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Ce document traduit est disponible dans sa version originale en français sous le titre **Collaborer avec les francophones en Ontario : Partie 1 – Comprendre le contexte.**

Working Together With Francophones in Ontario

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Why work with Francophones?

Equity, inclusion and a sense of belonging have become priorities for governments and for our society in general. They contribute to a healthier population, better social cohesion, stronger communities and a more equitable and prosperous society.

The provision of French-language services can help to build a more inclusive and healthy society by removing language as a key barrier to accessible services.

Why offer services in French?

Francophones in Ontario have the right to request and receive services in their own language, from provincial and federal governments as well as from organizations that receive funding from the provincial government. This right is enshrined in the *French Language Services Act*, as well as in other legislation.

Did You Know?

- Ontario has the highest number of Francophones outside Quebec.
- Franco-Ontarians have the right to be served in French in 25 designated areas of Ontario.



People who receive services in their own language are better able to follow health instructions or advices, have less need for hospital services and remain in better health¹. They also have a stronger sense of community belonging².

Service-providers who offer services in French have a better understanding of their Francophone clients and can offer higher quality services that are more closely suited to their needs. Being bilingual allows organizations to reach more of their target audience, develop closer links with the community and put their organizational commitments to equity into action.

Who are Ontario's Francophones?

Ontario's Francophones have the French language in common. Beyond language, however, Ontario's Franco-Ontarian community is characterized by diversity – of ethnicity, religion, origin, education, culture, income, values, and experience.

HISTORY – MORE THAN 400 YEARS OF FRANCOPHONE PRESENCE IN ONTARIO

- The French presence in Ontario goes back more than 400 years. The French were the first explorers in the province and established its first colonies. In 1763, France ceded its North American colonies to Great Britain.
- In 1912, Ruling 17 imposed English as the sole language of instruction in public schools. In 1927, bilingual schools were brought back. In 1969, Ontario law allowed French-language schools at the elementary and secondary levels.

- In 1984, the *Courts of Justice Act* conferred the French language with the status of official language before the courts.
- In 1986, the government adopted the *French Language Services Act*, which granted legal status to French in the Legislative Assembly and guaranteed the public the right to receive government services in French.
- In 1997, the government recommended the closing of the Montfort Hospital, the only Francophone teaching hospital in Ontario. This decision led to a popular resistance movement. The courts ruled in favour of the hospital and its defenders.
- In 2010, September 25 was declared Franco-Ontarian Day.

AN INCLUSIVE DEFINITION OF “FRANCOPHONE”

On June 4, 2009, the Ontario government created a new definition of the Francophone population to more closely represent the new realities and diversity of the Francophone community.

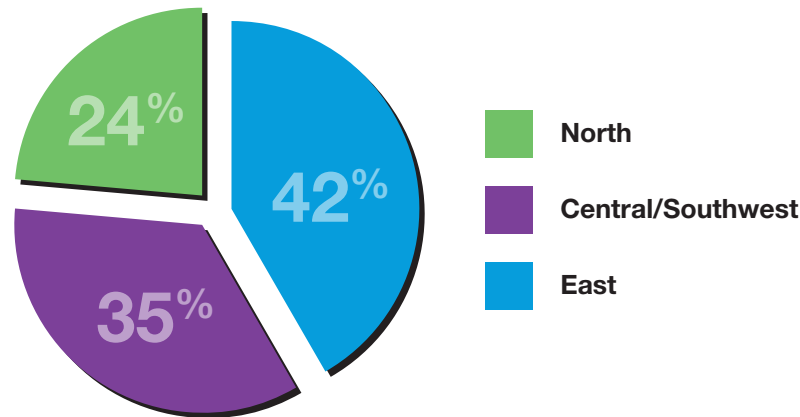
Until 2009, Francophones had been defined according to their mother tongue, or “the first language learned at home during childhood and still understood at the time of the census.”

