

TOWARD THE DEPOLITICIZATION OF FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

Toronto, October 21, 2009 – In his second annual report, which is being released today, Ontario’s French Language Services Commissioner, François Boileau, wants to see French-language services fully integrated within the Ontario government.

“Integrating and offering French-language services are not some forms of special treatment. It is an obligation under the *French Language Services Act*. French-language services must be depoliticized and the funding allocated to these services must be protected from political influence and budget fluctuations,” stated Mr. Boileau.

French-language services must be the core of programs and services development. The government must stop seeing them as somehow separate from other services. According to the Commissioner, the minimalist approach to French-language services that has set in over the past 20 years, that is to say, since the enactment of the *Act*, must end.

Furthermore, the financial and human resources allocated to French-language services are not adequate, yet the need for these services continues to grow and is more urgent than ever. This has a direct impact on the ability of the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner to deal with an ever-increasing number of complaints. In 2008-2009, the Office recorded 304 complaints—seven times the number reported in its first annual report released last year.

“It is becoming impossible to do more with less, and the quality of the services being delivered to the public is suffering as a result. The government must ensure that it offers services that meet the needs of Francophones. The vitality, development, and survival of Ontario’s Francophone communities depend upon these services,” added the Commissioner.

QUICK FACTS

- This annual report, entitled *One Voice, Many Changes*, is the French Language Services Commissioner’s second annual report. It covers the period from April 1, 2008, to March 31, 2009.
- The Commissioner’s four recommendations deal with the translation of provincial regulations, a mandatory policy on human resources for French-language services, increased resources for the Office of Francophone Affairs and the coordination of French-language services for the fiscal year 2010-2011 and subsequent years, and the creation of a committee in the justice sector to review the shortage of bilingual judges in Ontario.

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