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Report

Capacity of the Canadian Justice System to Provide Services in the Minority Official Language

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Report

Capacity of the Canadian Justice System to Provide Services in the Minority Official Language

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Introductory Remarks and Acknowledgements

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We want to thank the representatives of associations of French-speaking jurists (AJEFs), the representatives of advocacy organizations representing Francophones outside Quebec and Anglophones in Quebec, as well as the provincial and territorial justice officials who completed the questionnaires. We also want to express our gratitude to the jurists and other justice sector professionals who filled out the survey. Finally, we want to thank everyone who, directly or indirectly, contributed to the completion of this study and to the preparation of this report.

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Executive Summary

In 2002, a report commissioned by Justice Canada revealed that the capacity of provincial and territorial justice systems to deliver services in the minority official language differed greatly across Canada. The offer of French-language services was still in its infancy in several provinces and territories while in Quebec, the challenges encountered by the English-speaking community were — despite certain shortcomings — generally less acute. This report, published more than 20 years later, serves as an update to the 2002 report and shows that gains have been achieved, especially outside Quebec. However, progress varies widely depending on the province or territory and area of law.

Such progress has manifested in myriad ways: changes in legal frameworks, adoption of policies and action plans, development of resources in the minority language, increase in the system's bilingual capacity, expansion of the active offer, development of digital resources, creation of training initiatives, and deployment of outreach activities. Gains are most apparent in the area of criminal law and, in several provinces and territories, divorce and support. Bankruptcy law for its part remains an area where progress has been less apparent. In addition, several barriers reported in 2002 continue to persist. Outside Quebec, a shortage of bilingual personnel, difficulties recruiting and retaining professionals, regional disparities, and insufficient awareness of language rights continue to hinder effective access to French-language services.

Quebec is a distinct reality in its own right. Demographic data shows that the proportions of people who stated they are able to have a conversation in the other official language and use it at least on a regular basis at work are significantly higher than the same figures reported outside Quebec for similar categories of professionals. Nevertheless, these high proportions do not prevent certain challenges from persisting. For instance, access to certain English-language services remains more limited in some regions and for some categories of professionals. Challenges pertaining to the active offer and to language and recruitment policies have also been reported.

Ultimately, the report reveals a mosaic of situations and differing capacities. Indeed, the recognition of language rights is not on its own sufficient to guarantee the justice system's effective capacity to deliver services in the minority official language. A system also requires bilingual human resources available in the right place at the right time; an active offer of services; the ability for users to access information and documents; and collaboration between governments, courts, community organizations, and other stakeholders in the justice system, in particular when it comes to implementing practices and programs. Despite the progress achieved since 2002, the core challenge remains the same: translating language rights into services effectively accessible to justiciaries in the minority official language.

Introduction

This report is part of a research project titled “Capacity of the justice system and its stakeholders to offer services in both official languages”. Its objective is to map out the capacity of the justice system and its stakeholders to provide services in the two official languages of Canada, with an emphasis on official language minority communities (OLMCs). It also aims to assess the progress made over the past two decades by using the *Environmental Scan: Access to Justice in Both Official Languages* (GTA Research, 2002)¹ study as a point of reference. The data contained in the report could serve as a guide for future political and institutional decisionmakers.

The core of the report is divided into 14 chapters. The first 12 focus on the nine provinces and three territories where minority French-speaking communities live. The subsequent chapter presents a summary of the results for these communities. It is followed by a chapter dedicated to Quebec and its minority English-speaking communities. All 14 chapters are divided into sections titled “Background”, “Current situation”, “How services have changed since 2002”, “Areas for improvement”, and “Useful references”.

Following this introduction, we will provide a description of the methodology employed and the three complementary data collection tools utilized.

The report concludes with a general summary of the main findings drawn from the data collected and analyzed as part of the study.

¹ GTA Research (2002). *Environmental Scan: Access to Justice in Both Official Languages*. Justice Canada.

Methodology

This report is based on data gathered using three primary collection tools: 1) a questionnaire distributed to associations of French-speaking jurists (AJEFs) and advocacy organizations representing official language minority communities (OLMCs); 2) a questionnaire distributed to provincial and territorial justice officials; and 3) a survey on access to justice in both official languages distributed to jurists and other justice sector professionals who practise in the minority official language in their province or territory. The material used to collect data is available upon request from the research team (marie-helene.girard2@mcgill.ca).

The information gathered from the questionnaires serves as the foundation for each chapter dedicated to a province or territory. Survey responses, when deemed to be in sufficient numbers, were used to supplement the data collected from the questionnaires. Some information obtained from the questionnaires and survey was verified and supplemented by the research team, in particular information about directories published by law societies and other organizations. Moreover, data on bilingual staff was supplemented by the *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire* (DPM, 2025)² and *A Demographic Analysis of Anglophone Legal Professionals in Quebec* (DPM, 2026)³. For confidentiality purposes, the census population counts presented in these two analyses were subject to random rounding to multiples of five by Statistics Canada. Accordingly, some values reported as zero may correspond to counts of fewer than five.

² DPM (2025). *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire*. DPM Research Inc., Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne et Réseau national de formation en justice.

We want to thank the Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne (ACUFC) and the Réseau national de formation en justice (RNFJ), which is behind the analysis, for allowing us to use this data.

³ DPM (2026). *A Demographic Analysis of Anglophone Legal Professionals in Quebec*. DPM Research Inc. and McGill University.

Questionnaire for AJEFs and advocacy organizations

RESPONDENTS

The questionnaire intended for associations of French-speaking jurists (AJEFs) and advocacy organizations was distributed to directors and managers of associations, federations, and other organizations that represent the interests of professionals who provide legal services in the minority official language in a province or territory of Canada. In short, the questionnaire was submitted to AJEFs in seven provinces and to advocacy organizations in the three provinces and three territories where there is no AJEF. Only one questionnaire was submitted per province or territory, either to the AJEF or the advocacy organization.

The questionnaire (available in French and English) was submitted to AJEFs and advocacy organizations in the spring of 2025 and returned to the research team in the spring or summer of 2025. Organizations were given free rein to answer in the manner they deemed most appropriate and could do so in either French or English, no matter the language of the questionnaire.

One questionnaire was completed and received for each province and territory. Some information was validated and completed by the research team and, if needed, the text was submitted to the AJEF or advocacy organization in question for additional information before being incorporated into the report.

Here are the seven AJEFs and six organizations that completed the questionnaire:

- Alberta: [Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta \(AJEFA\)](#)
- British Columbia: [Association des juristes d'expression française de la Colombie-Britannique \(AJEFCB\)](#)
- Prince Edward Island: [Société acadienne et francophone de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard \(SAF'Île\)](#)
- Manitoba: [Association des juristes d'expression française du Manitoba \(AJEFM\)](#)
- New Brunswick: [Association des juristes d'expression française du Nouveau-Brunswick \(AJEFNB\)](#)
- Nova Scotia: [Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse \(AJEFNÉ\)](#)
- Nunavut: [Association des francophones du Nunavut \(AFN\)](#)
- Ontario: [Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario \(AJEFO\)](#)
- Quebec: [Quebec Community Groups Network \(QCGN\)](#)⁴
- Saskatchewan: [Association des juristes d'expression française de la Saskatchewan \(AJEFS\)](#)
- Newfoundland and Labrador: [Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador \(FFTNL\)](#)
- Northwest Territories: [Fédération franco-ténoise \(FFT\)](#)
- Yukon: [Association franco-yukonnaise \(AFY\)](#)

⁴ QCGN became Talking. Advocating. Living in Québec. (TALQ) in 2025.

QUESTIONNAIRE CONTENT

The questionnaire intended for AJEFs and advocacy organizations was designed to gather both qualitative and quantitative data on access to justice in the minority official language (French outside Quebec and English in Quebec) in each province and territory in Canada. It was divided into five parts: organizational context, active offer, experiences of respondents, a follow-up on previous recommendations, and progress achieved since 2002. It included 48 questions in addition to sub-questions and prompts for additional information when applicable. It contained a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions.

The first part aimed to gather information about the organization itself: name, general mandate, specific role in terms of access to justice in the minority official language, number of members, and any other relevant information.

The second part was designed to establish the scope of existing active offer policies in three areas under federal jurisdiction (criminal law, bankruptcy law, and divorce and support), and the potential existence of provincial or territorial rules in terms of the active offer. It also enabled the research team to obtain qualitative descriptions of current practices and observations regarding their implementation.

The third part asked respondents to describe the experience of justiciables, and any progress made since 2002. Respondents were invited to rate the level of satisfaction of justiciables and describe the factors that positively impact access to justice in the minority official language, barriers encountered, and recommended courses of action to remedy these challenges.

The fourth part served to follow up on the solutions recommended in 2002. It provided information on the following: the capacity of justice sector personnel (judges, lawyers, etc.) to provide services in the minority official language, tools and barriers in recruiting bilingual professionals, language training opportunities available, mechanisms used to assess language competencies, and the ability for justiciables to access documents and forms in the minority official language.

The fifth part covered progress and changes carried out since 2002. In particular, it focused on the impact of information technology, procedures for translating documents, the use of machine translation, and the implementation of awareness campaigns on language rights.

Questionnaire for provincial and territorial justice officials

RESPONDENTS

The questionnaire intended for provincial and territorial justice officials was submitted to the government of each province and territory in Canada. It was distributed by provincial and territorial representatives of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Access to Justice as well as the Heads of Court Administration committee. Each of these representatives determined which person or entity was in the most suitable position to respond to the survey on behalf of their province or territory. Even though only one questionnaire was distributed per province or territory, it was sometimes completed jointly by several representatives.

One questionnaire (available in French and English) was submitted to provincial and territorial governments in the winter of 2026 and returned to the research team in the spring or summer of 2026. Representatives were given free rein to answer in the manner they deemed most appropriate and could do so in either French or English, no matter the language of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was filled out and returned to the research team by representatives of every province and territory, except Quebec. Some information was validated and completed by the research team and the text submitted to the corresponding representative for validation before being incorporated into the report⁵.

Here are the government bodies that completed the questionnaire:

- Alberta: [Court and Justice Services](#)
- British Columbia: [Ministry of the Attorney General of British Columbia](#)
- Prince Edward Island: [Department of Justice and Public Safety](#)
- Manitoba: Government of Manitoba, [Francophone Affairs Secretariat](#) and [Manitoba Prosecution Service](#)
- New Brunswick: [Department of Justice and Public Safety](#)
- Nova Scotia: [Court Services Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Justice](#)
- Nunavut: [Nunavut Department of Justice](#)
- Ontario: representative of the [French Language Services Office of the Justice Sector Ministries of Ontario \(the Ministry of Attorney General and the Ministry of the Solicitor General\)](#)
- Saskatchewan: [Francophone Affairs Branch, part of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport](#)
- Newfoundland and Labrador: [Department of Justice and Public Safety of Newfoundland and Labrador, Policy and Strategic Planning Division](#)
- Northwest Territories: [Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Justice](#)
- Yukon: [Yukon Department of Justice](#)

⁵ Some representatives did not respond to our request for validation.

QUESTIONNAIRE CONTENT

The questionnaire intended for provincial and territorial justice officials was designed to gather both qualitative and quantitative data on access to justice in the minority official language (French outside Quebec and English in Quebec) in each province and territory in Canada. It was divided into four parts: organizational context, the current state of access to justice in the minority official language, a follow-up on previous recommendations, and progress achieved since 2002. It included 32 questions in addition to sub-questions and prompts for additional information when applicable. It contained a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions.

The first part aimed to gather information about the participating department and government: name, general mandate, specific role in terms of access to justice in the minority official language, position title and main duties of the respondent, and any other relevant information.

The second part was designed to establish the status of access to justice in the minority official language in the province or territory in question, more specifically in areas under federal jurisdiction (criminal law, bankruptcy law, divorce and support). It focused on the active offer, access to justice in the minority official language, and avenues for action to eliminate or mitigate barriers.

The third part served to follow up on the solutions recommended in 2002. It asked respondents to provide information on the following: the capacity of justice sector personnel (judges, lawyers, etc.) to provide services in the minority official language, tools and barriers in recruiting bilingual professionals, language training opportunities available, mechanisms used to assess language competencies, legal interpretation services in official languages, and the ability for justiciables to access documents and forms in the minority official language.

The fourth part covered the progress achieved since 2002. In particular, it focused on the impact of information technology, the existence of itinerant courts and central hubs (or other single points of access for services), procedures for translating documents, the use of machine translation or artificial intelligence, and the implementation of awareness campaigns on language rights.

Survey for jurists and other professionals in the Canadian justice sector

RESPONDENTS

The survey for jurists and other professionals in the Canadian justice sector was submitted to professional associations in the legal sector in Canada, in particular law societies of every province and territory, local branches of the Canadian Bar Association, and local associations. It was also distributed to legal information organizations, associations of French-speaking jurists (AJEFs), and advocacy organizations representing official language minority communities (OLMCs) in Canada. Associations and organizations were asked to share the survey with their members, with the message inviting them to fill out the survey drafted in both official languages. The survey opened on April 3, 2025, and concluded on December 5, 2025.

We received what we deemed to be a sufficient number of responses to the survey⁶ from only three provinces — Alberta and Manitoba for French as a minority official language and Quebec for English as a minority official language. As a result, only the data pertaining to these three provinces were taken into account in the analysis.

SURVEY CONTENT

The survey for jurists and other professionals in the Canadian justice sector was designed to gather quantitative and qualitative data on access to justice in the minority official language (French outside Quebec and English in Quebec) from lawyers, prosecutors, judges, and other justice sector professionals in Canada. It was divided into six parts and featured a mix of closed-ended, single-choice, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions. It included 64 questions in addition to sub-questions and prompts for additional information when applicable.

The first part assessed the eligibility of respondents according to their profession and experience with clients from official language minority communities.

The second part established the demographic and professional profile of respondents: province or territory of residence, first official language spoken, language spoken at work, level and field of education, field of practice, jurisdiction and usual judicial district, etc.

The third part asked respondents to describe clients who request legal services in the minority language, in particular the proportion of clients or justiciables who prefer this language, and the proportion who request services in the minority language.

The fourth part explored the factors that impact an individual's choice to proceed or not in the minority official language: delays, costs, quality of services, strategic advantages, affirmation of language rights, etc.

The fifth part featured three sub-sections, each corresponding to criminal law, bankruptcy law, and the law of divorce and support. It examined the following in each of these areas: knowledge of language rights, access to all services, the availability of documents in the minority language,

⁶ We considered a sufficient number of responses to be more than five for each province and territory.

the language competencies of legal professionals, and the level of satisfaction with the services available in the minority official language.

Finally, the sixth part covered institutional and governmental factors. It asked respondents to identify the policies and programs that positively impact access to justice in both official languages, as well as the barriers. Respondents were also prompted to recommend measures, strategies, and approaches to improve access to justice in both official languages.

Limitations

There were certain limitations to the methodology employed and these must be taken into consideration when interpreting the results.

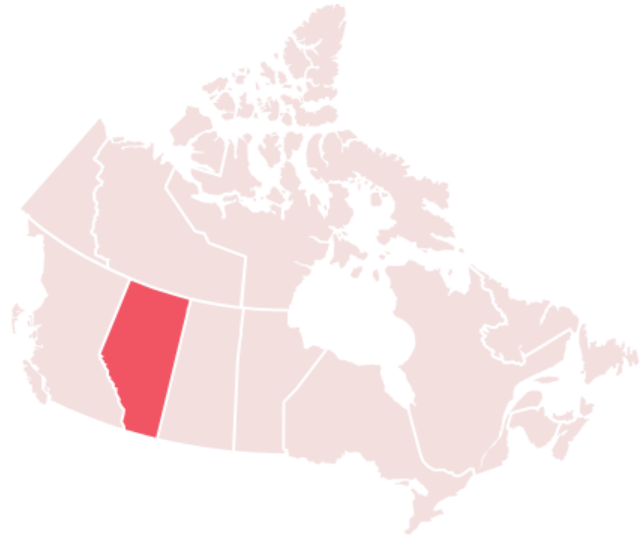
The first limitation pertains to the level of knowledge of respondents and the means at their disposal. While employees of some organizations, notably AJEFs and Justice departments, possess in-depth knowledge of the justice sector, this is not necessarily the case for individuals employed by advocacy organizations, for example, because their mandate does not explicitly pertain to justice. Moreover, some organizations employ numerous people whose knowledge may be complementary and who could have been asked to help complete the questionnaire. Consequently, some organizations may have provided answers that are more exhaustive and accurate than organizations with a smaller, less specialized workforce. It is impossible to verify who exactly has filled out the questionnaire and to determine if external parties were asked to help with this task. In sum, even if one single copy of both questionnaires was submitted to each province and territory, the responses returned to the research team may have been the fruit of collaboration. The nature and level of detail of the information collected and presented may vary from one province or territory to another due to the following: the number of people who helped answer the survey, the availability of data, the time dedicated to gathering information, and the level of interest or priority the participating organizations gave to the endeavour.

The second limitation concerns the data obtained from the survey for jurists and other professionals in the Canadian justice sector. The number of respondents is too small to present the results on their own. This data nevertheless remains valuable and was used to supplement the answers obtained from the questionnaire, whenever the number of respondents permitted. More specifically, only the sections on Alberta, Manitoba, and Quebec were supplemented with responses from the survey. The results of the survey must therefore be considered as supplementary to the information gathered through the questionnaires and cannot be used to make generalizations about all justice sector professionals.

The 2002 study serves as a reference point to assess how the situation has changed in the context of this report. However, because these two studies do not necessarily employ identical methodologies and indicators, their comparability is limited.

Francophone minority communities

Alberta



BACKGROUND

This section presents information obtained from the Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta (AJEFA), the Ministry of Justice of Alberta⁷, and the results of the Sondage à l'intention des juristes et autres professionnels et professionnelles du secteur de la justice au Canada (Survey of jurists and other professionals in the justice sector in Canada)⁸. Some information has been validated and completed by the research team.

The 2002 report (GTA Research) listed Alberta as one of the provinces where progress toward better access to justice in the minority official language was still in its infancy. Recommended courses of action included appointing a greater number of Francophone judges, creating bilingual positions among judicial personnel, and adopting innovative approaches to improve access to services.

Since the report was published, access to justice in the minority official language has improved. For example, the number of bilingual resources has increased, policies and action plans have been implemented, language training has been bolstered, and the active offer has expanded. However, recent observations show significant barriers remain: an ongoing shortage of bilingual staff, difficulty recruiting candidates, limitations with the offer of French-language services in certain areas of the law, and unmet training needs. As a result, several challenges identified in 2002 continue to persist.

⁷ Court and Justice Services.

⁸ We obtained answers from 20 professionals of the justice sector who stated they work with French-speaking clients in Alberta.

A few key facts...



- There is no constitutional obligation to provide services in French in Alberta. While the Alberta *Languages Act* recognizes the right to use French in some courts, the courts are divided as to the scope of this right.
- Although there is a sustained demographic growth in Alberta, the relative demographic weight of citizens whose mother tongue is French is in decline. The same is true for those whose first official language spoken is French.
- Demographic data collected since 2001 reveal a decrease in the overall rate of bilingualism in Alberta. The rate of bilingualism within Anglophone and Allophone communities is also in decline; the rate of bilingualism within the Francophone community has remained relatively stable.
- The Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta represents and promotes the interests of Francophones to governments. It works with several local partners, including the AJEFA, with the goal of strengthening the vitality of the Francophonie in Alberta.



CURRENT SITUATION



OVERVIEW

According to the AJEFA, a growing number of Albertans are using legal services in French. That being said, data from the survey reveals it is not uncommon for Francophones to use services in English. There are several reasons for this: they are proficient in English; they have not been offered services in French; they do not know these services exist; they are not aware they are entitled to receive services in French. Moreover, some people believe that the simple fact of asking for services in French results in delays or incurs additional costs. They may also believe that services delivered in French are of an inferior quality or that requesting services in French puts them at a disadvantage.

There is no centralized hub where Albertans can go to access services in the minority official language. However, the Ministry of Justice states that there are a variety of means available to citizens who want to access French-language services. These include bilingual personnel, interpretation services, a dedicated telephone line and emails, French forms, requests for French-language hearings, electronic filing of wills in French, and summonses for bilingual jurors. Indeed, juror summonses are used to identify bilingual individuals in order to assemble a pool of potential jurors who are proficient in French.

There is no itinerant court in Alberta that holds trials in French, but bilingual staff will travel as needed. Moreover, videoconference services in French are also available.

According to the AJEFA, Francophone justiciables in the province still generally report low levels of satisfaction with legal services offered in the minority official language and are at a significant disadvantage in areas under federal jurisdiction. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Justice reports having received positive feedback regarding the French-language services available, in particular at the Court of King's Bench.



BARRIERS

To explain this disadvantage (whether perceived or genuine), the AJEFA points to delays, costs, accessibility, geography (services limited to major cities), and the lack of human resources, in particular the shortage of lawyers able to provide services in French in the province. In fact, according to the Law Society of Alberta's online directory, only 411 out of its 9,595 (4%)⁹ members listed speak French. This does not mean that these 411 individuals are able to practise in French. Moreover, according to the AJEFA, the main barrier to accessing justice in the minority official language in Alberta, specifically in criminal matters, is the number of defence attorneys who are able to practise in French. Indeed, many bilingual attorneys are hired by the Crown which reduces the pool of candidates able to work in French in the private sector. This creates a certain disparity between the Crown and the defence. Per the AJEFA, only three criminal lawyers are able to take part in a trial in front of a French-speaking jury. As for family law, not only is there an insufficient number of lawyers able to work in French, there is also a shortage of mediators and arbitrators who are proficient in the language. The Ministry of Justice reports it is difficult to find personnel who possess both the competencies required in a specific area of law and the language skills needed in French. Despite recruiting efforts, finding individuals who are qualified, available, and interested in this type of work remains a challenge.

The Ministry of Justice is implementing (or about to implement) a range of solutions to overcome these hurdles. For example: creating a bilingual division responsible for training bilingual employees, updating online portals and institutional websites to ensure users can access content in the official language of their choice, and providing French-language support to justiciables to help them file documents with the court. The Ministry also affirms it ensures accused are promptly notified of their right to a trial in the language of their choice and that it is working to implement a clear and direct method for receiving and filing documents submitted in French. Another avenue of action would be to enhance the visibility of the services currently available in French while clarifying the mechanisms for accessing them.



FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

There are policies and programs that have been implemented in Alberta that have had a positive impact on access to legal services in both official languages. For instance, as a result of the Government of Alberta's *French Policy*, adopted in 2017 and updated in 2023, an individual

⁹ Law Society of Alberta (2025). *Lawyer Directory*.

(usually an assistant deputy minister) has been appointed to handle issues related to Francophone matters in each ministry. The Court of King's Bench also now has access to a Lawyer-Counsel for French Interpretation Services. The *French Policy* also led to the creation of a joint committee comprising the AJEFA, the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA), the Francophone Secretariat, the Ministry of Justice, and the province's three courts (the Alberta Court of Justice, the Court of King's Bench, and the Court of Appeal). An internal committee for French language services at the court has also been created. The *French Policy* also led to the 2024-2028 Action Plan titled *Enhancing services in French to support the vitality of the Francophonie in Alberta*¹⁰. This action plan includes various measures pertaining to justice, including:

- Implement official language rights in divorce proceedings under the amendment to the *Divorce Act*.
- Enhance Court and Justice Services' collection of French language proficiency to increase the size of French-speaking juror pools.
- Identify, maintain, enhance, create, and promote key online and print justice resources in French.
- Build the Courts' and Court and Justice Services' capacity to enhance and develop information and resources in French.

The Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta has also adopted an *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028*¹¹. It highlights the need to continue designating bilingual French/English justice positions in Alberta and hire more French-speaking Crown attorneys, court clerks, judges, mediators, and administrative staff. The *Plan* also recommends providing language-rights training to all service providers (i.e., victim services and police services) and creating an all-party advisory committee on police and correctional services in French. Survey respondents also mentioned various programs and policies that have had a positive impact on access to legal services in both official languages. That being said, they stated that although these programs and policies are useful, they do not have the same weight as an official law on French-language services would.



ACTIVE OFFER

Both the AJEFA and the Ministry of Justice of Alberta state there is an active offer of services in the minority official language in Alberta. Per the Ministry, this offer has been implemented in the areas of criminal law and the law of divorce and support. According to survey respondents, simply being offered French-language services is the greatest factor influencing whether proceedings take place in French.

¹⁰ Government of Alberta (2024). *Plan d'action 2024-2028 de la Politique en matière de francophonie : Améliorer les services en français pour soutenir la vitalité de la francophonie en Alberta*.

¹¹ Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (2024). *Plan d'action de la francophonie albertaine 2023-2028*.

To this effect, a notice and request form for French language proceedings is available on the website of the Court of King's Bench¹² and on the website of the Alberta Court of Justice¹³. The applicant uses the form to indicate the relevant area of law (criminal, bankruptcy, family, etc.) for the proceedings. According to the AJEFA, signs in French are displayed at the Court of King's Bench to notify members of the public of their language rights. Moreover, in 2018, the Court of the Queen's [King's] Bench implemented a process to guarantee that accused are systematically informed of the rights they are entitled to under Part XVII of the *Criminal Code*, regardless of how their name sounds or their presumed language of preference. Indeed, written notices are posted, and oral inquiries are made as to the accused's language preferences during certain proceedings¹⁴. According to the Ministry of Justice, a form titled *CC7 - Pre-trial Conference Report* informs the court of the language of the trial. Form *CC2 - Appointment of Counsel by Designation* is used to confirm that a person represented by counsel has been notified of their language rights under Part XVII of the *Criminal Code*. In the spring of 2025, the Alberta Court of Justice issued a Practice Direction regarding the language choice of the accused.

The Ministry of Justice also reports that the government has decided to implement the amendments made to the *Divorce Act* that stipulate parties may choose the official language of the proceedings. The Ministry of Justice made an announcement to this effect in March 2026 via *Bonjour Alberta*¹⁵. In fact, most measures considered have already been implemented, such as the possibility to submit documents, evidence, and other materials in either official language. French-language forms are also available. Furthermore, consecutive and simultaneous interpretation services are available at no cost to parties. If someone is planning to use French or both official languages during oral communications at the hearing, they must first notify the court by filling out a form titled *French Language Notice and Request*. The Ministry of Justice adds that in the area of bankruptcy law, any person may use French in their oral communications during the hearing. However, they must first notify the court by filling out the *French Language Notice and Request* form.

Other than federal legislation, there are no provincial rules of law or internal practices or policies on the active offer of legal services in the minority official language. Nevertheless, efforts are being deployed to ensure courts have access to bilingual clerks. When none are available, French-language services are available via telephone. Moreover, posters are displayed in the various courts informing justiciables of their language rights. These posters also serve to enhance the visibility of services in French and make members of the public, as well as staff, aware of language rights.

¹² Court of King's Bench of Alberta (2025). *Avis et demande d'audience en français / French Language Notice and Request*.

¹³ Alberta Court of Justice (2025). *Avis et demande d'audience en français / Notice and Request for French language Proceedings*.

¹⁴ Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta (2018, July 6). *Notice to the Profession and Public. Notice of Language Rights in Criminal Proceedings*.

¹⁵ Bonjour Alberta (2026). *Services de divorce en français maintenant offerts*.

DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

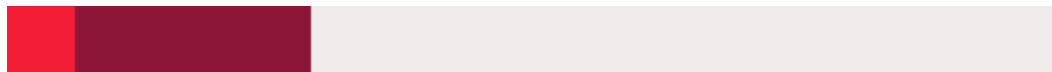
According to the AJEFA and the Ministry of Justice, documents issued by police officers (notices, statements of offence, citations, etc.), make no mention of a citizen's right to select their preferred official language. In criminal matters, the accused can fill out a form to specify their language of preference for the proceedings. Indictments and details of the charge are then presented to the accused in that language. In principle, forms in criminal law are available in both languages. The AJEFA states there are exceptions and some forms are only available in English.

