

Living Together with Two Languages



*Answering questions
about official languages in New Brunswick*

Hello!

Bonjour!

At the heart of our identity

*Do I have the right to be served in my language in any hospital?
Why do we have two school systems, one Anglophone, the other Francophone?
Do all government employees have to be bilingual?*

These are some of the questions raised when people talk about official languages in New Brunswick. The goal of this brochure is to answer many of them.

Language and culture are at the very heart of our identity. That is why some New Brunswickers are also speaking out in this document. They share their thoughts on the importance of bilingual services, the value of languages and the characteristics of our public education system.

We have everything to gain by acquiring a better appreciation of what makes New Brunswick such a special place – a province where two linguistic communities can thrive in harmony.

Happy reading,

Katherine d'Entremont
Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick

About this document

This document is published by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick. It contains general information about official bilingualism and linguistic duality. However, it is not a legal text. Readers are invited to consult the official texts of the statutes and regulations if they would like more details about the issues addressed in this document.

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OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
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FOR NEW BRUNSWICK



COMMISSARIAT AUX
LANGUES OFFICIELLES DU
NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK

Across New Brunswick, the provincial government and many organizations must serve you in the official language of your choice.

One Province, Two Official Languages

Official Bilingualism

Since English and French are the official languages of New Brunswick, government services must be provided in both of these languages. The *Official Languages Act* of New Brunswick describes the rights of citizens and the obligations of the government and organizations. Here are a few highlights from the Act.

- All individuals have the right to communicate with and receive services from provincial institutions in the official language of their choice.

Provincial institutions are:

- provincial departments¹ (e.g., the Department of Health);
- Crown corporations (e.g., NB Liquor, NB Power, Service New Brunswick);
- courts;
- agencies of the Legislative Assembly (e.g., the Office of the Ombudsman);
- police services;
- hospitals and public health services;
- any board, commission or council, or other body or office, established to perform a governmental function.

- Provincial institutions must actively offer the public their services in both official languages. This is done by means of bilingual signage and by greeting people in both languages over the phone and in person. Provincial institutions must publish information intended for the general public in both official languages.

- Private or other bodies that provide services on behalf of the provincial government must do so in both official languages.

- New Brunswick's cities (Bathurst, Campbellton, Dieppe, Edmundston, Fredericton, Miramichi, Moncton and Saint John) as well as some municipalities (Atholville, Charlo, Dalhousie, Eel River Crossing, Rexton, Richibucto, Shediac and Tide Head) must provide certain services² to the public in both official languages, including publication of information of a general nature. This obligation also applies to the following Regional Service Commissions: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 11.

It should be noted that the *Official Languages Act* of New Brunswick does not apply to distinct educational institutions. School districts, public schools, community centres, community colleges and universities do not have to offer services in both official languages. Moreover, the *Official Languages Act* does not apply to the English and French sections of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

¹ The *Official Languages Act* of New Brunswick does not apply to the English and French sections of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

² See Services and Communications Regulation 2002-63 under the *Official Languages Act* of New Brunswick.

Questions & Answers

Do I have to request service in my language or must it be offered to me?

Upon first contact, provincial institutions must offer you service in both official languages. That's what is called an *active offer*. For example, when you phone a provincial department, the employee who answers must greet you in both official languages. That lets you know that you have the right to receive the government service in English or French.

Does the *Official Languages Act* apply to schools?

No. School districts, public schools, community centres, community colleges, and universities do not have to offer services in both official languages (see section on duality on page 9).

Do private companies have to offer service in both official languages?

No. However, a private company that provides a service on behalf of the New Brunswick government must serve you in the official language of your choice.

Is the aim of the *Official Languages Act* to make all New Brunswickers bilingual?

No. The Act in no way forces people to be bilingual. It gives people the right to receive government services in the official language of their choice.

Do English and French services have to be of equal quality?

Yes. The *Official Languages Act* states that English and French have equality of status as to their use within the provincial government.

The *Official Languages Act* applies across the province. Wouldn't it be simpler to designate some Anglophone regions, some Francophone regions, and some bilingual regions?

There are Anglophone and Francophone communities throughout New Brunswick. If the *Official Languages Act* applied only in certain regions, some residents would not have access to government services in their official language of choice. That is why the Act applies across New Brunswick.

