

ONTARIO'S STRATEGIC PLAN PREAMBLE

1. THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT

In Ontario, the right to French-language services is covered by a number of statutes.

- Under the *French Language Services Act*, any individual is entitled to services in French from the provincial government in 23 designated regions. All government ministries and agencies, and all institutions of the Legislative Assembly are subject to the *Act*. The *Act* provides for the designation of transfer payment agencies (e.g., hospitals) as French-language service providers. The *Act* excludes municipalities but specifies that municipalities may enact by-laws specifying that some or all-municipal services will be available in both languages.
- In the area of education, the *Education Act* recognises the right of Francophones to elementary and secondary education in French, and the right of Francophones to govern their own schools. The *Fewer School Boards Act* established 12 French-language school boards.
- In the area of justice, the *Courts of Justice Act* recognises the official status of French in the provincial courts. Under the *Act*, any individual has the right not only to speak in French before the courts but also the right to be understood by the judge or jury in his or her language, without the assistance of an interpreter. Under the *Legal Aid Services Act*, Legal Aid Ontario must offer its services in English and French. The *Provincial Offences Act*, which transfers responsibility for certain offences to the municipalities, is accompanied by a memorandum of understanding that stipulates that the municipalities must offer the same level of service in French that the province offered prior to the transfer.
- In the area of health, the *Regulated Health Professions Act* specifies that members may communicate in French with their professional colleagues.
- In the area of municipal governance, the *Municipal Act* authorises municipalities to hold meetings in English and French and to enact by-laws in both languages.
- The *Social Housing Reform Act*, which transfers responsibility for social housing to the municipalities, includes requirements about offering French-language services in the designated regions.

2. ONTARIO'S FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY

There has been a French presence in Ontario for close to 350 years; the first settlement dates back to the mission of Sainte-Marie-Among-the-Hurons in Simcoe County in 1649.

French is the mother tongue of close to 500,000 Ontarians (or 5% of the population of Ontario). They make up the largest Francophone community in Canada outside of Quebec (52%).

The proportion of Francophones is highest in Northeastern Ontario (25%) and Eastern Ontario (15%). Francophones represent less than 5% of the population in the other regions. Two out of every five Francophones live in Eastern Ontario; one out of every four Francophones lives in Northeastern Ontario.

La Francophonie—Ontario's Francophone community—includes Francophones from all over the world, notably from Europe, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa.

The percentage of Francophones who are members of a racial minority is increasing. They represent 33% of the Francophone population of Toronto and 14% of the Francophone population of Ottawa. Close to four out of every five Francophones who belong to a racial minority were born in another country (74%).

For a number of reasons, including intermarriage, preserving the gains that have been made in the area of French language rights and institutions is a major challenge. In Ontario, three out of every five Francophones speak French most often at home (57%). Preservation of French language rights and institutions is highest in Eastern Ontario (70%) and Northeastern Ontario (67%) both of which have higher concentrations of Francophones. It is much lower in Southwestern Ontario (27%) and Central Ontario (33%).

Between 1996 and 2001, the percentage of Francophones who spoke French most often at home decreased in every region; this was particularly true in Southwestern Ontario and Northeastern Ontario.

The Francophone population is older than the general population; Francophones are under-represented in the age group 0 to 34 years and over-represented in older age groups.

The level of schooling of Ontario Francophones tends to be lower than that of the general population. Only 15% of Francophones have an undergraduate or a graduate degree, compared to 18% of the general population. Francophone university graduates are under-represented in every region with the exception of Central Ontario, where the percentage of Francophone university graduates (19.3%) is slightly higher than in the corresponding age group of the general population (18.9%).

In the age group 20 to 24 years, the percentage of Francophones who have completed a university education is similar to that of the general population (12.4% compared to 12.6%).

The Francophone unemployment rate is higher in Northern Ontario than in the other regions. Compared to the general population, Francophone unemployment rates are consistently higher in every age group. Unemployment rates tend to be particularly high for young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years; both in the general population and in the Francophone community, youth unemployment rates are almost twice as high as those in the corresponding general population.

The average household income for Francophones is lower than that of the general population (\$61,887 compared to \$64,227). The average income is lower than that of the general population in every region except Central Ontario and Northwestern Ontario. Where employment income is concerned, the reverse is true. The average employment income for Francophones is higher than that of the general population (\$29,527 compared to \$28,838). As is true for the general population, the average employment income of Francophones is higher in Central Ontario and lower in Northeastern Ontario.

Depending on where they live, Ontario Francophones have access to a range of Francophone and/or bilingual institutions and agencies.

