

Communications In French / Communications en français

Guidelines /
Lignes directrices



About These Guidelines

In the context of rapidly evolving communications practices and technologies, the Ontario government is adapting its overall communications approach. Through this ongoing process, the government has reiterated its commitment to proactive and quality communications with its Francophone community.

Ministries and classified agencies must consider and incorporate the specific needs of the Francophone community during the communications planning process to effectively reach out to Francophones in the implementation process.

These guidelines are intended to help government communicators identify the best and most consistent practices for reaching their Francophone population.

In conventional formats (especially the print medium), the guidelines do not change past expectations and requirements. In other, newer, formats, these guidelines simply clarify what common sense dictates. Overall, these guidelines aim at moving away from a model of simple translation to a model of adaptation to effectively reach this target audience.

Within the government there is a trend where policy and program departments are engaging in communications activities (for example, producing web or video content). These guidelines also apply to these activities.

French Language Services Coordinators can assist communicators in complying with these guidelines through the provision of advice and insight into the requirements of the FLSA, best practices and knowledge of the Francophone community. Responsibilities such as translations, adaptations, précis-writing, searches for French websites and references, event planning, and video production should be assumed by staff fluent in French and, ideally, familiar with the Francophone community.

The development of these guidelines was led by the Office of Francophone Affairs, Cabinet Office, the French Language Services Commissioner and many government communication staff also provided feedback and support.

These guidelines are available at:

http://intra.cabinetoffice.gov.on.ca/intranet/docs/communications/guides/Communications_in_French_Guidelines.pdf.

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Context

The Ontario government respects the long history and vibrant culture of the Francophone community in this province. To meet its unique cultural and language needs, the government is committed to proactively offering quality communication services to them.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS AND BACKGROUND

The French Language Services Act (FLSA) guarantees to French-speaking individuals, as well as Francophone organizations and municipalities, the right to receive communications services in French equivalent to those offered in English, at the same time, and of the same quality.

The Act is available at <http://www.ofa.gov.on.ca/en/flsa.html>.

The Communications in French Directive - which came into effect on May 13, 2010 - supports the government's commitment of building a stronger relationship with the Francophone community and reinforces the importance to comply with these guidelines to ensure staff meet and/or exceed the requirements in the FLSA.

The full Directive is available at [http://intra.ops.myops.gov.on.ca/cms/tiles.nsf/\(vwReadResourcesByRefld_Content\)/cpd_2010.10.05.14.36.12.PTP_res/\\$File/Communications%20in%20French%20Directive.pdf](http://intra.ops.myops.gov.on.ca/cms/tiles.nsf/(vwReadResourcesByRefld_Content)/cpd_2010.10.05.14.36.12.PTP_res/$File/Communications%20in%20French%20Directive.pdf).

Recent court decisions have strengthened the legal requirements, and have given the French Language Services Act a quasi-constitutional status, and have confirmed that, to be useful and effective, policies and programs must be conceived and adapted to the needs of the Francophone population.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES COMMISSIONER

The French Language Services Commissioner has a mandate to conduct independent investigations under the French Language Services Act, either in response to complaints or on his own initiative, to prepare reports on his investigations, and to monitor the progress made by government agencies in the delivery of French-language services in Ontario.

The commissioner's website is <http://www.flsc.gov.on.ca>.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Ontario Public Service (OPS) is a professional service organization committed to providing high-quality, cost-effective services that keep pace with rising public expectations.

ACTIVE OFFER

High-quality modern public services also include an active offer and delivery of French-language services to Ontario's Francophone citizens. The OPS is effective at fulfilling its responsibility under the French Language Services Act when Francophone members of the public are informed about available services in French, have access to these services, and are satisfied with the quality of these services.

IMPACT OF CHANGING TECHNOLOGY

As new technologies transform the way we interact with Ontarians, communication from government must evolve and adjust to new formats to ensure that all Ontarians receive information in a timely and effective manner.

Francophone Community

The Francophone community is quite diverse. While it encompasses an aging population that is not bilingual, Francophone youth are being assimilated and prefer to use English on a daily basis. One out of five Francophones comes from Quebec bringing new perspectives. On the other hand, about 15 per cent of Francophones were born outside Canada. As a result, Ontario's Francophones share the same language but not necessarily the same cultural references.