Many of the forms pertaining to criminal and family law are available in French on the website of the Court of King's Bench¹⁶. According to the Ministry of Justice, other forms and documents are available in French on government and court websites. Instead of bilingual forms, they are often two versions of the same form but are not always located side by side on pages listing forms available for download. As a result, it can be difficult to find the relevant forms in French. Survey respondents also reported certain shortcomings. In particular, they noted that even though key forms are often available in French, supplementary or procedural forms are not. The Ministry of Justice states that some documents are translated as needed on a case-by-case basis.

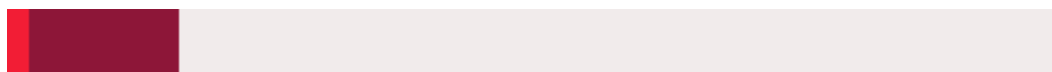
BILINGUAL STAFF

The following data from the *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire* from DPM Research (2025) provides an overview of the number of professionals who are able to have a conversation in French and those who speak French at least on a regular basis at work.

- **90 of the 310 judges** in the province (**29%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **20 (6.5%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **1,790 of the 10,970 lawyers** in the province (**16.3%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **225 (2.1%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.

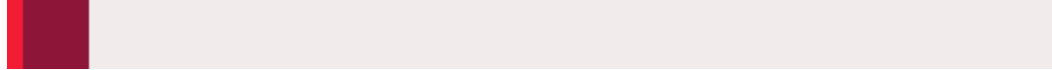


- **30 of the 485 court clerks** in the province (**6.2%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **15 (3.1%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



¹⁶ Court of King's Bench of Alberta (2025). *Criminal Forms*.
Court of King's Bench of Alberta (2025). *Family Law Forms*.

- **50 of the 640 sheriffs and bailiffs** in the province (**7.8%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **10 (1.6%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



The Law Society of Alberta's directory¹⁷ allows users to search for members by language spoken, thereby displaying the lawyers who speak French. As mentioned above, the directory lists 411 members (in all areas of the law) who have indicated they speak French. The AJEFA has also created a directory of its members¹⁸. Finally, users can find a lawyer who speaks French on the website of Legal Aid Alberta¹⁹.

According to the AJEFA and the Ministry of Justice, the number of judges, lawyers, Crown attorneys, registry staff, and other professionals able to provide services in the minority official language has increased. That being said, data from survey respondents would suggest obtaining services in French from judges, registry staff, and other justice sector professionals remains difficult. The Alberta Crown Prosecution Service does have Crown attorneys able to participate in French-language trials. Lawyers who are proficient in French are also available to ensure the language rights of accused are respected as per section 530 of the *Criminal Code*. When hearings are held in French, measures are taken to ensure bilingual employees are available. The French-language services division of the Court of King's Bench aims to ensure the Court and Justice Services (which supports the three courts) has access to bilingual clerks. The division is also responsible for training and certifying these clerks.

The Ministry of Justice affirms language training is available for judges, Crown attorneys, registry staff, and other professionals in the justice sector. But there is none for lawyers.

An agreement has also been concluded to allow judges to travel to New Brunswick to take part in a Juralingo training financed by Justice Canada. Albertan judges can also take part in the mootung program offered by the Centre canadien de français juridique (CCFJ) as well as a four-day national training program for defence lawyers and Crown attorneys. Finally, between 2023 and 2025, 28 hours worth of French-language legal terminology courses were available.

The Alberta Crown Prosecution Service also offers French language training to Crown attorneys. They can enroll in a one-week professional training and development program in French offered by the Attorney General of Ontario or a week-long program with Quebec's Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions. Moreover, many Crown attorneys have completed the criminal law certification program offered by the Centre canadien de français juridique (CCFJ) which focuses on, among other topics, French-language legal terminology. There are also training opportunities provided via the Court of King's Bench. For example, it recently organized a conference for staff employed by the Court and Justice Services.

¹⁷ Law Society of Alberta (2025). *Lawyer Directory*.

¹⁸ Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta. *Trouver un avocat*.

¹⁹ Legal Aid Alberta. *Lawyer Directory*.

Finally, a bilingual supervisor is responsible for training bilingual clerks. Every year, clerks from across the province, as well as legal interpreters, are invited to take part in a five-day training session provided by the CCFJ that also discusses criminal law and family law terminology. Two webinars that allow participants to earn a qualification are also available during the year.

As per the AJEFA, a mechanism has been implemented to assess the competencies in the minority official language of judges. According to the Ministry of Justice, such a mechanism has also been implemented for Crown Attorneys, registry staff, and other professionals in the justice system.

Crown attorneys who take part in the criminal law certification program by the CCFJ are assessed by KortoJura, a national organization providing language proficiency assessment and certification services.

Court clerks and jury officers who are certified bilingual when they are hired are subject to further language assessments, both oral and written. These assessments are designed in collaboration with judicial officers to ensure compliance with current standards.

According to the AJEFA and the Ministry of Justice, tools and policies have been designed to facilitate the recruitment of individuals who can provide services in the minority official language. For example, the Government of Alberta has indicated in some of its job offers that knowledge of French is an asset, sometimes even a prerequisite. These job offers are often communicated to the AJEFA and published in the Francophone Secretariat's newsletter. However, potential candidates are not always aware they can use French in certain legal positions, i.e., sheriffs or legal assistants. Finally, the Ministry of Justice states that targeted bilingual advertisements have been created to facilitate the recruitment of bilingual clerks and jury officers in Alberta.



TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

According to the Ministry of Justice, while there is currently no official procedure for translating court documents, one is being studied and is the subject of ongoing discussions. The Ministry regularly works with the Francophone Secretariat for the purposes of translating documents. Neither machine translation nor artificial intelligence is used to translate court documents.

The *Action Plan for Alberta's Francophonie 2023-2028* recommends prioritizing the translation of certain legal documents (laws, directives, forms, etc.) based on the needs of the community and legal practitioners.

Per the AJEFA, legal interpretation services in both official languages are systematically offered and available. Survey results seem to confirm this. These services are sometimes available in person, sometimes remotely with interpreters based throughout the province.

In order to obtain certification to work in a courtroom setting, legal interpreters must prove they have received appropriate training and possess the language skills required. They must also undergo specialized training. While they do need to take part in regular training sessions, they do

not have to be members of a professional association such as the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta (ATIA)²⁰.

According to the Ministry of Justice, interpretation services are arranged at a local level, with practices varying depending on the region. The Court Interpreter Services Scheduling Unit provides support in Calgary and Edmonton. If an emergency arises, or if interpretation services have not been contacted ahead of time and no interpreter is available, interpretation services via telephone are used. Although local interpreters have been hired in some rural regions, agencies are sometimes called upon to meet interpretation needs. Finally, the *French Policy: 2024–28 Action Plan* of the Government of Alberta aims to “maintain, promote and support the ability of applicants to the Land and Property Rights Tribunal to request interpreters to assist them during the proceedings”²¹.

Translation and interpretation services in criminal matters and cases pertaining to the law of divorce and support, as well as those requested by a judge, are provided at no cost to the justiciable.



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

According to the AJEFA and the Ministry of Justice, information technology has facilitated access to justice in the minority official language in the province, in particular by enabling justiciables to download or fill out forms and documents online (and track their status) in the official language of their choice. Moreover, virtual hearings allow French-speaking individuals to provide testimony or take part in the hearings when not available to travel to the proceedings in person. The AJEFA points to online trials that were held during the COVID-19 pandemic and in which persons residing in Quebec were able to provide testimony remotely. Technology has also provided tools (e.g., French keyboards) that allow users to work effectively in French. Artificial intelligence was also used for a first draft translation of the Rules of Court, which was then revised by jurists.



OUTREACH

According to the AJEFA, awareness campaigns have previously been deployed to inform users of their language rights pertaining to access to justice in the province. As an example, the AJEFA produced a video titled *Les droits linguistiques d'Antoine Beaudoin*²² in 2023 which was officially launched at the Annual Congress of Alberta's Francophonie and then published on social media.



HOW SERVICES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2002

The AJEFA has observed certain gains since the report (GTA Research) was published in 2002. Indeed, rights have been enshrined and the active offer has been bolstered. As a result, the

²⁰ Only two French-English legal interpreters are listed in the ATIA's directory. ATIA. *Directory*.

²¹ Government of Alberta (2024). *French Policy: 2024–28 Action Plan*.

²² Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta (2023). *Les droits linguistiques d'Antoine Beaudoin*.

number of requests for services in French has increased. Previously, the availability of services had been essentially dependent on the availability and willingness of judges and the courts, and the overall availability of bilingual staff. This led to delays which in turn resulted in confusion about how timely these services could be.

More specifically, significant improvements have been observed in criminal law. Some improvements have also been noted in the area of divorce and support law. As for bankruptcy law, the AJEFA has not noted any change in status. With respect to criminal law, the gains are the direct result of case law: *Vaillancourt* and *Tompouba* led to the recognition of language rights and the promotion of “flagship firms” within the community. Moreover, upon request of the AJEFA, the Law Society of Alberta amended its code of ethics to make it mandatory for lawyers to notify clients of their language rights, including the right to not have to rely on an interpretation service. As for divorce and support, the gains observed are a result of the new language provisions contained in the *Divorce Act*.

Finally, the “Bonjour Alberta” page on the Government’s official website lists a French services directory that contains a “Law and Justice” sub-category.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Despite the progress that has been achieved in terms of accessing justice in French in Alberta, there are still areas for improvement, in particular in terms of financing, training, and joint collaboration with various organizations.

1 FUNDING

- Funding should be increased, especially from the federal government with regards to areas under federal jurisdiction.

2 TRAINING

- Enhancing the availability of French-language training in the legal sector is also recommended, in particular at the university level, but also through ongoing professional development, e.g., legal terminology in French.
- Such training already exists for Crown attorneys and could be extended to defence lawyers. This could help mitigate the linguistic imbalance between the Crown and the defence.
- Training could also be made available to other professionals in the legal system (mediators, arbitrators, etc.).

3 COLLABORATION

- According to the AJEFA, access to justice in French would be bolstered by the joint effort of myriad stakeholders, including governments, community organizations, Francophone groups, and educational institutions.

4 INFORMATION

- Efforts should be deployed to ensure members of the public are more aware of the services offered in French. Furthermore, language needs should be taken into account when implementing new processes or updating existing ones.
- It would also be advisable to implement practice standards pertaining to French-language services.
- Legal terminology and dictionaries in French should be made easily accessible to the public.

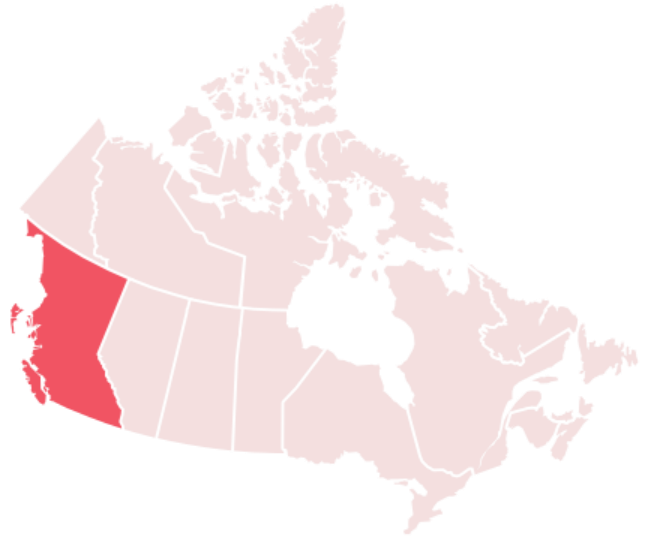
According to the Ministry of Justice, various improvements can be implemented, with particular emphasis on the availability of in-person and online French-language services, how these services are monitored, and the offer of French-language forms. However, enhancing French-language services first requires identifying where they must be offered and bolstered.

USEFUL REFERENCES



- Auclair, N., Frigon, C. & St-Amant, G. (2023). [*Key facts on the French language in Alberta in 2021*](#). Statistics Canada.
- Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta (2026). [*Ressources en français*](#).
- Website of [*Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta*](#)
- Website of [*Centre albertain d'information juridique*](#)

British Columbia



BACKGROUND

This section presents information obtained from the Association des juristes d'expression française de la Colombie-Britannique (AJEFCB) and the Ministry of Attorney General of British Columbia. Some information has been validated and completed by the research team.

The 2002 report (GTA Research) listed British Columbia as one of the provinces where “work ha[d] yet to begin” in terms of providing legal services in French. Major progress has been achieved since then, as revealed in a recent study titled *Barriers and enablers to accessing criminal justice in French in British Columbia*²³ which concluded that “[w]hile barriers persist, British Columbia now has the tangible means to overcome them.” (p. 4)

The AJEFCB reports that while there has been significant progress accomplished since 2002 in terms of access to justice in the minority official language in British Columbia, there is still room for improvement. Indeed, despite major strides that have enhanced the availability of services in French and reinforced the recognition of language rights, access to justice in French is inconsistent and remains a work in progress.

²³ Girard, Marie-Hélène & Ève Richard (2026). *Barriers and enablers to accessing criminal justice in French in British Columbia*. Research and Information Hub One Justice, One Access (1J1A).

A few key facts...



- In British Columbia, there is no constitutional obligation to provide legal services in French. Moreover, there are no statutory provincial provisions recognizing the right to use French in the courts.
- Despite the sustained demographic growth of British Columbia, the demographic weight of citizens whose mother tongue is French is in decline. The demographic weight of those whose first official language spoken is French is also in decline.
- Demographic data collected since 2001 reveal a continued downward trend in the overall bilingualism rate, including within Anglophone and Allophone populations.
- In 2002, there were approximately 10 criminal trials conducted in French. In 2025, there were approximately 100 active cases.



CURRENT SITUATION



OVERVIEW

According to the AJEFCB, Francophone justiciables in British Columbia are overall moderately satisfied with the legal services available in the minority official language and are at a significant disadvantage in areas under federal jurisdiction.

Historically, access to justice in French in British Columbia has always been limited. Indeed, there is no provincial law that guarantees the delivery of legal services in French and most provincial laws are only written in English. This has led to widespread dissatisfaction among Francophone justiciables, especially in civil matters. Consequently, Francophones have often opted to undergo proceedings in English, even when they would have preferred these to be held in French.

With regards to areas under federal jurisdiction (e.g., criminal law, bankruptcy law, the law of divorce and support), Francophone justiciables in British Columbia face specific challenges when compared to their Anglophone counterparts, despite the theoretical legal protections conferred by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and federal laws.

In sum, even though significant progress has been made to improve access to justice in French in British Columbia, Francophone justiciables report only modest levels of satisfaction. Sustained efforts are therefore needed to overcome persistent barriers and guarantee equitable access to justice in the province's two languages.



BARRIERS

According to the AJEFCB and the Ministry of Attorney General of British Columbia, the biggest barrier to accessing justice in French stems from an insufficient number of bilingual professionals in the justice system. Despite the progress that has been made, there are still too few bilingual judges, lawyers, registrars, and legal interpreters in British Columbia. According to the AJEFCB, this shortage has made it more difficult to hold trials, specifically criminal trials, in French and hinders equitable access to justice for Francophones. This situation has been exacerbated by an increase in the demand for French legal services, due in part to the growing number of Francophone immigrants. The scarcity of active bilingual personnel — including judges and interpreters — frequently results in procedural delays and court adjournments.

Because Francophones are scattered across the province, it can prove difficult to provide them with access to bilingual personnel who can respond to requests for services in French. This is especially the case in rural regions and outside major cities like Vancouver. In criminal matters, however, bilingual employees can travel to specific jurisdictions where no bilingual judge or registrar is available. Nevertheless, recruiting bilingual legal personnel remains a constant challenge. Accordingly, the offer of French services is often contingent on whether resources are available and is not a response to legal obligations.

Furthermore, there are no educational institutions (universities or otherwise) providing comprehensive legal training in French in British Columbia. Such institutions would be able to train bilingual legal professionals in the province. Individuals wishing to study law in French must therefore enroll in institutions in other provinces, which may deter some potential candidates.

Moreover, according to the Ministry of Attorney General, the provincial government's competing priorities render planning difficult and limit the amount of funding available for myriad programs, including those pertaining to justice. The AJEFCB, for instance, is primarily funded by government grants, causing the Association to be vulnerable to budget fluctuations and making long-term planning more difficult. Diversifying sources of funding, in particular through partnerships and fundraising activities, should be considered a priority to ensure the sustainability of the organization and its services.

According to the AJEFCB, certain institutional policies and practices have had a negative impact on the ability of justiciables, Francophones in particular, to access legal services in both official languages. Inexistent provincial legislation governing services in French and budget cuts to legal aid services are notable examples.

There is also room for improvement when it comes to sharing information and public outreach. Indeed, many Francophone justiciables are not aware that they are entitled to obtain services in French. This in turn may lead to such services being underutilized. It must also be noted that there is no centralized hub for accessing legal services in French. The Ministry of Citizens' Services "Service BC" page provides some information in French but nothing pertaining

specifically to justice²⁴. The AJEFCB also reports a limited availability of legal documents in French.

Even though initiatives to improve access to legal services in French in British Columbia have been implemented, structural and institutional barriers remain.



FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

According to the AJEFCB and the Ministry of Attorney General, there are policies and programs in British Columbia that have a positive impact on access to legal services in both official languages. For instance, the province implemented a *French Language Policy*²⁵ for the first time in January 2024 to help ministries enhance French-language services, including those within the justice system. The policy also aims to bolster the active offer of services in French and facilitate the recruitment of bilingual personnel in public institutions. Efforts have therefore been deployed to improve the availability of legal services in French in British Columbia and, as a result, the number of trials held in French has increased.



ACTIVE OFFER

In British Columbia, there is an active offer of service policy in the minority official language in matters of criminal law and in the area of divorce and support law (although the active offer is more limited in the latter). There is no such policy in bankruptcy law.

The active offer in the area of criminal law stems from the application of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as well as section 530 of the *Criminal Code*. According to the Ministry of Attorney General, the court will generally notify an accused of their right to proceedings in the official language of their choice. The Crown will then make sure it has at least one Crown counsel who can communicate in this language. According to the AJEFCB, however, some accused are never notified of their right to a trial in French. In matters of divorce and support, the active offer stems from the application of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Divorce Act*. The provincial government has made information in French on this topic available online²⁶.

The Supreme Court of British Columbia has jurisdiction over bankruptcy and insolvency matters. For proceedings to be conducted in French, an explicit request must be made by the party concerned. Similarly, mandatory information sessions for debtors may be held in French upon request. Licensed Insolvency Trustees must also provide their services in French when they are asked to do so by clients.

In summary, British Columbia has not adopted any official language law guaranteeing the delivery of services in French. As such, the active offer of services in the minority official language is essentially governed by federal legislation. From a legislative standpoint, the province is Anglophone — provincial laws do not explicitly require services to be offered in French.

²⁴ Service BC (2026). *Service BC*. Government of British Columbia.

²⁵ Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat (2024). *British Columbia introduces French-language policy*. Government of British Columbia.

²⁶ B.C. Public Service (2026). *Formulaires se rattachant aux Règles de procédure de la Cour suprême en matière familiale – version française*. Government of British Columbia.

Nevertheless, and even though no provincial law guarantees an active offer of services in French, British Columbia has now adopted a *French Language Policy*. Moreover, practices and initiatives have been implemented thanks to partnerships with the Francophone community and federally funded programs.

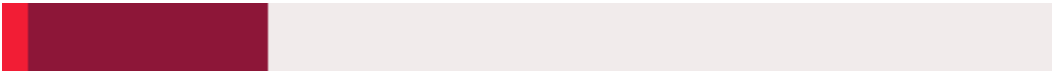
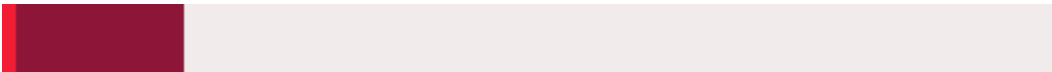
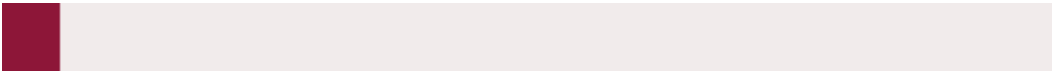
DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

According to the AJEFCB and the Ministry of Attorney General, documents issued by police officers (notices, statements of offence, citations, etc.), make no mention of a citizen's right to select their preferred official language. However, some other forms do allow citizens to choose the official language of their choice²⁷. In criminal matters, the accused can fill out a form — not a separate French form but rather a bilingual one — to specify their preferred language for legal proceedings. While a similar form also exists in matters of divorce and support, there is no such document available in the area of bankruptcy law.

Other French forms are available in the province, in particular documentation pertaining to child support and child support orders. The Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy has also made forms in French available.

BILINGUAL STAFF

The following data from the *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire* from DPM Research (2025) provides an overview of the number of professionals who are able to have a conversation in French and those who speak French at least on a regular basis at work.

- **105 of the 415 judges** in the province (**25.3%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **10 (2.4%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.

- **2,595 of the 14,885 lawyers** in the province (**17.4%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **210 (1.4%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.

- **25 of the 450 court clerks** in the province (**5.6%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but fewer than **5** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.


²⁷ For example, see the form titled “Violation ticket statement and written reasons” on the “[Provincial violation ticket forms](#)” page.

- **65 of the 730 sheriffs and bailiffs** in the province (**8.9%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but fewer than **5** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



The Law Society of British Columbia's Lawyer Directory²⁸ does not allow users to search for members by language spoken. However, a directory of French-speaking lawyers is available on the AJEFCB's website²⁹. The AJEFCB has also created a directory of other Francophone professionals where users can find lists of mediators, translators, interpreters, and notaries.

According to the AJEFCB and the Ministry of Attorney General, there has been an increase in the number of judges and Crown counsel who are able to provide services in the minority official language. The BC Prosecution Service (BCPS) has also expanded its team of bilingual Crown counsel and support staff. However, retaining bilingual registry staff remains a challenge. As for lawyers, the AJEFCB has not noted any change in the number of attorneys who are able to provide services in French. That being said, the province is facing a shortage of judges, lawyers, Crown counsel, and support staff who are proficient in French.

To remedy this situation, the province has implemented a language training program for judges, lawyers, Crown counsel, registry staff, and other professionals in the justice sector. For instance, specific training on French legal terminology is available to registrars, sheriffs, and other stakeholders of the justice system. Short videos have also been produced to help viewers improve their conversational skills in French. While the Centre canadien de français juridique (CCFJ) provides training to the Attorney General, other training programs are available internally or through external parties.

According to the Ministry of Attorney General, there are mechanisms in place to assess the French language skills of judges and other professionals in the justice system, including legal interpreters. For judges, this responsibility falls to the Judicial Council of BC. As for Crown counsel, the Ministry carries out its own language assessment. Finally, there is no official mechanism in place to assess the language skills of lawyers who self-report the languages in which they deliver services.

According to the AJEFCB and the Ministry of Attorney General, tools and policies have been designed to facilitate the recruitment of individuals who can provide services in the minority official language. The provincial government has also implemented measures to increase the number of bilingual legal professionals. For instance, there are bilingual positions within the courts and the BCPS. In fact, the BCPS has adopted a plan to recruit bilingual students and interns as well as a program supporting the recruitment of bilingual lawyers. That being said, each ministry is responsible for recruiting its own staff and very little government planning is specific to bilingual personnel.

²⁸ Law Society of British Columbia (2025). *Lawyer Directory*.

²⁹ Association des juristes d'expression française de la Colombie-Britannique (2025). *Répertoire d'avocats francophones*.

Tools in place also include language training for registrars, sheriffs, and other stakeholders of the justice system. Other measures have been adopted to encourage legal professionals to become proficient in French or hone their language skills in order to make it easier for them to take on roles that require fluency in both official languages. These measures include the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2023–2028* and scholarships for individuals wishing to study law in French.

However, because British Columbia has not adopted any provincial legislation guaranteeing the right to use French in the court system, there is less incentive to recruit bilingual staff. Moreover, a lack of awareness of language rights in areas under federal jurisdiction, in particular section 530 of the *Criminal Code*, has reduced the number of requests for services in French which in turn can deter institutions from recruiting bilingual staff.

In summary, structural, institutional, and cultural barriers are hindering the recruitment of professionals with the skills to provide legal services in French.



TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

According to the AJEFCB, there is no official procedure for translating court documents. Per the Ministry of Attorney General, in criminal matters, the only translated document an accused is automatically entitled to receiving is the indictment. Furthermore, the province's *French Language Policy* stipulates that a French Translation Guide must be available to “assist ministries with decisions and procedures for the translation of documents into French”³⁰. Some defence lawyers rely on machine translation or artificial intelligence to translate rulings.

According to the Ministry of Attorney General, legal interpretation services in both official languages are offered and available as needed for criminal and divorce proceedings. Per the AJEFCB, however, these interpretation services are not systematically offered nor available. As for civil or administrative matters, there is no legal obligation in the province to provide interpretation services in French. Nor has British Columbia adopted any provincial policy that guarantees systematic access to interpretation services in French in the courts. While they may be offered in some situations, they often depend on the discretion of the judge or whether the justiciable has explicitly requested them.

Still according to the AJEFCB, justiciables must often take it upon themselves to obtain the services of an interpreter, in particular when it comes to civil hearings. Even when a request has been submitted, it may take time or prove difficult to obtain the services of a competent interpreter due to the shortage of qualified French-language interpreters in British Columbia. When these services are available, they may be provided in person or remotely from an interpreter based in the province or elsewhere in Canada. The decision whether or not to allow interpretation services depends on the nature of the case, logistical constraints, and the availability of interpreters. It must also take into account accessibility and the quality of the service.

In British Columbia, legal interpreters who provide services in the province's official languages must demonstrate a high level of proficiency in English and French. These language skills are

³⁰ Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat (2024). *British Columbia introduces French-language policy*. Government of British Columbia.

generally assessed through a certification exam administered by the Society of Translators and Interpreters of B.C. (STIBC) or the Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council (CTTIC). The Ministry of Attorney General of British Columbia has developed its own recognition program and the Provincial Court of British Columbia requires interpreters to successfully complete exams to assess their ability to deliver accurate interpretation services in a legal context. For an interpreter to be able to provide interpretation services during legal proceedings, they generally require a diploma in legal interpretation, a degree in translation, or official certification. The interpreter's level of certification will essentially determine what type of proceedings they may take part in. Nonetheless, because of a shortage of interpreters, those without the appropriate level of certification will sometimes be called upon to provide their services.



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

According to the AJEFCB and the Ministry of Attorney General, information technology has broadly enhanced access to justice in French in British Columbia by improving how information is disseminated and by facilitating access to legal services. However, still according to the AJEFCB, challenges remain, in particular in terms of the availability of online bilingual resources and universal digital accessibility.



OUTREACH

There have been campaigns deployed in British Columbia to increase awareness about language rights in connection with accessing justice in the province. For instance, in 2024 the AJEFCB launched a campaign titled “La justice en français : mon droit et... mon devoir” (“Justice in French: my right and... my duty”) to encourage Francophone British Columbians to be considered for jury duty in French-language criminal trials. The goal was to make members of the community aware of the importance of defending this language right and to bring attention to the civic duty of being a juror. The government for its part has ensured that legal notices and information are displayed in courthouses, although these efforts were not part of a specific awareness campaign.



HOW SERVICES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2002

The AJEFCB notes that some progress has been made since the report was published in 2002. More specifically, some gains have been noted in criminal law and in the area of divorce and support law. As for bankruptcy law, the AJEFCB has not observed any change.

In terms of criminal law, initiatives have been implemented to train more bilingual judges and judicial personnel. The number of trials conducted in French has increased from approximately 10 per year to one hundred active cases in 2025.

In the area of divorce and support law, French-language resources are available for divorce and child support proceedings, and some specialized lawyers offer their services in French.

Finally, with respect to bankruptcy law, the Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy provides services in French, including online resources and forms. Moreover, certain Licensed Insolvency Trustees provide services in French. Despite this, most proceedings are conducted in English and there is a limited availability of bilingual professionals.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Improving access to justice in French in British Columbia could be achieved by bolstering efforts to recruit bilingual personnel, increasing the number of documents available in French, raising awareness about language rights, and fostering collaboration between governments and community organizations.

