Official Languages: Looking Toward the Future

Canadian Heritage Official Languages Strategy 2021–2026

Canada

A word from the co-champions

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Dear colleagues,

We are pleased to present the Official Languages Strategy 2021-2026, which was developed in a very particular context.

The last few months have brought a wealth of work and learning experiences, and official languages are no exception. Think, for example, of the vast official languages reform project or the virtual environment, which has highlighted certain challenges, but also opened the door to new possibilities.

In response to the pandemic, a situation of unprecedented urgency for Canadians and the public service, we conducted a broad reflection exercise across the department between November 2020 and January 2021. Many of you took part in this exercise to better understand the mechanisms by which we take official languages into account, in all circumstances. At the same time, through productive discussion groups, we learned about best practices that are worth sharing more extensively, and identified courses of action to better support the organization and systematize official languages practices.

This exercise helped us realize a fact we can all be proud of: official languages are an integral part of Canadian Heritage's culture and values, and they inspire commitment and interest within our great team.

Our department's specific official languages responsibilities make it a leader in the field. As such, we owe it to ourselves as an organization to continue to inspire and lead the way to the pinnacle of excellence.

Let's keep moving forward, with a toolbox and mechanisms that are well adapted to all circumstances. And step by step, let's continue to develop our agility and reflexes in official languages. Let's be a role model!

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Introduction

With respect to coordination, the *Official Languages Act* (Act) confers a legislative mandate on the Minister of Canadian Heritage (PCH), who is responsible for encouraging and promoting a coordinated approach to the implementation by federal institutions of the commitments set out in section 41. By virtue of its mandate and responsibilities, PCH plays a unique and central role in official languages, where it must serve as a model for all of government.

Official languages remain a priority and everyone's business, regardless of an individual's role or level. In this regard, the power of influence that each of us can have in our workplace should not be overlooked. That being said, it has been clearly demonstrated that strong and fully assumed leadership from senior management is the cornerstone of a workplace where official languages are treated equally, fully experienced in all their aspects and systematically taken into consideration, where necessary.

The pandemic situation in which this strategy is being implemented has shed a very different light on the way we implement our obligations under the Act. We conducted an exercise between November 2020 and January 2021 to better determine our ability to take official languages into account in an emergency situation. In addition, we have been taking steps over the past few months to prepare for the exercise that the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages will be conducting within our organization in fall 2021 to determine our level of maturity based on a model designed using several performance indicators. The portrait of official languages at PCH has never been sketched in such detail, meaning now we can propose courses of action based on solid data.

In addition to these efforts, we cannot ignore the enormous task of modernizing and reinforcing the Act. As described in the official languages reform document entitled English and French: Towards a substantive equality of official languages in Canada, published by the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages on February 19, 2021, major legislative and administrative amendments are expected in the coming months and years. For that reason, this strategy is flexible in its structure, leaving enough room for the adjustments we will have to make to align with the new requirements. It is also consistent with ongoing efforts across the public service to promote diversity and inclusion, taking into account the needs expressed by members of the employment equity designated groups.
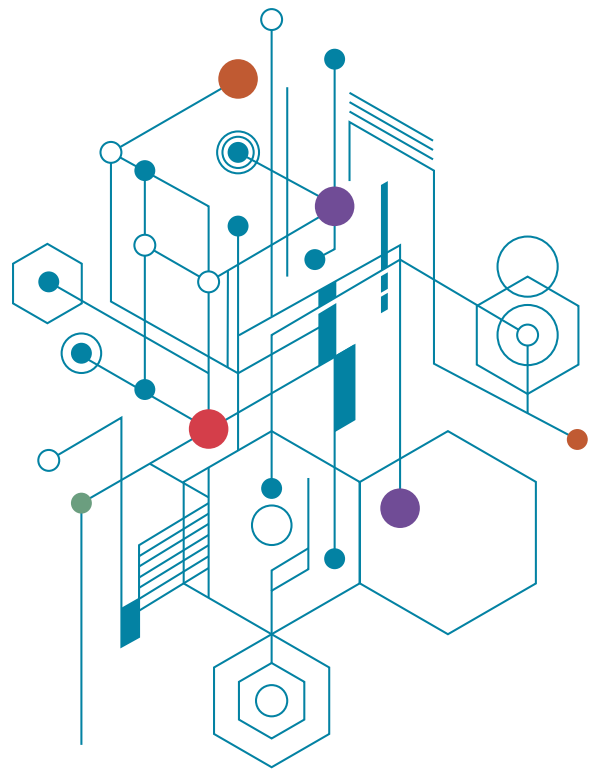
This strategy takes into account parts IV, V, VI and VII, as well as section 91 of the Act. The coordination of parts IV, V, VI and section 91 is the responsibility of the Human Resources and Workplace Management Branch (HRWMB), while the Official Languages Branch (OLB) has responsibility for coordinating Part VII. These two branches work closely together to ensure a consistent approach within the department, to report on our progress and to propose measures and tools that will allow us to go even further. That being said, it is important to remember that meeting our obligations and promoting official languages cannot be the job of just a few people as these matters concern all of us, be it in our day-to-day interactions with colleagues and the Canadians we serve, or in the initiatives and projects that are part of the work we do.