Ontario's Francophones have access to limited mass media, with two local/provincial television networks: *Radio-Canada* and TFO. *Le Droit* is published on a daily basis and there are numerous regional/weekly newspapers are published throughout the province.

Public relations and stakeholders relations are thus key to reaching out to Francophones. Social media is also changing the way people and organizations communicate. Numerous websites outside of the province have also become key sources of information for Francophones in Ontario. This is why it is important to adopt a broader, innovative and targeted approach when reaching out to Francophones.

Definitions

Below are some important definitions used throughout these guidelines:

- Bilingual format: The same document is produced with both French and English
- In both languages: Two separate documents are produced – one in French, one in English.
- Important speeches/events/announcements: These include the Throne Speech, the Budget, statements on the economy and other provincewide initiatives that have significant impacts on the general public. Cabinet Office can provide input based on its corporate perspective on priorities and announcements that have a broad impact.

Printed Format

NEWS RELEASE AND BACKGROUNDER

They must be distributed in both languages at the same time. For some announcements, ministries may consider quoting an Anglophone stakeholder in the English release and a Francophone stakeholder in the French release.

SPEECH TRANSCRIPT

If a ministry decides to distribute a transcript for an important speech, it should be made available in both languages simultaneously. Other speech transcripts should be available in French on demand in a timely manner.

HOUSE STATEMENT

These statements in the legislature must be printed in both languages and delivered to the Government House Leader's Office. It is recommended that the minister's reading copy includes at least a few phrases in the other language.

CORRESPONDENCE

All letters from the public must be answered in the language of request.

STATIONERY AND FORMS

These must be provided in a bilingual format or in both languages.

BUSINESS CARDS

Cards must be in a bilingual format or in both languages for designated bilingual staff.

PUBLICATIONS

Reports, studies or documents printed for the general public must be distributed or made available in a bilingual format or in both languages. There are exemptions for technical or scholarly documents only; however an executive summary in French would be helpful to Francophone audiences.

ADVERTISING

Any provincewide print advertising campaign to the general public must publish English ads in English publications and French ads in French publications. Similar actions should be taken with television, radio and online campaigns.

Advertising targeted to a specific community or region must use Francophone media if it is appropriate and available in the area.

The deadlines of French print publications must be taken into account since they are generally not published daily.

MARKETING MATERIALS

Postcards, posters, brochures and their display stands must be produced in a bilingual format or in both languages.

HOUSEHOLDERS

Any unaddressed mail sent to the general public must be printed and distributed in a bilingual format.

Electronic Format

WEBSITE CONTENT

Website information for the general public must be posted in both languages simultaneously. Hyperlinks to third-party websites should send the user to content posted in the same language if available. If the third-party website is not available in French, an alternative website with similar content in French should be considered, or a note should be included beside the hyperlink that the website is only available in English.

CORRESPONDENCE

All emails from the general public must be answered in the language of request and within the same turnaround time as English correspondence.

SPEECH TRANSCRIPT

If a ministry decides to post a transcript for an important speech on a website, it should be posted in both languages simultaneously. Other speech transcripts should be available in French on demand in a timely manner.

PUBLICATIONS

Reports, studies or documents posted on a website for the general public must be published in a bilingual format or in both languages. There are exemptions for technical or scholarly documents only; however an executive summary in French would be helpful to Francophone audiences.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Blogs, journals, RSS feeds, Twitter webpages, Facebook webpages, discussion forums or other social media should be published in both languages or in a bilingual format. The content can be different in both languages to make it more relevant to the Anglophone or Francophone audiences.

Any online users leaving comments or submitting questions must be answered in the language submitted.

If a government spokesperson (eg. Minister, subject expert) has a personalized social media site and does not speak or write French, then a regular summary of their ongoing comments should be provided in French and an offer to fully translate all of their comments should be made.

A large component of social media is sharing hyperlinks to third-party sites. These should send the user to content posted in the same language if available. If the third-party website is not available in French, an alternative website with similar content in French should be considered, or a note should be included beside the hyperlink that the website is only available in English.