1 RECRUITMENT

- The AJEFCB recommends the implementation of incentive programs to recruit bilingual lawyers, judges, registrars, and other professionals in the justice system.
- Bilingual competencies should be considered when it comes to career advancement for personnel already hired. Language training could also be offered to enable them to hone their ability to provide services in French.
- Targeted scholarships should be used to help young Francophones in the province pursue legal studies. As for bilingual lawyers already practising, they should be encouraged to emphasize their language skills.
- Qualified interpreters should systematically be made available for hearings in French.

2 DOCUMENTATION

- The AJEFCB states that steps should be taken to ensure that all legal documents and forms are made available in French. Currently, only some documents and forms have been produced in French, mostly in the areas of criminal law and divorce and support law.

3 OUTREACH

- More efforts should be made to ensure the general population and stakeholders are aware of their language rights.
- Informing members of the Francophone community about their language rights when it comes to accessing justice could be accomplished by distributing brochures, implementing online awareness campaigns, and organizing community workshops.
- Workshops on the legal obligation to offer French-language services during court proceedings should be made available to all legal professionals.

4

COLLABORATION

- Greater collaboration should be fostered between governments and community organizations. According to the AJEFCB, a multitier approach is the key to guaranteeing access to justice in French in British Columbia.
- All levels of authority must collaborate to ensure the efficient implementation of the measures recommended. The federal and provincial governments both have specific roles to play in the various spheres under their jurisdiction.
- The federal government could develop and fund programs promoting access to bilingual legal services, ensure federal language laws are enforced, (in particular with respect to the *Official Languages Act*), implement bilingual federal courts, and deploy community initiatives to bolster access to justice in French.
- The provincial government could make it easier to train bilingual legal professionals and develop provincial policies that promote an active offer of legal services in French.
- Joint committees that meet periodically could be created to ensure language policies are enforced. These committees should comprise stakeholders from various levels of government, in particular the Department of Justice and the Supreme Court of British Columbia, as well as Francophone associations in the province.
- Francophone associations must be actively involved in communicating local needs and promoting access to services in the minority language. It is therefore critical to improve communication between community actors and institutions.
- Interprovincial collaboration would enable provinces to find inspiration from practices implemented elsewhere, in particular in provinces where French enjoys special status in the justice system, such as New Brunswick and Ontario.

Finally, indicators that measure access to legal services in French in the province should be implemented. This could be achieved, for instance, by regularly surveying Francophone justiciables on the quality of services obtained.

USEFUL REFERENCES



- Auclair, N., Frigon, C. & St-Amant, G. (2023). [*Key facts on the French language in British Columbia in 2021*](#). Statistics Canada.
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Prince Edward Island



BACKGROUND

This section presents information obtained from the Société acadienne et francophone de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard (SAF'Île) and the Department of Justice and Public Safety of Prince Edward Island. Some information has been validated and completed by the research team.

The 2002 report (GTA Research) listed Prince Edward Island as one of the provinces where progress toward better access to justice in the minority official language was in its infancy. Possible solutions included appointing a greater number of Francophone judges, creating bilingual positions among courthouse personnel, and adopting innovative approaches to improve access to services.

Since the report was published, some progress has been achieved and access to justice in the minority official language has been enhanced. However, recent observations show significant structural barriers remain, specifically the shortage of bilingual resources and the limits of the active offer. As a result, several challenges identified in 2002 continue to persist.

A few key facts...



- There is no constitutional obligation to provide judicial and legal services in French in Prince Edward Island. Furthermore, the *French Language Services Act* of Prince Edward Island contains no provisions pertaining to the administration of justice.
- While there is a sustained demographic growth in Prince Edward Island, the relative demographic weight of citizens whose mother tongue is French is in decline. The same is true for those whose first official language spoken is French.
- Demographic data collected since 2001 reveal that the overall bilingualism rate in Prince Edward Island has remained relatively stable, despite an increase in the rate of bilingualism among Anglophones and a decrease in the rate of bilingualism among Allophones.
- SAF'Île is the main voice of Prince Edward Island's Acadians and Francophones and oversees a network of 25 community organizations.



CURRENT SITUATION



OVERVIEW

According to the SAF'Île, Francophone justiciables in the province are overall moderately satisfied with the legal services available in the minority official language and are at a significant disadvantage in areas under federal jurisdiction. Still according to the SAF'Île, it is not uncommon for Francophone justiciables to opt for services in English. They do this to be obliging and to not be perceived as disruptive. In other words, they are often resigned to being served in English.



BARRIERS

Based on information provided by the SAF'Île and the Department of Justice and Public Safety, a dearth of bilingual personnel working in the judicial system is the main barrier to accessing justice in French in Prince Edward Island. The root of this problem, according to the Department of Justice and Public Safety, can be traced to the reduced pool of bilingual candidates in the province. When bilingual positions are not filled due to a lack of candidates, these positions remain vacant which in turn leads to delays in the delivery of services. One measure adopted to remedy the shortage of bilingual judges has been to call upon judges proficient in French from neighbouring provinces to oversee proceedings.

There is a shortage of bilingual personnel at all levels of the justice system. While this problem impacts lawyers, it is most evident when it comes to judges. In fact, there is only one bilingual

judge appointed to the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island. Moreover, no judges appointed to the Provincial Court can preside over French proceedings. The Department of Justice and Public Safety states that despite efforts deployed, the pool of qualified bilingual personnel remains limited, rendering it difficult to appoint bilingual judges to the Provincial Court. Furthermore, because the province is not officially bilingual, being bilingual is an asset – not an obligation. According to the SAFÎle, the fact that bilingual judges are not appointed sends the message that lawyers do not have to speak French to become a judge. In sum, the situation has become a vicious cycle.

To illustrate the impacts of a shortage of judges fluent in French, the SAFÎle notes the case of an accused who appeared before the courts several times in 2009-2010 and convinced the Provincial Court to hold a trial in French (under the provisions of the *Criminal Code* of Canada) for infractions related to the municipal code of Charlottetown³¹. However, after finding in favour of the accused, the judge rendered their oral decision in English.



FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

According to the SAFÎle, few provincial policies or programs have a positive impact on access to legal services in both official languages. One initiative that has had a positive impact is the Honourable C.R. McQuaid Family Law Centre³² in Charlottetown and its collaboration with Community Legal Information to make legal information documents available in French, including plain-language brochures on legal terminology and family law.

The Department of Justice and Public Safety also notes that the *French Language Services Act* outlines what services are available in French across the province. The *Act* stipulates that any reply to correspondence received in French (regardless of whether it pertains to the justice sector) must be drafted in French. There are no designated services specific to the justice sector, but such services may be added by amending general regulations. Moreover, the Acadian and Francophone Affairs Secretariat plans to fill a new bilingual position for a French language services officer in 2026. This position was designed to: provide guidance to Francophones in obtaining public services in French; build ties to the Acadian and Francophone community to facilitate access to these services; notify the Acadian and Francophone Affairs Secretariat and any other government body of shortcomings or barriers hindering access to programs and services in French; and work with these government bodies to improve the delivery of services in French and the overall client experience.

Finally, the Department of Justice and Public Safety has been collaborating with Community Legal Information to make legal information documents, including plain-language brochures on legal terminology and family law, available in French.

³¹ Radio-Canada (2010, March 4). *Un pas en avant pour les francophones*.

³² The Honourable C.R. McQuaid Family Law Centre is under the direction of the Office of the Attorney General of Prince Edward Island.



ACTIVE OFFER

It is unclear whether there is an active offer of services in the minority official language in areas under federal jurisdiction. According to the SAF'Île, however, there are no provincial rules of law in Prince Edward Island or practices or internal policies pertaining to an active offer of services in the minority official language. The Department of Justice and Public Safety reiterates that the *French Language Services Act* of Prince Edward Island provides for an active offer of designated services, including those pertaining to justice. That being said, the *Act* makes no mention of designated services in the area of criminal law. Nor are there any designated services in bankruptcy law or in the area of divorce and support. Designated services may be added by amending general regulations.



DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

According to the Department of Justice and Public Safety, indictment forms are available in both official languages – the French version is generally available when the accused submits a request to this effect. While forms pertaining to indictments and details concerning the charge are generally not printed in both languages, the accused or their lawyer may submit a request to obtain a French copy. Most government agencies proceed in this way when it comes to their documents and forms.

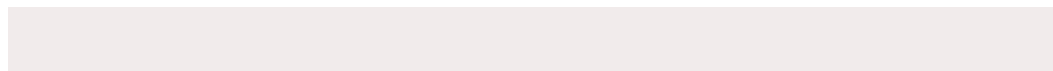
Per the SAF'Île, some documents issued by police officers (e.g., tickets) are in both official languages. However, information on the offence is drafted in English. The Acadian and Francophone Community Advisory Committee conveys the Acadian and Francophone community's priorities to help determine which information and documents (i.e., forms) should be translated in French.



BILINGUAL STAFF

The following data from the *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire* from DPM Research (2025) provides an overview of the number of professionals who are able to have a conversation in French and those who speak French at least on a regular basis at work.

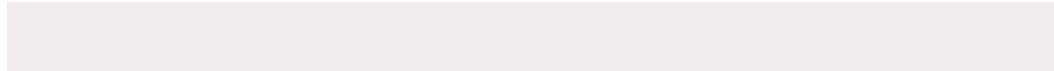
- Because the number of judges is below the minimum threshold, the number of judges who stated they are able to have a conversation in French and who speak French at least on a regular basis at work cannot be disclosed.



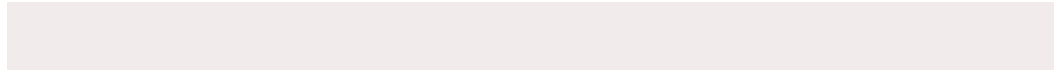
- **90 of the 280 lawyers** in the province (**32.1%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **10 (3.6%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **Fewer than 5 of the 10 court clerks** in the province stated they are able to have a conversation in French.



- **Fewer than 5 of the 35 sheriffs and bailiffs** in the province stated they are able to have a conversation in French.



Neither the Law Society of Prince Edward Island³³, nor Community Legal Information, nor Legal Aid provides an online directory of lawyers who offer services in the minority official language. According to the SAFÎle, the number of bilingual lawyers in PEI has risen since 2002. The Department of Justice and Public Safety also notes an increase in the rate of bilingualism in judges and courtroom staff. However, there are fewer bilingual Crown prosecutors than there were in 2002. The Department specifies that the Crown is not currently able to hold trials, bring applications, or submit motions in French. Nevertheless, there is a support officer and a lawyer at Legal Aid who are proficient in French. If needed, Legal Aid can call on Francophone lawyers from the private sector, in particular with respect to duty counsel services required under the Brydges ruling.

There is very little legal training available in French in Prince Edward Island, with the exception of French legal terminology courses provided by the Government of Canada. Judges wishing to take part in specific training courses in French generally need to travel outside the province. Nevertheless, the Public Service Commission of Prince Edward Island provides a French Language Training Program to all government employees. Various training programs are also available depending on a person's language proficiency level and their individual needs. This offer includes full courses at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), half-day workshops, online discussion groups, and self-learning tools (e.g., modules on Moodle and subscriptions to Babbel). These options are designed to help civil servants learn French while allowing those who are already fluent in French to maintain their language skills. Moreover, eligible public sector employees who enroll in a training program in French may receive funding through the French Language Training Incentive Program.

The province has implemented a mechanism to verify civil servants' proficiency with the minority official language. According to the Department of Justice and Public Safety, the Public Service Commission of PEI carries out over 100 French language proficiency assessments every year. These play a key role in bolstering the government's ability to function in both official languages and serve as a way to help employees learn French and improve their language skills. Evaluations are also used in the recruitment process when filling bilingual positions.

³³ The Law Society of Prince Edward Island (2025). *Member Directory/Find a Lawyer*.

TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

The Acadian and Francophone Affairs Secretariat oversees government translation services, including any translation on behalf of the Department of Justice and Public Safety. Translation fees are covered by the Secretariat. However, this service does not include the translation of documents submitted to the Court that are translated by specialized translators. The Secretariat can outsource specialized translation mandates to external parties to meet the needs of the Department of Justice and Public Safety. The Secretariat covers the costs of these contracts. Neither machine translation nor artificial intelligence is used to translate court documents.

Interpretation services in both official languages are provided in person. Interpretation is not a regulated profession in Prince Edward Island, and it is unclear whether there are any professional and educational requirements legal interpreters must meet.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information technology has not specifically facilitated access to justice in the minority official language in the province; there are only a few web pages in French on the Department of Justice and Public Safety's website³⁴.

OUTREACH

According to the SAF'Île, no awareness campaign on language rights and access to justice has ever been deployed in the province.



HOW SERVICES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2002

The SAF'Île has not observed any change since the 2002 report was published in terms of accessing justice in the minority official language in the areas of criminal law, the law of divorce and support, and bankruptcy law.

That being said, some information in French has become easier to access with the rise of the internet. For instance, the Government of Prince Edward Island has created a “Justice et Sécurité publique” (“Justice and Public Safety”) website to provide information in French about the legal and support services offered within the province. The family law section is quite detailed. Even though some links redirect to pages that have not been translated in French, the Department of Justice and Public Safety has deployed efforts to increase the number of pages translated in French. Several web pages and other resources have also been translated in French over the past few years, in particular pages concerning family law and the Maintenance Enforcement Program. Moreover, bilingual positions have been created and filled in recent years. For instance, in 2021 a bilingual officer position was created in the Maintenance Enforcement Program. Other

³⁴ Ministère de la Justice et de la Sécurité publique (2025). *Justice et Sécurité publique*. Gouvernement de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard.

bilingual positions were created in 2023 and 2024, including a legal clerk and a clinician position at the Family Law Centre³⁵.

Finally, in 2022, equipment for simultaneous interpretation was installed in two courtrooms at the Supreme Court in Charlottetown and in two courtrooms in Slemon Park. This type of equipment was also installed at the Court of Appeal, in two Provincial Court courtrooms in Charlottetown, and at the Summerside courthouse in 2023.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The SAF'Île points to several areas for improvement and recommends the following: an increase in the number of bilingual legal professionals, the creation of a directory of bilingual lawyers in the province, the promotion of bilingualism, increased funding, and the creation of an AJEF.

1 RECRUITMENT

- A shortage of bilingual legal personnel in Prince Edward Island hinders access to justice in both official languages. Indeed, there are very few judges who can preside over proceedings in French.
- Requiring judges to travel from New Brunswick to hear cases in Prince Edward Island has been a stopgap measure that has been in place since the 1990s and does not contribute to the active offer of services in French. Appointing bilingual judges in Prince Edward Island requires greater political will.

2 OUTREACH

- Promoting bilingualism within the broader justice ecosystem should also be prioritized. Such efforts fall to every level of government, each being responsible for the areas under their jurisdiction.

3 INFORMATION

- The Law Society of Prince Edward Island (or another organization) should create a list of lawyers in the province who provide services in French. The directory available on the Law Society's website should also allow users to search for lawyers by language of services offered. This is currently not the case.

4 FUNDING

- The SAF'Île does not have the financial or human resources needed to adequately take on the role that various Associations of French-Speaking Jurists (AJEF) play in most

³⁵ Ministers' Council on the Canadian Francophonie (2024). *Annual report on the French Language Services Act in Prince Edward Island*.

Canadian provinces. Even though an AJEF would help facilitate access to justice in French, funding constraints make it difficult to allocate staff to the project of creating such an organization.

5 COLLABORATION

- In collaboration with the Department of Justice and Public Safety, the Acadian and Francophone Affairs Secretariat has been exploring the option of adding an active offer clause to job descriptions of bilingual designated positions not connected to designated services when these positions are financed in part by the Canada–Prince Edward Island Agreement on Services in the Minority Language. This would include several positions within the Department of Justice and Public Safety. That being said, the Department needs data, in particular quantitative data, to better understand needs and respond to them.

USEFUL REFERENCES



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- Government of Prince Edward Island (2026). [*Services et appui juridiques*](#).
- Website of [*Community Legal Information \(CLI\)*](#)
- Website of [*Société acadienne et francophone de l'Île \(SAF'Île\)*](#)

Manitoba



BACKGROUND

This section presents information obtained from the Association des juristes d'expression française du Manitoba (AJEFM), the Government of Manitoba³⁶, and the results of the Survey for jurists and other professionals in the Canadian justice sector³⁷. Some information has been validated and completed by the research team.

The 2002 report (GTA Research) listed Manitoba as one of the provinces where progress toward better access to justice in the minority official language was in its infancy. Recommended courses of action included bolstering bilingual resources, creating bilingual positions among judicial personnel, and adopting innovative approaches to improve access to services.

Since then, progress has been made and access to justice in the minority official language has improved. This is due notably to an increase in the number of bilingual resources and the development of infrastructures facilitating access to services. However, recent observations show barriers remain: an ongoing shortage of bilingual staff, deficiencies in terms of training, and the limits of the active offer. As a result, several challenges identified in 2002 continue to persist.

³⁶ The Francophone Affairs Secretariat and the Manitoba Prosecution Service.

³⁷ We obtained answers from nine justice sector professionals who indicated they work with French-speaking clients in Manitoba.

A few key facts...



- Like in New Brunswick and Quebec, constitutional provisions require Manitoba to respect its citizens' right to use French or English before the courts.
- While there is a sustained demographic growth in Manitoba, the relative demographic weight of citizens whose mother tongue is French is in decline. The same is true for those whose first official language spoken is French.
- Demographic data collected since 2001 reveal a slight downward trend in the overall bilingualism rate in Manitoba even though the bilingualism rate within Anglophone, Francophone, and Allophone populations has remained relatively stable.
- The Université de Saint-Boniface offers a range of programs in French and also houses the Centre d'études franco-canadiennes de l'Ouest, a research centre focusing on French-speaking communities in Western Canada.



CURRENT SITUATION



OVERVIEW

According to the AJEFM and data from the survey, Francophone justiciables in the province are overall moderately satisfied with the legal services available in the minority official language and are at a significant disadvantage in areas under federal jurisdiction. This is mainly due to a lack of bilingual personnel, delays, costs, and even the quality of the services rendered. According to survey respondents, it is not uncommon for Francophones to opt to receive services in English, either because they are proficient in this language or because they have not been told they can receive services in French. Moreover, some Manitobans believe that requesting services in French leads to additional delays or incurs extra costs. They may also fear disrupting the proceedings or failing to be understood. Or they assume that services delivered in French are of an inferior quality. Those who choose to benefit from services in French generally do so because these services were made available to them or because they want to assert their language rights. In some cases, they opt for services in French simply because they are not proficient in English.



BARRIERS

According to the AJEFM, there are several major barriers to accessing justice in French in Manitoba. First, the legal sector suffers from a dearth of bilingual jurists and other professionals, in particular support staff. Second, the offer of French-language training programs remains

limited. Indeed, individuals who have completed a French immersion program (and even some Francophones) are not proficient enough in French to practise in this language with confidence or even be accepted into a university law program. According to the Government of Manitoba, not only is there a shortage of bilingual professionals at every level of the government, but there is also a pervasive lack of awareness among stakeholders regarding language rights and the concept of an active offer. The AJEFM and survey respondents also reported that some forms and documents are not systematically offered in French while calls regarding services in French may be redirected to voicemail with a message recorded in English.



FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

There are several factors that have a positive impact on access to legal services in both official languages in Manitoba. For instance, signs in courtrooms are generally displayed in both official languages and the rules of the court are in English and French. Additionally, courts will deploy the necessary efforts to meet requests for services in French. Finally, the Government of Manitoba, via the Francophone Affairs Secretariat, has adopted a *French Language Services Policy* that governs public bodies (including administrative courts) in how they provide services in French³⁸. In addition, according to the Government of Manitoba, the *Francophone Community Enhancement And Support Act* provides a stronger legislative framework in support of the *Policy* and the delivery of services in French.

Other factors that have a positive impact on access to legal services in French include the creation of the Access to Justice Francophone Service Hub — a centralized hub where Manitobans can access myriad services and speak to bilingual personnel. In fact, users are guaranteed to receive services in French. In terms of government services in general, there are five bilingual service centres (one in Saint-Boniface and four in rural areas) where citizens can access federal, provincial, and municipal services in the official language of their choice. These services are also available online or by phone. The Francophone Affairs Secretariat employs the staff at these centres and covers their operating costs.

Finally, the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Law launched a Concentration in Access to Justice in French program in 2022 in order to increase the offer of services in French in the province³⁹. It allows students to complete up to a third of their courses in French with the aim of ensuring that graduates are much more comfortable working in both official languages.



ACTIVE OFFER

In Manitoba, there is an active offer of services in the minority official language in criminal law, the law of divorce and support, bankruptcy law, and all other areas of justice in Manitoba — in theory at least.

In criminal law, justiciables are informed of their right to choose the official language in which the proceedings will take place. As for matters pertaining to divorce and support, challenges persist

³⁸ Government of Manitoba. *Francophone Affairs Secretariat*.

³⁹ University of Manitoba (2025). *Concentration in Access to Justice in French*.

according to the AJEFM. Justiciables may receive forms in French and have access to a bilingual judge, or at the very least, an interpreter. Barring a few exceptions, courtroom staff are generally aware of the concept of an active offer. In the area of bankruptcy law, the active offer is more restrained due to the fact that there are few bilingual lawyers practising in this field.

In addition to federal legislation, all government departments must comply with Manitoba's *French Language Services Policy*. It is based on the concept of an active offer and applies to all services (including legal ones) provided by the provincial government. Citizens interacting with public services are generally greeted in both languages, allowing them to indicate the language in which they wish to receive services. Moreover, certain locations display signage that informs citizens they can choose their preferred language. Finally, the Law Society of Manitoba's Code of Professional Conduct reminds lawyers of their duty to notify clients of their language rights: "A lawyer must, when appropriate, advise a client of the client's language rights, including the right to proceed in the official language of the client's choice"⁴⁰.



DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

According to the AJEFM and the Government of Manitoba, documents issued by police officers (notices, statements of offence, citations, etc.), indicate citizens have the option of choosing their preferred official language. However, the AJEFM reports that interactions with police officers generally occur in English. Indictments and details pertaining to the charge are provided to the accused in the official language of their choice, but this is not always done immediately. Courts manage the translation of these documents as needed and cover the costs for the accused.

In criminal law, there is no form allowing the accused to specify their preferred official language. Instead, the question is put to them verbally during their first appearance before a judge or a justice of the peace. The same applies in matters of divorce and support; no form allows individuals to specify their preferred official language. That being said, French-language forms are available upon request. These are not bilingual forms but rather separate versions in French. Finally, it is unknown whether forms in French are available in matters pertaining to bankruptcy. The Government of Manitoba specifies that all federal forms are available in French. This is not necessarily the case at the provincial level. Some forms and documents are issued in bilingual versions and whichever language the justiciable uses is presumed to be indicative of which official language they prefer. That being said, there is no explicit mention of this.



BILINGUAL STAFF

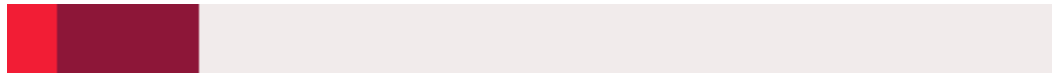
The following data from the *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire* from DPM Research (2025) provides an overview of the number of professionals who are able to have a conversation in French and those who speak French at least on a regular basis at work.

⁴⁰ The Law Society of Manitoba (2025). *Code of Professional Conduct*.

- **20 of the 130 judges** in the province (**15.4%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but fewer than **5** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



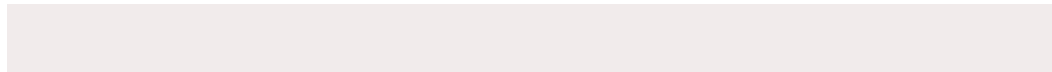
- **445 of the 2,440 lawyers** in the province (**18.2%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **115 (4.7%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **10 of the 80 court clerks** in the province (**12.5%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but fewer than **5** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **Fewer than 5 of the 185 sheriffs and bailiffs** in the province stated they are able to have a conversation in French.



The Law Society of Manitoba⁴¹ directory does not allow users to search for members by language spoken. However, a directory of French-speaking lawyers, divided by areas of law, is available on the AJEFM/Infojustice's website⁴².

According to the AJEFM, the number of bilingual judges, lawyers, and other legal professionals has increased since 2002. Per the Government of Manitoba, the number of bilingual Crown attorneys has also risen. In other words, bilingual resources are available. However, survey respondents noted that assembling a complete team remains a challenge due to the differing availabilities of key actors within the justice sector. For example, securing a Francophone or bilingual judge, registrar, and Crown attorney simultaneously can prove difficult.

Language training available in Manitoba has directly led to an increase in the number of bilingual personnel in the province's justice sector. Indeed, programs are now offered by the Law Society of Manitoba and the Centre canadien de français juridique. Moreover, all public servants who occupy designated bilingual positions or who could be called upon to provide services in French can benefit from French-language training thanks to funding from the Francophone Affairs Secretariat. In order to better support bilingual personnel, including staff at Manitoba Justice, the Secretariat is committed to developing targeted training modules focused on technical terminology and real-world situations.

Furthermore, a mechanism has been implemented to assess the competencies in the minority official language of judges, Crown attorneys, courtroom staff, and other professionals in the

⁴¹ The Law Society of Manitoba. *Lawyer Lookup*.

⁴² Association de juristes d'expression française du Manitoba (2024). *Annuaire d'avocats*.

justice system. However, as per the Government of Manitoba, it is unclear how this mechanism is used to assess the language competencies of judges. As for other professionals, assessments remain highly erratic and fail to address current needs. To remedy this situation, a project to develop a bilingual competency framework is currently underway.

The hiring process does include language assessments, and professional development workshops are offered as needed. Furthermore, the number of designated bilingual positions has increased within the entire justice ecosystem as well as within the provincial government, in particular at the Francophone Affairs Secretariat. As part of its Multi-Year Strategic French Language Services Plan, the Manitoba Prosecution Service has reported it intends to hire at least one bilingual intern per year. Moreover, bilingualism is a key asset prioritized during the recruitment of Crown attorneys in Winnipeg.

The main barrier to recruitment remains the level of French required from candidates. That being said, the uptick in Francophone immigration has resulted in more Francophones applying to positions within Manitoba Justice. However, these individuals are not always proficient enough in English to be hired in a designated bilingual position. Training in English could rectify this problem and allow employers to benefit from the presence of the Francophone community.



TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

Court documents are translated by the court upon request of the justiciable, with the court covering the costs of such translations. Personal documents may be in either official language. However, court documents in a different language than the proceedings must be translated. Court services coordinators submit all documents that need translation to Manitoba's Translation Services Branch, and the province covers the costs. While it is possible machine translation is used by some justiciables or their lawyers to translate documents, any translation or revision carried out by the Translation Services Branch is done by human translators. The Crown for its part never uses machine translation.

According to the Government of Manitoba, the Translation Services Branch (also responsible for providing court interpreters) works with nine interpretation service providers, including a few private firms. The Translation Services Branch reports they are always able to find interpreters for hearings and specifies that no hearing has ever been delayed due to a shortage of interpreters.

Interpretation services are provided in person or remotely using interpreters based in the province or elsewhere in Canada. Legal interpreters in Manitoba must be certified by a professional association. The Association of Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters of Manitoba (ATIM) offers certification based on the Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council's (CTTIC) standardized court interpreting certification exam. Freelance interpreters must also hold a bachelor's degree with a specialization in interpretation and have at least one year of experience in interpretation, including recent experience as a legal interpreter.



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

According to the AJEFM and the Government of Manitoba, information technology has enhanced access to justice in the minority official language in the province. Indeed, better access to terminology databases and specialized lexicons has made the process of drafting and translating texts easier.



OUTREACH

According to the AJEFM, awareness campaigns on language rights and access to justice have previously been deployed. Indeed, one of the AJEFM's missions is to raise awareness of these issues among justice stakeholders.



HOW SERVICES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2002

Overall, the AJEFM has observed some improvements since the 2002 report (GTA Research) was published, in particular regarding awareness and overall mobilization. In criminal matters for instance, the AJEFM has observed significant improvements driven by a favourable policy, continuous advocacy, and increased funding. As for the area of divorce and support, the AJEFM notes improvements due to favourable policies and increased funding, among other factors. In terms of bankruptcy law, some improvements have been observed and are partly the result of demands made by lawyers practising in this area of law. Nevertheless, and despite an increase in the number of bilingual professionals, there remains a shortage of bilingual staff in these three areas of law. Indeed, the province requires a greater number of bilingual judges, lawyers, and other legal professionals.