The network of institutional services includes community health centres, over 160 daycare services, nine early childhood education centres that offer French language services, over 100 health and social service agencies, 12 French-language school boards that govern close to 390 schools, school-community centres, legal aid clinics, centres for abused women, two French-language colleges of applied arts and technology, an agriculture and agricultural technology college, a bilingual university college, and four universities that offer courses in French.

In terms of community services, the Francophone community is represented by community agencies in a variety of fields: agriculture, education, child services, business, heritage, seniors and retirees, women, health and social service professionals, justice, heritage, the disabled, *caisses populaires* or credit unions, literacy, youth, sports, recreation, tourism, immigrant services, services for victims of violence, and groups representing ethnic and cultural communities and racial minorities. Forty municipalities are members of the Francophone Association of Municipalities of Ontario; however, several of these agencies face tremendous budget pressures.

Bilingualism and a French-speaking labour force is one of Ontario's economic strengths. Approximately 12,000 businesses and corporations are owned by Francophones. In addition to agricultural operations in Eastern, Southwestern, and Northeastern Ontario, Francophone entrepreneurs operate businesses in the primary sector, notably forestry and mining. There are approximately 140 cooperatives, including 50 *caisses populaires*, with assets of close to \$3 billion. Francophone businesspeople connect through a number of organisations including the *Regroupement des gens d'affaires*, the *Chambre économique de l'Ontario*, the *Club canadien de Toronto*, the *Association des femmes d'affaires francophones*, etc.

Ontario has a rich and vibrant Francophone cultural community. Franco-Ontarian authors and playwrights win national literary awards on a regular basis. Throughout the province, there are approximately 30 cultural and community centres, numerous festivals, several art galleries, numerous professional theatre groups, book fairs, film festivals, seven publishing houses, and specialized magazines. Francophones have made their mark in the visual arts, music, dance, and film.

In the area of communications, Francophones have access to six community radio stations and five public radio stations (*Société Radio-Canada*). In terms of television programming, they have access to Ontario's French-language television network, *TFO*, *Société Radio-Canada* (broadcasting from Ottawa), *RDI*, *TV5*, and *TVA*. There are 17 weekly newspapers, two bi-monthly newspapers, one daily newspaper (*Le Droit*), five magazines, and some 50 community newspapers.

The integration of Francophone immigrants is an important issue in Ontario, which receives the largest number of immigrants of any province in Canada and the largest number of French-speaking immigrants after Quebec. Ontario's French-language communities represent very diverse cultures and nationalities. The richness that the cultural diversity of Ontario's Francophone community represents is little-known and poorly-understood. This situation creates communication problems between Ontario's French-language communities and hinders the integration of French-language immigrants.

3. THE CHALLENGES FACING SOCIETY

Great strides have been made since the *French Language Services Act* became law in 1989. In the designated regions of the province, all government ministries and agencies must offer in French all of the services that they provide to the public.

All provincial statutes are enacted in both languages and government offices and information centres serving the designated regions of the province offer services in English and French. All communication with the public must be available in both languages.

Using technology to deliver government services has increased access to French-language services: websites, electronic service outlets, toll-free telephone lines, Telehealth, and other services are available in both languages.

The government's standards for the quality of its telephone services, written services, and over-the-counter services apply to services in both English and French in every designated region of the province.

All government agencies, the majority of whose members are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council (approximately 200), offer services in French.

Moreover, some 200 transfer payment agencies have been designated by regulation as French-language service providers. These agencies include hospitals, children's aid societies, daycare centres, family and child service agencies, services for the disabled, addiction services, and so forth.

However, in recent years, the government's French-language services have been affected by budget cuts, ministry and transfer payment agency restructuring, more private-sector service delivery, the transfer of programs to municipalities, and reduced visibility of French-language services within the civil service and in the community.

Many Francophone communities still have difficulty obtaining services in French. The designated regions of the province include very small communities that are isolated or in rural regions. In some cases, there are no government offices in these regions. These communities do not have access to the same level of service as Francophones living in the Ottawa region, Prescott and Russell Counties or Northeastern Ontario.

Francophones living in Central Ontario and Southwestern Ontario face other challenges. Most Ontarians live in Central and Southwestern Ontario, where the Francophone population represents a very small percentage of the total population (e.g., Toronto: 1.7%, Mississauga: 1.7%, Hamilton: 1.8%, London: 1.7%). In these designated regions, over 70,000 Francophones live in an Anglophone/Allophone population of more than 3.7 million. These regions also have the largest number of Francophone racial minorities and Francophone immigrants. Living in French in these regions and offering high-quality French-language services are major challenges that require a great deal of imagination, flexibility, and determination.