What should I do if I cannot obtain a government or public service in my language of choice?

You may file a complaint with the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick (see the last page of this brochure).





“It’s about respect and understanding.”

Beatrice Long

When she was a teenager, Beatrice Long went on a 4-H trip to British Columbia. She remembered helping a participant from Quebec understand the others with her limited French. “It made me think how important it is to have these two languages in your back pocket. They weigh nothing and are worth so much,” Long said.

A lifelong resident of Grand Falls, Beatrice learned French over the years and she is now fully bilingual. However, she likes being able to obtain government services in English, which is her mother tongue. “When it comes to technical terms, medical words, numbers, I want to make sure I fully understand,” she explained. “That’s why I prefer getting these services in English. For me, official bilingualism is about respect and understanding.”

Beatrice Long

**“Language isn’t just a communications tool,
it’s what I am! And speaking another language
means being open to others and their culture.”**

Eric Kennedy



Eric Kennedy

Did you know?

- According to the 2011 Census, 65.3% of New Brunswickers have English as their mother tongue. French is the mother tongue of 32% of the province’s residents.
- New Brunswick’s first *Official Languages Act* was passed in 1969. The New Brunswick Legislative Assembly adopted a new one in 2002. Both acts were adopted unanimously by the members.

Questions & Answers

Do all civil servants need to be bilingual?

No. The New Brunswick government does not require all employees to be bilingual. However, a sufficient number of positions have to be filled by people who can communicate in both official languages. This is necessary in order for government departments and agencies to serve the public equally in both official languages.

In order to provide the public with bilingual services, the provincial government relies on what is called the team approach. As its name implies, the approach involves grouping employees into operational teams and leveraging their diverse linguistic skills to provide services to the public in both official languages.

Departments create teams with a linguistic profile. The profile sets out the minimum requirements for communicating in each and both of the official languages. On March 31, 2012, the linguistic profiles for provincial departments as a whole stipulated that 40%* of employees had to be bilingual.

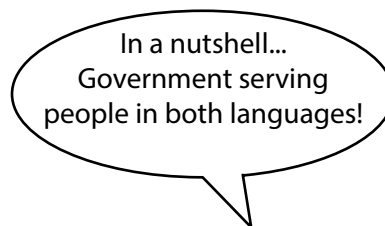
The provincial government must ensure that its linguistic profiles enable it to provide equal services in both official languages.

* Source: Department of Human Resources
Government of New Brunswick

Are employees of the provincial government able to work in the official language of their choice?

The provincial government has adopted a policy to allow its employees to work in the official language of their choice. The policy contains measures and tools that aim to create a work environment that promotes the use of both official languages. The fact that a government employee may work in English or French has no bearing on the government's obligation to provide its services in both official languages.

On March 31, 2012, the linguistic profiles for provincial departments as a whole stipulated that 40%* of employees had to be bilingual.





“People love diversity!”

Gervais Mbarga

Gervais Mbarga is a native of Cameroon, a country where, as in Canada, English and French are the two official languages. However, his mother tongue is Ewondo, one of the 240 national languages spoken in that African country.

Mr. Mbarga believes that every language provides a view of the world. “When I was a journalist in Africa, I sometimes could not find an English or a French equivalent to what I would have said in my mother tongue,” he said. He gives the example of the word “elik,” which refers both to material heritage and to genetic identity, lineage, kinship and place of birth. “It’s almost untranslatable.” In his opinion, this illustrates the richness of languages. “People love diversity,” he continued. “If everyone spoke just one language, I think we’d get bored quickly and would want to invent another one.”

After working in Africa and Europe, Mr. Mbarga decided to immigrate to Canada. For the past two years, this doctor of sociology has been teaching in New Brunswick. “What interested me, basically, was the fact that I can speak French and be in a bilingual environment. It’s a bit like being in Cameroon.”

Gervais Mbarga

“I like my services in French!”

Victorine Robichaud

Victorine Robichaud has lived in the Saint John area for about 30 years. She has witnessed firsthand the major progress of the French presence in the Port City. “It’s like night and day. People no longer turn around in the street when someone speaks French,” she said. Perfectly bilingual, Victorine nonetheless prefers to receive government services in French. “You feel at home; you feel you belong when you’re spoken to in your mother tongue. I like my services in French!”



Victorine Robichaud

Did you know?