A circuit court in Saint-Boniface and Saint-Pierre-Jolys, created approximately two decades ago, represents another positive development. It sits once or twice a month and every member of staff speaks French. An interpreter also remains on standby. Another example of progress is the Access to Justice Francophone Service Hub which officially opened in Saint-Boniface in January 2026. It houses the circuit court as well as the AJEFM/Infojustice offices. It is also where citizens can access services in French.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

To improve access to justice in French in Manitoba, addressing the shortage of bilingual personnel remains a top priority.

1

TRAINING

- Before bilingual judges and personnel can be appointed or recruited, they need to undergo language training. These programs need to be funded.

- Linguistic criteria associated with enrolling in certain programs should be reviewed, in particular with regards to second-language proficiency levels and the recognition of prior learning.
- Bolstering the training offer would help mitigate deficiencies that impact every level of the province's legal ecosystem.

2 OUTREACH

- According to the Government, more outreach efforts need to be deployed. These not only need to target Francophones, but all stakeholders within the justice system (e.g., members of the Law Society), to ensure that everyone is aware of the importance of language rights and the active offer of services in both official languages.

Finally, the Government of Manitoba is currently working on implementing a long-term strategy on bilingualism. Access to services and training a bilingual labour force are the two core pillars of this strategy which should improve access to justice in French in the province.

USEFUL REFERENCES



- Auclair, N., Frigon, C. & St-Amant, G. (2023). [*Key facts on the French language in Manitoba in 2021*](#). Statistics Canada.
- Government of Manitoba. [*Francophone Affairs Secretariat*](#).
- Website of [*Aide juridique Manitoba*](#)
- Website of [*Association des juristes d'expression française du Manitoba*](#) (Infojustice Manitoba)
- Website of [*Société de la francophonie manitobaine*](#)
- Government of Manitoba. [*Soutien juridique*](#).
- Government of Manitoba. [*Justice Manitoba*](#).
- Les tribunaux du Manitoba. [*Se représenter seul*](#).

New Brunswick



BACKGROUND

This section presents information obtained from the Association des juristes d'expression française du Nouveau-Brunswick (AJEFNB) and the New Brunswick Department of Justice and Public Safety. Some information has been validated and completed by the research team.

According to the 2002 report (GTA Research), New Brunswick was one of the provinces where problems related to access to justice in the minority official language were not as widespread. However, some courses of action were recommended: the availability and accessibility of services in the minority official language needed to be ensured throughout the entire province, the active offer needed to be bolstered, the bilingual capabilities of judicial personnel needed to be improved, and the use of French needed to become standard practice.

Since then, significant progress has been made and access to justice in the minority official language has improved. This is due notably to changes in the legal framework, the implementation of active offer policies, and the reinforcement of bilingual resources, training, and services. Nonetheless, recent observations show barriers remain. These include an ongoing shortage of bilingual staff, difficulties in recruiting personnel, delays affecting certain sectors, and sustained needs in terms of outreach. As a result, several challenges identified in 2002 continue to persist.

A few key facts...



- Like in Manitoba and Quebec, constitutional provisions require New Brunswick to respect its citizens' right to use French or English before the courts.
- While New Brunswick is undergoing demographic growth, the relative demographic weight of citizens whose mother tongue is French is in slight decline. The same is true for those whose first official language spoken is French.
- Demographic data collected since 2001 reveal that the overall rate of bilingualism in New Brunswick is relatively stable. The rate of bilingualism among Anglophone and Francophone populations is stable; the rate of bilingualism among Allophones is in decline.
- The Université de Moncton is the country's largest French-language university outside Quebec. It offers French-language undergraduate and graduate programs across its three campuses in Edmundston, Moncton, and Shippagan.



CURRENT SITUATION



OVERVIEW

Under Canada's *Official Languages Act* and New Brunswick's *Official Languages Act*, all government services in the province must be made available in French and English. As such, justiciables in New Brunswick may choose their official language of preference for services, including those provided by phone or online.

According to the AJEFNB, Francophone justiciables in the province report moderate levels of satisfaction with the legal services available in the minority official language and are at a slight disadvantage in areas of federal jurisdiction. Despite New Brunswick being a constitutionally bilingual province, Francophone justiciables still encounter barriers such as delays and a shortage of professionals who are proficient in both official languages.

Nevertheless, the Government of New Brunswick has an obligation to its citizens regarding language rights. Accordingly, not enforcing these rights may result in lawsuits which, in most cases, conclude in favour of the party whose language rights have not been respected.



BARRIERS

In theory, New Brunswick's status as an officially bilingual province means no barriers should hinder access to justice in either official language. Per the AJEFNB however, there is a shortage

of professionals, especially judges and lawyers, who are proficient in French. This is especially true in regions of the province where there are few Francophones. Court delays for French-language cases represent another barrier, one driven by said shortage in personnel proficient in French.

FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

In addition to legislation on official languages, there are factors that have a positive impact on access to legal services in both official languages in New Brunswick. The promotion of language rights is a notable example. Indeed, the provincial government has deployed various awareness campaigns on general language rights as well as campaigns pertaining to access to justice in both languages. As a result, it is more common for Francophone justiciables to request services in their mother tongue rather than in their second language.

ACTIVE OFFER

According to the Department of Justice and Public Safety, an active offer policy governing services in the minority official language has been implemented in the areas of criminal law, divorce and support law, and bankruptcy law. In addition to federal legislation, there are provincial rules of law, practices, and active offer policies governing services in the minority official language, with New Brunswick's *Official Languages Act* being a prime example. The Department of Justice and Public Safety specifies that services must be delivered in both languages and that all legal documents must be made available in French and English.

DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

According to the AJEFNB and the Department of Justice and Public Safety, documents issued by police officers (notices, statements of offence, citations, etc.) indicate citizens have the option of choosing their preferred official language. Moreover, a form allows an accused to specify their language of preference for criminal proceedings. Indictments and details of the charge are presented to the accused in the preferred official language. The Department of Justice and Public Safety notes that the Crown Prosecutor's office is responsible for determining an individual's preferred language in matters heard before the Court of King's Bench. In proceedings in the Provincial Court, the judge is responsible for the active offer of services in both languages.

The Department of Justice and Public Safety states that all courtroom forms are available in both official languages, including forms pertaining to bankruptcy and matters of divorce and support. In other words, there is no single form that allows a justiciable to choose the official language of their preference for the hearing. In all cases, the official language preferred by the justiciable is recorded in their file.

BILINGUAL STAFF

The following data from the *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire* from DPM Research (2025) provides an

overview of the number of professionals who are able to have a conversation in French and those who speak French at least on a regular basis at work.

- **75 of the 85 judges** in the province (**88.2%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French and **60 (70.6%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **875 of the 1,485 lawyers** in the province (**58.9%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French and **655 (44.1%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **25 of the 30 court clerks** in the province (**83.3%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French and **20 (66.7%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **95 of the 195 sheriffs and bailiffs** in the province (**48.7%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French and **95 (48.7%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



The Law Society of New Brunswick's directory⁴³ allows users to search for members by language spoken and displays the profiles of lawyers who speak French. However, the directory only displays a maximum of 200 lawyers per search request. This tool can therefore not be used to find out how many members are proficient in French. For its part, the AJEFNB provides a list of its members, nearly all of whom are Francophone or bilingual.

According to the AJEFNB and the Department of Justice and Public Safety, the number of bilingual judges and lawyers has increased since 2002. The Department also reports the number of bilingual Crown prosecutors has increased. The number of registry staff and other professionals in the justice system has remained unchanged.

The AJEFNB notes that the most recent individuals appointed to the bench have been bilingual. Moreover, the Law Society of New Brunswick has been doing more to provide bilingual services to its members. For instance, training on language rights will be available.

Language training in the minority official language is already available for judges, lawyers, Crown prosecutors, and registry staff in New Brunswick. It is unclear whether training of this kind is available for other professionals in the justice system.

The AJEFNB provides lawyers with French-language legal training in various areas of law, allowing them to complete hours of training as required by the Law Society of New Brunswick to

⁴³ Law Society of New Brunswick (2025). *Member Directory*.

retain their practising status. The Law Society requires members to complete 12 hours of training every year; the AJEFNB offers a total of 22.5 hours of French-language training.

In New Brunswick, a mechanism has been implemented to assess the competencies in the minority official language of judges, lawyers, Crown prosecutors, and registry staff. It is unclear whether any mechanism is in place to assess the competencies of other professionals in the justice system. According to the Department of Justice and Public Safety, a candidate's language skills in French and English are evaluated by a test that takes place during the hiring process.

Finally, recruiting bilingual professionals has been problematic. There is a documented shortage of human resources which means that in some instances, the first candidates to apply to a vacant position are hired despite the fact some only speak one language. According to the Department of Justice and Public Safety, bilingual professionals are often reluctant to accept entry-level positions in the province's public service. Because there is a limited pool of bilingual professionals, they often opt for better paid positions, often with the federal government.



TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

The Department of Justice and Public Safety notes that documents that need to be translated are sent to the New Brunswick Translation Bureau. The Department covers the cost of such translations. This service is only available for documents issued by the Department and court documents, (i.e., rulings and public notices). It is not available for documents submitted by parties. The province is also able to call on the Centre de traduction et de terminologie juridiques (CTTJ) of the Université de Moncton Faculty of Law. The CTTJ translates all rulings of the Court of Appeal of New Brunswick and offers other translation services as well as revision, drafting, consultation, and terminology services.

According to the AJEFNB and the Department of Justice and Public Safety, legal interpretation services in both official languages are systematically offered and available in New Brunswick. However, the Department specifies that when a party requires an interpreter, the request is submitted by the court. Interpretation services are provided by the New Brunswick Translation Bureau and the costs are covered by the Department. Nevertheless, resources available may fail to meet demand. Legal interpreters may obtain certification by passing an exam administered by the Corporation of Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters of New Brunswick (CTINB) or the Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council (CTTIC).



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

According to the AJEFNB and the Department of Justice and Public Safety, information technology has facilitated access to justice in the minority official language in the province, in particular by making information more accessible and allowing users to benefit from services online.



OUTREACH

In the past, there have been awareness campaigns on language rights pertaining to access to justice in the province. Ensuring citizens are aware of their language rights generally falls to the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Secretariat of Official Languages of New Brunswick. Moreover, other departments have taken part in outreach efforts, including the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture. The New Brunswick Bilingualism Support Program is a notable example. It supports community initiatives that “support respect, knowledge and communication between the two linguistic communities and bring them closer together”⁴⁴. In terms of justice specifically, the Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick has published various booklets including *What’s Fair? Government Decisions and Your Rights* and *The Law, the Police and You*⁴⁵.



HOW SERVICES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2002

The AJEFNB reports that some gains have been made in the province since the 2002 report (GTA Research) was published in the areas of criminal law, bankruptcy law, and the law of divorce and support. Progress achieved has in large part been due to case law on the right to be represented by a lawyer who is proficient in French and the right to be heard in the language chosen by the party to the proceedings. Despite this case law, and section 530 of the *Criminal Code*, it is not uncommon for Francophones to choose to undergo legal proceedings in English.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1 ACCESSIBILITY

- Courts should be more accessible to reduce wait times for trials. In family law, court delays can sometimes reach two to three years.

2 RECRUITMENT

- More bilingual professionals should be recruited. These include judges, but also sheriffs, stenographers, and administrative personnel.

3 BILINGUALISM

- To improve access to justice in the official languages, a mechanism should be implemented to make it mandatory to appoint bilingual judges at all levels of the justice system — Provincial Court, Court of King’s Bench, and Court of Appeal.

⁴⁴ Culture and heritage New Brunswick. *New Brunswick Bilingualism Support Program (NBBSP)*.

⁴⁵ Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick. *Publications*.

- In conclusion, as the only officially bilingual province in Canada, New Brunswick must be proactive and implement viable models and practices that could then be employed in other provinces and territories.

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- Auclair, N., Frigon, C. & St-Amant, G. (2023). [*Key facts on the French language in New Brunswick in 2021*](#). Statistics Canada.
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- Website of [*Commission des services d'aide juridique du Nouveau-Brunswick*](#)
- Website of [*Service public d'éducation et d'information juridiques du Nouveau-Brunswick*](#)

Nova Scotia



BACKGROUND

This section presents information obtained from the Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse (AJEFNÉ) and the Court Services Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Justice. Some information has been validated and completed by the research team.

The 2002 report (GTA Research) described Nova Scotia as one of the provinces where progress toward better access to justice in the minority official language was in its infancy. Recommended courses of action included bolstering bilingual resources, creating bilingual positions among judicial personnel, and adopting innovative approaches to improve access to services.

Since then, progress has been made and access to justice in the minority official language has improved. This is notably due to the fact that resources have been developed, some French-language services have been enhanced, and language training opportunities have increased. However, recent observations show significant barriers remain. These include a shortage of bilingual personnel resulting in regional disparities, delays in accessing French-language services, and insufficient awareness of language rights and the existence of French-language services. As a result, several challenges identified in 2002 continue to persist.

A few key facts...



- There is no constitutional obligation to provide services in French in Nova Scotia. However, individuals prosecuted for a provincial offence benefit from the same language rights as those guaranteed by the *Criminal Code*.
- While there is a sustained demographic growth in Nova Scotia, the relative demographic weight of citizens whose mother tongue is French is in decline. The same is true for those whose first official language spoken is French.
- Demographic data collected since 2001 reveal that the overall rate of bilingualism in Nova Scotia is relatively stable. The rate of bilingualism among Anglophone and Francophone populations is stable; the rate of bilingualism among Allophones is in decline.
- Université Sainte-Anne is the only French-language post-secondary institution in Nova Scotia. It offers both university and college-level courses as well as French immersion programs.



CURRENT SITUATION



OVERVIEW

According to the AJEFNÉ, Francophone justiciables in Nova Scotia are overall dissatisfied with the legal services available in the minority official language and are at a disadvantage in areas under federal jurisdiction. Per the AJEFNÉ, justiciables do not tend to request services in French because the province is predominantly English-speaking. They are sometimes unaware of the resources and services available in French. Justiciables who are aware of French-language services appear to be reluctant to take advantage of them because they feel they will be put at a disadvantage and that additional delays may impact proceedings.

The Court Services Division of the Department of Justice states that the labour shortage and a small pool of candidates proficient in French also pose a challenge in Nova Scotia. That being said, the province has the means to provide services in both official languages in every region. It has also created bilingual positions for front-line services in five designated courthouses. In other words, these front-line services are not available everywhere in French. There are 10 court officer positions designated as being bilingual, as well as other positions for which being proficient in French is an asset. Language training is available to all justice sector employees, including judges, Crown attorneys, and legal aid staff. Finally, there is no provincial itinerant court in Nova Scotia providing services in French. While there is no centralized hub where users can access

services in French, the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie (OAAF) offers a plethora of French-language services.



BARRIERS

According to the AJEFNÉ and the Court Services Division of the Department of Justice, the shortage of personnel is the main barrier to accessing justice in the minority official language. The Court Services Division specifies that this shortage varies by region, which in turn leads to uneven access to French-language services across the province. Nevertheless, measures are being taken to ensure bilingual staff are available when a justiciable requests that their trial be held in French.

Per the AJEFNÉ, because there are few opportunities to practise law in French in Nova Scotia, justice professionals, most specifically lawyers, struggle to maintain their level of French. As a result, they may be less confident with the language which subsequently leads to a decline in French being used in professional settings. Maintaining a level of French that is sufficient to practise law is even more difficult for lawyers for whom French is their second language.

The AJEFNÉ points to delays and the perception justiciables have of French-language services as being other barriers. Indeed, justiciables tend to opt for services in English, which means there are fewer incentives to hire French-speaking individuals. The situation has become a vicious cycle. Delays in obtaining services in French represent another barrier, fostering the perception among justiciables that services in French are inferior in quality. This deters them from asserting their language rights.

Finally, according to the Court Services Division of the Department of Justice, not all documents and forms are available in French and some pages on the Department of Justice's website are only available in English.



FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

There have been policies and programs that have had a positive impact on access to legal services in both official languages in Nova Scotia. For instance, the Department of Service Nova Scotia releases an annual *French-language Services Plan*⁴⁶ and has also recruited a French-language services coordinator. Furthermore, the Department of Justice has created a "Services judiciaires du ministère de la Justice"⁴⁷ webpage in French while the website of the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia includes a section titled "Information juridique en français"⁴⁸. The Nova Scotia Legal Aid's website for its part is entirely available in French⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ Department of Service Nova Scotia (2026). *French-language services plan 2026 to 2027: Department of Service Nova Scotia*. Government of Nova Scotia.

⁴⁷ Department of Justice (2021). *Services judiciaires du ministère de la Justice*. Government of Nova Scotia.

⁴⁸ Legal Info Nova Scotia (2017). *Information juridique en français*.

⁴⁹ Aide juridique Nouvelle-Écosse (2017). *Aide juridique de la Nouvelle-Écosse*.



ACTIVE OFFER

According to the Court Services Division of the Department of Justice, there is an active offer of services in the minority official language in the areas of criminal law, bankruptcy law, and the law of divorce and support. Department of Justice employees — including personnel in courts handling cases within the above-mentioned three areas of law — are expected to take reasonable steps to inform the public that services are available in both French and English.

Another initiative is *Bonjour!*, a provincial program established by the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie (OAAF) that aims to promote the active offer of services in the minority official language. Its goal is to ensure that government employees actively offer services in both English and French. Department of Justice employees, including courtroom staff, legal aid personnel, and employees of the Nova Scotia Public Prosecution Service all take part in the program.

As part of the program, the active offer of French-language services takes the form of a French greeting, a *Bonjour!* sign, or bilingual signage. Indeed, bilingual signs are displayed in courthouses in Yarmouth, Digby, Annapolis Royal, Halifax, Dartmouth, and Port Hawkesbury. However, there are few or no signs in French in smaller courthouses. When an employee is unable to deliver services in French, they will generally refer the person making the request to another employee proficient in French. If needed, the French-language services coordinator is called upon for support.



DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

According to the Court Services Division of the Department of Justice, documents issued by police officers (notices, statements of offence, citations, etc.), make no mention of a citizen's right to select their preferred official language. Some forms issued by police agencies (information, summons to appear) are bilingual but do not indicate the recipient has the option of choosing their preferred language.

In criminal matters, there is no form that allows the accused to specify their preferred official language for legal proceedings. Instead, they make their language choice known orally at their initial appearance. When an accused requests the indictments and details of the charge in French, these materials are translated and presented in this language.

There are no forms allowing the justiciable to choose their preferred language in bankruptcy law or in matters pertaining to divorce and support. Most family law forms are available in French on the bilingual *Nova Scotia Family Law* website⁵⁰ and in courthouses. In other areas of law, most courtroom forms are available in French only upon request.



BILINGUAL STAFF

The following data from the *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire* from DPM Research (2025) provides an

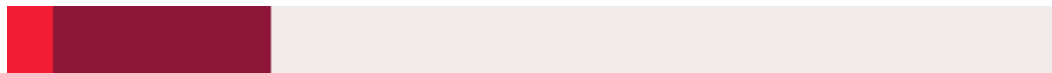
⁵⁰ Droit de la Famille Nouvelle-Écosse, [Ressources en français](#).

overview of the number of professionals who are able to have a conversation in French and those who speak French at least on a regular basis at work.

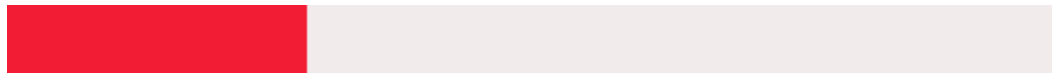
- **35 of the 130 judges** in the province (**26.9%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **10 (7.7%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



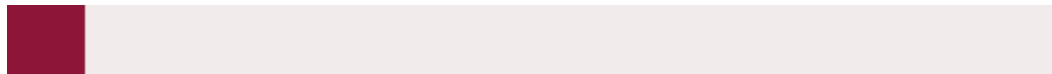
- **555 of the 2,210 lawyers** in the province (**25.1%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **95 (4.3%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **10 of the 35 court clerks** in the province (**28.6%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French and **10 (28.6%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **25 of the 340 sheriffs and bailiffs** in the province (**7.4%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but fewer than **5** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



The Nova Scotia Barristers' Society directory⁵¹ does not allow users to search for members by language spoken. However, a directory of French-speaking lawyers and other legal professionals is available on the AJEFNÉ's website⁵². Users can also access a form to make an appointment with a lawyer who is a member of the AJEFNÉ.

According to the Court Services Division of the Department of Justice, the number of judges, lawyers, Crown attorneys, registry staff, and other professionals in the justice system who are able to provide services in the minority official language has increased. When a member of personnel is unable to provide services in French when asked to do so, they take the steps necessary to ensure that a French-speaking member of staff can accommodate the request.

A training program in the minority official language is available for judges, lawyers, Crown attorneys, registry staff, and other justice sector professionals. The Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie (OAAF) provides free language training to public servants, no matter their proficiency with the language. Participants must attend at least 70% of the sessions for their training to be recognized. For its part, the Department of Justice offers French-language legal terminology courses and French correspondence workshops to employees with an intermediate or advanced level of French.

⁵¹ Nova Scotia Barristers' Society. *Directory Of Lawyers*.

⁵² Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse (2025). *Besoin d'un juriste?*

According to the Court Services Division of the Department of Justice, there is a mechanism in place to assess competencies in the minority official language of judges, lawyers, Crown attorneys, registry staff, and other justice sector professionals. Tests are administered by Université Sainte-Anne.

Still per the Court Services Division, tools and policies have been designed to make it easier to hire individuals able to provide services in the minority official language in Nova Scotia. For example, job postings for front-line positions state that proficiency in French is an asset. Postings for bilingual positions are published and disseminated both internally and externally via agencies in order to maximize their reach and expand the pool of bilingual candidates. For these positions, the hiring process includes a question in French. Depending on the level of French required, the person responsible for filling the position may also require that the candidate take the official French test.



TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

According to the Court Services Division of the Department of Justice, there is an official procedure in place that ensures court documents are translated. Translation requests (e.g., forms, official websites, or other content) are transferred to the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie (OAAF). For court documents, the OAAF has access to certified translators. Neither machine translation nor artificial intelligence is used to translate court documents and the costs are covered by the Division making the request.

According to the Court Services Division of the Department of Justice, legal interpretation services in both official languages are systematically offered and available. Legal interpretation services are available through Access Language Services, an external party providing in-person and remote services across the province. These interpretation services are available at no cost to justiciaries.

Furthermore, the Court Services Division states that a mechanism has been implemented to assess the competencies in the minority official language of legal interpreters: they must be certified or have successfully completed the Interpreter Language & Skills Assessment Tool (ILSAT) exam. The Association of Translators and Interpreters of Nova Scotia (ATINS)⁵³ offers certification to members who have successfully passed the uniform legal interpretation certification exam administered by the Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council (CTTIC). In some instances, an interpreter who is not certified may be called upon to provide their services. However, they must have experience in legal interpretation or have at least one year of experience in consecutive interpretation in a specialized field.



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

According to the AJEFNÉ and the Court Services Division of the Department of Justice, information technology has enhanced access to justice in the minority official language in the

⁵³ Association of Translators and Interpreters of Nova Scotia (2025). *About Atlantic Translators and Interpreters Nova Scotia*.

province. Indeed, legal services in French are easier to access online and available in a variety of formats. Videoconferencing technology is an example of a tool that provides greater flexibility for the delivery of legal services in French, in particular in courtrooms.



OUTREACH

According to the AJEFNÉ, no awareness campaign has ever been deployed to inform users of their language rights when it comes to accessing justice. The Court Services Division of the Department of Justice is also unaware of any recent or current awareness campaigns.



HOW SERVICES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2002

The AJEFNÉ has observed certain gains since the report (GTA Research) was published in 2002. Under section 530 of the *Criminal Code*, legal services are available in both official languages, even though there are more delays associated with such services in French. Certain gains have also been made in matters pertaining to divorce and support, notably because the *Family Law Nova Scotia*⁵⁴ website is now available in both official languages and provides users with forms in English and French. It is unclear whether any gains or setbacks have been made in the area of bankruptcy law.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

According to the AJEFNÉ, the following are solutions or improvements that could enhance access to justice in French: recognizing the value and normalizing the use of French; creating a comprehensive directory of bilingual professionals; bolstering the training available; fostering interregional collaboration; and promoting legal professions to young Francophones.

1

RECOGNIZING VALUE

- It is important to promote the value of being proficient in French and of learning French. Indeed, proficiency in French is an excellent springboard for career advancement, in particular for lawyers who aim to one day become judges.
- The use of French must also be normalized by, for instance, creating an environment that encourages Francophones to request services in French.
- A sound practice would consist of systematically providing an active offer and notifying justiciables that services in both official languages are available.

⁵⁴ Droit de la famille Nouvelle-Écosse (2025). [Home](#).

2 CREATING A DIRECTORY

- A comprehensive directory would be useful to not only identify lawyers proficient in French throughout the province, but also other categories of bilingual professionals (e.g., judges, sheriffs, and registry staff).
- This directory could also cover the entire Atlantic Canada region in order to facilitate networking and collaboration in areas under federal jurisdiction.

3 BOLSTERING TRAINING

- The few opportunities to speak French in a professional context lead to a loss of confidence with the language and a decline in French being used in legal professional settings. Providing continuous training in French would mitigate this problem.
- Moreover, expanding the number of French-language university programs in the legal sector is also recommended. Université Sainte-Anne offers legal interpretation courses and has, in the past, offered legal terminology courses. Reviving these types of initiatives would be highly beneficial.

4 FOSTERING COLLABORATION

- It would be advisable to ensure greater collaboration with Francophone institutions in the Atlantic provinces. Francophone students are not always aware of the opportunities they have to pursue legal studies in French (at Université de Moncton, for example).
- It is therefore important to promote this offer, in particular throughout the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) in Nova Scotia.

5 PROMOTING LEGAL PROFESSIONS

- For young Francophones to be interested in pursuing a career in law, they must be aware of the opportunities in this field. To this end, Francophone professionals working in the legal sector should be invited to career days in high schools or asked to speak to classrooms.
- Organizing mock trials could also inspire young people to pursue a career in this field.

USEFUL REFERENCES



- Auclair, N., Frigon, C. & St-Amant, G. (2023). [*Key facts on the French language in Nova Scotia in 2021*](#). Statistics Canada.
- Government of Nova Scotia (2021). [*Ministère de la Justice de la Nouvelle-Écosse*](#).
- Website of [*Aide juridique de la Nouvelle-Écosse*](#)
- Website of [*Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse*](#)

Nunavut



BACKGROUND

This section presents information obtained from the Association des francophones du Nunavut (AFN) as well as the Nunavut Department of Justice. Some information has been validated and completed by the research team.

According to the 2002 study (GTA Research), Nunavut and the other Canadian territories had a less highly developed judicial infrastructure and as such, borrowing services from external locations served as a temporary measure until resident bilingual judges could be appointed.

Since then, progress has been made to bolster access to justice in French in the territory. This has been achieved through a stronger protection of language rights, enhanced resources, and the implementation of measures designed to facilitate access to services. However, recent observations show significant barriers remain, specifically a shortage of bilingual professionals, logistical constraints that are unique to the territory, and the challenges arising from delivering services to remote communities. As a result, many challenges identified in 2002 continue to persist.

A few key facts...



- Nunavut's *Official Languages Act* stipulates that Inuktitut, French, and English are the three official languages of the territory. The *Act* entitles citizens to use any of these languages in all matters brought before the courts or quasi-judicial bodies within Nunavut.
- While there is a sustained demographic growth in Nunavut, the proportion of citizens whose mother tongue is French remains relatively stable. The same is true for those whose first official language spoken is French.
- Demographic data collected since 2001 reveal that the overall French-English bilingualism rate in Nunavut has remained relatively stable, despite a decrease in the rate of French-English bilingualism among Anglophones and a stable yet very low rate within Allophone communities.
- The Association des francophones du Nunavut (AFN) acts as the main voice of Francophones in Nunavut. Its services help users access justice and it advocates for public policies that promote access to justice in French within the territory.