The commitments proposed here go beyond the day-to-day work that the teams with specific official languages responsibilities are doing and will continue to do. Rather, they are pillars that will guide our actions over the next five years to help us take another step toward achieving excellence, while leaving room for the flexibility and agility we will need to adapt to the new requirements stemming from the modernization of the Act and the findings arising from the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages' Official Languages Maturity Model exercise.

We must all personally commit to leveraging the resources and initiatives put in place to ensure that official languages remain increasingly strong within our organization and well integrated into our processes. Our collective success depends on our individual efforts and personal commitment.

IV — PART IV
Communications with and services to the public

Any member of the public in Canada has the right to communicate with and to receive available services from federal institutions in either official language.

V — PART V
Language of work

Employees of federal institutions located in regions designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes have the right to use either official language at work except where they are serving the public or other employees.

VI — PART VI
Participation of English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians

The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that all Canadians have equal opportunities to obtain employment and advancement in federal institutions, and that the composition of the work force reflect the population.
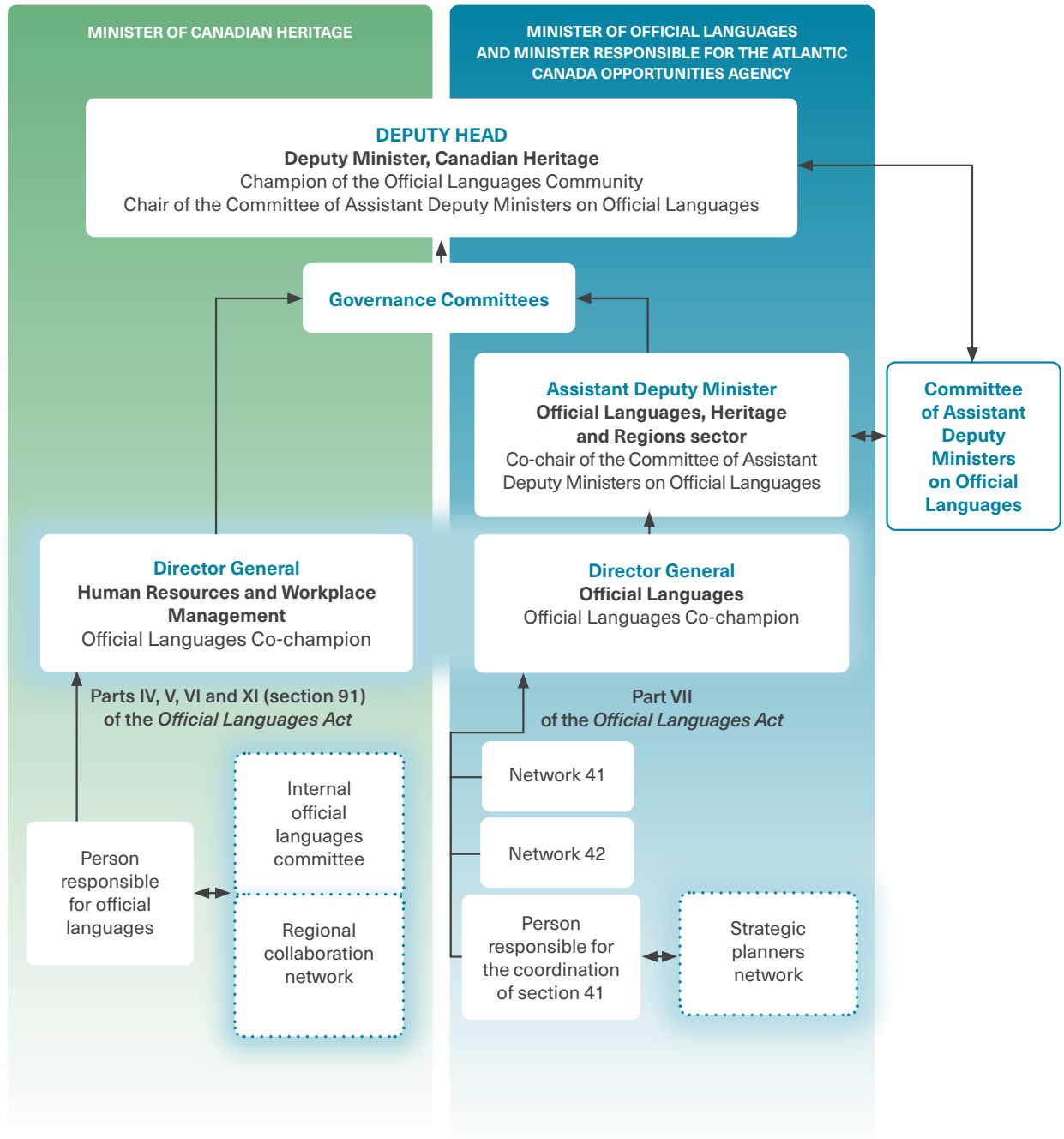
VII — PART VII (SECTION 41)
Advancement of English and French