To ensure that as many Francophones as possible have access to high-quality French-language services, we need to address the issues that will enable us to better serve our Francophone population and to maintain productive relationships with its members.

A) Delivery of services by transfer payment agencies

The Government of Ontario offers a wide range of services through transfer payment agencies. These not-for-profit agencies are funded out of the public purse and provide a multitude of services to the public including health services, legal services, social services, and child and youth services. They include hospitals, children's aid societies, legal clinics, homes for the aged, associations for social and community living, family services, addiction centres, battered women's shelters, counselling services, and so forth.

The *French Language Services Act* does not impose obligations on the government's transfer payment agencies. These agencies are encouraged to offer French-language services; however, designation as a French-language service provider is voluntary. Ministries may not have the resources to support agencies that want to enhance their French-language services and the agencies themselves may be lacking in resources. As a result, the range of French-language services offered by the transfer payment agencies varies greatly from region to region.

Enhanced strategies to support transfer-payment agencies in offering French-language services are required.

B) Shortage of bilingual staff

The delivery of high-quality French-language services revolves around the availability of French-speaking staff.

In the past 15 years, a number of ministries have repeatedly raised the challenge of recruiting qualified bilingual staff to deliver their services. It is more difficult to hire bilingual individuals for positions that require technical skills: engineers, inspectors, economists, energy consultants, veterinarians, accountants, environmental agents, geologists, etc. However, the issue that raises the most concerns is the shortage of health and social service professionals.

This shortage affects the ability of ministries to offer French-language services through their own programs and institutions as well as through transfer payment agencies. It is difficult for agencies working in health, social services, and children and youth services to offer high-quality French-language services when they lack physicians, nurses, speech therapists, dieticians, occupational therapists, and physiotherapists who can speak French.

Because of this situation, the ministries need to adopt concrete strategies that will increase the number of professionals who can serve Francophones in their language.

C) Municipal services

Municipalities provide Ontarians with many vital services in the area of health, social services, libraries, ambulance services, fire departments, police services, daycare, housing, arts and heritage, parks and recreation, the environment, and family services.

A few years ago, a number of provincial programs and services were transferred to municipalities. These programs include Ontario Works and the administration of provincial offences.

A number of municipalities with a high percentage of Francophones offer some or all of their services in French and enact by-laws in both languages; however, municipalities have not been provided with additional resources to offer French-language services.

The Ontario government does not currently have programs in place to help the municipalities to offer their services in French. The *Association française des municipalités de l'Ontario* (AFMO) is interested in working with Ontario ministries on this issue. The province is interested in working with AFMO to identify municipalities' priorities and to see what can be done to help them.

D) Communication with the Francophone community

Effective communication with Francophones involves more than translating websites and public documents and printing announcements in one or two community newspapers. Ministries need to be proactive, adapting their messages to the needs of the Francophone community and developing mechanisms that will enable them to reach Francophones in the various regions of the province. This must be done in partnership with community newspapers and radio stations and with Francophone associations.

Ministries must also consult their Francophone clients on a regular basis. They must also be visible at community events (information booths, presentations, meetings) and work with community organisations in order to make their programs and services known. This approach is particularly important in areas such as health promotion, the prevention of disease, the prevention of violence against women, and the promotion of physical activity.

In recent years, there has been little promotion of the government's French-language services. Some Francophones are not aware of their language rights or of the fact that there are government services in French. They do not know which government offices and transfer payment agencies offer services in French. And they don't complain if French-language services are not available or are of inferior quality. Francophones must be encouraged to ask for service in French in the designated regions and to complain if the services they receive do not meet their needs.

E) Francophone participation in government decision-making

The Government of Ontario has approximately 200 agencies, boards and commissions that are subject to the requirements of the *French Language Services Act*. Their members are, for the most part, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Government agencies operate in many different areas including agriculture, justice, human rights, social services, culture, education, economic development, the environment, energy, health services, occupational safety, housing, natural resources, transportation, tourism, postsecondary education, and public safety. Given the role that these agencies play, it is important that Francophones be appointed to their boards of directors. Francophone board members can then articulate the needs of the Francophone community and help these agencies to plan and offer their French-language services more effectively. In the case of administrative tribunals, a lack of French-speaking panel members can result in delays for Francophones in obtaining services and concerns about quality of services.

Ministries must involve Francophones in planning and delivering services to ensure that their programs serve their Francophone clients effectively. Greater Francophone participation could be done through commissions, working groups, working committees, consultations, and exercises for planning French-language services.