CURRENT SITUATION



OVERVIEW

Nunavut is the only Canadian jurisdiction to have an Indigenous language — Inuktitut — as the mother tongue of the majority of the population and as an official language. As a result of this unique linguistic environment, the Nunavut Department of Justice specifies that instead of being provided on a permanent basis, services in French are offered and arrangements are made upon request. Hearings in French are also scheduled throughout the year.

Nevertheless, according to the AFN, Francophone justiciables in the territory generally report low levels of satisfaction with legal services offered in French and are at a significant disadvantage in areas under federal jurisdiction. There are also shortcomings in how policies are monitored. However, annual reports published by the Office of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut reveal that very few admissible complaints were lodged by the Francophone community to this effect. According to the Government, this may be symptomatic of a low demand for services in French, which in turn may indicate that Francophones settle for English instead of stating they would prefer to receive services in French.



BARRIERS

According to the AFN, there are numerous barriers to accessing justice in French, in particular in terms of training, awareness, documentation, and the number of professionals proficient in French. Assembling a jury able to function in French has also proven difficult.

According to the Nunavut Department of Justice, barriers to accessing justice in French are a direct result of the limited number of judges, lawyers, courtroom staff, and interpreters who are proficient in the language. There are also logistical challenges associated with delivering services in remote communities that are often accessible only by air, are subject to weather-related disruptions, and have only limited technological and hospitality infrastructure (e.g., accommodations) available to parties and stakeholders. All these barriers cause delays in the delivery of services.



FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

According to the Nunavut Department of Justice, myriad measures have been implemented to improve access to justice. These include interpreters hired on a contract basis, targeted solutions to overcome technological constraints, weeks dedicated to trials in French, and itinerant courts able to conduct French-language proceedings. Moreover, the Government of Nunavut has been collaborating with federal partners, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), to ensure that language rights are enforced. Finally, the Nunavut Court of Justice has conducted a survey to measure the public's satisfaction with respect to language services. The results should help it identify ongoing challenges and determine the most appropriate solutions.



ACTIVE OFFER

A policy on the active offer of services in French has been implemented in Nunavut in matters pertaining to criminal law and the law of divorce and support. The AFN has no knowledge of an active offer policy in the area of bankruptcy law.

In criminal law, the active offer stems from the application of section 530 of the *Criminal Code* which stipulates that an accused has the right to be tried before a judge (or before a judge and jury) who speaks the official language the accused prefers. The accused must also be informed of the deadlines for making such a request. As for matters pertaining to divorce and support, under the *Divorce Act*, justiciables are entitled to use the official language of their choice and also have the right to be heard by a judge who speaks the official language of their choice.

Moreover, there are territorial laws that govern the active offer of services in all official languages of the territory. These include the *Official Languages Act* of Nunavut and Practice Directive #22 of the Nunavut Court of Justice. Indeed, under the *Official Languages Act* of Nunavut, judicial entities such as courts must enforce an active offer for justiciables and notify them of their right to communicate in the official language of their choice and their right to obtain services in this language. The *Act* also stipulates that as part of civil proceedings, the justiciable must be notified

of their right to request and obtain interpretation services. The Legal Services Board (NU Legal Aid) is subject to these provisions.

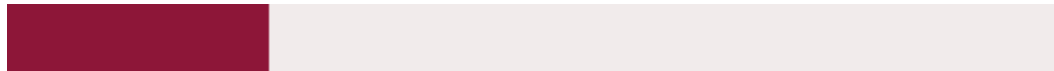
DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

According to the Nunavut Department of Justice, all documents issued by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) are available in both official languages of Canada. Moreover, in areas of criminal law, bankruptcy law, and the law of divorce and support, justiciables may fill out a form to specify the official language of their choice for legal proceedings. Documents relating to judicial proceedings are available in French if needed. However, it is unclear whether documents issued by police officers (notices, statements of offence, citations, etc.) indicate citizens may choose their preferred official language.

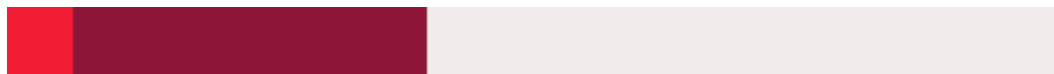
BILINGUAL STAFF (ENGLISH-FRENCH)

The following data from the *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire* from DPM Research (2025) are aggregated across the three territories — the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon — and therefore do not provide a separate picture of each. However, they provide an overall quantitative overview of professionals who are able to have a conversation in French and those who speak French at least on a regular basis at work in the territories.

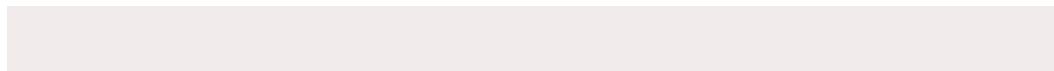
- **10 of the 40 judges** in the territories (**25%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but fewer than **5** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



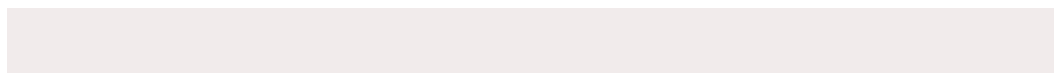
- **130 of the 325 lawyers** in the territories (**40%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **20 (6.2%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **Fewer than 5 of the 10 court clerks** in the territories stated they are able to have a conversation in French.



- **Fewer than 5 of the 25 sheriffs and bailiffs** in the territories stated they are able to have a conversation in French.



The Law Society of Nunavut⁵⁵ directory does not allow users to search for members by language spoken. It has however implemented a policy that aims to recruit individuals able to provide services in French. Moreover, the Department of Justice has noted an increase in the number of courtroom staff who are proficient in French. It also adds that French-language training is available for judges, Crown prosecutors, courtroom staff, and other professionals in the legal system. The Government of Nunavut offers various programs to this end and uses assessments to verify language skills.

The AFN nonetheless reports there are barriers to recruiting individuals (i.e., lawyers and other legal professionals) able to provide services in French. In response to questions about the offer of services in French, the AFN has pointed to the dominant use of English, inadequate infrastructure, and shortages in terms of the promotion of professional opportunities in French. This observation on the prevalence of English in the legal system should be studied more in depth – English in Nunavut is a minority language when compared to Inuktitut in the territory. This highlights the unique language situation in Nunavut and the need to better document the relationship between Inuktitut, French, and English, as well as the importance of a nuanced assessment of the rebalancing measures discussed herein. These are issues that fall outside the scope of this study.

The Government of Nunavut and its public agencies systematically publish their employment offers in Inuktitut, French, and English, underscoring their status as official languages. According to the Government of Nunavut, if a candidate has indicated that French is their preferred language, the hiring process may take place completely in French. Stringent procedures are in place to this effect.



TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

According to the Government of Nunavut, there are stringent official procedures governing the translation of documents intended for the public. Such documents must all be translated and available in Inuktitut, French, and English. According to the Nunavut Department of Justice, legal interpretation services in all official languages are systematically offered and available when necessary. Moreover, legal interpreters must provide proof of relevant training and proof of certification. If needed, parties outside of Nunavut may be contacted to provide their services.



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

According to the Nunavut Department of Justice, information technology has enhanced access to justice in French throughout the territory by making it easier to communicate online with legal professionals and other qualified individuals.

⁵⁵ Law Society of Nunavut. *Membership Directory*.



OUTREACH

Awareness campaigns on language rights and access to justice have been deployed within the territory. These campaigns have sometimes received funding from the Government of Nunavut and have always been implemented by the AFN. Increased funding would bolster the impact.



HOW SERVICES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2002

The *Official Languages Act of Nunavut* was adopted in 2008. It ensures Anglophone and Francophone minorities enjoy equal status with the Inuktitut-speaking majority in terms of access to services. In any case, services have evolved in a way that is aligned with the linguistic specificity of the territory.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1

RECRUITMENT

- In addition to increasing the number of professionals able to work in French in the legal sector, the AFN states that community-driven efforts could be strengthened.
- In addition to recruiting Francophones outside Nunavut, it would be advisable to better train those who already live in the territory.

2

FUNDING

- Increasing funding for the AFN would enable it to hire a full-time person who would be responsible for compiling, updating, and disseminating available French-language resources. This individual would also work closely with public agencies to improve access to legal services in French for the entire community.

USEFUL REFERENCES



- Association des francophones du Nunavut. [*Accès à la justice – Ressources*](#).
- Auclair, N., Frigon, C. & St-Amant, G. (2023). [*Key facts on the French language in Nunavut in 2021*](#). Statistics Canada.
- Website of [Association des francophones du Nunavut](#)
- Website of [Division de la législation du Nunavut](#)
- Website of [Tribunal des droits de la personne du Nunavut](#)

Ontario



BACKGROUND

This section presents information obtained from the Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario (AJEFO) and a representative of the French Language Services Office of the Justice Sector Ministries of Ontario⁵⁶. Some information has been validated and completed by the research team.

According to the 2002 report (GTA Research), Ontario was one of the provinces where problems related to access to justice in the minority official language were not as widespread. However, some courses of action were recommended: services in the minority official language needed to be made available throughout the entire province, the active offer needed to be bolstered, the bilingual capacities of judicial personnel needed to be improved, and the use of French needed to become standard practice.

Since the report was published, significant progress has been made to expand access to justice in the minority official language. For example, the legal framework has been strengthened, strategic plans and policies have been implemented, resources have been developed, and the offer of French-language services has been augmented. However, recent observations show barriers remain. These include an ongoing shortage of bilingual staff, needs in terms of training and outreach, and difficulties recruiting professionals in certain regions. As a result, some challenges identified in 2002 continue to persist.

⁵⁶ Ministry of the Attorney General of Ontario and the Ministry of the Solicitor General of Ontario.

A few key facts...



- Ontario has no constitutional obligation to provide judicial or legal services in French. However, under the *Courts of Justice Act* of Ontario, a party is entitled to bilingual proceedings, and oral evidence and submissions may be given or made in French.
- While there is a sustained demographic growth in Ontario, the relative demographic weight of citizens whose mother tongue is French is in decline. The same is true for those whose first official language spoken is French.
- Demographic data collected since 2001 reveal a slight decrease in the overall rate of bilingualism in Ontario. The rate of bilingualism within Anglophone and Francophone communities has remained relatively stable; the rate of bilingualism among Allophones has declined.
- Ontario is home to the country's largest population of Francophones outside Quebec. They are mostly concentrated in the east and northeast of the province.



CURRENT SITUATION



OVERVIEW

Under the *Courts of Justice Act*, either official language of Canada may be used in any of Ontario's courts. According to the AJEFO, Francophone justiciables in Ontario are overall moderately satisfied with the legal services available in the minority official language and are at a disadvantage in areas under federal jurisdiction. The AJEFO adds there are more resources available in English and a pervasive misconception that French-language trials are slower and incur more costs.

Access to justice in French encompasses government services delivered in French under the *French Language Services Act* (FLSA), as well as the language rights relating to legal proceedings provided for by the *Act*. Access to justice in French in Ontario is also governed by federal legislation and the *Courts of Justice Act*. Moreover, the *Bilingual Proceedings Regulation* entitles Ontarians to bilingual proceedings for civil matters without a jury, family law matters, small claims, and cases governed by the *Provincial Offences Act*. Finally, the *Accelerating Access to Justice Act, 2021* has expanded access to justice in French by guaranteeing the right (since 2022) to submit documents in French to any court in the province and for any type of case.



BARRIERS

Per the AJEFO, a shortage of bilingual personnel — judges, Crown attorneys, court clerks, paralegals, and support staff — represents a barrier to accessing justice in French in Ontario. There is also a noted shortage of translators and legal interpreters. According to the Justice Sector Ministries representative, there are instances where it equally proves difficult to find bilingual private-sector lawyers. The AJEFO states that training programs and outreach efforts remain inadequate and highlights the limited availability of French-language legal resources in the province.



FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

There are policies and programs that have a positive impact on access to legal services in both official languages in Ontario. For instance, persons who interact with justiciables are offered training on the concept of the active offer and on French-language legal services. As per the FLSA, service points in designated areas provide users with access to services in French. Moreover, remote court hearings have expanded access to services in French and judges proficient in both languages may be called upon to travel if needed.



ACTIVE OFFER

According to the Justice Sector Ministries representative, an active offer policy governing services in the minority official language has been implemented in the areas of criminal law, divorce and support law, and bankruptcy law, in accordance with applicable legislation. In addition to federal legislation, there are provincial rules of law, practices, and policies on the active offer of legal services in the minority official language, including those mentioned above. The AJEFO and the Justice Sector Ministries representative specify that the active offer is reinforced by various regulations including the *Active Offer of Services In French - Prescribed Measures Regulation* and the *Provision of French Language Services on behalf of Government Agencies Regulation*.



DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

According to the AJEFO and the Justice Sector Ministries representative, documents issued by police officers (notices, statements of offence, citations, etc.) generally indicate citizens have the option of choosing their preferred official language. Per the AJEFO, however, this may depend on the police service and region, as well as whether internal resources are available. Moreover, the Justice Sector Ministries representative adds that even though all forms are bilingual, the list of charges may not be because the software shared with other police services in Canada does not allow users to enter information in French. In collaboration with police services and the Criminal Law Division, Justice Sector Ministries are currently evaluating how to add a bilingual list of the most common charges in order to make it easier for users to enter information in both English and French.

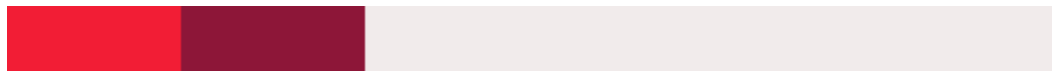
Indictments and details of the charge are presented to the accused in their preferred official language. Court undertakings are issued in both languages. According to the Justice Sector Ministries representative, a form (available in either official language) allows the accused to specify their language of preference for criminal proceedings. The accused may also orally indicate the language in which they would like to proceed. When a person requests that the proceedings take place in French, the police provide information in French, and the Crown must issue the indictment in French.

In the area of divorce and support, the parties can fill out a form (available in either French or English) to specify their preferred official language for the proceedings. As per the *Bilingual Proceedings Regulation*, the simple act of filling out a form in French usually initiates the process for conducting French-language or bilingual proceedings. It is unclear whether there is a form allowing individuals involved in bankruptcy matters to specify their preferred official language for the proceedings. Finally, the Justice Sector Ministries representative specifies that forms and guides are all available in both languages.

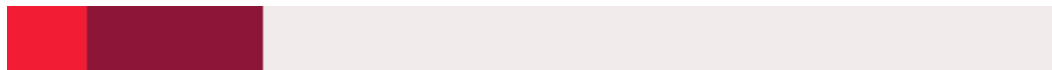
BILINGUAL STAFF

The following data from the *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire* from DPM Research (2025) provides an overview of the number of professionals who are able to have a conversation in French and those who speak French at least on a regular basis at work.

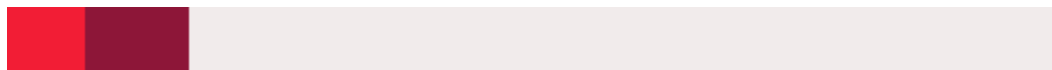
- **310 of the 910 judges** in the province (**34.1%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **150 (16.5%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **11,270 of the 46,125 lawyers** in the province (**24.4%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **3,490 (7.6%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **175 of the 1,010 court clerks** in the province (**17.3%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **75 (7.4%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **175 of the 2,250 sheriffs and bailiffs** in the province (**7.8%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **50 (2.2%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



The directory⁵⁷ of the Law Society of Ontario allows users to tick a “Offers Services in French” box to quickly find a list of the lawyers and paralegals who practise in French. Because users must enter a postal code or city as well as an area of law to obtain results, it is impossible to obtain an exhaustive list of all the members who can provide services in French. That being said, the AJEFO provides a directory of lawyers who provide services in French⁵⁸. Finally, users can find a lawyer who speaks French via the Legal Aid Ontario website⁵⁹.

According to the AJEFO, there has been an increase in the number of bilingual judges, lawyers, Crown attorneys, and court clerks since 2002. The Justice Sector Ministries representative adds that the number of other justice sector professionals has also increased. For its part, the AJEFO notes that efforts have been deployed to appoint bilingual judges. Additionally, legislative amendments have created designated bilingual regions, requiring them to have access to personnel capable of providing French-language services. In practice, however, shortcomings have been noted by members of the public and legal practitioners due to a shortage of personnel able to provide services in French. There is indeed a shortage of labour at all levels of the system which has resulted in delays. The Justice Sector Ministries representative explains that recruiting qualified bilingual personnel remains a challenge, in particular in remote regions.

Language training in the minority official language is available for judges, lawyers, Crown attorneys, court clerks, and other professionals in the justice system including police officers, correctional officers, 9-1-1 personnel, probation and parole officers, administrative tribunal arbitrators, administrative courthouse staff, victim and vulnerable person services staff, and legal aid lawyers and staff.

Ensuring access to justice in French is one of the core mandates of the Justice Sector Ministries. As such, continuous education courses and professional development activities in French are made available to bilingual personnel. Such training includes programs offered by the Institut national de développement professionnel en langue française. These are organized by the Government of Ontario in collaboration with the AJEFO and funded by Justice Canada. Legal French courses and legal terminology programs are also available. Furthermore, some universities in Ontario offer programs designed to train bilingual jurists.

There is a mechanism in place to assess the competencies of judges, Crown attorneys, court staff, legal interpreters, and other justice sector professionals in the minority official language. Crown attorneys and personnel employed by the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry of the Solicitor General must undergo French-language assessment and, if needed, take part in language training. The Government of Ontario has established its own standards with regards to French-language competencies for designated bilingual positions.

The AJEFO and the Justice Sector Ministries representative report that tools and policies are in place to recruit and retain individuals able to provide services in the minority official language. Under the FLSA, services in French must be made available in central offices and in the regional offices of designated regions. As a result, bilingual positions have opened up. The government

⁵⁷ Law Society of Ontario (2025). *Lawyer and Paralegal Directory*.

⁵⁸ Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario (2025). *Trouver une avocate ou un avocat*.

⁵⁹ Legal Aid Ontario (2025). *Trouver une avocate ou un avocat*.

adds that the public sector implemented an initiative in 2023 to hire bilingual personnel with the aim of facilitating the recruitment, retention, training, and professional development of bilingual justice sector professionals while improving its data collection mechanisms. In addition, recruitment and training form the core pillars of the Justice Sector Ministries' *Strategic Plan on French Language Services*, adopted in 2006.



TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

The French Language Services Office handles translation requests and any related requests (e.g., comparative editing and transcription of audiovisual material) for public documents issued by the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry of the Solicitor General. Upon approval, any internal requestor can create an account on FlowFit to manage translation requests. Ministries also possess a list of accredited external providers that are under contract with the Government of Ontario and registered with the Government Translation Service. The list includes a category of providers employing translators who are also jurists who can be called upon to translate court decisions and other specialized documents. Neither machine translation nor artificial intelligence is used by the government to translate legal documents. Finally, the costs of such translation services are covered by the Ministry submitting the request.

According to the Justice Sector Ministries representative, legal interpretation services in both official languages are systematically offered and available when needed. Legal interpreters who want to be accredited in Ontario need to attend a training seminar and pass an exam from the Court Interpretation Unit of Ontario's Ministry of the Attorney General⁶⁰. The Ministry of the Attorney General has a list of all accredited interpreters. They provide services in myriad languages, including French and Langue des signes du Québec (LSQ).



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

According to the AJEFO and the Justice Sector Ministries representative, information technology has facilitated access to justice in the minority official language by enabling a greater number of justiciables to access French-language services and providing them with the means to obtain information on their rights, in particular in terms of accessing justice in French. Technology has also benefitted legal professionals by providing them with access to more resources. Measures to accelerate the digital transformation of courts have led to the creation of the Ontario Courts Public Portal⁶¹ which allows users to file court documents, search the list of documents submitted for a specific case, and pay fines and fees.

Moreover, users have access to high-quality legal services thanks to pan-Canadian projects spearheaded by the AJEFO, such as *CliquezJustice.ca* and *Jurisource.ca*. The Ontario Legal Information Centre — funded in part by the Justice Sector Ministries of Ontario — provides Ontario residents with the opportunity to obtain legal information by videoconference or phone. It also offers legal information workshops to community organizations. In sum, information

⁶⁰ Government of Ontario (2023). *Devenir interprète judiciaire*.

⁶¹ Government of Ontario (2026). *Portail public des tribunaux de l'Ontario*.

technology has allowed more people, both in Ontario and across Canada, to access legal services.



OUTREACH

According to the Justice Sector Ministries representative, awareness campaigns on language rights pertaining to access to justice have been deployed in the province. Among other activities, Justice Sector Ministries have also led awareness initiatives in French schools and universities, attended job fairs, promoted bilingual positions in local Francophone media, and taken part in the Access to Justice Week in both official languages.



HOW SERVICES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2002

The AJEFO has observed certain gains since the report (GTA Research) was published in 2002. In the area of criminal law, organizations have received funding to enhance their offer of services in French and provide language training to professionals. The addition of language rights to the *Divorce Act* also represents progress in the area of divorce and support.

Through various initiatives, Justice Sector Ministries have demonstrated they are committed to complying with their legal obligations in terms of providing services in French. For example, in 2006 they implemented the *Strategic Plan on French Language Services*, an initiative led by the Justice Sector French Language Services Office of the Corporate Services Division, with the Ministry of the Attorney General of Ontario and the Ministry of the Solicitor General of Ontario taking part. Moreover, government agencies and ministerial departments have implemented myriad strategies aligned with a shared vision established by senior public servants and stakeholders in the Francophone community. These strategies aim to enforce the government's obligations with respect to the French language while modernizing access to services in French within Ontario's judicial system.

The update to the *Strategic Plan on French Language Services* (2022) takes into account new legislative requirements stemming from the most recent modernization of the *French Language Services Act*, the new *Active Offer Of Services In French - Prescribed Measures Regulation*, and Ontario's public sector French Language Services Strategy. The *Strategic Plan's* priorities include expanding services in French, strengthening the capacity of the system to provide services in French, and ensuring accountability regarding the provision of French-language services.

An advisory committee responsible for the *Strategic Plan* meets on a regular basis in order to guide ministries on strategic directions and to help build lasting partnerships with community stakeholders. Moreover, Francophone stakeholders and senior justice sector officials meet every year to maintain an open, constructive dialogue in order to establish priorities in terms of access to justice in French and ensure efficient services are provided to members of the Francophone community.

Furthermore, the Attorney General's Advisory Committee on Access to Justice in French was established in 2018. It relies on the principle of an active offer to provide advisory services to the

Attorney General of Ontario and guides it in developing strategies and setting priorities in terms of access to justice in French. This committee is chaired by the Honourable Paul Rouleau, a justice of the Court of Appeal for Ontario. Members also include representatives of the legal Francophone community, the Ministry of the Attorney General, and the Offices of the Chief Justices of Ontario.

Other initiatives pertaining to access to justice in French include projects deployed in partnership with the Chief Justices of Ontario aiming to provide a consistent, timely access to justice in French in the courts of Ottawa (2015), Sudbury (2020), and North Bay (2022).



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The AJEFO has noted areas for improvement, in particular in terms of funding, training, outreach, and collaboration.

1 TRAINING

- Increased funding is required to create and provide training programs adapted to legal professionals to ensure they are able to hone their skills and acquire the tools necessary to provide their clients with services in French.

2 OUTREACH

- It is also important to make future jurists and legal professionals aware of the challenges associated with accessing justice in French. This could be achieved through information sessions in law faculties or college programs.

3 COLLABORATION

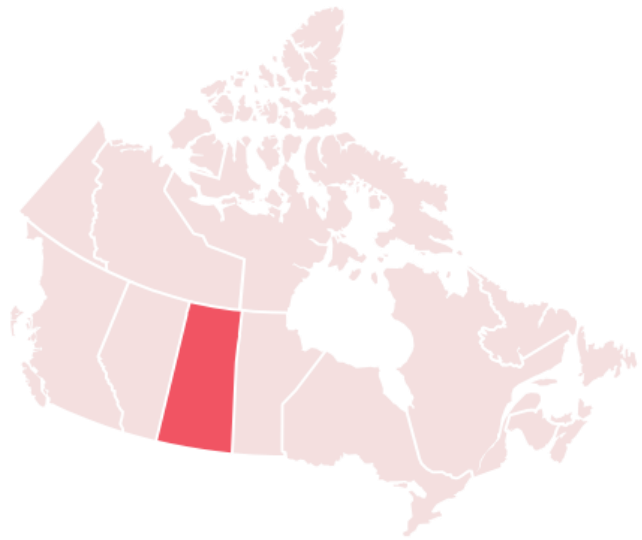
- Finally, tools and resources promoting access to justice could be developed in collaboration with justiciables and key partners including community actors, universities, and governments.

USEFUL REFERENCES



- Auclair, N., Frigon, C. & St-Amant, G. (2023). [*Key facts on the French language in Ontario in 2021*](#). Statistics Canada.
- Government of Ontario. [*Ministère du Procureur général*](#).
- Website of [*Aide juridique Ontario*](#)
- Website of [*Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario*](#)
- Website of [*Éducation juridique communautaire Ontario*](#)
- Website of [*Services juridiques communautaires d'Ottawa*](#)
- Website of [*Centre d'information juridique de l'Ontario*](#)
- Website of [*Réseau ontarien d'éducation juridique*](#)

Saskatchewan



BACKGROUND

This section presents information obtained from the Association des juristes d'expression française de la Saskatchewan (AJEFS) as well as the Francophone Affairs Branch, part of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. Some information has been validated and completed by the research team.

The 2002 report (GTA Research) listed Saskatchewan as one of the provinces where progress toward better access to justice in the minority official language was in its infancy. Recommended courses of action included appointing a greater number of Francophone judges, creating bilingual positions among judicial personnel, and adopting innovative approaches to improve access to services.

Some progress has been made since the report was published and accordingly, access to justice in the minority official language has improved. This is due notably to an increase in the number of bilingual resources, the development of services and training programs, and the adoption of policies promoting access to services. However, recent observations show significant barriers remain: an ongoing shortage of bilingual staff, a dearth of qualified interpreters, and insufficient awareness of language rights. As a result, several challenges identified in 2002 continue to persist.

A few key facts...



- There is no constitutional obligation to provide legal or judicial services in French in Saskatchewan. The *Act respecting the Use of the English and French Languages in Saskatchewan* grants only partial recognition of the right to use French in the courts.
- While there is a sustained demographic growth in Saskatchewan, the relative demographic weight of citizens whose mother tongue is French is in decline. The same is true for those whose first official language spoken is French.
- Demographic data collected since 2001 reveal that the overall rate of bilingualism in Saskatchewan has remained relatively stable despite a decrease in the rate of bilingualism within the Francophone community.
- La Cité universitaire francophone of the University of Regina offers a range of French programs. Another educational institution worth mentioning is Collège Mathieu, a French-language technical and vocational college with three campuses.



CURRENT SITUATION



OVERVIEW

According to the AJEFS, Francophone justiciables in Saskatchewan are overall moderately satisfied with the legal services available in the minority official language and are at a slight disadvantage in areas under federal jurisdiction. The Francophone Affairs Branch notes that while the province meets its obligations on matters pertaining to French proceedings, it has proven difficult to make key actors in the system aware of the French-language offer in ancillary services, areas where the province has no obligations. While there are no provincial itinerant courts providing their services in French, any personnel required (judges, registrars, stenographers, etc.) can travel as needed to ensure French hearings can take place in areas where such services are usually not available. This is the approach the province takes for the Provincial Court and the Court of King's Bench.



BARRIERS

According to the AJEFS, the main barrier to accessing justice in the minority official language stems from a shortage of personnel (in particular jurists) and qualified interpreters. Per the Francophone Affairs Branch, this shortage is especially notable in ancillary services such as legal aid, victim aid services, and family law mediation. That being said, the number of bilingual judges,

registry staff, and Crown prosecutors has increased over the past 15 years. A lack of awareness of language rights among those responsible for administering the justice system represents another barrier to accessing justice in the minority language.



FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

According to the AJEFS, there are policies and programs in Saskatchewan that have a positive impact on access to legal services in both official languages. The Family Matters program is a prime example. In civil matters, the *Act respecting the Use of the English and French Languages in Saskatchewan* guarantees users the right to employ French in some courts.



ACTIVE OFFER

According to the Francophone Affairs Branch, there is an active offer policy regarding legal services in the minority official language in matters of criminal law as well as divorce and support. In these areas of law, justiciables are notified of their right to provide testimony and submit documents in the official language of their choice.

Other provincial rules of law, internal practices, and policies have been adopted in order to support an active offer of legal services in the minority official language. Two such examples are the *French Language Court Services Policy* and the *Act respecting the Use of the English and French Languages in Saskatchewan*. Furthermore, the Codes of Professional Conduct and Amendments of the Law Society of Saskatchewan stipulate that lawyers must inform clients of their language rights, including the right to proceed in the official language of their choice⁶².

Finally, the Centre de services aux citoyens Bonjour! states that “bilingual court staff are able to provide front-line services in French to the individuals requiring information in French⁶³”.



DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

According to the Francophone Affairs Branch, documents issued by police officers (notices, statements of offence, citations, etc.) do not provide citizens with the option of selecting their preferred language. Indictments and details of the charge are not presented to the accused in their preferred official language. However, according to the Francophone Affairs Branch and the AJEFS, regulations, Practice Directives, and forms from the Court of King's Bench are available in French⁶⁴. The Francophone Affairs Branch adds that the Provincial Court and the Court of Appeal also provide such documents in French.



BILINGUAL STAFF

The following data from the *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire* from DPM Research (2025) provides an

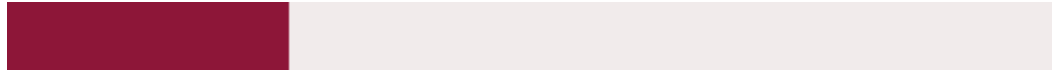
⁶² Law Society of Saskatchewan (2025). *Codes of Professional Conduct and Amendments*.

⁶³ Government of Saskatchewan. *Système judiciaire en Saskatchewan*.

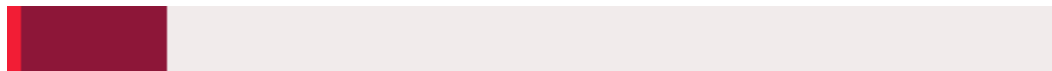
⁶⁴ Government of Saskatchewan. *Cour du Banc du Roi – Formulaires (Complètes)*.

overview of the number of professionals who are able to have a conversation in French and those who speak French at least on a regular basis at work.

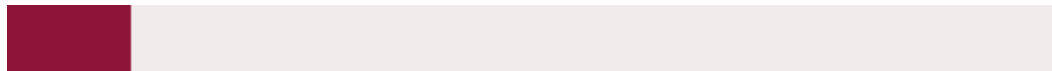
- **35 of the 130 judges** in the province (**26.9%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but fewer than **5** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



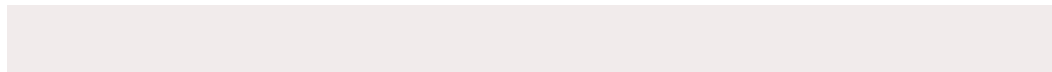
- **300 of the 1,970 lawyers** in the province (**15.2%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **25 (1.3%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **10 of the 85 court clerks** in the province (**11.8%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but fewer than **5** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **Fewer than 5 of the 295 sheriffs and bailiffs** in the province stated they are able to have a conversation in French.



The Law Society of Saskatchewan's directory⁶⁵ allows users to search for members by language spoken. Search results using the keyword "French"⁶⁶ displayed the profiles of 128 lawyers who state they can speak French. The AJEFS also has a directory of its members which includes 30 lawyers who speak French⁶⁷.

According to the Francophone Affairs Branch, the number of judges, lawyers, Crown prosecutors, registry staff, and other professionals in the justice system who are able to provide services in the minority official language has increased since 2002. The AJEFS for its part has only observed an increase in the number of bilingual judges and lawyers.

Per the Francophone Affairs Branch, the province has implemented a language training program in the minority official language for judges, lawyers, Crown prosecutors, registry staff, other professionals in the justice sector, and public sector employees. The French-language training provided by the Government of Saskatchewan through the Francophone Affairs Branch is general and is not specifically designed for the legal field. The Francophone Affairs Branch and AJEFS both specify that language training for legal professionals is available from the Centre canadien de français juridique (CCFJ).

⁶⁵ Law Society of Saskatchewan (2025). *Find Legal Assistance*.

⁶⁶ The search function is only available in English.

⁶⁷ Centre Info-Justice de la Saskatchewan (2025). *Avocats à votre service en Saskatchewan*.

Per the Francophone Affairs Branch, there is no formal mechanism (i.e., a skills assessment test) to assess language competencies. Rather, the approach is an informal one and takes place when a candidate is hired. The same applies to assessing an individual's language skills in English.

In terms of recruitment, some administrative positions — in particular registry staff positions — have been designated as bilingual positions. Moreover, the province's practice is to ensure bilingual judges are appointed at the Provincial Court and that it hires bilingual Crown prosecutors.

The limited pool of bilingual candidates in Saskatchewan, which mostly stems from the population's low rate of bilingualism and the small size of its Francophone community, represents a general barrier to accessing justice in the minority language.



TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

There is no official procedure for translating court documents in Saskatchewan. Court documents that need to be translated are submitted to the Francophone Affairs Branch and the provincial government's centralized translation budget enables the Branch to cover the costs of such translations. Neither machine translation nor artificial intelligence is used to translate court documents.

As for legal interpretation services, the Francophone Affairs Branch states that they are systematically offered and available when required, adding that the quality of such services may vary. According to the AJEFS, legal interpreters are in short supply. Legal interpretation services are provided in person or remotely using interpreters based in the province or elsewhere in Canada. Interpreters may be members of the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Saskatchewan (ATIS) but do not need any specific training or qualifications.



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

According to the AJEFS and the Francophone Affairs Branch, information technology has enhanced access to justice in the minority official language in the province most notably by allowing users to connect with information and referral services. Moreover, such technology provides access to French documents online.



OUTREACH

According to the AJEFS, awareness campaigns on language rights and access to justice have been previously deployed in the province. For example, the Centre Info-Justice de la Saskatchewan has produced videos on language rights in Canada⁶⁸. The Francophone Affairs Branch reports that no campaigns of this type have been deployed by the provincial government.

⁶⁸ Centre Info-Justice Saskatchewan (2025). *Centre Info-Justice Saskatchewan*. YouTube.



HOW SERVICES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2002

The AJEFS declares that some progress has been made with respect to accessing justice in the minority official language since the report (GTA Research) was published in 2002. Indeed, gains have been observed in criminal law and the law of divorce and support. According to the Francophone Affairs Branch, there has also been an increase in the number of judges, lawyers, Crown prosecutors, registry staff, and other professionals in the justice system who are able to provide services in French.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1 RECRUITMENT

- Saskatchewan needs more bilingual professionals in the justice sector to improve access to justice in the minority official language.
- In addition to recruiting Francophones outside Saskatchewan, it would be advisable to better train those who already live in the province.

2 TRAINING

- More qualified interpreters need to be trained.
- Finally, French-language training should be made available to court staff.

USEFUL REFERENCES



- Auclair, N., Frigon, C. & St-Amant, G. (2023). [*Key facts on the French language in Saskatchewan in 2021*](#). Statistics Canada.
- Courts of Saskatchewan. [*French Services*](#).
- Government of Saskatchewan. [*Ministère de la Justice et du Procureur général*](#).
- Government of Saskatchewan. [*Services juridiques*](#).
- Government of Saskatchewan. [*Système judiciaire en Saskatchewan*](#).
- Website of [*Association des juristes d'expression française de la Saskatchewan*](#) (Centre Info-Justice Saskatchewan)

Newfoundland and Labrador



BACKGROUND

This section presents information obtained from the Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador (FFTNL) and the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Justice and Public Safety⁶⁹. Some information has been validated and completed by the research team.

The 2002 report (GTA Research) listed Newfoundland and Labrador as one of the provinces where “work ha[d] yet to begin” in terms of access to justice in the minority official language. Recommended courses of action included compiling an inventory of bilingual lawyers, appointing at least one bilingual judge, recruiting bilingual Crown attorneys, and pursuing interprovincial service loans as a supplement to these measures.

Since the report was published, some progress has been made and access to justice in the minority official language has improved. This is notably due to the fact that bilingual positions have been created, resources have been developed, and specific services have been enhanced. Nevertheless, significant barriers remain. These include an ongoing shortage of bilingual staff, difficulties in recruiting personnel, and needs in terms of outreach. As a result, several challenges identified in 2002 continue to persist.

⁶⁹ The Policy and Strategic Planning Division.

A few key facts...



- The province of Newfoundland and Labrador has no constitutional obligation to provide judicial or legal services in French. Nevertheless, the *Provincial Offences Act* applies the language provisions of the *Criminal Code* to provincial offences.
- The population of Newfoundland and Labrador has remained relatively stable. The demographic weight of those whose mother tongue is French and those whose first official language spoken is French has also remained relatively stable.
- Demographic data collected since 2001 reveal an upward trend in the overall rate of bilingualism, including within the Anglophone community. The rate of bilingualism among Francophones has remained relatively stable while the rate of bilingualism among Allophones has declined slightly.
- The Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador represents the francophone community on matters related to justice.



CURRENT SITUATION



OVERVIEW

According to the FFTNL, Francophone justiciables in the province generally report low levels of satisfaction with the legal services available in the minority official language and are at a significant disadvantage in areas under federal jurisdiction. Overall, it is very rare for legal services to be provided in French in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Department of Justice and Public Safety specifies that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to providing services in the minority official language. For instance, it has opened up nine bilingual positions in provincial courts over the past six years and made efforts to fill them. Moreover, the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Provincial Court each have an Official Languages Coordinator.

There are no provincial itinerant courts in Newfoundland and Labrador providing services in the minority official language. The Office of French Services serves as the point of contact for the Francophone community on all matters pertaining to the government's programs and services.



BARRIERS

According to the FFTNL and the Department of Justice and Public Safety, a shortage of legal professionals (including legal interpreters and translators) who are proficient in French represents a barrier to justice in French in the province. Inadequate French training for legal staff and court

personnel is another. Furthermore, public awareness of French-language law programs available in Canada remains limited. The FFTNL adds that many bilingual professionals are not confident enough in their language skills to provide services in French – more training opportunities could help them overcome this feeling of insecurity. Finally, the Department of Justice and Public Safety reports other barriers: inadequate outreach efforts, few documents available in French, and the difficulty empanelling jurors who understand French.



FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

There are no specific policies or programs in Newfoundland and Labrador that have a positive impact on access to legal services in both official languages.



ACTIVE OFFER

According to the Department of Justice and Public Safety, there is an active offer policy with respect to the minority official language in the areas of criminal law and bankruptcy law. The active offer in criminal matters stems from the application of section 530 of the *Criminal Code* and, accordingly, at their initial hearing, the accused are notified of their right to proceedings in the official language of their choice. Despite this, very few trials are held in French in the province.

While there is no active offer policy in the area of divorce and support law, the Supreme Court's Family Division relies on the official languages provisions set out in Canada's *Divorce Act*. Finally, contraventions tickets are issued in both English and French. Justiciables can pay the fine or contest the ticket in the official language of their choice. They are processed by the Traffic Court which is part of the Provincial Court⁷⁰.



DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

According to the Department of Justice and Public Safety, documents issued by police officers (notices, statements of offence, citations, etc.), make no mention of a citizen's right to select their preferred official language.

In criminal matters, there is no form that allows the accused to specify their preferred official language for legal proceedings. At the initial hearing, the judge is required to inform the accused of their right to a trial in their preferred official language. However, this does not always happen. If an accused requests a French-language trial, the Crown must make sure that the indictments and details of the charge are presented to them in French.

In matters pertaining to bankruptcy or divorce and support, there are no forms allowing parties to specify their preferred official language for hearings.

That being said, the website of the Family Division of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador has made information in French available. Moreover, the tool to schedule an appointment notifies users that French-speaking support is available on Thursdays at the St.

⁷⁰ Provincial Court of Newfoundland and Labrador. *Traffic Court*.

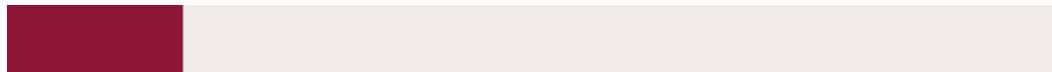
John's Family Division⁷¹. Finally, French-language forms are available on the Provincial Court website⁷².



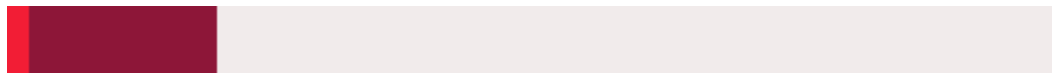
BILINGUAL STAFF

The following data from the *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire* from DPM Research (2025) provides an overview of the number of professionals who are able to have a conversation in French and those who speak French at least on a regular basis at work.

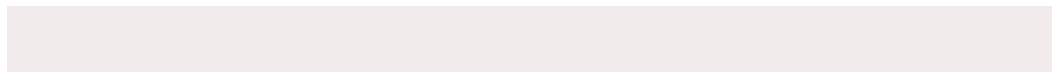
- **10 of the 60 judges** in the province (**16.7%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but fewer than **5** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



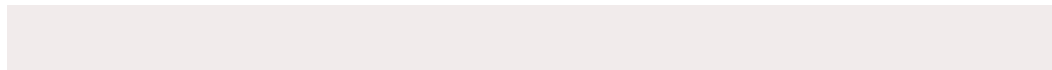
- **150 of the 750 lawyers** in the province (**20%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **15 (2%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **Fewer than 5 of the 15 court clerks** in the province stated they are able to have a conversation in French⁷³.



- **Fewer than 5 of the 85 sheriffs and bailiffs** in the province stated they are able to have a conversation in French.



The directory⁷⁴ of the Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador allows users to search for members by language spoken, thereby displaying the lawyers who speak French. A search⁷⁵ using the drop-down menu displayed the profiles of 20 lawyers who indicated they speak French.

The French Speaking Common Law Members division of the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) in Newfoundland and Labrador has also identified legal professionals in the province who are proficient in French. Finally, the Francophone Justice Network⁷⁶ has a directory of professionals (lawyers, commissioners for oaths, notaries public) who are able to provide their services in French.

⁷¹ Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador. [Book an Appointment](#).

⁷² Provincial Court of Newfoundland and Labrador. [Services et formulaires électroniques](#).

⁷³ According to the Department of Justice and Public Safety, there are eight bilingual court clerk positions at the Provincial Court.

⁷⁴ Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador (2025). [Lawyer Directory](#).

⁷⁵ The search function is only available in English.

⁷⁶ Portail des francophones de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador (2025). [Répertoire des juristes d'expression française](#).

According to the Department of Justice and Public Safety, the number of bilingual judges, lawyers, Crown attorneys, registry staff, and other justice sector professionals who are able to provide services in French has increased since 2002. However, no specific tools or policies have been designed or adopted to make it easier to hire individuals able to provide such services in the minority official language, despite a need for more bilingual personnel.

Salaries and benefits offered to provincial employees hinder the recruitment and retention of bilingual personnel who often opt for higher salaries with the federal government or in the private sector. A lack of career advancement opportunities is another barrier. As is the fact that bilingualism is not recognized as an asset for candidates.

While the Provincial Court has hired bilingual personnel, these individuals have little to no knowledge of legal terminology in French. To remedy this situation, the Court provides legal language training for its bilingual employees and judges through the Centre canadien de français juridique. Such training is funded under the *Contraventions Act*.

According to the Department of Justice and Public Safety, language training is also available for judges, lawyers, Crown attorneys, registry staff, and other justice sector professionals (court clerks, officers of the court, court assistants, family justice counsellors). For example, bilingual judges at the Provincial Court are invited to take part in a two-week French language training program in New Brunswick through Juralingo Inc. The FFTNL also reports that in October 2024, the Francophone Justice Network, in partnership with Memorial University, offered a 10-month legal French program for lawyers.

According to the FFTNL and the Department of Justice and Public Safety, there is no formal mechanism to verify language skills. During the interview process for bilingual positions, the French services coordinator acts as an advisor in order to assess a candidate's oral and written French-language skills.



TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

According to the Department of Justice and Public Safety, there is an official procedure in place that ensures court documents are translated. The Office of French Services oversees translation services and covers their cost. Whenever external translation services are required, they are funded by the Department of Justice and Public Safety. Neither machine translation nor artificial intelligence is used to translate court documents.

Per the FFTNL and the Department of Justice and Public Safety, legal interpretation services in both official languages are not systematically offered or available. Whether these services are offered depends on the legal context and legislative framework. For example, in matters pertaining to the *Criminal Code*, interpretation services are always offered no matter the language chosen by the accused.

As for youth protection matters, the Department of Justice and Public Safety provides interpretation services when one of the parties is not proficient in English — the language usually used during hearings. For any other family law matter, the party requesting interpretation services must cover their costs because language provisions of Canada's *Divorce Act* do not apply to

Newfoundland and Labrador. Once these provisions are in effect, parties will be able to use the official language of their choice and interpretation services will be offered as needed.

In civil matters, the party requesting interpretation services is generally responsible for covering their costs. The Department of Justice and Public Safety may provide interpretation services in cases involving adult protection.

The FFTNL reports that interpreters providing their services in official languages are generally required to hold a university degree in translation or a related field.



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

According to the FFTNL and the Department of Justice and Public Safety, information technology has facilitated access to justice in the minority official language in the province by facilitating the dissemination of online resources. For instance, the websites of the Newfoundland and Labrador Supreme Court and Provincial Court are bilingual.



OUTREACH

According to the FFTNL, no awareness campaigns on language rights and access to justice have ever been deployed in the province.



HOW SERVICES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2002

The FFTNL reports progress has been made since the report (GTA Research) was published in 2002. These gains are general and not specific to criminal law or bankruptcy law. Nevertheless, there have been specific gains in the area of divorce and support.

The Francophone Justice Network, created in 2019, has contributed to this progress. For example, court websites, forms and guides (e.g., the new *Driver's Handbook*), and some documents of the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission have been translated in French.

Finally, because there is no association of French-speaking lawyers in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) opened a French-Speaking Common Law Members Section for lawyers in the province.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1

OUTREACH

- To improve access to justice in French in Newfoundland and Labrador, existing services should be promoted. Francophones should be made aware of their language rights and the services offered.

- More funding and outreach efforts would be required to improve access to services in both official languages. Moreover, bilingual positions should be made more appealing.

2 TRAINING

- Legal professionals and court staff should be made aware of legal French training opportunities.

3 ORGANIZATION

- An Association de juristes d'expression française (AJEF) should be created in the province. It would benefit from powers that the FFTNL does not currently have.

USEFUL REFERENCES



- Auclair, N., Frigon, C. & St-Amant, G. (2023). [*Key facts on the French language in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2021*](#). Statistics Canada.
- Website of [*Association pour l'information juridique publique de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador*](#)
- Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador (2026). [*Services juridiques en français*](#).
- Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. [*Renseignements en français - Justice et Sécurité publique*](#).

Northwest Territories



BACKGROUND

This section presents information obtained from the Fédération franco-ténoise (FFT) and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Department of Justice. Some information has been validated and completed by the research team.

According to the 2002 study (GTA Research), the Northwest Territories, and the other Canadian territories, had a less highly developed judicial infrastructure and as such, borrowing services from external locations appeared to be a temporary solution until resident bilingual judges could be appointed.

Since the report was published, progress has been made to enhance access to justice in the minority official language. For example, policies and standards pertaining to the delivery of services in French have been adopted, the active offer has been improved, resources have been developed, and some French-language services have been expanded. However, recent observations show significant barriers remain. These include a shortage of bilingual personnel, difficulties recruiting and retaining staff due to demographic and geographic constraints, and a lack of awareness regarding language rights and services available in French. As a result, several challenges identified in 2002 continue to persist.

A few key facts...



- The Northwest Territories *Official Languages Act* grants official language status to English, French, and nine Indigenous languages. A person may use either French or English in any proceedings before the courts. In some cases, court decisions must be delivered in both languages.
- While there is a slight demographic growth in the Northwest Territories, the proportion of citizens whose mother tongue is French, and those whose first official language spoken is French, has remained relatively stable.
- Demographic data collected since 2001 reveal an increase in the overall rate of bilingualism in the Northwest Territories. The rate of bilingualism among Anglophones has increased whereas the rate of bilingualism within Francophone and Allophone communities has remained relatively stable.
- Accès Justice TNO, spearheaded by the Fédération franco-ténoise, aims to facilitate access to justice in French by informing Francophones of their rights, supporting legal professionals, and promoting the offer of services in French.



CURRENT SITUATION



OVERVIEW

French is an official language of the territory as per the Northwest Territories (NWT) *Official Languages Act*. As such, legal proceedings may take place in French, English, or both languages. Interpretation services are provided whenever a participant is not proficient in the language of the proceedings. The GNWT Department of Justice enforces the language rights of Francophones and ensures citizens benefit from equal access to justice in both French and English. Accordingly, all statutes and public documents (e.g., forms and information guides) are published in both languages.

The government has made it a priority to provide communications and services in French. The offer of services in French has expanded in the past few years, in particular with respect to the active offer and material available online and in print. The number of bilingual public servants has increased over time.

According to the FFT, Francophone justiciables in the NWT are overall moderately satisfied with the legal services available in the minority official language and are at a slight disadvantage in areas under federal jurisdiction. In theory, all courts in the territory operate in English and French

and can rely on staff that are able to offer services in both these languages. There is therefore no itinerant court providing services in French.

Even though not every judge is able to oversee hearings in French, the Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court, and the Territorial Court all have access to one or more deputy judges able to hear cases in French. If the judge at the initial hearing is not able to proceed in French, the case may be postponed until a judge proficient in French is available. Remote interpretation services may be used on occasion.

The Department of Justice aims to leverage technology to improve the language aspect of its services, especially in rural regions. Indeed, the Court Services Division of the Department of Justice has taken this into consideration in its current project to upgrade its systems. The goal is for court websites to provide more information and forms in both French and English and to become the main point of access for all justiciables in the territory.



BARRIERS

According to the FFT, the main barrier to accessing justice in French is the shortage of legal professionals who are proficient in French. Recruiting and retaining bilingual personnel represents another challenge. Furthermore, there may be delays in obtaining interpretation and translation services.

Another barrier stems from the lack of awareness of language rights and available services. Indeed, professionals in the justice system and justiciables remain mostly unaware of these language rights, which leads to an underutilization of the services or reluctance on their part to request or provide these services. Justiciables are also largely unaware of the services offered, mostly due to the lack of visibility of services in French.

According to the FFT and the GNWT Department of Justice, in-person services are difficult to provide, especially outside the capital, because the Francophone community is dispersed across a vast territory with limited road infrastructure. This limitation is true for the entire population of the NWT.



FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

There are policies and programs implemented in the Northwest Territories that have a positive impact on access to legal services in both of Canada's official languages.

First, the Northwest Territories *Official Languages Act* recognizes French as one of the official languages of the territory and of Canada. A French Language Service Coordinator is employed by every government department and agency, including the Department of Justice. Moreover, the Department of Justice's language services policy supports the use of legal translation and interpretation services. The Government also provides funding for Accès Justice TNO, an organization designed to raise awareness, share information, and develop French-language tools. Finally, under the Canada - Northwest Territories Co-Operation Agreement for French and

Aboriginal Languages in the NWT, the Government of Canada covers all the costs incurred to deliver services in French to the public⁷⁷.

The GNWT has produced two documents that serve as guidance for French-language communications and services: the *Strategic Plan on French Language Communications and Services 2023 – 2028*⁷⁸ (Strategic Plan) and the *Standards for French Language Communications and Services*⁷⁹ (Standards). The Strategic Plan outlines the general principles while the Standards provide specific guidelines for French-language communications and services.

Services TNO is the French language service centre of the GNWT. It is headed by the GNWT Francophone Affairs Secretariat and offers a wide range of French-language information and services.

The Department of Justice promotes access to justice by providing information and services in both English and French. Efforts deployed ensure that: greetings, email signatures, and voicemail messages are in both languages; signage indicating that services in French are available is displayed; documents are available in both languages; responses to emails received in French are drafted in French; official websites are bilingual; and French-language ads placed in local media are equivalent to English-language ads. Furthermore, forms, permits, and certification documents are available in both languages.

Legal aid services are available in French and English. Moreover, legal aid has access to a defence attorney who can provide legal advice to justiciables in French and English and take part in French-language or bilingual proceedings. Other criminal lawyers affiliated with legal aid can participate in French-language or bilingual proceedings.



ACTIVE OFFER

According to the Department of Justice, an active offer policy governing services in the minority official language has been implemented in the areas of criminal law, divorce and support law, and bankruptcy law. The Public Prosecution Service of Canada is responsible for prosecutions and all other federal statutory offences in the Northwest Territories.

There are also territorial rules of law, internal practices, and policies on the active offer of legal services in the minority official language in the territory. The NWT *Official Languages Act* grants official status to French along with English and nine Indigenous languages. Moreover, the GNWT has undertaken to actively offer services in French and ensures that every government department or agency is in a position to provide high-quality services and information in French.

In communities where there is a significant demand (Fort Smith, Hay River, Inuvik, and Yellowknife), the active offer includes, among other things, a public notice informing citizens that they may use French or English when receiving a service from the GNWT or from a third-party on behalf of the government. This public notice may take the form of a sign posted in a window, at a

⁷⁷ Government of Northwest Territories. *Action Plan 2023–2028 – Canada–Northwest Territories Agreement on French Language Services 2023–2024 to 2027–2028*.

⁷⁸ Government of Northwest Territories. *Strategic Plan on French Language Communications and Services 2023 – 2028*.

⁷⁹ Government of Northwest Territories. *Standards for French Language Communications and Services*.

reception area, a welcome desk, or outside a building where French-language services are available.

Some government services rely on interpretation services provided by CanTalk or Services TNO, headed by the GNWT Francophone Affairs Secretariat.

The GNWT Department of Justice has adopted a policy to actively provide judicial administrative services in the minority official language in both civil and criminal matters. The Department of Justice offers French-language services to citizens who need legal services via the Rental Office, Public Trustee Office, Legal Aid, Outreach Legal Aid Clinics, Maintenance Enforcement Program, and court registries.

Legal aid services also provide services in French and English on family matters, including child protection services. The Family Law Mediation program provides services in French via a bilingual mediator. Parenting After Separation workshops are available in French and the Maintenance Enforcement Program offers French-language services.

DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

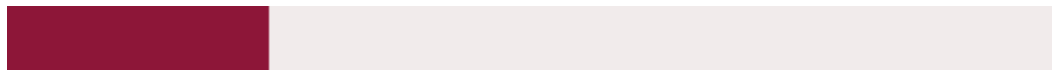
According to the FFT and the Department of Justice, documents issued by police officers (notices, statements of offence, citations, etc.) indicate citizens have the option of choosing their preferred official language. Moreover, indictments and details of the charge are presented to accused individuals in their preferred official language. Per the Department of Justice, there is no form that allows the accused to specify their preferred official language for legal proceedings. During their initial appearance, the accused's language rights are discussed, and their choice of language is recorded in their file.

For family law matters, such as applications for divorce, spousal support, and child support, there is a form allowing parties to specify in which official language they would like the proceedings to be held. Two versions of this form are available: one in French and the other in English. Finally, most court documents and forms available in courthouses are available in both languages.

BILINGUAL STAFF

The following data from the *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire* from DPM Research (2025) are aggregated across the three territories — the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon — and therefore do not provide a separate picture of each. However, they provide an overall quantitative overview of professionals who are able to have a conversation in French and those who speak French at least on a regular basis at work in the territories.