New Brunswick is Canada’s only officially bilingual province.



“It’s something we should be proud of!”

Marianne Limpert

The name Marianne Limpert is well known in New Brunswick. In 1996, this New Brunswicker brought honour to the province when she won the silver medal in swimming at the Atlanta Olympic Games. What is less well known is that, in a way, her training was carried out in both official languages. Her coach, a Quebecker, spoke to her in English in order to improve his proficiency in that language. As for Marianne, she seized every opportunity to improve her French. She would often help her Francophone teammates who spoke little, if any, English. “I enjoy talking to people and making them feel comfortable with me,” said the former Olympic swimmer. “I believe there is no better way of doing that than by communicating with them in their own language.” In addition to English and French, Marianne speaks German, her parents’ mother tongue.

After studying and working here and there across Canada, Marianne decided to come back to New Brunswick where she likes the pace of life. Working in communications, she greatly appreciates the province’s bilingual status. “I’m happy to live in New Brunswick, the only officially bilingual province. It’s something we should be proud of!”

Marianne Limpert

Much more than just languages

Ryan Sullivan

Ryan Sullivan took French immersion. And it produced results, early on... When he was looking for a way to pay for his university degree, Ryan opened an ice cream parlor in the old train station in Sussex. A rule was established: bilingual services and signage. For Ryan Sullivan, it should not only be government agencies offering services in both official languages, the whole community should embrace that concept.

“For me, it’s not only about languages; it’s about culture, people. I think it’s extremely important that we celebrate each other’s culture, understand the challenges and opportunities that come with having two official languages and that we allow both linguistic communities to flourish. I think that is the way we are going to move forward and be successful as a province.”



Ryan Sullivan

82%

Percentage of support for official bilingualism

In 2010, a survey done by Continuum Research showed that a large majority of New Brunswickers (82%) support the concept of an official languages act and bilingualism.

To flourish, any linguistic community needs places where its members can live fully in their language. Distinct institutions serve that objective.

Two linguistic communities living together in one province

Linguistic Duality

Linguistic duality means that New Brunswick has two official language communities: one Anglophone, the other Francophone. The Canadian constitution states that these two communities have equal rights. One of these should be noted: the right of each community to its own cultural and educational institutions (schools for example). The goal of these distinct institutions is to ensure the preservation and promotion of each linguistic community.

Questions & Answers

Distinct institutions: Aren't they an obstacle to the province's unity?

Actually, they promote unity. Here's how. To flourish, any linguistic community needs places where its members can live fully in their language. Distinct cultural and educational institutions serve that objective. By ensuring the development of each community, distinct institutions promote equality, hence unity.

Distinct institutions don't prevent dialogue between the two groups. Members of both linguistic communities have regular contacts in all spheres of activity, both public and private.

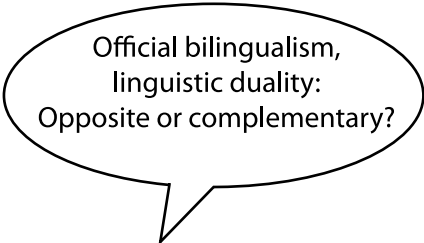
What does money invested in official bilingualism and duality give us?

Official bilingualism and distinct institutions allow our two linguistic communities to live together and flourish in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

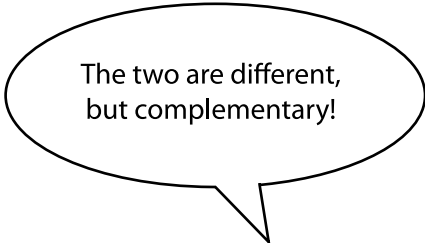
What's the difference between linguistic duality and official bilingualism?

Linguistic duality is the recognition of two linguistic communities. Both of them have equal rights, including the right to distinct cultural and educational institutions.

Official bilingualism is the term generally used to indicate that the government operates and serves the public in both official languages.



Official bilingualism,
linguistic duality:
Opposite or complementary?



The two are different,
but complementary!

Duality in Education

English and French have equal status in New Brunswick. However, their influence is not the same. Unlike English, French is a minority language in North America. The existence of two distinct public school systems - one Anglophone, the other Francophone - enables each community to control its development while preventing assimilation.