VIDEO AND AUDIO RECORDINGS OF EVENTS

Videos should be produced and posted in the language of the event with a transcript available in the other language. Important events and announcements should have separate French and English videos produced or contain some content in both languages.

See Appendix A for more details and recommendations.

SCRIPTED VIDEO AND PODCASTS

Videos and podcasts should be produced and posted in both languages for important events and announcements. Other events and announcements can be produced in English, French or both languages; however at minimum a transcript must be posted if the video or podcast is only available in one language. For events/announcements of particular interest to the Francophone community, a French video should be strongly considered.

See Appendix A for more details and recommendations.

Oral Format

PUBLIC INQUIRIES

All questions in person and on the telephone from the public must be proactively answered in the language of request.

MEDIA RELATIONS

All questions from the media at events or on the phone can be answered in either English or French depending on the spokesperson's language skills. For a major announcement, a bilingual spokesperson should be made available if possible.

SPEECH

Remarks at events, public announcements or statements in the legislature should be delivered in the language of the speaker with passages in the other language, if they have sufficient knowledge and comfort. For important speeches by Anglophones, 10 to 20 percent of the content should be delivered in French if possible.

See Appendix B for more details and recommendations.

CONSULTATIONS

Documents should be available in both languages or in a bilingual format. Bilingual staff or interpretation services should be available if appropriate for the audience. Separate discussion groups or consultations for subjects of particular interest to the Francophone community should be organized. When relevant, compile and analyze the views of Francophones separately, because they may have different concerns.

Appendix A: Videos

GENERAL RULES

- When the speaker has adequate language skills (especially if he or she is a minister), film a French version if possible. A message delivered by the speaker, even with an accent, is preferable to subtitles or a voice-over.
- When posting transcriptions, ensure they appear on the same screen as the video, or in a separate window, so as to allow simultaneous viewing of the video and transcription.
- If a video is only available in English, always indicate that it is the case. However, post the video, not simply the transcription.

VIDEO RECORDINGS OF EVENTS

- When recording an event in both languages, ensure that visual elements and moments that occur in French are also recorded and used in production. For important events, consider editing two different versions, with a greater proportion of “French moments” in the video produced for French speakers.
- For events of particular interest to the Francophone community, produce a French video where possible.

SCRIPTED VIDEO

Videos produced in both languages, subtitled or voiced over

- While the script for the English and French version of a video may be the same, substitute French interviews / testimonials from bilingual people if available (filming them in each language) or from different people. Avoid voice-over or subtitles.
- Identify Francophones to take part in those videos so they can testify to the benefits of a given announcement.
- For English parts, a voice-over is preferable to subtitles. Subtitles are preferable to transcriptions.
- Videos that involve filming several different people can be a mix of both, i.e., those who can speak French will speak in French and others’ comments could be voiced over.
- Remember to translate all graphics, maps, and images. If a video has subtitles, plan to replace any visual elements in English with visual elements in French.
 - If necessary, adapt the content.

Videos in one language

- Videos in “blog” style, i.e., personal journals of individuals other than the Premier, may be produced in the language of the speaker.

Educational and informative videos

- Some videos are produced for distribution in the community, with the participation of stakeholders or professional actors. For example, videos for the Ontario Provincial

Police on the prevention of extortion or videos for the Ministry of Education on healthy nutrition.

- These videos should be produced in both languages using Francophone stakeholders or professional actors for the French version. Generally, when subtitles and voice-overs are used, the final product is not equal in quality to the English version.

Communication directors and assistant directors can advise on their minister's fluency and proficiency in French when planning videos or other communication tactics.

Appendix B: Speeches

Speakers are encouraged to incorporate at least a few French phrases at any speaking engagement to reflect the active presence of the Francophone community in Ontario and its institution.

A Francophone audience will appreciate a short speech in French as opposed to a longer speech in English.

The percentage of French content should depend on:

- the audience: if there are Francophones in the audience, this fact should be acknowledged with a few carefully-chosen phrases;
- the speaker's ability: the more limited the speaker's fluency in French, the shorter these passages in French should be. Attention should also be paid to choosing French words that are easier to pronounce.
- the subject matter: the more the subject is of interest to the Francophone community (or to Francophones in the audience), the more French there should be in the speech.