Francophone Affairs.
- 2007**
 • Development of a French services accountability framework to be integrated in the annual planning process of each ministry.
 • Creation of the Office of French Language Services Commissioner. Reporting to the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs, but independent of the OFA, the Commissioner is responsible for handling complaints relating to the FLSA, conducting investigations to ensure compliance with the FLSA and submitting special reports as well as an annual report to the Minister that is tabled in the Legislative Assembly.
- 2008**
 • Introduction of French licence plates for personal vehicles.
 • OFA launches the "Accent On Youth" strategy to encourage young Francophones to socialize, work, and live in French.

- 2009**
 • Adoption of a new more inclusive definition of Francophone (DIF): 50,000 more Francophones identified, bringing the total Franco-Ontarian population to over 580,000.
 • Addition of a Youth Francophonie Award as part of the Ontario Francophonie Awards.
 • Release by the OFA on its website of a new General Statistical Profile of Ontario's Francophone Community in December 2009.
- 2010**
 • Adoption of the Franco-Ontarian Day Act. The Province of Ontario officially recognizes September 25th of each year as Franco-Ontarian Day as well as the "contribution of the Francophone community of Ontario to the social, economic and political life of the Province and the community's importance in Ontario's society".
 • Adoption of a new directive for Communications in French by the Ontario Government. Ministries and classified agencies are required to consider and incorporate the Franco-Ontarian community's specific needs when developing and implementing communications strategies and tactics.
- 2011**
 • Adoption of a Regulation on the provision of French language services by third parties on behalf of government agencies.
 • 32 new public service agencies were designated under the FLSA since 2003, which brings the total number of designated agencies to 222. These agencies provide health services and support services for children, youth and women who are victims of violence.

HEALTH

- 1988**
 • Creation of the first Centre médico-social communautaire (Toronto) to bring health and social services under one roof. Others will open in Cornwall (1989), Sudbury (1991), Hamilton (1992), Welland (1992) and New Liskeard (1996).
- 2002**
 • A five-year memorandum of understanding is reached by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the French-Language Health Services Network of Eastern Ontario.
- 2006**
 • \$185 million investment to double the size of the Montfort Hospital, the only French-language teaching hospital in Ontario.
 • Passage of the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006 which provides for the creation of a French-language advisory council on health care services in French and for mandatory community engagement with Francophone planning entities at the local level.
- 2007**
 • Creation of the French Language Health Services Advisory Council.
- 2010**
 • Adoption of the Francophone Community Engagement Regulation under the Local Health Integration Networks Act. Establishment of 6 French language health planning entities (1 in Northern Ontario, 1 in Eastern Ontario and 4 in Southern Ontario) in order to provide advice and input on French language health services in their communities.
 • Inauguration of the "new" Montfort hospital.

PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- 1991**
 • Creation of a program to assist sexual assault victims in order to improve the services offered in French to Francophone women.
- 2005**
 • Creation of a help line for Francophone women who are victims of violence: 1 877 FEMAIDE (1 877 336-2433). Francophone women across the province can access this dedicated toll-free line anytime.
- 2010**
 • Announcement of a \$5.2 M investment for the construction of Toronto's first Francophone women's shelter.
 • Opening of a 10-bed women's Francophone Shelter in Timmins.

