

History of Bilingualism in Canada

- 1867 Section 133 of the *British North American Act* (now the *Constitution Act*) permits the use of either English or French in the debates of Parliament as well as in the proceedings before the federal courts. This section also provides that both languages must be used in the records and journals of Parliament, and that its laws must be enacted and published in both languages.
- 1927 Postage stamps become bilingual.
- 1934 The federal Translation Bureau is established by an Act of Parliament.
- 1936 Bank notes become bilingual.
- 1959 Simultaneous interpretation of the debates in both languages begins in the House of Commons.
- 1963 - 1970 The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism is established and produces its reports.
- 1969 Following the work of the Commission, the first *Official Languages Act* is adopted by Parliament. Its three main objectives are:
- the equality of English and French in Parliament, within the Government of Canada, the federal administration and institutions subject to the Act;
 - the preservation and development of official language communities in Canada ;
 - the equality of English and French in Canadian society.
- New Brunswick enacts its first *Official Languages Act* , making it Canada 's first, and only, officially bilingual province.
- 1970 Creation of the official languages in education programs.
- The Commissioner of Official Languages whose mission is "to take all measures to achieve the three main objectives of the *Official Languages Act*" is established.
- 1973 A parliamentary resolution is adopted, dealing with the language of work and the participation of members of the English- and French-speaking communities in the federal public service.
- 1974 The *Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act* comes into force, along with regulations respecting bilingual labelling of consumer products.
- 1978 First Court Challenges Program - Official Languages.
- 1982 The *Constitution Act*, 1982, including the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), is proclaimed, containing further constitutional guarantees respecting the status and use of the official languages of Canada in federal institutions. In addition, under Section 23 of the Charter, the provinces and territories must offer primary and secondary schooling to their official-language minorities in their mother tongue, where the numbers justify (English in Quebec, French elsewhere). In 1990, the Supreme Court of Canada also established that this same Section would give official-language minorities the right to manage their own schools.

- 1988 The new [Official Languages Act](#) is adopted by Parliament. It repeats and qualifies the obligations under the 1982 Charter regarding the use of the two official languages in the provision of government services and throughout government institutions. The Act also states the government's commitment to promote linguistic duality within Canadian society and to support the development of official-language minority communities.
- 1990 Mahé Case: the Supreme Court rules that official-language minorities have the constitutional right to participate actively, in all provinces, in the governance and control of their children's education and the educational institutions their children attend.
- 1992 The first phase begins of the coming into force of the Official Languages Regulations.
- 1994 *Congrès mondial acadien*: Prime Minister Chrétien announced the adoption of "an overall policy on the participation of federal institutions in community development" that requires federal institutions to produce action plans under [Part VII of the Official Languages Act](#).
- Set up of the Court Challenges Program of Canada.
- 1997 Memorandum of Understanding between Canadian Heritage and the Treasury Board Secretariat on making departments accountable with regard to official-language minority communities.
- 1998 National Symposium on Canada's Official Languages.
- 1999 The Interdepartmental Partnership for Official-Language Communities is established to stimulate and consolidate links between minority official-language communities and federal departments and agencies.
- 2002 The New Brunswick government introduces a bill to update and modernize their [Official Languages Act](#). The bill aims to fulfill obligations set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and to make improvements to the original bill of 1969. Provisions in the bill include fair and reasonable thresholds for municipalities to comply with requirements to translate municipal bylaws; the appointment of a Commissioner of Official Languages; access to health services within the New Brunswick Health Network in the language of choice, and a further review of the Official Languages Act every 10 years.
- 2003 The Federal Government announces its [Action Plan for Official Languages](#) (2003/04 - 2007/08) which aims to provide a "new momentum for Canada's linguistic duality," through increased inter-departmental co-ordination, and new investments in education, community development and the public service.