F) Promoting the contribution that Francophones make to the life of the province

Many Ontarians are not aware of the existence of the Francophone community and its contribution to the province. They do not understand the role that Francophones have played in the history of the province and the history of Canada, or the steps that the government has taken to preserve the Francophone community's cultural and linguistic heritage.

This lack of awareness of the French fact makes it harder for entrepreneurs, artists, and community groups to increase their reach and activities in Ontario, Canada, and abroad. The role of Francophones in the history of the province and their current contribution to the culture and economy of Ontario must be promoted. Ministries must further develop partnerships with the Francophone community in order to increase the visibility of French language resources in Ontario, particularly where culture and tourism are concerned.

Each year, many Ontarians are officially acknowledged and thanked for their contributions to their communities and the province. Efforts must be made to further encourage the Francophone community to participate in these government programs and to acknowledge Francophones for their volunteer work and contribution to the community.

Many Francophones from other countries have chosen to make Ontario their home, although they make the Francophone community richer and more diverse Ontario ministries and Francophone organisations are not always aware of their presence. More information on Ontario's Francophone ethnic and cultural minorities needs to be circulated within the government and the Francophone community to encourage dialogue on, and greater awareness of, this important segment of the Francophone population.

4) STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE AGREEMENT

The strategic objectives of the Canada-Ontario Agreement on French-Language Services must be integrated into the Ontario government's plan to deliver results for Ontario. The measures that are proposed must be designed to address the government's priorities and produce measurable results.

The Ontario government has set five key priorities for its four-year term of office. All government programs must take these key priorities into account and, wherever possible, contribute to achieving the targeted outcomes.

The government's five key priorities are:

1. Success for students
2. Better health for Ontarians
3. A strong economy
4. Strong communities
5. A stronger democracy

1. Success for students

The province wants its elementary and secondary education system to be one of the best in the world. It is planning to stabilize its system of education and to target excellence in education and success for students. To achieve this, it will introduce a series of initiatives, including limiting the number of students per class, adding more teacher training spaces, creating a literacy and numeracy secretariat, purchasing textbooks and other educational resources, and implementing a learning strategy to increase the number of students who complete high school and take training or pursue a postsecondary education.

2. Better health for Ontarians

The government has made a commitment to improve the health care system and deliver high-quality services. Key strategies include broader access to primary care, community care, and hospital care offering essential health services. The government will focus on healthy lifestyles, the prevention of illness, and the promotion of health. It will promote increased participation in athletics and physical activity and implement a human resource development strategy to increase the number of qualified health care professionals.

3. A strong economy

In addition to improving access to high-quality postsecondary education, the government will transform its training and apprenticeship system in order to better serve apprentices, immigrants, the unemployed, and youth who are making the transition from school to work. It will take steps to eliminate the obstacles that prevent foreign-trained individuals from practising their professions and trades, and will provide small business with more help.

4. Strong communities

The government will revitalize the social service sector and offer coordinated, effective forms of support for children, families, and at-risk populations. Children and families who are at risk will have access to early prevention and intervention services. Support measures will provide at-risk adults and individuals with disabilities with access to services designed to increase their personal autonomy and their autonomy within the community. The government will begin a dialogue with the municipalities to create a new partnership between these two levels of government.

5. A stronger democracy

The government will recognise the contribution that volunteers make to the prosperity and vitality of the province and will encourage more Ontarians to get involved in their communities. It will encourage Ontarians—particularly young Ontarians—to vote. It will be a responsible, transparent government that tells Ontarians about the programs and services it offers and the results that it achieves with the money at its disposal.

In order to contribute to the Ontario government's priorities, while addressing the major challenges involved in delivering high-quality French-language services, the Province of Ontario has set three key strategic objectives under the Agreement.

1. Increase access to French-language services in priority sectors

- Together with their transfer payment agencies and their municipal partners, government ministries and agencies will increase access to high-quality French-language services in the area of health, social services, child and family services, vocational training, services for the elderly and for victims of crime and violence. Efforts will be made to reach young people more effectively.

2. Communication and dialogue with the Francophone community

- Government ministries and agencies will involve Francophones more extensively in planning policies and programs and they will adopt concrete

measures to make their programs and services, including their French-language services, more widely known.

3. Participation and promotion of the contribution that Francophones make to the political, social, cultural, economic, and community life of the province
 - Ministries will promote the cultural and linguistic heritage of Francophones and their cultural diversity. They will encourage the economic development of Francophone communities and highlight the contribution that Francophones make to the prosperity and vitality of the province.

