

MANITOBA

a truly bilingual province



Manitoba 



"We recognize the founding role of the Francophone community in our province, we aim to protect their rights and will strive to improve access to French language education, health care and services so that we are truly a bilingual province."

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HON. WAB KINEW

Premier of Manitoba
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and International Relations
Minister responsible for Indigenous Reconciliation

Message from the Premier

Here in Manitoba, bilingualism has always been an important part of who we are. Since long before we became known as Manitoba, bilingualism defined many of the communities who made their home here. Francophone and Métis peoples played an essential role in building Manitoba into the province we know and love today, and they are a crucial part of Manitoba's future.

Our first honorary Premier, Louis Riel, dreamed of Manitoba as a truly bilingual province. More than a century later, our government is deeply committed to making this dream a reality.

As we launch this consultation to develop Manitoba's bilingualism strategy, we want to hear from you about how the value of bilingualism can once again be a guiding light for our province.

This is an ambitious mandate, and it is one that will take time. As we work to fully live up to Manitoba's potential of being a truly bilingual province, we're looking for transformative steps that will ensure the permanent recognition and protection of our bilingualism.

We are asking you, the people of Manitoba, to help us imagine our bilingual future. What will it look and sound like? How do we get there?

Our government was proud to recognize Louis Riel as our first Premier, and we are proud to be creating a strategy that will make his dream of a bilingual province a reality. Let's build a bilingual Manitoba together!

Miigwech and merci.



HON. GLEN SIMARD

Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations
Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs
Minister responsible for the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation

Message from the Minister

When I was appointed to the Premier's cabinet in November 2023, I could not have been prouder. Not only was I being trusted with the responsibility of a government department, but I was also being tasked with ensuring the vitality of Manitoba's Francophone communities. Coming from a small French-speaking village surrounded by hundreds of square kilometres of English-speaking neighbours, I have always been keenly aware of the resilience of our Francophonie as well as of the challenges it has faced since Louis Riel first brought Manitoba into the Canadian federation as a bilingual province.

Since those early days in St. Lazare, I have also had the privilege to teach in the French immersion system, sharing my love of French language and culture with generations of new Francophones. These experiences too have given me clear insights into the fear felt by many learners for whom French is an additional language.

Finally, being part of a caucus with so many French-speakers and champions of the Francophonie has provided me with a platform to promote bilingualism in Manitoba and to dream about the actions we could implement to help our province soar...

There are so many opportunities before us, so many paths to making Manitoba a truly bilingual province! But this work requires all of us to come together. This is a shared responsibility – government and community collaborating and supporting one another so that everyone who wants to live, work and thrive in their official language of choice can do so.

That is why I am so proud to be launching this initiative. I am making an Active Offer to you – whether French is your first, second or fifth language, whether you grew up in Manitoba or made the choice to call our beautiful province home. We want to take those first steps to creating a Manitoba where French is seen and used everywhere. A Manitoba where it is not surprising to hear French spoken in malls, in restaurants, at sports events, in schools, in government offices, in the streets and in homes. I am offering you the opportunity to help us build a truly bilingual province.

Together, we will create a new strategy. Together, we will make Louis Riel's dream come true!



Our Vision

That all Manitobans can live and receive services in the official language of their choice, and that conditions exist for the Francophone community to evolve and flourish. This vision can only come to fruition when we all work together.

Some Facts and Figures About the Francophonie

SOME SIGNIFICANT DATES...

- **1870** Manitoba enters the Canadian Confederation as a bilingual province
- **1979** With the Supreme Court decision in the Forest Case, French regains its status as an official language in the legislature and the judiciary
- **1981** The French Language Services Secretariat is created
- **1989** The French Language Services Policy is adopted
- **1994** The Division scolaire franco-manitobaine is created
- **2016** The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act is adopted

SOME SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS...

112,115

Manitobans can have a conversation in French

37,750

Manitobans regularly speak French at home

INFORMATION ABOUT FRANCOPHONE INSTITUTIONS

16

bilingual municipalities

30+

Francophone community organizations

INFORMATION ABOUT FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION

4,500

Francophone newcomers have come to Manitoba since 2002

INFORMATION ABOUT FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

24

French-language schools in the DFSM (with more to come!)