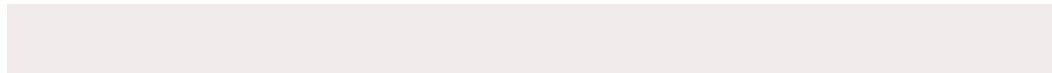
- **10 of the 40 judges** in the territories (**25%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but fewer than **5** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



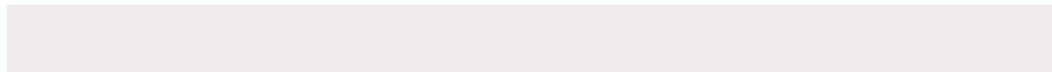
- **130 of the 325 lawyers** in the territories (**40%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **20 (6.2%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **Fewer than 5 of the 10 court clerks** in the territories stated they are able to have a conversation in French.



- **Fewer than 5 of the 25 sheriffs and bailiffs** in the territories stated they are able to have a conversation in French.



The Law Society of the Northwest Territories' directory⁸⁰ allows users to search for members by language spoken. A search using the keyword "French"⁸¹ displayed a list of 15 lawyers who stated they speak French. That being said, this figure only includes members who indicated they wanted to be listed in the directory and who filled out information about languages spoken.

According to the Department of Justice, the number of bilingual judges, Crown prosecutors, registry staff, and other justice sector professionals who are able to provide services in French has increased since 2002. The number of bilingual lawyers has however decreased. Even though not all justice sector professionals are proficient in French, each sector has employees who are able to provide services in French.

A training program in the minority official language is available for judges, lawyers, registry staff, and other justice sector professionals. It is unclear whether language training is available to NWT Crown prosecutors.

Language training is available through various organizations outside the GNWT. For instance, public servants in bilingual positions can enroll in language refresher courses at a French-language educational institution in Yellowknife. Moreover, all employees of the GNWT who state they are proficient in French must pass a French-language assessment test to obtain the bilingual status. This exam stems from a ruling rendered in 2006 by Moreau J. which required, among other things, that the GNWT implement an objective language assessment system for designated bilingual positions. There is no equivalent system in place for judges. Lawyers employed by the GNWT must complete training and successfully pass exams administered by the GNWT. Crown prosecutors for their part must follow training and pass exams administered by their employer. Legal interpreters may be evaluated by the service hiring them but there is no definitive evaluation process for freelance interpreters.

⁸⁰ Law Society of the Northwest Territories. *Find a Lawyer*.

⁸¹ The search function is only available in English.

According to the Department of Justice, tools and policies have been designed to make it easier to hire individuals able to provide services in the minority official language in the NWT. Civil servants proficient in at least two official languages and who occupy a position requiring them to be bilingual or who hold privileged bilingual status are eligible for a bonus tied to their bilingualism. These employees are encouraged to maintain this bilingual status by enrolling in refresher courses. Despite a significant need for bilingual staff, the limited pool of candidates makes it hard to attract qualified individuals.

TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

The Government of Canada's Translation Bureau is tasked with translating court documents (e.g., evidence) that must be translated in French or English. The GNWT covers the costs. However, court decisions are only translated upon request of the courts. Finally, when a case involves both French and English, documents submitted by either party are translated in the other official language. Machine translation is not used to translate court documents.

According to the FFT and the Department of Justice, legal interpretation services in both French and English are systematically offered and available in the NWT. When the parties to a proceeding do not use the same official language, or if a witness opts to provide testimony in the other official language, the court provides one or more interpreters for the duration of the proceedings. These services are provided in person or remotely from interpreters based throughout the territory or elsewhere in Canada. Legal services may call upon CanTalk for remote interpretation services. Interpreters who provide services in official languages do not need to be certified.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

According to the FFT and the Department of Justice, information technology has facilitated access to justice in the minority official language. Indeed, myriad resources (i.e., legal information, forms, and guides in French) are now available online from the GNWT, federal websites, or from organizations and programs such as Accès Justice TNO.

Videoconference tools also provide Francophone justiciables located in remote communities with an easier way to find lawyers and other justice sector professionals who are proficient in French. Information technology also provides access to remote interpretation services when such services are not available in person.

OUTREACH

According to the *Annual Report on Official Languages 2023–2024*⁸², the Legislation Division of the Department of Justice has translated information detailing legal proceedings in French. This information is public and is designed to help Francophones better understand these proceedings.

⁸² Education, Culture and Employment. *Annual Reports on Official Languages*. Government of Northwest Territories.



HOW SERVICES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2002

The FFT has observed some progress since the report was published in 2002, more specifically in the area of criminal law. These gains are a result of the NWT *Official Languages Act* which has led to increased outreach efforts from institutions, a greater offering of translation and interpretation services, and funding for Accès Justice TNO.

Since 2020-2021, the GNWT has offered a mediation program in family law that is entirely in French. This free service provides support in order for parents undergoing a separation or a divorce to agree on matters of family law, such as child custody and access, support, and the division of minor assets and debts. Thanks to this mediation service, parties involved can solve problems without having to go through the courts.

The GNWT's ability to communicate in French and provide French-language services has greatly improved in the past few years. The government has pledged to pursue this objective and monitor the offer of services in French.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1 RECRUITMENT

- The FFT points to several areas for improvement, including the need to increase the number of bilingual legal professionals. To this end, more individuals need to be hired, and efforts should be made to retain them.

2 TRAINING

- All personnel in the justice system should undergo mandatory language training.

3 INFORMATION

- The FFT recommends that legal information documents be drafted in plain language and distributed to citizens. Moreover, they should be produced in the Northwest Territories to ensure they are adapted to the territory's realities.
- Material designed to make citizens aware of their language rights and the services available could also be produced.

4 SERVICES

- Even though interpretation services are generally available in the courts, the offer of these services should be bolstered at all stages outside the courtroom, including for informational and administrative services.

5 FUNDING

- Finally, the FFT believes that Accès Justice TNO should receive more funding.

USEFUL REFERENCES



- Auclair, N., Frigon, C. & St-Amant, G. (2023). [*Key facts on the French language in the Northwest Territories in 2021*](#). Statistics Canada.
- Fédération franco-ténoise (2025). [*Accès Justice TNO*](#).
- Government of Northwest Territories (2026). [*Ministère de la Justice*](#).
- Website of [*Tribunaux des Territoires du Nord-Ouest*](#)

The Yukon



BACKGROUND

This section presents information obtained from the Association franco-yukonnaise (AFY) and the Yukon Department of Justice. Some information has been validated and completed by the research team.

According to the 2002 study (GTA Research), the Yukon and the other Canadian territories had a less highly developed judicial infrastructure and as such, borrowing services from external locations appeared to be a temporary solution until resident bilingual judges could be appointed.

Since then, progress has been made to bolster access to justice in French in the Yukon. This has been achieved by adopting active offer policies, developing resources, and improving certain services in French. However, recent observations show significant barriers remain. These include the limited pool of bilingual personnel, difficulties recruiting due to demographic and geographic constraints, and the need to rely on alternative measures. As a result, several challenges identified in 2002 continue to persist.

A few key facts...



- The Yukon's *Languages Act* stipulates that a person may use either French or English in any proceedings before the courts, with witnesses also being guaranteed this right. However, courts are under no obligation to provide judicial personnel who understand the language chosen.
- While there is a sustained demographic growth in Yukon, the proportion of citizens whose mother tongue is French has slightly increased. The same is true for those whose first official language spoken is French.
- Demographic data collected since 2001 reveal an increase in the overall rate of bilingualism in the Yukon; the rate of bilingualism within Anglophone and Francophone communities is also on the rise, unlike in Allophone communities where the rate of bilingualism is in decline.
- The Association franco-yukonnaise (AFY) acts as the main voice of Francophones in the Yukon, providing services and resources designed to help users access justice. It also carries out advocacy and outreach initiatives targeting key stakeholders in the justice sector with the goal of expanding the offer of services available in French.



CURRENT SITUATION



OVERVIEW

According to the AFY, Francophone justiciables in the Yukon are overall moderately satisfied with the legal services available in the minority official language and are at a significant disadvantage in areas under federal jurisdiction. Services in French are not always available, despite an active offer policy, and interpreters are called upon in these instances. The Department of Justice specifies that bilingual employees are nevertheless available outside of the courts, in particular in registry services, to answer questions and provide guidance to users. In matters of divorce and support, Francophones (most of whom are bilingual) often use English, especially when it comes to mediation.



BARRIERS

The main barrier to accessing justice in French in the Yukon stems from the limited number of jurists and other justice sector professionals who are proficient in French. As for training

opportunities in legal French, these remain insufficient. Finally, services in French benefit from little visibility and some free services are not available in both official languages.



FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

According to the AFY, there are policies and programs that have a positive impact on access to legal services in both official languages, in particular a policy to recruit bilingual personnel. For instance, the Yukon Department of Justice and the French Language Services Directorate implemented a three-year joint program (funded in large part by the federal government) in 2024 with the aim of expanding the offer of services in French provided by the Yukon Public Legal Education Association and the Yukon Legal Services Society, two non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This initiative has: provided salary subsidies for bilingual lawyers and legal assistants; expanded the offer of French-language training; ensured the translation of key materials, including online content; and implemented a remote interpretation service.



ACTIVE OFFER

In the Yukon, there is an active offer of service policy in the minority official language in areas under federal jurisdiction. Active offer is reflected in bilingual signage, such as a “Hello, Bonjour” poster, or in bilingual greetings by reception staff. The Government of Yukon has also implemented its own active offer practices and policies in the minority official language. In addition, the Yukon Department of Justice specifies that section 5 of the *Languages Act* stipulates that “[e]ither English or French may be used by any person in, or in any pleading in or process issuing from, any court established by the Legislature”⁸³. This is reflected in the courts’ practices and policies and in the judicial services delivered across the territory. Finally, and more broadly speaking, section 6 stipulates that the public has “the right to communicate with, and to receive available services from, any head or central office of an institution of the Legislative Assembly or of the Government of the Yukon in English or French”.



DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

According to data collected from the Yukon Department of Justice, indictments and details of the charge are presented to the accused in their preferred official language. However, there is no form that allows the accused to specify their preferred official language for legal proceedings. That being said, the Department specifies that accused are asked to indicate their preferred official language at their initial appearance. Once this person has made their choice, all subsequent proceedings are conducted in the indicated language and a judge and Crown prosecutor proficient in this language are assigned to the case. In some cases, interpreters may be called upon during the initial proceedings (i.e., adjournment hearings).

In bankruptcy law and the law of divorce and support, there are no forms allowing individuals to specify their preferred official language for the proceedings. Nevertheless, the Department notes

⁸³ Government of Yukon. *Languages Act*.

that all courtroom forms (i.e., forms pertaining to bankruptcy law, the law of divorce and support, estate issues, and other civil matters) are available in both official languages.

According to the Department of Justice, although Francophones generally fill out forms in French, some use English-language forms. These individuals sometimes subsequently request French or bilingual services, which are then provided. The Department also states that in the Yukon, all rules of procedure, forms, practice directives, and advisories for professionals and the public are published in both official languages and available online.

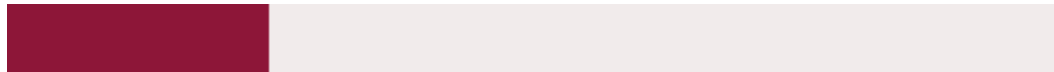
As for documents issued by police officers, it is unclear whether they indicate that citizens are able to choose their preferred official language because the information collected is conflicting.



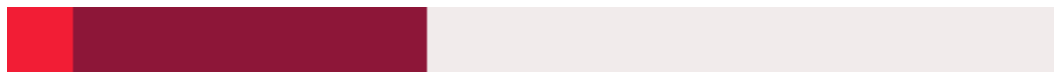
BILINGUAL STAFF

The following data from the *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire* from DPM Research (2025) are aggregated across the three territories — the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon — and therefore do not provide a separate picture of each. However, they provide an overall quantitative overview of professionals who are able to have a conversation in French and those who speak French at least on a regular basis at work in the territories.

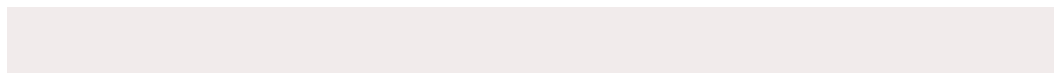
- **10 of the 40 judges** in the territories (**25%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but fewer than **5** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



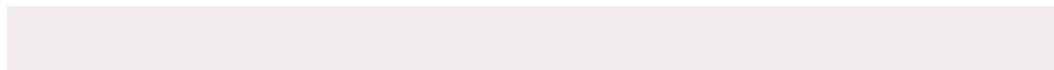
- **130 of the 325 lawyers** in the territories (**40%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **20 (6.2%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **Fewer than 5 of the 10 court clerks** in the territories stated they are able to have a conversation in French.



- **Fewer than 5 of the 25 sheriffs and bailiffs** in the territories stated they are able to have a conversation in French.



The Law Society of Yukon's directory⁸⁴ allows users to search for members by language spoken and displays the profiles of lawyers who speak French. A search⁸⁵ using the drop-down menu displayed the profiles of 15 lawyers who indicated that they speak French. It must be noted that these are only the members who have willingly provided information about the languages they speak. The AFY has its own directory with more than 50 bilingual legal professionals and paralegals. According to the Yukon Department of Justice, the number of bilingual judges, Crown prosecutors, and other professionals in the justice system has increased since 2002. The AFY affirms this increase is not a notable one, pointing instead to the growth in population as a factor.

According to the AFY and the Yukon Department of Justice, judges and Crown prosecutors in the territory have access to legal training in the minority official language. While there is no such training available for private-sector lawyers, it is available for other professionals of the justice system, according to the Department of Justice. For instance, registry services and judicial services regularly send clerks and other professionals to attend training at the Centre canadien de français juridique. Furthermore, the Department of Justice encourages all its employees to undergo French-language training offered by the Government of Yukon. Bilingual employees (court clerks, sheriffs, etc.) are also encouraged to undergo French-language classes (provided by the French Language Services Directorate) specific to their position. This enables them to increase their level of comfort in French and, in the long run, carry out their tasks in both official languages.

According to the Department of Justice, a mechanism has been implemented to assess the competencies of judges, registry staff, and other justice sector professionals in the minority official language. There seems to be no such mechanism for lawyers. The French Language Services Directorate is responsible for assessing the French-language competencies of bilingual public servants. Its evaluation combines a language analysis of the profession along with an individual language assessment. If the Directorate is unable to assess the French-language competencies of an employee because of the technical nature of their position (e.g., legislative counsel), they outsource the task to an external party (e.g. KortoJura).

Finally, there are tools and policies in place in the Yukon governing the recruitment of bilingual personnel, with designated bilingual positions being posted. Because the territory is sparsely populated, it can prove difficult to find professionals able to provide legal services in French. Moreover, rules regarding articling, combined with the territory's geographical remoteness, make external recruitment more complex.



TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

According to the Yukon Department of Justice, there is an official procedure in place that ensures court documents are translated. It stipulates that the translation of various court documents is the responsibility of Court Services which, upon request of any party, oversees and covers the costs of the translation of any court document from French to English or vice versa. It also ensures the translation of documents when they are drafted in one official language and the response is in the

⁸⁴ Law Society of Yukon (2025). *Find a Lawyer*.

⁸⁵ The search function is only available in English.

other. All documents must be filed with the court registry prior to being translated. According to the Yukon Department of Justice, neither machine translation nor artificial intelligence is used to translate court documents.

According to the Yukon Department of Justice, legal interpretation services in both official languages are systematically offered and available. For its part, the AFY states that there are instances when interpretation services are not offered and when they are available, they are often provided remotely because interpreters may be located elsewhere in Canada. According to the Department of Justice, interpreters who work for the Supreme Court of Yukon must have received sufficient training and have the experience necessary to interpret legal proceedings. Except as otherwise stipulated by the Court, interpretation services must be provided by an organization designed for this purpose, such as the British Columbia Professional Legal Interpreters. All interpreters at the Territorial Court must be certified as legal interpreters by the Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia (STIBC) or any other organization recognized by the Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council (CTTIC). However, this requirement is currently under review. Finally, the French Language Services Directorate has deployed its own online interpretation tool for some services rendered by the Department of Justice. These include victim services, family mediation, Integrated Restorative Justice, and legal services to support staff if no bilingual employee is available.



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

According to the AFY and the Department of Justice, information technology has enhanced access to justice in the minority official language in the territory thanks to the availability of myriad online resources. Information technology also makes interpretation services by videoconference possible. Furthermore, the Department notes that its new case management system is bilingual, adding that the vendor selection process established that the system must deliver the same user experience in both languages.



OUTREACH

According to the AFY, awareness campaigns on language rights pertaining to access to justice have been deployed in the territory. For example, content has been published in the Francophone publication *Aurore Boréale* and on the AFY's website to inform citizens about their language rights.



HOW SERVICES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2002

The AFY notes some progress since the report (GTA Research) was published in 2002. Services are available in French in areas under federal jurisdiction. Documents in the Yukon courts are also available in French.

Since 2019, the AFY has been providing a French-language legal referral service and offering specialized webinars on myriad topics (wills, labour rights, harassment prevention). In the area of

divorce and support, a webinar on family law was offered in partnership with the Fédération des associations de juristes d'expression française de common law (FAJEF) to meet the needs identified from a community survey. The AFY has also published plain-language legal fact sheets online. Finally, it has implemented an informal network of French-language jurists in the Yukon and regularly updates its directory of such professionals. These tools have all served to enhance access to justice for Francophones in the Yukon and, accordingly, members of the community now instinctively turn to the AFY when they need legal information or referrals.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1 RECRUITMENT

- According to the AFY, efforts should be deployed to recruit legal professionals proficient in French.

2 TRAINING

- Articling opportunities should be provided to young jurists who want to gain experience in the Yukon.
- Expanding the availability of French-language legal education is also a recommended course of action.

3 OUTREACH

- Yukoners are sometimes unaware of the services available in French. These should be promoted.

4 COLLABORATION

- The AFY is willing to build partnerships with various actors of the justice sector in Canada, including Law Societies.
- It also recommends developing a tool to identify national best practices that can be tailored to the specific needs of each province and territory, including the Yukon.

USEFUL REFERENCES



- Auclair, N., Frigon, C. & St-Amant, G. (2023). [*Key facts on the French language in Yukon in 2021*](#). Statistics Canada.
- Government of Yukon. [*Ministère de la Justice*](#).
- Government of Yukon. [*Services judiciaires*](#).
- Website of [*Association franco-yukonnaise*](#)
- Website of [*Yukon Public Legal Education Association*](#)
- Website of [*Tribunaux du Yukon*](#)

Summary: Minority French-speaking communities



BACKGROUND

This section provides a summary of the findings on the various aspects of the justice system's capacity to provide services in French in the nine provinces and three territories where minority French-speaking communities live. This section therefore only pertains to the system's capacity to provide French-language services outside Quebec.

According to the 2002 report (GTA Research), the system's capacity to deliver services in French differed greatly from one province to the next. While efforts to enhance access to justice in French were still in their infancy in some provinces, other provinces faced challenges of a lesser magnitude but still needed to implement corrective measures. As for territories, the report revealed their judicial infrastructure was less developed and that services were borrowed from external locations.

Since the report was published, progress has been made in most provinces and territories. This is notably due to changes in legal frameworks, the adoption of policies and action plans, the development of French-language resources, an increase in their bilingual capacity, and an expanded active offer. However, the extent of such progress varies, and several challenges identified in 2002 continue to persist: a shortage of bilingual personnel, difficulties recruiting professionals, regional disparities, and unmet needs in terms of training and outreach.

In this section, six tables provide a synthesis of 22 aspects of access to justice in French in the 12 provinces and territories where French is the minority official language. The criteria used to assess each aspect are described in the legends; the meaning of symbols varies depending on the aspect. These tables are for illustrative purposes only — they must be interpreted while taking into account the nuances described in the relevant chapters.



CURRENT SITUATION



OVERVIEW

The capacity of the justice system to provide French-language services outside Quebec greatly varies depending on the province or territory. According to organizations consulted, Francophone justiciables report varying degrees of satisfaction, ranging from dissatisfaction to moderate satisfaction. These same justiciables are at a disadvantage, sometimes a significant one, in areas under federal jurisdiction. Data collected also reveal several reasons why individuals opt for English-language services: they are proficient in this language; they are unaware that services in French exist; French-language services are not proactively offered; they believe that French-language services are inferior in quality, incur additional costs, or lead to long delays.

Nonetheless, the situation varies greatly depending on the location. Some provinces and territories benefit from a relatively developed legislative and institutional framework. In others, the ability to access services in French is mainly due to federal legislation, administrative policies, or the timely availability of bilingual staff. In some regions, a sparse population, remoteness, or dispersion make it difficult to recruit bilingual personnel and deliver services in French.

The following table presents a summary of relevant aspects by province and territory.

Table 1: Overview of minority French-speaking communities⁸⁶

Aspect	AB	BC	PEI	MB	NB	NS	NU	ON	SK	NL	NWT	YK
1) <i>Justiciables satisfied?</i>	X	—	—	—	—	X	X	—	—	X	—	—
2) <i>Justiciables at an advantage?</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Legend:

- 1) *Justiciables satisfied?*: ✓ = satisfied; X = dissatisfied or somewhat satisfied; — = moderately satisfied.
- 2) *Justiciables at an advantage?*: ✓ = at an advantage; X = at a disadvantage; — = neither at an advantage nor a disadvantage.



BARRIERS

A lack of bilingual personnel remains one of the most reported barriers. This situation affects (to varying degrees) judges, prosecutors, lawyers, registry staff, interpreters, and other justice sector professionals. A dearth of resources may also lead to delays and adjournments, require services to be delivered remotely, or prompt justiciables to proceed in English instead.

Challenges recruiting and retaining bilingual professionals can mainly be attributed to: small pool of bilingual individuals in some areas, geographical remoteness, competition from other

⁸⁶ AB: Alberta; BC: British Columbia; PEI: Prince Edward Island; MB: Manitoba; NB: New Brunswick; NS: Nova Scotia; NU: Nunavut; ON: Ontario; SK: Saskatchewan; NL: Newfoundland and Labrador; NWT: Northwest Territories; YK: Yukon.

employers, salary conditions, and specific requirements of the positions. Depending on the province or territory, other barriers may add a degree of difficulty, including limited opportunities to take part in French legal training, insufficient awareness of language rights, disparities between major urban centres and rural regions, and limited financial and institutional resources.



FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

Several provinces and territories have adopted policies, action plans, and programs that bolster their ability to provide services in French. Such measures may aim to strengthen the active offer, designate bilingual positions, recruit and train personnel, translate resources, deploy outreach efforts to inform citizens of their language rights, or expand access to French-language government services. Various coordination mechanisms — committees, units, or persons responsible for the delivery of services in French — also help implement these measures.

Furthermore, associations of French-speaking jurists and community organizations play a key role in disseminating legal information, deploying outreach efforts, providing referral services, offering training opportunities, and engaging in advocacy on behalf of Francophone communities. Collaboration between these organizations, governments, courts, law societies, and educational institutions is also presented as a means to enhance access to services in French.



ACTIVE OFFER

The active offer of French-language services varies by province, territory, and area of law. In general, the active offer is the greatest in criminal law, where language rights are enshrined in the *Criminal Code*. In terms of divorce and support, several provinces and territories have adopted active offer policies and practices aiming to inform justiciables of their rights. In the area of bankruptcy law, the offer is generally less developed, or it is unclear whether an active offer exists.

In addition to ensuring they meet the requirements of federal legislation, some provinces and territories have also enacted their own laws, policies, and internal practices. The active offer may therefore manifest in various ways: information on language choices provided orally, bilingual signage, greetings in both languages, bilingual personnel in reception areas, and mechanisms allowing justiciables to be quickly referred to someone who can provide French-language services. That being said, these practices remain inconsistent across provinces and territories.

The following table presents a summary of relevant aspects by province and territory.

Table 2: Active offer for minority French-speaking communities

Area of law	AB	BC	PEI	MB	NB	NS	NU	ON	SK	NL	NWT	YK
3) <i>Criminal</i>	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4) <i>Bankruptcy</i>	—	X	—	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	—	✓	✓	✓
5) <i>Divorce and support</i>	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓

Legend:

✓ = policy or practice confirmed; X = no policy or practice; — = uncertain or insufficient data.

DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

The availability of French-language documents and forms varies widely. In several provinces and territories, legal forms and documents are available in French or in both official languages, but sometimes as two separate versions rather than a single bilingual document. However, obtaining these forms and documents sometimes requires explicitly requesting them. Furthermore, French-language versions are not always available.

Forms enabling users to specify their official language of preference are not consistently available either. While these forms exist within criminal and family law in certain provinces and territories, they are much less common in bankruptcy law.

The situation also varies with regards to documents issued by police services. In some provinces and territories, these documents explicitly indicate that users may choose their preferred official language whereas in others, they either make no mention of language choices or the information available is insufficient to draw a conclusion.

The following table presents a summary of relevant aspects by province and territory.

Table 3: Documents and forms for minority French-speaking communities

Aspect	AB	BC	PEI	MB	NB	NS	NU	ON	SK	NL	NWT	YK
6) Choice in documents issued by police?	X	X	—	✓	✓	X	—	✓	X	X	✓	!
7) Indictments in the OL of choice?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
8) Language choice form: criminal	✓	✓	—	—	✓	—	✓	✓	—	X	—	—
9) Language choice form: bankruptcy	✓	X	—	—	—	X	✓	—	—	X	—	X
10) Language choice form: divorce...	✓	✓	—	—	—	X	✓	✓	—	X	✓	X

Legend:

- 6) Choice in documents issued by police?: ✓ = indication confirmed; X = absence of indication confirmed; — = insufficient data; ! = contradictory information.
- 7) Indictments in the OL of choice?: ✓ = possible; X = not possible.
- 8), 9), and 10) Language choice form...: ✓ = existence confirmed; X = absence confirmed; — = mechanism functionally equivalent or insufficient data.

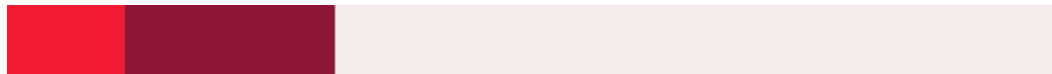
BILINGUAL STAFF

In general, the information gathered reveals that the justice system's capacity to deliver bilingual services has increased since 2002, with progress varying depending on the profession and province/territory. However, the information also reveals that labour shortages remain significant. Furthermore, demographic data reveals a significant gap between the number of professionals who declared they are able to have a conversation in French and the number of people who

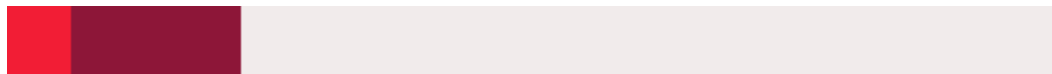
speak French at least on a regular basis at work. This gap has been observed among judges, lawyers, judicial personnel, and the other professions examined.

The following data from the *Analyse démographique des professionnels de la justice dans les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire* from DPM Research (2025) provides an overview of the number of professionals outside Quebec who are able to have a conversation in French and those who speak French at least on a regular basis at work.

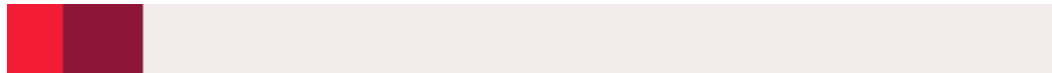
- **690 of the 2,210 judges** outside Quebec (**31.2%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **250 (11.3%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



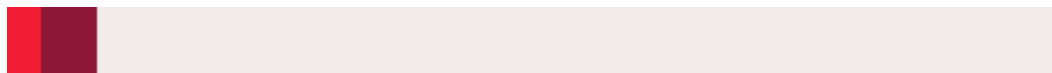
- **18,200 of the 81,440 lawyers** outside Quebec (**22.3%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **4,860 (6.0%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **285 of the 2,210 court clerks** outside Quebec (**12.9%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **120 (5.4%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



- **410 of the 4,780 sheriffs and bailiffs** outside Quebec (**8.6%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in French but only **155 (3.2%)** speak French at least on a regular basis at work.



