

**Responsibility Centre in Institutions
for
Official Languages**

Official Languages Act

Treasury Board Secretariat

April 7, 1998

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Official Languages Act (OLA)

Context

- Following Program Reviews I and II various observers, including the Commissioner of Official Languages (COL), have asserted that there is a weakening of the network and visibility of official languages in federal institutions.
- This assertion was also made by the Sussex Circle in a study commissioned by the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS), dealing with the administration of the Official Languages Program in federal departments.
- The results of the COL studies raise questions about the reliability of the optimistic data provided by departments on the basis of their own in-house studies.
- Official language minority communities wish to have access to a high-level contact within departments.
- TBS's new approach to the functions of a modern comptrollership require that rigorous accountability be implemented within the institutions concerned, so that TBS can adjust comptrollership to institutional circumstances.
- Treasury Board (TB) has decided to react vigorously to strengthen the official languages network. The Program should be made more visible within departments and other government agencies for which TB is the employer.

Treasury Board Decision

- That all federal institutions optimize in their Treasury Board submissions the impact of initiatives on the development of minority official language communities, and on institutional bilingualism, in the following manner:
 - at TBS: by incorporating the above considerations into their analyses;
 - in general, that departments identify a high-level responsibility centre accountable to the deputy minister for the above aspects, and for Cabinet submissions.

What this means:

- Departments and other federal institutions for which TB is the employer will need to identify a senior official, accountable to the deputy minister, who will become the champion of official languages within the institution. Generally, this means that the official responsible for official languages is a member of the executive committee of the department.

- Specifically, the responsibility centre will have the following objectives:

Increase the visibility of official languages (institutional bilingualism and application of section 41 of the *OLA*, which deals with the development of official language minority communities) within the institution.

Ensure that the public can communicate with offices designated as bilingual and receive services in French or English where required by the *Act* or the Regulations (Part IV of the *OLA*).

Ensure that an environment conducive to the use of both official languages is maintained within the institution, so as to assure the effective use of both official languages in regions designated as bilingual with respect to language of work, including language requirements for EXs, thereby establishing an organizational culture favourable to bilingualism (Part V of the *OLA*).

Ensure that measures are taken to remedy shortcomings, as required, with respect to the equitable participation of both official language groups (Part VI of the *OLA*).

Ensure the necessary and ongoing links between the institution's activities dealing with Parts IV, V, VI (institutional bilingualism) and Part VII (development of official language minority communities and promotion of linguistic duality) of the *OLA*.

Ensure that all TB and Cabinet submissions submitted by the institution were the object of a systematic analysis of impacts, and optimize these impacts for institutional bilingualism and the development of minority official language communities.

Ensure that official language minority communities have access to a high-level contact in every federal institution for which TB is the employer.

Generally, TBS will incorporate these elements into its analysis for reviewing departmental submissions to the TB, and will work very closely with the high-level contact on the official languages program, for which TBS has a general co-ordination mandate.