



French Language Services Unit



Overseeing the Application of the *French Language Services Act*

**Presentation to the Toronto Francophone Affairs
Advisory Committee**

**By Carl Bouchard, French Language Services
Commissioner**

October 17, 2024

French Language Services Act (FLSA)

- Adopted unanimously at Queen's Park in 1986, came into force on November 19, 1989
 - Although it doesn't make French an official language in Ontario, it offers a broad array of rights to provincial government services in French.
- Guarantees the right to receive services in French from:
 - Institutions of the legislature, provincial government ministries, boards, commissions and corporations, and their third parties:
 - Public sector bodies that are designated under the regulation, including hospitals, daycares, universities, and District Social Services Administration Boards.

French Language Services Act (FLSA)

- Central offices of government agencies must offer services in French across Ontario.
- Regional offices must offer services in French in 27 designated regions in Ontario (as of November 1st, 2024).
- The provincial government has to offer its services in French in the City of Toronto.
 - Example: LCBO and ServiceOntario branches

French Language Services Act (FLSA)

- There are 21 designated organizations in Toronto that are subject to the *French Language Services Act* and the Commissioner's jurisdiction, such as:
 - Centre francophone du Grand Toronto
 - Le Petit Chaperon Rouge
 - Les Bouts d'Choux
 - Taibu Community Health Centre
 - Bendale Acres
 - Centres d'Accueil Héritage
 - Autism Society Ontario
 - Women's College Hospital

Role of the French Language Services Commissioner

- Monitor and promote compliance with the *French Language Services Act*
- Investigate unresolved complaints
- Investigate systemic issues
- Report publicly
- Make recommendations for improving the provision of French language services in Ontario

**We are independent
and impartial.**

**Our services are
confidential and
free for everyone.**

| What we do not do

We cannot investigate

- Individuals
- Elected representatives, e.g., MPPs
- Private companies
- Judges or the functions of any court
- Self-regulated professions
- Police officers
- Criminal activities
- Federal government services

We cannot

- Reverse the political decisions of elected representatives or government officials
- Replace or redo the work of existing complaint or accountability mechanisms
- Impose sanctions and orders:
 - The Ombudsman and Commissioner make recommendations

Municipalities and the *French Language Services Act*

- The Commissioner's jurisdiction under the *French Language Services Act* does not include municipalities.
- Exception: When a municipality agrees to offer a service on behalf of the provincial government (third party).
- Example: The City of Toronto acts as a third party when it administers *Provincial Offences Act* matters on behalf of the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Cases

- A francophone from Toronto received a fine for going through a red light and contested it. The forms related to court proceedings were available in English only on the City's website. The complainant had to write to the City to obtain the form they needed in French.
- A Franco-Torontonian received a speeding fine from the City of Toronto by mail. The bilingual document invited the complainant to make the payment online. The website was in English only.

In these cases, the City was providing services on behalf of the province (Ministry of the Attorney General) under the *Provincial Offences Act*. As such, the Ministry must ensure its third party – in this case: the City - offers services in French.

Following our intervention, the French forms are now available online and the website for paying fines will be translated.



The Ombudsman's Office also handles thousands of complaints from the public about services provided by municipalities, school boards and post-secondary institutions across the province.

Matters that fall within the jurisdiction of the City of Toronto Ombudsman must be referred to that office.

Who we oversee

- **1,000+** provincial government departments, agencies, boards, commissions, corporations and tribunals (including provincial prisons)
- **444** municipalities
- **72** school boards and **10** school authorities
- **23** universities
- **Children's aid societies** and licensees
- **Services in French**

Contact us

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