The Government of Canada is committed to enhancing the vitality of English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada and supporting and assisting their development, and fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.

Official Languages Governance Structure at Canadian Heritage[1]

MINISTER OF CANADIAN HERITAGE

MINISTER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES AND MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

DEPUTY HEAD
Deputy Minister, Canadian Heritage
Champion of the Official Languages Community
Chair of the Committee of Assistant Deputy Ministers on Official Languages

Governance Committees

Assistant Deputy Minister
Official Languages, Heritage and Regions sector
Co-chair of the Committee of Assistant Deputy Ministers on Official Languages

Committee of Assistant Deputy Ministers on Official Languages

Director General
Human Resources and Workplace Management
Official Languages Co-champion

Director General
Official Languages
Official Languages Co-champion

Parts IV, V, VI and XI (section 91) of the *Official Languages Act*

Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*

Person responsible for official languages

Internal official languages committee

Regional collaboration network

Network 41

Network 42

Person responsible for the coordination of section 41

Strategic planners network

[1] With respect to coordination, the Act confers a legislative mandate on the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who is responsible for encouraging and promoting a coordinated approach to the implementation by federal institutions of the commitments set out in section 41. In October 2021, the specific responsibilities of the Minister of Canadian Heritage with respect to official languages were delegated to the Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

Official Languages Pillars

1 Be a model

Exercise one's power of influence to promote inclusion and demonstrate leadership

2 Be equipped

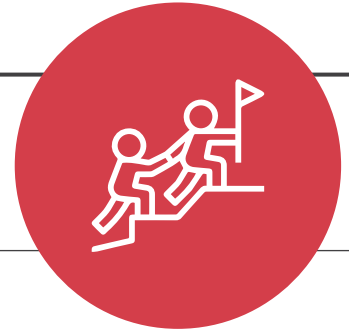Increase knowledge, skills and awareness

3 Be agile

Work to improve integration and support commitment and innovation

Be a model

This pillar refers to the **power of influence** that we can all wield to **promote inclusion in carrying out our official languages responsibilities**, starting with our own work team. It also refers to the **leadership** of managers and executives, a key element in an organization's success in building a culture of bilingualism.

