

Justice in Official Languages – The Bulletin No. 22 – summer 26

Words of welcome

Time flies so quickly! It was in June 2023 that the *Official Languages Act* (OLA) was modernized. Since then, the Justice in Official Languages Team (JOL) has been busy working on projects that reflect the new obligations of the OLA.

This edition of the Bulletin presents the important work done by the Official Languages Directorate (OLAD) and our community partners over the past year. First, we begin with an article on our colleague Warren J. Newman, a distinguished jurist who recently retired. This is followed by an overview of the Advisory Committee meeting and what was discussed there. We then introduce some community partners and their projects. The new draft Regulations for the OLA are then discussed, following which we will outline a major event for 2026, the Agora on access to justice in French in Winnipeg on June 26-27. We also make a career suggestion and finish by sharing some announcements.

Happy reading!

The JOL Team



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Review on Official Languages

Every year, Justice Canada is called upon by the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) to submit the Review on Official Languages. The Review details the efforts of Justice Canada in relation to official languages and the implementation of Parts IV to VII of the OLA. Justice Canada's Review feeds into the [Annual Report on Official Languages](#) that is presented to Parliament. Past editions of Justice Canada's Review on Official Languages can be found [here](#).

Spotlight On Warren J. Newman

A prominent figure in constitutional law and official languages for nearly 45 years retires from Justice Canada

After studying history and political science at McGill University, Mr. Newman earned both his civil law and common law degrees from the same institution and was called to the Bars of Ontario and Quebec. Coincidence or not, his move into the legal profession coincided with the adoption of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, including the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

After working at the Privy Council Office (PCO) and the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, Warren joined the Department of Justice in 1984 as project counsel for the new OLA, which was assented to in 1988. He was then appointed counsel and manager of the Official Languages Group (which became the Legal Team of the OLAD), whose mandate was to provide legal advice and counsel to federal institutions regarding the brand new OLA, as well as to support the TBS in developing the Regulations under Part IV of the OLA and policies on Parts IV, V and VI of the OLA. The PCO and the Secretary of State (now the Department of Canadian Heritage) were also important clients of the group led by Warren.

In 1996, Warren joined the Department's Canadian Unity Group as General Counsel to coordinate the participation of the Attorney General of Canada in the *Reference re Secession of Quebec* (1998) and to act as senior advisor during the development of the *Clarity Act* in 2000.

He was subsequently appointed Senior General Counsel of the Constitutional, Administrative and International Law Section of the Department, providing advice across a wide range of legal areas, from constitutional principles and conventions to the procedure for amending the Constitution, federalism and the separation of powers.

Throughout his distinguished career, Mr. Newman has represented the Attorney General of Canada on numerous occasions before the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) and certain courts of appeal in litigation concerning fundamental issues in constitutional law and official languages law, notably the *Reference on language rights in Manitoba* (1985), *Quebec (AG) v. Collier* (1990), the *Reference re Manitoba language rights* (1992), the *Reference regarding the Public Schools Act (Manitoba)* (1993), *Lalonde v. Ontario* (Montfort Hospital, 2001), the *Reference re Senate Reform* (2014), as well as *Motard v. Attorney General of Canada* (a 2019 decision relating to the *Succession to the Throne Act, 2013*).

He also served as project counsel and senior advisor during the drafting of constitutional enactments such as the *1997 Constitutional Amendment (Quebec)*, the *1998 Constitutional Amendment (Newfoundland Act)* and the *2001 Constitutional Amendment (Newfoundland and Labrador)* — all amendments related to denominational school rights under section 93 of the *Constitution Act, 1867* — as well as the *Succession to the Throne Act, 2013*.

Beyond his exceptional work within the Department of Justice and the Government of Canada, Warren advanced the law in many other ways, for example by teaching constitutional law at Osgoode Hall, McGill University and the University of Ottawa, serving as co-director of Osgoode Hall's Master of Law in Constitutional Litigation for Professionals program, in addition to obtaining a Master degree from that same program and a Ph.D. in Constitutional Law from Queen's University.