EDUCATION

- 1968**
• Official recognition of French-language elementary schools; authorization to create French-language sections at the secondary level.
- Creation of French-language advisory committees within school boards.
- 1979**
• School boards are required to establish French-language classes, sections or schools where numbers warrant.
- 1984**
• Recognition of the right of Francophones to receive an education in French at the elementary and secondary levels and removal of the “where numbers warrant” requirement.
- 1986**
• Enactment of legislation on school governance giving Francophones exclusive control of French-language schools and sections.
- 1988**
• Creation of French-language community literacy centres.
- 1990**
• Opening of Ontario’s first French-language college of applied arts and technology, La Cité collégiale, in Ottawa.
- 1995**
• Opening of Collège Boréal in Sudbury.
- 1997**
• Creation of 12 French-language school boards (4 public and 8 catholic).
- 2000**
• Creation by the 12 French-language school boards of the SAMFO project, a multimedia and e-learning initiative designed to compensate for the geographic and demographic dispersion of the Francophone school population in Ontario by ensuring access to more courses at the secondary level.
- 2006**
• The growing number of French-language schools gives rights holders increased access to French-language education across the province.
- Launch of the *Politique d’aménagement linguistique de l’Ontario*, a language planning policy to promote the French language and culture, improve student achievement, and help keep young Franco-Ontarians in French-language schools.
- Creation of an advisory committee on French-language postsecondary education.
- Establishment of a permanent Elementary and Secondary French-Language Education Task-Force.
- 2009**
• New *Aménagement Linguistique* Policy whose goal is to help the province’s French-language educational institutions and settings optimize the transmission of the French language and culture among young people, to help them reach their full potential in school and society, and to breathe new life into the francophone community.
- 2010**
• Creation of 266 new child-care spaces in French language schools.
- 2003-2011**
• Additional investments of \$562 million in the French-language education system, at the elementary and secondary level, since 2003; an increase in per pupil funding of over 69%. The total funding for French-language boards for the 2010-11 school year was \$1.24 billion, the largest investment in French Language education in the history of the province.
- 2011**
• Ontario puts in place a French-language policy framework for postsecondary education and training. The goal is to help provide Ontarians with more opportunities to study and train in French.
- Substantial additional investments in infrastructure in the primary, secondary and postsecondary francophone educational sectors:
- \$248.9 million worth of construction was undertaken under the French Capital Transitional Funding component of the Grant for New Pupil Places in the primary and secondary school systems.
- \$84.8 million was invested in the postsecondary sector as well as in training for Francophones.

CULTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS

- 1969**
• Creation of a Franco-Ontarian Office of the Ontario Arts Council and of a French-language section at TVOntario.
- 1987**
• TVOntario’s La Chaîne française, now known as TFO, begins broadcasting.
- 1993**
• The first *Salon du livre de Toronto* is held in October 1993, with the support of Ontario ministries.
- 1994**
• Creation of the Prix Trillium, an annual award for Ontario’s Francophone writers.
- 2006**
• Establishment of an improvement program for French-language, rural, Northern, and First Nations libraries.
- 2007**
• The OFA, in collaboration with the *Regroupement des organismes du patrimoine franco-ontarien*, launches the travelling exhibition *Ontario’s Francophonie: Then and Now*.
- 2008**
• TFO becomes an independent and self-governing organization with its own budgets, its own board of directors and its own offices.
- 2010**
• Official launch of TFO in Manitoba.
- The Ministry of Tourism and Culture launches two three-year pilot programs to address the needs of Francophone visual artists, arts organizations and collectives in Ontario.

JUSTICE

- 1979**
• Recognition of the right of Francophones to criminal proceedings in French in Ontario.
- 1984**
• Enactment of the Courts of Justice Act, giving French and English official language status in Ontario’s court system.
- 1991**
• The Revised Statutes of Ontario are published in French.
- 1993**
• Designation of the first two French-language legal clinic under the French Language Services Act (one in Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry and the other in Prescott-Russell).
- 1998**
• Enactment of the Legal Aid Services Act, 1998, resulting in the creation of Legal Aid Ontario/Aide juridique Ontario, an independent government funded agency subject to the French Language Services Act.
- 2000**
• Creation of a Forum between francophone stakeholders and senior managers from the justice sector in order to work together to improve French language services in the justice sector.
- 2002**
• Memorandum of understanding to open the first Francophone legal aid clinic in Toronto, followed by the Ottawa clinic in 2003.
- 2003**
• Launch of the first Ontario Provincial Police Strategy for the Delivery of French Language Services.
- 2004**
• Creation of a French Language Institute for Professional Development through which professionals in the justice system can increase their French-language abilities.
- 2006-2011**
• Implementation of the first phase of the *Strategic Plan for the Development of French Language Services in Ontario’s Justice Sector*, in partnership with the francophone stakeholders, which aims to improve, modernize and expand access to French Language Services in the justice sector.
- 2011-2015**
• Renewal of the *Strategic Plan (Phase 2): Evolution of French Language Services in Ontario’s Justice Sector*.

MUNICIPALITIES

- 2006**
• Creation of a website, *Centre d’archives des règlements municipaux*, which provides the English and French versions of municipal by-laws.
- 2009**
• As part of the province’s Accent on Youth Strategy, launch of a new initiative developed by the OFA in partnership with the *Association française des municipalités de l’Ontario* (AFMO) – which aims to encourage young Francophones to learn more about municipal affairs.