Areas of intervention

Be a model
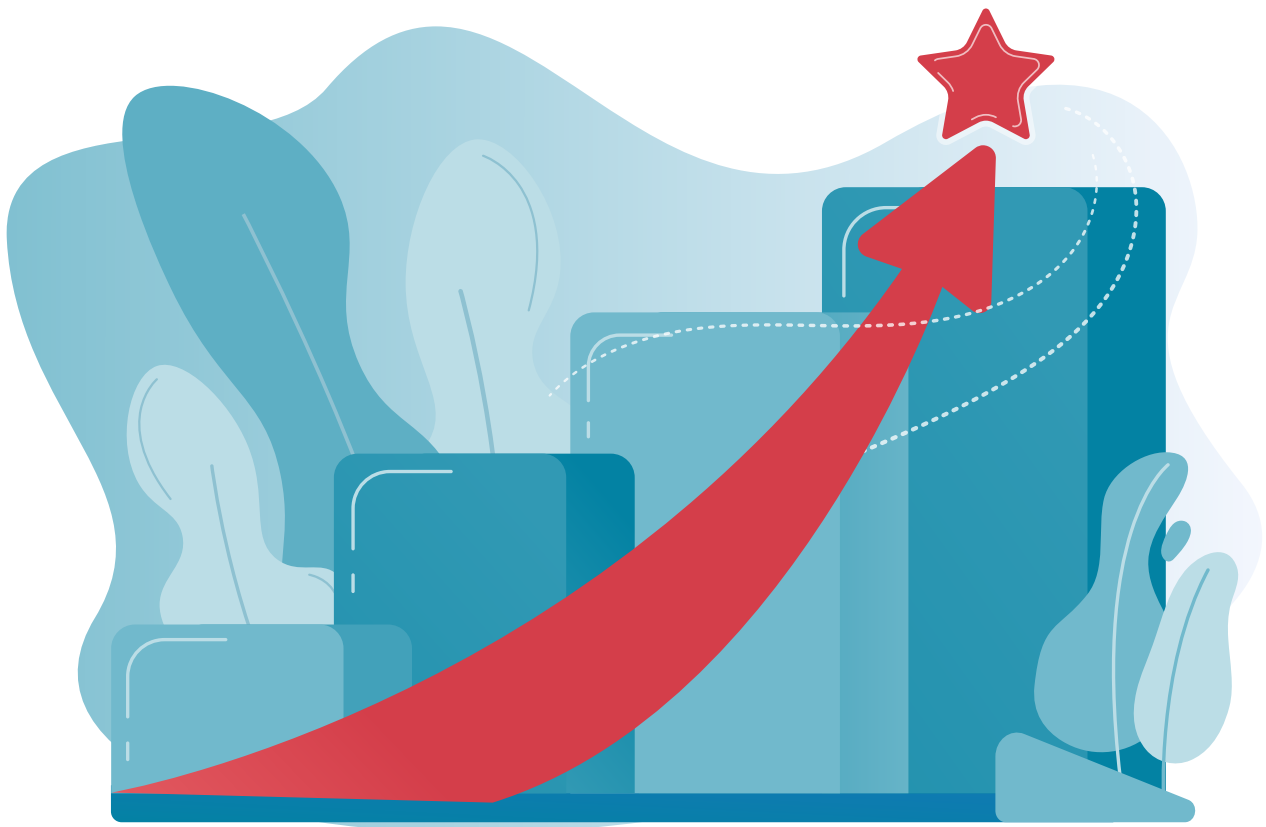
IV-V-VI

1.1 Promote linguistic security by encouraging the use of both official languages, creating opportunities for dialogue and leveraging federal initiatives.

1.2 Ensure executives have valid second language test results at all times.

VII

1.3 Support management in exercising leadership with respect to the consideration of Part VII in particular, through regular and timely presentations.

1.4 Incorporate support mechanisms for program officers so that considerations relating to official language minority communities (OLMCs) and organizations promoting official languages are taken into account when projects are being developed for funding.

All

1.5 Promote official languages inclusively to complement the revitalization of Indigenous languages and the diversity that enrich Canada.

1.6 Seek leadership from managers to foster a work environment that is conducive to the consideration and use of both official languages.

1.7 Take into account official languages considerations and OLMCs in developing and implementing policies and programs.

1.8 Support governance committee members' commitment to promoting official languages by equipping them and seeking their input.

1.9 Establish a departmental official languages network comprising sector representatives to promote the sharing and implementation of best practices.