His scholarly writings on constitutional law and official languages law are numerous, and several have been cited by judges of the SCC. He has also frequently appeared as an expert witness before parliamentary committees in both Houses of Parliament. We should also note Mr. Newman's role for several years as the Government of Canada's representative to the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission).

Finally, it would be remiss not to mention Warren's outstanding personal qualities: his openness to others, notably to jurists less experienced than he; his willingness to share and pass on his knowledge; his respect for people expressing opinions different from his own; and his proverbial kindness, all of which made him highly appreciated by colleagues, clients and supervisors.

The OLAD wishes Warren a happy and well-deserved retirement!

Advisory Committee on Access to Justice in Both Official Languages Meeting

Justice Canada held a meeting of its [Advisory Committee on Access to Justice in Both Official Languages](#) (Advisory Committee) on October 29, 2025. The mandate of the Advisory Committee is to promote consultation, information exchange and the creation of partnerships between Justice Canada, the legal representatives in Official Language Minority Communities and the spokespersons for these communities on issues affecting access to justice in a minority official language setting.

The meeting was held in Ottawa. There were more than 60 participants, including the coordinators responsible for the implementation of section 41 of the OLA (Network 41) who work for the departmental programs. The session on Network 41 allowed the members of the Advisory Committee to learn more on the different programs of the department and to be able to speak with the coordinators.

The topics covered at the October meeting included Justice Canada's annual Review on Official Languages, an introduction to justice careers for francophone youth in Newfoundland and Labrador by the Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador, a diversity initiative for Black students at McGill University's Faculty of Law, presentation of data on projects financed by Justice Canada under the Access to Justice in Both Official Languages Fund

(Support Fund), and a discussion on the issues in access to justice in both official languages thanks to a survey. The 2025 survey is in fact the second survey, the first having been done in 2024. This time, the survey was done 'live', which allowed the participants to discuss its results during the meeting.

Justice Canada came to visit

Much more than a community hub for francophones, the Centre francophone du Grand Toronto (CFGT) offers services in French related to establishment, integration, jobs, health, and legal aid for newcomers to Canada. In 2025, as part of the Support Fund, two Justice Canada representatives had the opportunity to pay a courtesy visit to the CFGT, which allowed the Department to see firsthand the range of activities this organization offers to Francophone and Francophiles newcomers in the region. Thanks to funding from Justice Canada, the CFGT has made video capsules in French on legal topics of particular interest to its clientele. Here is an example of a video capsule explaining the fundamental concepts regarding Canada's justice system : [Système de justice](#).

Justice Canada is also funding a project led by InfoJustice – Outaouais, which allows this legal information center to reach English-speaking communities in western Quebec. In 2026, as part of the Support Fund, two representatives of Justice Canada met with key players in the organization, allowing the department to learn more about its activities and the substantial impacts they have on the communities it serves.

New law, new energy

Since the modernization of the OLA, the JOL team has in turn chosen to modernize its ways of working.

1. Network 41

To begin, regarding our [Network 41](#), for the first time, and as mentioned above, Justice Canada program coordinators came to meet with members of the Advisory Committee during their annual meeting. It was a great experience, and there was interest from the members of the Advisory Committee in meeting these coordinators.

Also, a pilot project took place last year to encourage courtesy visits with organizations funded by Justice Canada. The visits are conducted by Network 41 regional coordinators and are not intended to evaluate the organizations but rather to get to know them better and to answer any questions these organizations may have for Justice Canada. As mentioned above, the Centre francophone du Grand Toronto hosted members of the Justice Canada team in November 2025 for a first courtesy visit. The pilot project was a success, and we have continued with this initiative this year, visiting InfoJustice – Outaouais in May 2026.

