



Office of the  
Commissioner of  
Official Languages

Commissariat  
aux langues  
officielles



# FILING A COMPLAINT

WITH THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER  
OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

[www.officiallanguages.gc.ca](http://www.officiallanguages.gc.ca)



## **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES?**

The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages protects language rights and promotes English and French in Canada. Its mission is to ensure that federal institutions comply with the *Official Languages Act*. To perform this duty, the Office of the Commissioner carries out various activities, including investigations into complaints from the public.

If you believe a federal institution has not respected your rights under the Act, the Office of the Commissioner can help.

## **WHY FILE A COMPLAINT?**

### **TO ENSURE THAT YOUR RIGHTS ARE RESPECTED**

In Canada, the *Official Languages Act* establishes the equality of English and French and grants you language rights. It is perfectly normal to insist that these rights be respected.

### **TO FIND SOLUTIONS**

As an ombudsman, the Commissioner of Official Languages uses persuasion and constructive dialogue with federal institutions to find appropriate, fair and long-term solutions.

## **TO REPORT A PROBLEM**

Complaints are an indicator of what's happening in federal institutions. They help the Office of the Commissioner work with federal institutions to find solutions to problems.

## **TO RAISE AWARENESS IN FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS**

A lack of familiarity with or a misunderstanding of the requirements of the Act is often the reason for non-compliance with language obligations. By filing a complaint, you are helping to make federal institutions aware of these issues and promoting a change in corporate culture.

## **WHOM CAN I FILE A COMPLAINT AGAINST?**

The *Official Languages Act* applies to federal institutions such as offices, Crown corporations and federal departments, as well as agencies and businesses acting on their behalf. Certain companies, like Air Canada, still have language obligations even though they have been privatized.

The Act does not apply to municipalities, provincial government institutions or private companies.

If you have difficulty determining whether a particular organization is subject to the Act, please do not hesitate to contact us.

## ARE COMPLAINTS CONFIDENTIAL?

Yes—all complaints are confidential unless you authorize us to reveal your name.

## IN WHAT SITUATIONS CAN I FILE A COMPLAINT?

- You go to an office that is designated bilingual, but are greeted in only one official language.
- You are not able to obtain services in the official language of your choice at a federal government office that is designated bilingual.
- You are an employee of a federal institution in a designated bilingual region and you find it difficult to use the official language of your choice at work.
- You believe that decisions made by a federal institution will have a negative impact on the vitality of an official language minority community.
- You believe that the language requirements of a position have not been determined objectively in light of the duties of that position.
- You believe that the equal status of both official languages is not being respected by a federal institution.
- You believe that one of the other provisions of the *Official Languages Act* has not been complied with.

## WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN INVESTIGATION?

We gather the facts from you and from the appropriate federal institution and we analyze the information.

We provide you with updates on how the investigation is progressing, tell you what the final result is and inform you of our conclusions.

Once the investigation has been completed, recommendations may be made to the institution and a follow up may be carried out to ensure that the recommendations are being followed properly.

## WHAT KINDS OF RESULTS CAN A COMPLAINT GET?

Depending on the problem identified, a federal institution may commit to solutions such as the following:

- remind staff and managers of their language rights and obligations
- better integrate official languages into planning and activities
- review practices and guidelines for communications in both official languages
- allocate more resources to translation
- modify the workplace to make it more conducive to the use of both official languages
- review the language requirements of a position
- strengthen control measures
- make periodic reports to the Commissioner of Official Languages

## HOW DO I FILE A COMPLAINT?

Contact us as soon as possible with clear, detailed and specific information about the situation. You will need to provide us with the following:

- your name
- your telephone number
- your mailing address
- a summary of the incident or situation, including the date, time and location, as well as the federal institution in question
- any documentation that could help us investigate your complaint

You can file a complaint with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages by mail, telephone or fax.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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