Armand Saintonge

In the early 1980s, the provincial government reorganized the school districts on a linguistic basis. Two public school systems were set up: one Anglophone, one Francophone.

At that time, Armand Saintonge was the Deputy Minister of the Francophone sector of the New Brunswick Department of Education. He was not surprised by the government's decision because bilingual schools were centres of assimilation. And he knows what he is talking about.

"Before starting college, I had to go to a bilingual school in Edmundston for three years," said Saintonge. "Most of the instruction at those schools, even though they were bilingual, was in English. As a result, at the end of that period, the quality of my written French had suffered considerably."

Duality was first established within the Department of Education in 1974. In response to the recommendations of the Elliot-Finn committee, it was extended to the school districts and schools in 1981.

"Richard Hatfield, the Premier at the time, understood very well that duality in education was necessary to protect the French language," concluded Armand Saintonge.

"Bilingual schools will work for the Anglophones, but it will not work for the Francophones. English is the dominant language and it will take over in these schools. We are not going to lose our English. But you could lose your French in North America unless you are quite vigilant."

Reid Manore
Former Director of Planning
New Brunswick Department of Education



Reid Manore



Don A. Desserud

Taking positive measures

“Societies cannot ensure the equality of linguistic communities passively, because it is rare that such communities will be equal in strength and power. Minorities are always at risk, for no other reason than the fact that majorities have such an overwhelming impact on culture and shared experience. This is why liberal-democratic societies, through the State, take measures to protect such communities. In turn, this includes taking positive measures to ensure that minority communities have the educational and other cultural resources necessary for their survival and prosperity. In New Brunswick, that means providing resources such as separate schools for the province’s Francophone community. Canada’s *Constitution Act, 1982* (section 16.1) makes this clear. While it states that the “English linguistic community and the French linguistic community in New Brunswick have equality of status and equal rights and privileges,” it adds that this “includes the right to distinct educational institutions and such distinct cultural institutions as are necessary for the preservation and promotion of those communities!”

Don A. Desserud, PhD
Political Scientist

Building Bridges: Learning the Other Official Language

In a province with two linguistic communities, learning the other official language is the best way to forge ties. Within the two public school systems, teaching the other official language is mandatory. Also, a French immersion program is offered to students in the Anglophone sector.

Number of New Brunswick students by language of instruction (2012-2013 school year)*

- English: 53,844
- French immersion: 18,111
- French: 29,124

* Source: New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

The Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick: At Your Service

The *Official Languages Act* of New Brunswick created the position of Commissioner of Official Languages.

The Commissioner has two responsibilities. The first is to ensure compliance with the *Official Languages Act*. The Commissioner receives complaints from the public, conducts investigations, and if necessary, makes recommendations. The second is to promote the advancement of both official languages in the province.

Questions & Answers

What complaints can the Commissioner receive?

Complaints concerning:

- an institution of the Legislative Assembly or the New Brunswick government (departments, Crown corporations, government agencies, hospitals, etc.) (See page 3.);
- private or other bodies that provide services on behalf of the provincial government;
- New Brunswick's cities (Bathurst, Campbellton, Dieppe, Edmundston, Fredericton, Miramichi, Moncton and Saint John), municipalities subject to the Act (Charlo, Dalhousie, Eel River Crossing, Rexton, Richibucto, Shediac and Tide Head) as well as the following Regional Service Commissions: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 11.

Can the Commissioner conduct investigations concerning businesses in the private sector?

No. However, the Commissioner can receive complaints and investigate cases involving businesses in the private sector that provide services on behalf of the provincial government.

Can the Commissioner impose sanctions?

No. But, at the end of an investigation, the Commissioner can recommend that corrective action be taken.

If the organization at fault does not agree to make the necessary changes or does not comply with the recommendations, the Commissioner may denounce it in the annual report that he presents to the Legislative Assembly.

If I file a complaint, will my name be revealed or can I remain anonymous?

All complaints received are considered confidential. Every effort is made to keep the complainant's identity confidential.

How do I file a complaint with the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick?

- In person (the complainant goes to the office with or without an appointment)
- In writing: 440 King Street, King Tower, Suite 646, Fredericton, N.B. E3B 5H8
- By phone: 1-888-651-6444 (toll-free) or 506-444-4229
- By fax: 506-444-4456
- By e-mail: complaints@officiallanguages.nb.ca