To conclude with new initiatives related to Network 41, since the modernization of the OLA, the JOL team has reviewed the list of Justice Canada programs to determine which other programs could be added to Justice Canada Network 41. Thus, two new programs are now members of the

network: the Indigenous Justice Program ([Indigenous Justice Program](#)) and the Drug Treatment Courts Funding Program ([Drug Treatment Courts Funding Program](#)).

2. Advisory Committee on Access to Justice in Both Official Languages and the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Access to Justice in Both Official Languages

With respect to the two groups of external stakeholders, namely the Advisory Committee and the [Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Access to Justice in Both Official Languages](#) (FPT Working Group), dialogue activities were held in 2025-2026. JOL offered to meet with members of the Advisory Committee and members of the FPT Working Group in order to hold bilateral discussions with them. Although participation was voluntary, a large number of members took part. The verdict is clear: these meetings were a resounding success and should be repeated! In June 2026, another series of bilateral meetings was held with members of the Advisory Committee.

Also, JOL has begun compiling data on issues related to access to justice in both official languages. Thus, in 2024-2025 and 2025-2026, JOL surveyed members of the Advisory Committee to see if any trends could be noted among the different provinces and territories. If the survey continues over the longer term, we will also be able to see if certain issues decrease in importance over the years and if new issues emerge. JOL observed a strong interest in the survey data. For 2025-2026, JOL even ensured that the survey results could be released ‘live’ so that they could be shared quickly and discussed during the Advisory Committee meeting held in October 2025.

Since the modernization of the OLA, JOL has also prepared a presentation providing data on the Support Fund and the projects it finances. This presentation has been repeated for each year of the Action Plan.

As you can see, the JOL team has been able to draw inspiration from the modernization of the OLA to revitalize itself in turn. And this is just the beginning!

Progress update on the proposed regulations relating to the implementation of the *Official Languages Act*

The draft regulations entitled *Official Languages Regulations (Advancing the Equal Status and Use of French and English)*, concerning the implementation of Part VII of the OLA, was tabled in Parliament on December 9, 2025. The draft regulations were studied before the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages and the Standing Committee on Official Languages of the House of Commons.

The draft regulations are structured around five key elements:

- the duty to take positive measures
- the analyses that federal institutions must carry out to support their decisions
- the dialogue and consultation activities provided for in the Act

- the promotion of official language provisions in federal–provincial agreements
- the evaluation and monitoring mechanisms expected of federal institutions

The draft regulations as tabled and the related next steps are available [here](#).

In addition, the draft *Official Languages in Federally Regulated Businesses Regulations* were tabled in Parliament on April 15, 2026, and the draft *Official Languages Administrative Monetary Penalties Regulations* were tabled in Parliament on November 26, 2025, and published in [Part I of the Canada Gazette](#) on March 7, 2026.

Review of the Agora on Access to Justice in French

In June 2026 in Winnipeg, following the annual meeting of the Ministers’ Council on the Canadian Francophonie, the Agora on Access to Justice in French was held — a landmark event devoted to the challenges and opportunities surrounding access to justice in French in minority-language settings across Canada. This large-scale event was part of ongoing intergovernmental cooperation efforts to support the development of Francophone communities outside Quebec and Acadian communities and the Government of Canada’s efforts to promote and protect French across the country.

Designed as a space for reflection and dialogue, the Agora brought together over 150 participants from the legal, governmental, community and academic sectors. This gathering allowed perspectives to be exchanged and fostered an in-depth discussion on well-established issues, while also opening the way to concrete and innovative avenues for solutions.

Among the central issues discussed, the shortage of bilingual staff within the justice system attracted particular attention. This reality, experienced in the majority of provinces and territories, has direct repercussions on access to quality judicial services in French. The exchanges highlighted recruitment and retention challenges, as well as the importance of strengthening training capacities and support for professionals working in the field.

The Agora also provided an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of language policies in a rapidly changing environment. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence were identified as a potential tool for improving access to justice by combining innovation with respect for language rights.