PURPOSE OF AGREEMENT:

To provide a multi-year collaboration framework to support the planning and delivery of quality French-language services for the Francophone community of Ontario, and to support the participation and promotion of Francophones in the political, social, cultural, economic, and community life of the province through structuring initiatives as presented in the strategic plan set out in Schedule B.

SCHEDULE B – ONTARIO’S STRATEGIC PLAN 2005-06 TO 2008-09

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE # 1: SUPPORT SERVICE DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING AND DELIVERY IN A PRIORITY AREA

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT KEY PRIORITY AREAS *	OFA STRATEGIES	PLANNED ACTIONS / MEASURES	EXPECTED RESULTS 2005-06 to 2008-09	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success for Students • Better Health for Ontarians • Stronger, Safer Communities 	<p>Improve access to French-language services for Ontario’s Francophones with a focus on ministries/agencies responsible for implementing services in the following priority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEALTH CARE (Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care); • SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Ministry of Community and Social Services) • SERVICES IN THE JUSTICE SECTOR (Ministry of the Attorney General and Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services) • SOCIAL SERVICES (Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ministry of Children and Youth Services and Ontario Women’s Directorate) • SERVICES FOR SENIORS (Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Ontario Seniors’ Secretariat). 	<p>In areas designated under the <i>French Language Services Act</i> and for services subject to the requirements of the <i>Act</i>, the Government of Ontario is committed to improving access to French-language services by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with transfer payment agencies to increase/improve French-language services • Assisting professionals and professional associations to better serve their Francophone patients/clients/communities • Developing and adapting programs and services to meet the needs of Francophones • Providing Francophones with information on French-language government programs and services • Encouraging Francophones to request and use French-language government programs and services. 	<p>Projects funded contribute to improving access to French-language services in the government’s key priority areas and produce the following results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More transfer payment agencies and professionals in priority areas providing services in French • Increased level of services provided or available in French • More Francophone communities, organizations and individuals have access to programs, services and activities • Francophones express more satisfaction with the services received <p>Reports submitted provide tangible and measurable results which demonstrate the contribution of ministries / agencies to improving access to services in French for Ontario’s Francophones.</p>	<p>Ministries/agencies demonstrate, by means of performance indicators established in the funding submission, increased access to quality French-language services in the priority areas identified by the Government of Ontario. These priority areas are to be finalized in consultation with the federal government.</p>

* See Section 4 (Strategic Objectives of Agreement) in the Preamble of Ontario’s Strategic Plan

SCHEDULE B – ONTARIO’S STRATEGIC PLAN 2005-06 TO 2008-09

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE # 2: ENSURE FORMAL COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION WITH THE FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT KEY PRIORITY AREAS *	OFA STRATEGIES	PLANNED ACTIONS / MEASURES	EXPECTED RESULTS 2005-06 to 2008-09	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong People, Strong Economy • Stronger Democracy • Vital Public Interest 	<p>Improve access to French-language services for Ontario’s Francophones and foster the contribution of Ontario’s Francophones to the social, cultural economic and political life of the province by focussing on the programs and activities of the following ministries/agencies:</p> <p>CULTURE, TOURISM AND RECREATION (Ministry of Culture, Ontario Arts Council, Ontario Heritage Foundation, Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership, Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, Ministry of Natural Resources, Office of Francophone Affairs)</p> <p>MUNICIPAL SERVICES (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Culture).</p>	<p>In areas designated under the <i>French Language Services Act</i> and for services subject to the requirements of the <i>Act</i>, the Government of Ontario is committed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing Francophones’ involvement in the consultative and decision-making processes of the government • Promoting partnerships between ministries/agencies and Francophone organizations for the social, cultural, economic and political development of the Francophone community • Distributing information on government programs and services available in French and disseminating information on the Francophone community • Working with municipalities to increase and improve French-language municipal services. 	<p>Projects funded contribute to fostering the contribution of Ontario’s Francophones to the social, cultural economic and political life of the province and produce the following results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased involvement of Francophone in the government’s consultative and decision-making processes • More services are provided or made available in French • More Francophone communities, organizations and individuals have access to programs, services and activities • Francophones express more satisfaction with the services received <p>Reports submitted provide tangible and measurable indications of progress achieved by ministries / agencies toward fostering the contribution of Ontario’s Francophones to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the province.</p>	<p>Ministries/agencies demonstrate, by means of performance indicators established in the funding submission, the improvements their activities have achieved in fostering the contribution of Ontario’s Francophones to the social, cultural economic and political life of the province. The progress to be achieved is to be finalized in consultation with the federal government.</p>