1.10 Incorporate official languages more concretely into executive performance agreements.

Be equipped

For the Act, with all its implications, to be implemented effectively, it must be well understood. This refers not only to the approach we take to **communicate** and **raise awareness of the Act**, but also to our efforts to **support the development** and retention of language skills.

Be equipped
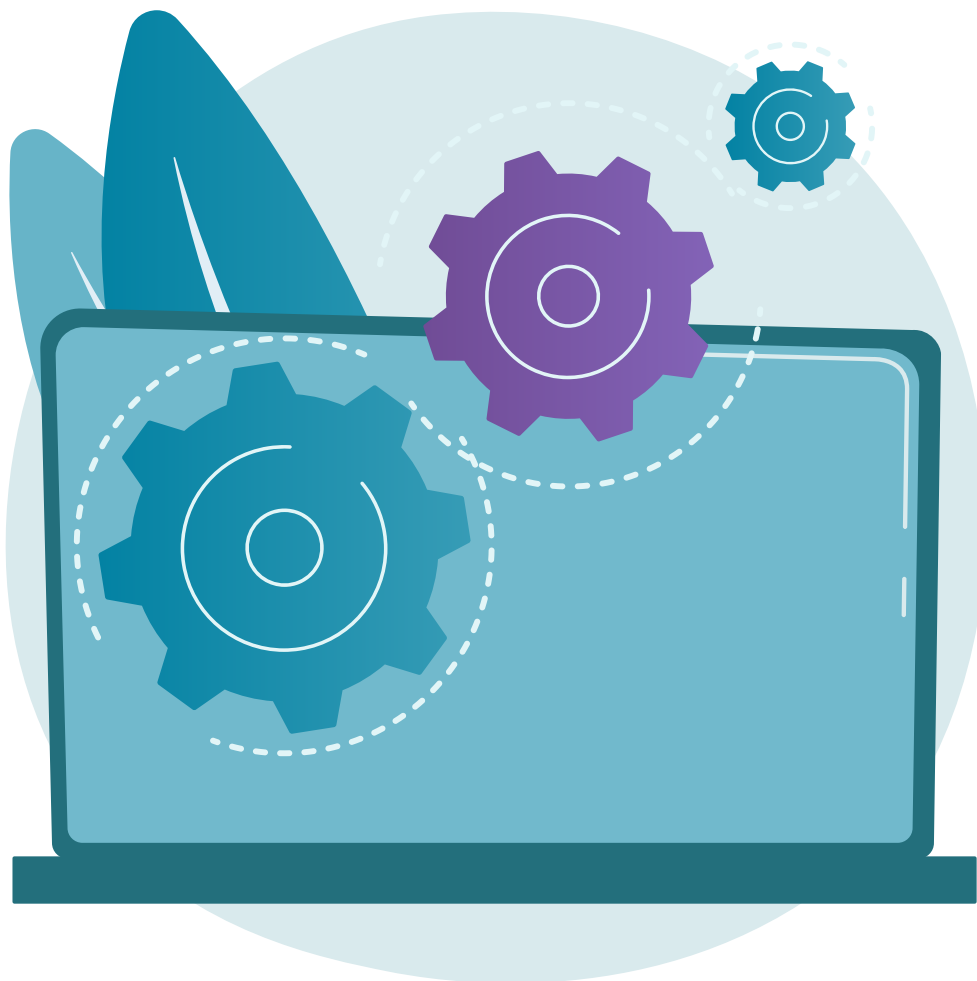
IV-V-VI

2.1 Develop and disseminate tools to support compliance with obligations in terms of services to the public and active offer.

2.2 Adapt internal mechanisms for maintaining language skills to the reality of telework and virtual team management, and make them known.

2.3 Provide in-house language training taking the needs of members of designated groups into account.

2.4 Actively promote official languages learning with innovative tools adapted to employees' needs.

2.5 Promote the functionalities of videoconferencing platforms to foster the use of and respect for official languages.

2.6 Taking into account parts IV and V of the Act, better support managers in applying section 91 when carrying out staffing activities and when assessing the language requirements of positions.

2.7 Participate in the ten-year review of the implementation of the *Official Languages (Communications with and Services to the Public) Regulations* in 2023 and promote its results.