The new, inclusive definition of Francophone takes into account the number of people whose mother tongue is French and adds those whose mother tongue is *neither* French nor English, but who have personal knowledge of French as an official language, and who use French at home. This would include recent immigrants to Ontario for whom French is the language of integration.



SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

According to the 2006 census, the Franco-Ontarian community includes nearly 600,000 people, or 4.8% of the total population of the province, represented geographically by the following chart.



The Francophone population is dynamic, complex and increasingly diverse:

Ten percent of Francophones report belonging to an ethnocultural, racialized community and nearly 22% of Francophone immigrants arrived between 2001 and 2006. The largest concentrations of racialized Francophone communities are in Central Ontario, especially in the Greater Toronto Area.

LIVING AS A MINORITY

Being part of a linguistic minority influences the way that members of Ontario's Francophone community live and express themselves.

Research shows that Francophones do not always ask for services in French, even if the service provider is able to offer these services.

Two socio-linguistic concepts can help to explain this phenomenon of Francophone disengagement and assimilation:

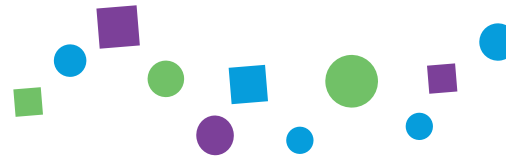
SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

Developed in the 1970s by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, the concept of *symbolic violence* explains the power relationships in society between *dominant* classes or groups and *dominated* classes or groups³.

Linguistic minorities can be defined as:

Actions taken by the dominant linguistic group to force the linguistic minority to speak the dominant language. Symbolic violence is conducted with the implicit consent of the subordinate group because the environment of domination includes only the dominant group's categories of ideas. Symbolic violence serves to maintain order, without the conscious awareness of those who exercise this power.

Symbolic violence can both create insecurity and anxiety. For some people, it can even lead them to stop speaking their own language.



EXAMPLE OF WHAT IS MEANT BY SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

A Francophone arrives at the counter and asks for a service in French. He or she is told:

- *I'm sorry but I don't speak French.*
- *Can you speak English?*
- *It's not polite to speak a language other people can't understand.*
- *Why should we offer services in French? French isn't a priority for us. We have more customers who speak other languages.*

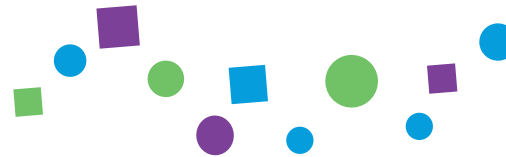
INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION

External oppression is the unjustified use of power and authority of one group over another. This includes imposing the beliefs, values and lifestyle of one group onto another group. *External* oppression becomes *internalized* oppression when we end up believing and acting as if the beliefs, values and lifestyle of the oppressor are our own reality⁴.

Internalized oppression can also be defined as “self-hate” or “internalized racism”. Internalized oppression can translate into both shame and a denial of a person’s individual and cultural reality.

EXAMPLES OF INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION⁴

- Discomfort with your own identity as a Francophone.
- Not wanting to belong to the Francophone community anymore.
- Not letting on that you are different.
- Fear of making others angry.
- Fear of not obtaining services.
- Fear of falling behind and losing credibility.
- Fear of being seen as a “whiner.”
- Fear that nobody will listen to you if you speak French.
- Passive acceptance of assimilation.
- Pretending to belong to the majority to have the same privileges.
- Believing that services in English are better than services in French.



THE DOUBLE MINORITY STATUS OF FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRANTS

If Francophones are usually in the minority within their communities, this is even more the case for recent immigrants and ethnic communities. Francophone members of visible minorities face a *double minority* status – both a linguistic minority in a predominantly English-speaking Ontario, and a visible minority in a predominantly white French-speaking Ontario.

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Part 2: Legislation and institutional support

The next issue of the series *Working Together With Francophones in Ontario* deals with legislation and institutional support for French language services.