The richness of the exchanges was enhanced by the participation of numerous high-level speakers, including the Honourable Glen Simard of Manitoba, the Honourable Sarah Lang of Yukon, and the Honourable Marc Miller of the federal government. The new Commissioner of Official Languages, Kelly Burke, also attended the Agora and addressed the participants. The event was further distinguished by the presence of several members of the magistrature, including the SCC Justice Mary T. Moreau. Their presence helped base the discussions in the realities on the ground while offering illuminating perspectives on systemic challenges and avenues for reform.

The organization of the Agora relied on close collaboration among several partners, including Justice Canada, which contributed to the work of the organizing committee and to the funding of the activity through the Support Fund. The participation of representatives from provincial and territorial governments, the federal government, the community sector (including the Fédération des associations des juristes d'expression française de common law), and the academic community ensured a truly pan-Canadian and multidisciplinary approach.

The protection and promotion of the French language is a commitment of the federal government under the modernized OLA, and Justice Canada was pleased to contribute to this effort by partnering with the Agora.

Ultimately, the Agora on Access to Justice in French reaffirmed the importance of a concerted commitment to access to justice for Francophone minority communities in Canada. It also laid the groundwork for an ongoing dialogue among key sector stakeholders, which is essential to address current and future challenges. The avenues for reflection that emerged from this event constitute a valuable resource for guiding future actions and strengthening equitable access to justice for all Canadians.

Help wanted: Legal language professionals

Have you ever considered a career as a legal language professional? Legal interpreters and translators perform essential functions in Canada's justice system, ensuring that proceedings and documents are understood in both official languages. The Canadian justice system is experiencing a national shortage of interpreters and translators in French and English, which creates opportunities for qualified candidates.

Several post-secondary institutions across Canada offer interpretation and translation courses and programs. In Eastern Canada, institutions such as Dalhousie University, Université Laval, the University of Ottawa, and Western University offer translation courses at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. In Western Canada, the University of Regina offers courses at these levels. McGill University and the Université de Saint-Boniface offer programs in legal translation. Thus, training is accessible, and you can take specialized workshops for legal language professionals or obtain certifications for translators, terminologists, and certified interpreters. To guide you toward the right institution, information on requirements and certifications is available on the Government of Canada's [Job Bank](#).

Why not try your hand in this high-demand field—perhaps as a second career or as a part-time job in retirement? If you already master more than one language, these programs will allow you to turn that skill into a source of income without having to work full time. It is a way to stimulate your mind by combining languages, human relations, and law while remaining active within the legal community.

Announcements

1. Network 41 Excellence Award

It is our great pleasure to announce the co-winners of the 2025-2026 Network 41 Excellence Award:

- Bertrand Malo, former coordinator for Alberta, received the award for his initiatives that aimed to contact organizations in official language minority communities
- Mélissa Tremblay, coordinator for the Justice Partnership and Innovation Program, who also provided valuable support to the Access to Justice in Both Official Languages Support Fund, was likewise recognized as she also put in place new initiatives that contributed to the implementation of section 41 of the OLA in the context of her program
- Sébastien Budd, coordinator for Ontario, won the 2024-2025 inaugural Award

Congratulations to Bertrand, Mélissa and Sébastien!

2. Official Languages Ally Award

It is our great pleasure to announce the winner of the 2025-2026 Justice Canada Official Languages Ally award. This year, this national award was won by the members of Network 41. The members are Justice Canada program analysts, policy analysts, and counsels whose work across Canada helps to ensure that official languages are incorporated into the day-to-day activities of the Department. Congratulations to Ami Assignon, Joliane Boulay, Sébastien Budd, Wendy Divoky, Stéfanie Gobeil, Valérie Gosselin, Régis Loreau, Bertrand Malo, Jean Marquis, Terry Nikidis, Caroline Pellerin, Jocelyn Sigouin, Silvia Şuman, Mélissa Tremblay, and Philip Vézina!

JOL

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