VII

2.8 Improve the collection and dissemination of data on official languages and OLMCs.

2.9 Increase awareness of program achievements within the department relating to Part VII concerning the vitality of OLMCs and the advancement of both official languages in Canadian society.

2.10 Promote the use of the guide on official languages clauses in funding agreements and make this use a routine practice.

All

2.11 Highlight key official languages events throughout the year to raise employee awareness and build engagement.

2.12 Include an official languages fundamentals course in the PCH training curriculum.

2.13 Inform and equip employees to fully understand the changes to and impact on work that are associated with the official languages reform and a modernized and reinforced act.

Be agile

Agility refers to our ability to quickly adapt to the changes and circumstances of the moment. Agility often goes hand in hand with **innovation** and our ability to think outside the box in order to go further. The ability to be agile is best supported by **well-integrated processes**, **well-honed reflexes** and **well-established monitoring mechanisms**.

Areas of intervention   Be agile

IV-V-VI

3.1 Support employees in individual translation in order to increase the department's ability to promptly respond to the growing demand for translation, to complement the Translation Bureau's service.

3.2 Enhance the Departmental Fund for Language Training to meet emerging/growing needs and to support the training needs of designated group members.

3.3 Review language training follow-up mechanisms to improve accountability.

3.4 Ensure promotion and recruitment initiatives for employment opportunities at PCH reach both English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians, including members of OLMCs and designated groups.

3.5 Ensure English-speaking and French-speaking employees, regardless of ethnic origin or first language learned, are given equal opportunities for advancement by promoting access to second official language training and by developing an approach to objectively and comprehensively assess the language requirements of positions.

VII

3.6 Develop and disseminate awareness tools on the current and emerging needs of OLMCs and organizations promoting both official languages.

All

3.7 Support the development of inclusive official languages clauses in funding agreements.

3.8 Apply an official languages lens to the departmental business resumption plan.

3.9 Regularly share findings and areas for improvement relating to official languages with the various governance committees.

3.10 Systematically take into account official languages in memoranda to Cabinet within the department.

3.11 Develop information capsules on various current or emerging aspects of official languages.

3.12 Adapt our tools and mechanisms to the new requirements stemming from the official languages reform and a future modernized and reinforced act.

3.13 Leverage PCH research services and the internal audit team to:
- develop official languages surveys and assessments;
- measure progress on the integration of official languages analyses into memoranda to Cabinet;
- monitor services to the public.

3.14 Participate in the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages' Official Languages Maturity Model exercise and establish appropriate follow-up mechanisms.

Implementation

The strategy's success will depend on the collective leadership and commitment of all Departmental stakeholders.

With the support of PCH's official languages Co-champions, the resource-persons responsible for official languages will monitor the strategy's overall progress to ensure that our commitments are met and that our objectives are adjusted if new circumstances arise. Official languages at PCH will continue to be discussed at the various meetings of the Department's governance committees and will remain a key priority.

Appendix A   Roles and responsibilities

Deputy head

Pursuant to the Treasury Board Secretariat's Policy on Official Languages and taking into consideration their institution's size and mandate, deputy heads are responsible for:

- designating an official languages unit for the coordination of the institution's official languages responsibilities;
- designating a person in the institution at an appropriately senior level as responsible for official languages;
- designating an Official Languages Champion, or any other person to fulfill this function, who supports the deputy head in developing an integrated vision for the official languages program within the institution, who promotes official languages, and who aims to have official languages considered in all its decision-making processes;
- ensuring that compliance with this policy and associated directives and standards is included in annual performance appraisals and influences appraisal ratings in institutions for which the Treasury Board is the employer.

Champion of the official languages community

The champion of the official languages community within the public service is a deputy minister appointed by the clerk of the Privy Council. The champion has a mandate to:

- raise the community's profile;
- provide strategic support to a community or program;
- educate counterparts on certain issues;
- seek opportunities to advance and promote the initiative or community;
- guide employee-led networks, secretariats, committees or councils;
- attend public/special events relating to the community or initiatives;
- obtain funding, in some cases, for special projects, initiatives and other indirect costs.

Governance committees

These committees are regularly consulted on official languages action plans and the various initiatives they contain. Member feedback is valuable and contributes to the advancement of the organization's official languages objectives.