Law societies, AJEFs, and community organizations in several provinces and territories have published directories that allow users to find lawyers who speak French. However, they are not available everywhere and do not necessarily allow users to determine if the lawyers listed actually practise in French.

Language training opportunities also vary depending on the province and territory. Various groups of justice professionals in several provinces and territories are able to enroll in French-language training on legal terminology, or language skills enhancement programs. Formal mechanisms to assess competencies are less consistent. Some provinces and territories employ structured assessments or tests whereas others rely on informal means or have not implemented a mechanism that applies to all professions.

The following table presents a summary of relevant aspects by province and territory.

Table 4: Bilingual staff in minority French-speaking communities

Aspect	AB	BC	PEI	MB	NB	NS	NU	ON	SK	NL	NWT	YK
11) Measures to recruit bilingual staff?	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	—	✓	✓	—	✓	✓
12) Directory of Francophone lawyers?	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13) Language assessment: judges	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	X	X	✓
14) Language assessment: prosecutors	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	X	✓	—

Legend:

11) Measures to recruit bilingual staff?: ✓ = confirmed; X = none implemented; — = insufficient data or unclear.

12) Directory of Francophone lawyers?: ✓ = confirmed; X = none available.

13) and 14) Language assessment...: ✓ = mechanism confirmed; X = none established; — = informal assessment or insufficient data.



TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

Data collected from governments provide a detailed overview of translation practices. Some provinces and territories have adopted official procedures for the translation of court documents while others rely on mechanisms for the translation of documents only when required. Depending on the province or territory, the costs may be covered by the courts, ministries, government translation services, or other organizations. In most documented cases, governments do not rely on machine translation or artificial intelligence to translate court documents. A few exceptions have been reported, mostly by lawyers, and the use of such tools occurs in very specific contexts.

In general, governments state that legal interpretation services in official languages are available when needed. Associations and community organizations have reported some problems related to the availability of interpreters, the quality of the services, or delays associated with this service. Legal interpretation services may be provided in person or remotely. In some instances, agencies or interpreters based elsewhere in Canada may be called upon. Even though legal interpreters generally need to meet requirements in terms of their training, experience, and certification, these requirements vary widely depending on the province or territory. Moreover, said requirements don't always set a high bar.

The following table presents a summary of relevant aspects by province and territory.

Table 5: Translation and interpretation for minority French-speaking communities

Aspect	AB	BC	PEI	MB	NB	NS	NU	ON	SK	NL	NWT	YK
15) Official translation procedure?	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
16) Interpretation offered and available?	✓	!	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	!
17) Interpreter training or certification?	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓

Legend:

15) Official translation procedure?: ✓ = confirmed; X = none adopted.

16) Interpretation offered and available?: ✓ = confirmed offered and available; X = services not systematically offered or available; ! = contradictory information.

17) Interpreter training or certification?: ✓ = training or structured qualification confirmed; X = absence confirmed; — = insufficient data.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

In most provinces and territories, information technology has enhanced access to justice in French by allowing users to: find legal information and forms online, benefit from videoconference services, and take part in remote hearings. Such technology also enables professionals and interpreters to take part in proceedings even when not on location. It can also prove especially useful in rural regions. Some limitations have nevertheless been reported when it comes to the availability of French-language resources and digital accessibility.

OUTREACH

Outreach campaigns and activities on language rights and French-language legal services have been deployed in many provinces and territories. These include videos, publications in Francophone media, activities in schools and universities, professionals attending fairs or community events, and information made available online.

However, such efforts have not been deployed consistently. Some respondents reported that no campaigns have been deployed in their province or territory. Or they were not aware of any current or recent efforts to this effect. Ensuring justiciables are aware of their language rights and the services available in French therefore remains a cross-cutting issue.



HOW SERVICES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2002

Overall, data collected reveals that the offer of French-language services outside Quebec has improved since 2002, but progress varies depending on the province or territory and area of law. The most significant gains have been made in the area of criminal law. In some provinces and

territories, this is due in particular to the application of language rights enshrined in the *Criminal Code*, favourable policies, increased funding, an active offer, and a greater institutional capacity.

Divorce and support is an area that has also undergone improvements in several provinces and territories, in particular following the introduction or application of new language provisions under the *Divorce Act*. In contrast, progress in bankruptcy law remains limited or is less apparent. In some provinces or territories, very little or no change has been reported in one or more of these areas of law.

Gains observed also include an increase in the number of bilingual professionals in several provinces and territories, an adoption of French-language policies and programs, an expansion of digital resources, and an increase in the number of language and legal training opportunities. These gains have not completely mitigated the significant discrepancies between provinces and territories, or the challenges of accessing French-language services in areas where there are still too few bilingual resources.

The following table presents a summary of relevant aspects by province and territory.

Table 6: How services have changed since 2002 for minority French-speaking communities

Aspect	AB	BC	PEI	MB	NB	NS	NU	ON	SK	NL	NWT	YK
18) Overall improvement?	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
19) Increase: bilingual judges?	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
20) Increase: bilingual lawyers?	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	X	—
21) Increase: bilingual prosecutors?	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	!	✓	✓	✓
22) Increase: bilingual registry staff?	✓	—	—	—	—	✓	—	✓	!	✓	✓	—

Legend:

18) Overall improvement?: ✓ = improved; X = deteriorated; — = no change or insufficient data.

19), 20), 21), and 22) Increase...: ✓ = increase; X = decrease; — = no change or insufficient data; ! = contradictory information.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Recommended courses of action bear several similarities across provinces and territories. Recruiting and retaining more bilingual professionals recurs as a priority, as does expanding and diversifying language and legal training opportunities in French. In particular, there are unmet needs in terms of legal terminology, ongoing professional development, university training, and opportunities for justice system professionals who are not judges, prosecutors, or lawyers.

Another avenue would be to undertake outreach efforts with the public to ensure they are aware of their language rights and the services available. Recommendations also include increasing the production and dissemination of French-language legal resources (in plain language), improving

access to information about professionals who are able to offer their services in French, and bolstering the active offer.

Other approaches, noted more sporadically, include increasing funding; strengthening collaboration between governments, courts, law societies, community organizations, and educational institutions; and implementing better data collection measures to better understand needs and measure progress. Such solutions must however take into account the demographic and geographic realities that vary widely from one province or territory to another.

USEFUL REFERENCES



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Anglophone minority communities

Quebec



BACKGROUND

This section presents information obtained from the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) — known as TALQ since 2025⁸⁷ — and the results of the Survey for jurists and other professionals in the Canadian justice sector⁸⁸. Some information has been validated and completed by the research team.

According to the 2002 report (GTA Research), Quebec was one of the provinces where problems related to access to justice in the minority official language were not as widespread. However, some courses of action were recommended: services in the minority official language needed to be made available throughout the entire province, the active offer needed to be bolstered, the bilingual capabilities of judicial personnel needed to be improved, and the use of English needed to become standard practice.

Since the report was published, progress has been made thanks, in particular, to the development of resources and support programs as well as new training initiatives and increased funding. Nevertheless, recent observations show barriers remain. These include a limited access to certain services in English, a shortage of bilingual personnel in some regions, restrictions pertaining to the recruitment of bilingual personnel, and the effects of recent language policies. As a result, several challenges identified in 2002 continue to persist.

⁸⁷ We will be referring to QCGN instead of TALQ because this was the group's designation when the questionnaire was filled out in the spring of 2025.

⁸⁸ We obtained answers from 62 justice sector professionals who indicated they work with English-speaking clients in Quebec.

A few key facts...



- Under the *Charter of the French language*, French is the sole official language in Quebec. Nevertheless, the Charter stipulates that “either French or English may be used by any person in, or in any pleading in or process issuing from, any court of Québec”.
- While there is a sustained demographic growth in Quebec, the relative demographic weight of citizens whose mother tongue is English remains relatively stable while the relative demographic weight of those whose first official language spoken is English is growing.
- Demographic data collected since 2001 reveal an increase in the overall rate of bilingualism in Quebec, specifically among Francophones, whereas the rate of bilingualism of Anglophone and Allophone populations has remained relatively stable.
- According to data from the 2021 census, more than half of the population of Quebec is able to have a conversation in English.



CURRENT SITUATION



OVERVIEW

Even though French is the language of the legislature and the courts in Quebec, another language may be used in some situations. For instance, anyone can use French or English in any pleadings in or processes issuing from the courts of Quebec. Moreover, legislative bills are printed, published, passed, and assented to in both languages. Statutes are also printed and published in French and English.

According to QCGN, English justiciables in Quebec generally report low levels of satisfaction with the legal services available in the minority official language. Furthermore, they are at a slight disadvantage in areas under federal jurisdiction. Nonetheless, according to the survey, professionals in the justice sector indicate they are generally moderately to fairly satisfied with the judicial services available in English in Quebec.

According to QCGN, various decisions made by the provincial government have hindered access to justice in English in the province. Such decisions include the obligation to use French in certain steps of the legal process, policies limiting the recruitment of bilingual judges and other professionals in the justice system, and language policies that have caused some Anglophone justiciables to opt not to pursue access to justice in the English language. QCGN reports there

have been complaints regarding the absence of various services in English within the province's justice system.



BARRIERS

According to QCGN, legislation and policies adopted by the provincial government represent the main barriers to accessing justice in English in Quebec. Per QCGN, the province suffers from a shortage of bilingual judges and other professionals (i.e., lawyers and other experts), especially outside the Greater Montreal Area. A shortage of interpreters outside Montreal has also been observed by QCGN. For their part, most survey respondents pointed to the shortage of bilingual professionals outside major urban centres and the restrictions imposed by Bill 96 as being barriers to accessing justice in English.

According to QCGN, in some instances English-language services are simply not offered to justiciables. In other instances, opting for services in English results in longer delays. Moreover, some documents, such as judgments, are only available in French. Because translating these documents takes time, problems may arise in situations requiring a quick resolution. For example, situations involving provisional injunctions, child custody decisions, or applications for leave to appeal. Additionally, mediation services and family law services in English remain insufficient. QCGN also notes that some Anglophone justiciables are not always aware of their rights or the procedures to follow to receive services in English. Survey respondents agree.

According to QCGN, Anglophones who are not proficient in French are rarely able to navigate the legal system and must hire legal representation at their own cost. It is also not uncommon for judges and other stakeholders to alternate between English and French with no consideration for the fact that not all parties in attendance are bilingual. Navigating the legal system can prove even more difficult for Anglophones who are also immigrants, racialized persons, Indigenous persons, individuals with a disability, or senior citizens.

Finally, both QCGN and survey respondents report regional inequities: access to justice in English is more limited in Anglophone communities outside the Greater Montreal Area, specifically in remote areas or sparsely populated regions.



FACTORS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

According to QCGN, there are policies and programs implemented in Quebec that have a positive impact on access to judicial services in both official languages. QCGN's Access to Justice in English project has enabled the province's Anglophones to benefit from the organization's information, workshops, and documentation. Moreover, interdisciplinary research conducted as part of the project has led to important insights that have resulted in greater collaboration with government actors and community stakeholders, with the ultimate aim of improving access to services. Éducaloi⁸⁹ also plays a significant role in enhancing access to justice in the province by providing legal information in English and hosting English-language workshops.

⁸⁹ Éducaloi (2025). *Éducaloi – Your Starting Point for Legal Information*.

From an institutional perspective, it is worth noting that the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada entered into the Canada–Québec Agreement on the Implementation of the Action Plan for Official Languages – 2024–25 to 2027–28⁹⁰. Under the terms of the agreement, the federal government provides support for the implementation of measures aimed at bolstering English-language services in Quebec, in particular in the justice sector.

Moreover, both governments concluded a funding agreement pertaining to the Access to Justice in Both Official Languages Support Fund. This agreement aims to fund and offer professional development in legal English to judges, justices of the peace, magistrates, and municipal judges in Quebec.



ACTIVE OFFER

It is unclear whether there is an active offer policy in the minority official language in areas under federal jurisdiction. According to QCGN, there are no provincial rules of law in Quebec or practices or internal policies regarding the active offer of services in the minority official language. Moreover, some survey respondents believe the main reason why Anglophones navigate the justice system in French in Quebec is because they have not been offered services in English. That being said, these same professionals (most of whom are lawyers) stated they notify their clients of their choices when it comes to the use of official languages. These persons also indicated that most judges do notify the accused and other persons appearing before the courts of their language rights. The inexistence of an active offer therefore lies at another level.



DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

According to QCGN, documents issued by police officers (notices, statements of offence, citations, etc.) indicate citizens have the option of choosing their preferred official language. However, there is no specific form that allows an accused to specify their preferred language for legal proceedings. Instead, they make their language choice known orally or via another document. Moreover, indictments and details of the charge are presented to accused individuals in their preferred official language. It is unclear whether justiciables receive such forms in matters regarding bankruptcy law or divorce and support. Survey respondents nevertheless noted that forms are generally available in English, but users must specifically ask for them. Finally, the English versions of some forms bear a watermark indicating that they are courtesy copies.



BILINGUAL STAFF

The following data from *A Demographic Analysis of Anglophone Legal Professionals in Quebec* from DPM Research (2026) provides an overview of the number of professionals who are able to have a conversation in English and those who speak English at least on a regular basis at work.

⁹⁰ Canadian Heritage (2025). *Canada–Québec Agreement on the Implementation of the Action Plan for Official Languages – 2024–25 to 2027–28*.

- **965 of the 1,080 judges** in the province (**89.4%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in English and **590 (54.6%)** speak English at least on a regular basis at work.
- **21,035 of the 23,460 lawyers and notaries** in the province (**89.7%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in English and **12,825 (54.7%)** speak English at least on a regular basis at work.
- **170 of the 330 court clerks** in the province (**51.5%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in English and **75 (22.7%)** speak English at least on a regular basis at work.
- **505 of the 795 sheriffs and bailiffs** in the province (**63.5%**) stated they are able to have a conversation in English and **255 (32.1%)** speak English at least on a regular basis at work.

The Barreau du Québec's directory⁹¹ allows users to search for members by language spoken. However, the "Language" option is not available in the initial search form: the user needs to specify the area of law and region before they can view results by language spoken. Search results reveal that out of the 31,027 members in the directory, 29,174 (94%) indicate they speak English⁹². In Montreal, 97.6% of lawyers state they speak English.

According to survey respondents, obtaining services in English from judges and prosecutors is generally easy. It is however harder to receive English-language services from staff at the office of the court and other professionals in the justice system. Moreover, English proficiency varies among stakeholders and, per QCGN, there is no mechanism to assess competencies in the minority official language. Additionally, some restrictions imposed on the hiring of bilingual personnel could lead to a decrease in the number of bilingual judges, lawyers, prosecutors, court office staff, and other professionals in the province's justice ecosystem.

According to QCGN, there is no language training in the minority official language available for lawyers, prosecutors, court office staff, and other professionals in the justice system.

Per QCGN, the government's recruitment policy actively hinders the recruitment of bilingual personnel because it limits how competencies in languages other than French are evaluated for

⁹¹ Barreau du Québec. [Find a lawyer](#).

⁹² In the initial search results, a user may select "All fields of law", and "All regions", then "Language - English" to obtain the full list of members providing services in English.

judges and court personnel. That being said, being proficient in English is a criterion for selection in some judicial districts. In these districts, the ratio of judges who must be proficient in English is set by an administrative agreement concluded in 2023 between the Chief Judge of the Court of Québec and the Minister of Justice of Québec⁹³.



TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

According to QCGN, there is an official procedure in place that ensures court documents are translated, although the procedure depends on the type of document. The parties are often responsible for the translation of documents. Neither machine translation nor artificial intelligence is used to translate court documents.

According to QCGN, legal interpretation services are not systematically offered nor available in both official languages. Nevertheless, survey respondents reported it was generally easy to obtain interpretation services in English in Quebec.

Under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, any party or witness who does not understand or speak the language of the hearing is entitled to an interpreter. In criminal and penal matters, as well as youth protection matters, interpretation services are provided at no cost for justiciables. In civil matters, including family law, the party making the request is responsible for covering the costs of interpretation.

To be hired, interpreters must demonstrate they have experience in interpretation and successfully pass a language proficiency test and an interpretation skills test. Interpreters can be certified (by the Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec, for instance) but this is not a requirement.



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

QCGN does not specify whether information technology has facilitated access to justice in the minority official language in the province.



OUTREACH

QCGN has deployed its own awareness campaigns on language rights and access to justice in English in Quebec, in particular through its Access to Justice in English project.



HOW SERVICES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 2002

QCGN notes some setbacks since the report (GTA Research) was published in 2002. For instance, it points to Bill 96⁹⁴ as a hindrance to accessing justice in English in Quebec. This is

⁹³ Gouvernement du Québec (2023). *Entente entre le ministre de la Justice et le juge en chef de la Cour du Québec mettant fin aux procédures judiciaires portant sur l'exigence du bilinguisme chez les juges*.

⁹⁴ CanLII (2022). *Loi sur la langue officielle et commune du Québec, le français, LQ 2022, c 14*.

due to restrictions on bilingualism requirements for judges and the requirement that justiciables must provide a certified French translation of their English-language documents – and cover the costs of such translations. That being said, QCGN specifies that overall, criminal matters have not been impacted by laws and policies that hinder access to justice in English in Quebec due to constitutional provisions.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

According to QCGN, many solutions could enhance access to justice in English.

1 BILINGUALISM

- First, more professionals in the justice sector, including judges, should be bilingual.
- In the same vein, the bilingualism of candidates should be an inherent part of the appointment process for provincial court judges.
- A greater number of bilingual personnel should be recruited across the province to accommodate Anglophone justiciables, in particular those outside the Greater Montreal Area.
- Interpretation services should be made available in situations where no bilingual personnel are available.

2 DOCUMENTATION

- Every document and form required throughout the judicial process should be made available in English. This includes content on websites, forms provided at government points of services and courthouses, and documents pertaining to legal aid, youth protection services, etc.
- Whenever documents are not available in English, the translation should be carried out and the costs covered.

3 OUTREACH

- Anglophone citizens of Quebec should be made aware of their language rights, with information on the steps to follow to obtain such services written in plain English.
- Awareness campaigns that are tailored to different regions should also be deployed by the Ministry of Justice in collaboration with regional community organizations.

4 SERVICES

- A greater number of English-language services outside the courts should be made available. These include mediation services and social services.
- Taking into account whether a person speaks a minority official language should be done when determining whether they are entitled to legal aid services.

- Online English-language services should also be provided, most notably to individuals in remote regions.

Finally, a monitoring mechanism should be established to collect data on the services provided in English and on the court proceedings held in English in the province. This data should be collected by judicial district.

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- Website of [*Aide juridique du Québec*](#)
- Website of [*Commission des services juridiques*](#)
- TALQ (Talking. Advocating. Living in Québec.) (2026). [*Justice and rights*](#).

General Conclusion

Analyzing the situation in the 12 provinces and territories where French is the minority official language and in Quebec, where the minority official language is English, reveals both shared challenges and notable differences. Indeed, Quebec presents a unique case: it is the only province where minority English-speaking communities live and the only province whose government officials provided no response. Qualitative information on Quebec is therefore mainly based on responses received from QCGN as well as the survey of justice sector professionals who work with English-speaking clients in Quebec. It is important to note that these two sources do not always align in their observations.

Overall, a recognition of language rights does not, in itself, guarantee that the justice system has an effective capacity to deliver services in the minority official language. This capacity depends, in particular, on the availability of bilingual personnel, the active offer, the ability of justiciables to access documents and forms, the availability of translation and interpretation services, awareness of language rights, and the demographic and geographic realities inherent to each province and territory.

In general, organizations consulted in minority French-speaking communities reported low to moderate levels of satisfaction and deemed Francophone justiciables to be at a disadvantage, sometimes a significant one, in areas under federal jurisdiction. There are several reasons why individuals opt for English-language services: they are proficient in this language; French-language services are not proactively offered; they believe that French-language services lead to long delays, incur additional costs, or are inferior in quality. In Quebec, the results must be interpreted with the knowledge that no government response has been provided and the two primary sources consulted presented certain contrasting findings. QCGN reported Anglophone justiciables to be overall dissatisfied and at a slight disadvantage in areas under federal jurisdiction. On the other hand, most professionals who filled out the survey stated they are moderately to fairly satisfied with the legal services offered in English.

The data collected also paints a mixed picture of how services have changed since 2002. Overall, the capacity of justice systems outside Quebec to provide French-language services has improved since 2002, but progress varies depending on the province or territory and area of law. Such progress has mainly been reported in criminal law and, depending on the situation, stems from the application of language rights set out in the *Criminal Code*, favourable policies, increased funding, an active offer, and a greater institutional capacity. Divorce and support is an area where gains have also been noted in several provinces and territories. In terms of bankruptcy law, the changes have been more limited or are less apparent. Even though progress has been made, many barriers reported in 2002 still persist. These include a shortage of bilingual personnel, regional disparities, unequal access to resources, as well as the delays and costs (real or perceived) that may discourage justiciables from opting for services in French. Progress has also been made in Quebec since 2002 thanks to the development of resources and support programs, as well as training and increased funding. QCGN nonetheless reported recent setbacks, attributing them in particular to *Bill 96*. It also reported limitations in terms of recruiting

bilingual personnel (English proficiency nevertheless remains a criterion for selecting judges in some districts). QCGN also specified that, in general, the area of criminal law has not been impacted by the laws and policies that it believes hinder access to justice in English in Quebec due to constitutional provisions.

Avenues for action proposed in 2002 have since been implemented to varying degrees across the four groups of provinces and territories identified at the time. In the three territories, where borrowing services should have been a temporary measure until resident bilingual judges could be appointed, the justice system is capable of operating in French but the data collected does not make it possible to confirm whether the objective to appoint bilingual judges has been met in each territory. Moreover, recruitment difficulties persist, as does reliance on external resources or remote services. In British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador, several of the recommendations issued in 2002 have been implemented. These include the creation of directories to help users find French-speaking lawyers and an increase in the number of bilingual judges and prosecutors. However, these measures have not resolved ongoing labour shortages. In Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, strengthening bilingual capacity, creating or designating bilingual positions, and using technology are also consistent with the directions proposed in 2002. Approaches aimed at consolidating or bringing services closer to justiciables — such as central hubs and itinerant courts — have also been implemented, though their deployment remains uneven. Finally, in Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick, the objectives of ensuring province-wide accessibility, affirming the active offer, making bilingual staff available, and normalizing the use of the minority language remain only partially met: the capacities and measures described herein coexist with regional disparities, gaps in the availability of services, and reluctance on the part of justiciables to proceed in the minority language. Several solutions recommended in 2002 have therefore materialized but their scope and effectiveness in practice remain key challenges.

This assessment broadly aligns with the conclusions drawn from a recent study by Girard and Lehoux-Jobin (2026)⁹⁵ in which the authors synthesized both “scholarly” (i.e., scientific articles) and “grey” (i.e., government reports) literature on access to justice in official language minority communities (OLMCs). With respect to English-speaking communities in Quebec, the material analyzed reveals systemic barriers that hinder or prevent access to services. With respect to French-speaking communities outside Quebec, the material analyzed reveals progress that has failed to resolve numerous challenges. Based on the literature reviewed, the authors also concluded that the system and stakeholders continued to encounter difficulties translating recognized rights and principles into concrete solutions and actions for the benefit of justiciables in OLMCs. The data and information from the 13 provinces and territories in this report allow these literature-based findings to be measured in light of the current situation while revealing overall trends that largely mirror those described.

As for active offer practices, they vary significantly. In minority French-speaking communities, the active offer is generally greater in criminal law and also manifests in different ways in the law of divorce and support. It is sparser or less apparent in the area of bankruptcy law. The active offer

⁹⁵ Girard, Marie-Hélène & Etienne Lehoux-Jobin (2026). Entre langues officielles et droits linguistiques : l'accès à la justice en contexte linguistique minoritaire au Canada. *Linguistic Minorities and Society*, (27).

may manifest in various ways: information on language choices provided orally, bilingual signage, greetings in both languages, or bilingual personnel in reception areas. In Quebec, QCGN does not report any provincial rules or internal policies on the active offer of English-language services. Survey respondents also stated that the lack of a proactive offer was the main reason why some Anglophones opted to navigate the province's justice system in French. Professionals, mostly lawyers, who took part in the survey noted that they notify their clients of their language options, and according to these respondents, most judges inform the people appearing before them of their language rights.

One of the most common challenges pertains to human resources, although the situation differs significantly depending on the context. Outside Quebec, the shortage of bilingual personnel remains one of the most widely reported barriers. It impacts judges, prosecutors, lawyers, registry staff, interpreters, and other justice sector professionals. Challenges recruiting and retaining bilingual professionals are due in large part to the following: a small pool of bilingual individuals in some areas, geographical remoteness, competition from other employers, salary conditions, and the requirements of the positions. Quebec stands out as a unique case in this regard. In the categories of professionals listed below, the proportions of people who stated they are able to have a conversation in the other official language and use it at least on a regular basis at work are significantly higher than the same figures reported outside Quebec.

In Quebec, 89.4% of judges stated they are able to have a conversation in English and 54.6% use it at least on a regular basis at work. Outside Quebec, these figures are respectively 31.2% and 11.3%. In Quebec, the proportions are respectively 51.5% and 22.7% for clerks. Outside Quebec: 12.9% and 5.4%. For sheriffs and bailiffs, the proportions are 63.5% and 32.1% in Quebec, versus 8.6% and 3.2% outside Quebec. The same trend affects lawyers. In Quebec, 89.7% of lawyers and notaries stated they are able to have a conversation in English with 54.7% stating they speak it at least regularly at work. Outside Quebec, these figures are 22.3% and 6.0%, respectively (it should be noted that these categories are not entirely comparable because notaries are included in data from Quebec). In both contexts, the data reveals a discrepancy between a person's self-reported ability to have a conversation in the minority language and whether they speak it at work on a regular basis. This does not automatically imply bilingual resources are underutilized. Indeed, a person's ability to have a conversation in a language does not necessarily correspond to their ability to use the language in a professional setting. In Quebec, the challenges reported therefore coexist with an overall high bilingual capacity and seem to be more concentrated in some regions and affect certain professional categories to a greater extent. QCGN also sought to emphasize the effects of certain hiring policies.

The availability of documents and forms also remains uneven. As do interpretation and translation practices. Outside Quebec, documents are available in French in many provinces and territories, but sometimes only upon request. Furthermore, the French and English versions may be separate documents. Some documents may also be translated upon request. This is the case in several provinces and territories. Forms enabling users to specify their official language of preference are not available everywhere. Translation procedures also vary by province or territory, as do the availability and modes of interpretation services. In Quebec, survey respondents noted that forms are generally available in English but users must sometimes

specifically ask for them. QCGN also reported that legal interpretation services in English are not systematically offered or available. In contrast, professionals surveyed stated they are easy to obtain.

Information technology has generally facilitated access to justice in French outside Quebec by providing access to information and forms, enabling hearings to be held remotely, and making it easier to obtain the services of professionals and interpreters located elsewhere. Some limitations have nevertheless been reported when it comes to the availability of French-language resources and digital accessibility. Data from QCGN is insufficient to determine how information technology has impacted access to justice in English in Quebec. Outreach challenges for their part remain nation-wide: despite campaigns deployed and activities undertaken in several provinces and territories, there is widespread ignorance of language rights and of the steps that enable someone to obtain services in the minority official language.

Outside Quebec, challenges mostly pertain to bilingual human resources, the active offer, and access to resources in French. Demographic and geographic constraints may also add additional barriers. The reported bilingual capacity of professionals in Quebec is clearly superior to the bilingual capacity of those outside Quebec. Nonetheless, barriers remain that hinder access to certain English-language services and the active offer, depending on the region. QCGN also reported the effects of certain language and recruitment policies.

Despite these differences, several common avenues for action emerge in both settings to varying extents. These include bolstering the bilingual capacity of the justice system, especially where needs have been identified; making it easier to recruit bilingual personnel; improving access to legal documents and resources in the minority language; enhancing awareness of language rights; strengthening effective access to services in the minority language; and fostering collaboration between institutions and community organizations. The capacity of the justice system to provide services in both official languages therefore stems not only from the formal recognition of language rights, but also — and ultimately — from the existence of conditions allowing institutions to provide high-quality services in the minority official language in an effective and accessible way.