6,301

children enrolled in the DSFM

28,355

children enrolled in French immersion

1,429

students registered at St. Boniface University

Cornerstones

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

- The Manitoba Act establishes bilingualism in the legislature and the judiciary. All Manitoba's Acts and regulations are drafted simultaneously in both official languages, English and French can be used in the Legislative Assembly, and Manitobans have the right to use either language in court.
- Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides for education in the language of the minority under the coordination and control of Francophone communities.
- The French Language Services Policy provides a framework for the delivery of administrative government services in French. It establishes the designated bilingual regions and promotes the Active Offer concept for services in French that are evident, easily accessible, readily available, and of comparable quality to those provided in English.
- The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act sets out the obligation for all public bodies to develop and implement multi-year strategic French language service plans, while there are various regulations that establish the requirement to provide healthcare and social services in French in designated bilingual regions of the province. A new regulation on the implementation of French-language government services is currently being drafted.
- The Francophone Affairs Secretariat supports public bodies in the strategic planning of services in French and also coordinates the implementation of the Canada-Manitoba Agreement on French-Language Services – a bilateral agreement with the federal government that aims to ensure progress in the delivery of government information and services in French.

SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY VITALITY

- The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act creates a framework for public bodies to support the vitality of the Francophone community and assist its development.
- Francophones receive significant financial supports from numerous public bodies each year. This support can take the form of operating and project grants, continuing service agreements, cooperation agreements, etc.
- Investments in French-language services are another way in which public bodies indirectly support the Francophone community.
- Manitoba has also entered into several agreements with other Francophone jurisdictions - Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and the region of Basse-Normandie in France. These provide opportunities for collaboration and cooperation for Manitoba's Francophonie.



Considerations

NORMALIZING THE USE OF FRENCH

- It is not enough to simply offer services in French or provide financial support to Francophone groups and organizations. If we are to really ensure the ongoing vitality of our Francophone communities, we must create the conditions where French is seen, heard and used in all sectors.
- Progress has been made in certain program areas – particularly education and general government services – but we need to aim higher. French should not be seen just as a language of the classroom or considered a language of translation.
- Just as it is essential for public bodies to promote the use of the Active Offer, so must Francophone communities promote the active demand of services in French.
- Together, the government and the Francophone community must collaborate to encourage active participation in French – at work, in school, in sports, in recreational and cultural activities. Only then can we really normalize the use of French.

FRENCH EVERYWHERE, FOR EVERYONE

- Manitoba's Francophone community is increasingly diverse, and so we must promote an inclusive Francophonie. Whether someone can trace their family history back to the days of the earliest French-speaking settlers, or they moved recently to Manitoba from a country where French is an official language, or they decided to learn French as an additional language: anyone who speaks French is a Francophone.
- Furthermore, we need to recognize that Francophones live across the province, not only in the designated bilingual regions. People who speak French live in the North, they live in neighbourhoods of Winnipeg considered as Anglophone, they live in Brandon and in Steinbach. Normalizing the use of French everywhere in the province will heighten visibility and better support the vitality of Francophones wherever they may be found.
- We know that fear of speaking French due to linguistic insecurity is a significant barrier for numerous bilingual Manitobans, whether they are the bilingual Anglophones who make up the majority of the Francophone population or people for whom French is their first language. More needs to be done to build a province where everyone's French is valued.





Toward a Strategy

And so, our government is inviting you to provide your perspective on how we can make Manitoba a truly bilingual province!

Tell us your dreams.

Let us know what elements you see as the essential foundation for this ambitious project.

When you close your eyes and think about a Manitoba where French and English share public spaces, where diversity and inclusion are valued, what exactly do you see?

Community engagement will start now and run until the fall. There will be a variety of opportunities so that everyone can contribute.

- **A survey on EngageMB**
- **An email address where you can submit discussion papers**
- **Round tables**
- **Targeted consultations**

We look forward to hearing your perspective. We are eager to put your ideas into practice.

Together, we will make Manitoba bilingual!