Assistant deputy minister (ADM) – Official Languages, Heritage and Regions sector (OLHR)

The ADM, OLHR, is responsible for the OLB and regional offices. This interdepartmental horizontal coordination role is carried out at national headquarters and in the regions for the coordination program (Network 42) and in the delivery of Official Languages Support Programs (OLSP). The ADM also co-chairs the Committee of Assistant Deputy Ministers on Official Languages (CADMOL) with the assistant deputy ministers of the Treasury Board Secretariat, Privy Council Office and Justice Canada.

Committee of Assistant Deputy Ministers on Official Languages

CADMOL is an essential part of the official languages governance structure. CADMOL is the senior governance forum for the horizontal management and coordination of official languages in the public service. Mandated by the clerk of the Privy Council, the committee's constituent authority is vested in the deputy minister responsible for official languages at PCH. In the deputy minister's absence, the meetings are hosted on a rotational basis by each co-chair of the committee, namely, the assistant deputy ministers of PCH, the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Privy Council Office and Justice Canada.

CADMOL has a mandate to:

- provide leadership mainly on three priorities:
    - the language of work within the federal public service;
    - federal horizontal strategies on official languages;
    - the management of other issues of interest related to the Act;
- support and monitor the development of official languages programs and policies;
- consult with OLMCs annually.

Official languages co-champions

Official languages co-champions are appointed by the deputy head. As such, they do not have specific responsibility regarding the application of official languages legislation and policies. Rather, they are called on to demonstrate leadership by remaining attentive and wielding their influence to mobilize the organization's key players and advance important official languages issues. Thus, they have a role to:

- support the deputy head in developing an integrated vision of official languages within PCH;
- provide support to the deputy head, as well as to senior public servants responsible for implementing parts IV, V, VI and VII of the Act;
- support the person responsible for official languages (PROL) and the person responsible for the coordination of section 41 at PCH;
- inform the deputy head and executives of official languages issues affecting the institution's mandate and priorities;
- strengthen visibility by promoting official languages and wielding influence on governance committees;
- act as official languages ambassadors and spokespersons within PCH;
- build understanding of official languages obligations among the people they work with closely;
- foster the advancement of official languages by encouraging the use of best practices;
- leverage key events such as the Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, Linguistic Duality Day and National Public Service Week to bring visibility to official languages;
- participate in the Network of Official Languages Champions, the Best Practices Forum on Official Languages and other meetings to advance the official languages agenda within the public service.

The co-champions play an influential and guiding role in drafting and implementing official languages action plans within PCH. Through the co-champions, the various action plans are presented to the executive committee for final approval.

The co-champions' role complements that of the HRWMB and the OLB. It is not a substitute for the work and obligations of these branches.

Official Languages Branch (OLB)

The OLB plays a central role in the horizontal coordination of the implementation by federal institutions of the commitments set out in Part VII of the Act (section 41).

The OLB's responsibilities and activities include:

- official languages reform, including the modernization of the *Official Languages Act*;
- the official languages coordination program (Network 42);
- coordination of CADMOL, steering committees and the organization of annual consultations with OLMCs stakeholders and organizations promoting linguistic duality;
- the delivery of OLSP;
- the implementation of the Action Plan for Official Languages – 2018-2023: Investing in Our Future, the Government of Canada's official languages strategy designed to contribute to strengthening Canada's linguistic duality and the growth of OLMCs across the country;
- coordination of the Collaboration Agreement for the Development of Arts and Culture in the Francophone Minority Communities of Canada 2018–2023, which calls on the OLB to work closely with the five signatory federal institution and the organizations represented by the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française (FCCF);
- federal-provincial-territorial agreements in education, as well as agreements for services in the minority language.

Human Resources and Workplace Management Branch (HRWMB)

The HRWMB ensures proper coordination of human resources and workplace management needs, particularly those relating to parts IV, V and VI and section 91 of the Act. In terms of official languages, various teams come under its responsibility, such as:

- the employment equity, diversity and official languages team, which includes the person responsible for official languages;
- the learning and performance management team, which coordinates language buddy programs and PCH coffee chats, in addition to following up on non-imperative staffing, managing the Departmental Fund for Language Training and promoting the standing offer for language training;
- the staffing team, which coordinates the language testing process, reports on the use of non-imperative appointments and ensures that official languages are taken into consideration in recruitment processes;
- the classification team, which supports managers to ensure that the language requirements of positions are established objectively;
- the HR Policy, Planning and Strategies team, which oversees language training and is responsible for the Over to you Survey.

Interdepartmental coordination network (section 42 of the Act)

The interdepartmental coordination network aims to:

- support, mentor and equip federal institutions to build common understanding of federal obligations under section 42;
- help create conditions in which all federal institutions can maximize their contribution to the development of OLMCs and the advancement of English and French in Canadian society, in line with their respective mandates;
- provide governance for and oversee federal institutions' official languages activities;
- work with partners to achieve concrete results.

Person responsible for official languages (PROL)

The main functions of the PROL are to:

- provide advice and guidance in relation to parts IV, V and VI of the Act, and develop tools for managers and staff;
- liaise with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and follow up on complaints brought to the Commissioner of Official Languages;
- support the PCH co-champions;
- ensure drafting of the Annual Review on Official Languages and official languages action plans;
- chair an internal official languages committee within the HRWMB;
- work closely with the section 41 coordinator.

Internal official languages committee

The internal official languages committee aims to:

- ensure collaboration among staffing, classification, learning and monitoring experts;
- ensure consistency across official languages mechanisms within the HRWMB;
- serve as an advisory group for official languages issues within the HRWMB.

Regional collaboration network

The main functions of the regional collaboration network are to:

- serve as an advisory group for parts IV, V and VI, specifically for the Annual Review on Official Languages;
- promote internal official languages initiatives in the regions.

Person responsible for the coordination of section 41

The primary duties of the person responsible for the coordination of section 41 are to:

- provide expertise and guidance to ensure the department reaches its full potential in implementing Part VII of the Act;
- participate in existing departmental processes such as memoranda to Cabinet and Treasury Board submissions;
- support the PCH co-champions;
- support the drafting of the Annual Review on Official Languages – Part VII;
- work with the Centre of Expertise for Grants and Contributions and legal services to support the programs in drafting official languages clauses;
- Work closely with the person responsible for official languages.

Strategic planners network

The main functions of the strategic planners network are to:

- serve as an advisory group for Part VII, specifically for the Annual Review on Official Languages;
- promote internal official languages initiatives within the department.

Executives and managers

The main responsibilities for executives and managers are to:

- exercise leadership in official languages;
- communicate, through behaviour, the values of bilingualism and equality in official languages;
- show respect for employees' language preferences;
- maintain an environment respectful of both official languages;
- ensure that employee communications are bilingual and that every employee's language of choice is respected in keeping with the requirements of the environment;
- make sure written documents are available in both official languages;
- conduct bilingual meetings and encourage employees to participate, in regions designated as bilingual for language of work purposes;
- make sure employees have the necessary language skills and encourage skills development and retention;
- make sure work tools and training are available in both official languages in keeping with the requirements of the environment;
- where necessary, have in place the necessary language skills to make an active offer, communicate with the public and offer services in both official languages;
- conduct monitoring and follow-up activities to ensure compliance with official languages obligations in terms of communications with and services to the public, as well as language of work and make sure these activities are documented.

Employees

The main responsibilities for employees are to:

- know their rights and meet their obligations;
- demonstrate respect for their fellow employees' preferred language;
- take part in efforts to foster a work environment respectful of official languages;
- respect the right of members of the public to be served in the language of their choice;
- inform members of the public, using different methods (posters, greeting, communications, etc.), that they are free to use the official language of their choice;
- retain their language skills.

Appendix B   Tools

Visit the official languages intranet page for access to many tools and resources also accessible from the right-hand menu on the home page Our PCH.

- Official Languages at a Glance
- Official Languages – Second Language Learning
- Official Languages to Communicate with the Public
- Official Languages in the Workplace
- Official Languages in the Job Profiles
- Official Languages in Policies and Programs
- Official Languages as Procedures
- Official Languages in Legislative and Policy Instruments
- Official Languages – Planning and Accountability
- Official Languages in Writing Tools
- Official Languages on the Microsoft (MS) Teams Platform
- Other Resources and Practical Tools