

MANITOBA

a truly bilingual province





Land Treaty Acknowledgment

We recognize that Manitoba is on Treaty 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10 Territories and the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.

We respect the spirit and intent of Treaties and remain committed to working with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people as we walk the shared path in the spirit of truth and reconciliation.



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Minister's Message

I am extremely proud to present this report that sums up the results of the public consultations on how we make Manitoba a truly bilingual province. I want to thank all of those people who took the time to present their perspective, whether by completing the online survey or by attending one of the many round table sessions. I would also like to recognize the participation of so many of our community organizations who made written submissions, as well as attending consultation sessions. The feedback we received from each and every one of you is invaluable.

We asked Manitobans what a truly bilingual province means to them and what it can look like. We received almost two thousand responses from people who wanted to express their hopes and wishes, as well as the realities of building towards Louis Riel's vision of a Manitoba where both English and French are equally valued.

This document encapsulates the moment all French-speaking Manitobans find themselves in today.

As minister responsible for Francophone Affairs, I am committed to setting out on this journey with you and all those who hold the French language dear. In partnership with the Francophone Affairs Advisory Council and key partners across our community, we will co-create the new strategy on bilingualism. The key to ensuring real progress is to work closely with Francophones and organizations on the priorities they identified – increasing services in French, strengthening access to French-language education, promoting the historic significance of the Francophonie and celebrating its contributions.

You have offered an ambitious vision of what can be achieved, and this is only the beginning. It will take the combined effort of all Manitobans to bring this to life, and our government has already begun acting. We are investing in new schools, creating new daycare spaces, enhancing access to justice in French, supporting bilingual municipalities, and building our bilingual capacity so we have the human resources we need to provide new services. All while working to strengthen and promote our Indigenous languages as well.

It is an honour to share this important moment in our province's history, as we take one step closer towards a truly bilingual province.

Project Overview

The mandate letter for the Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations and Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs, the Honourable Glen Simard, includes the obligation to improve access to services in French in various sectors in order to make Manitoba a truly bilingual province. On March 20, 2025, Minister Simard announced that he would undertake a broad public consultation with Manitobans to guide the creation of a long-term provincial strategy on bilingualism. This consultation took place between June and November 2025.

Using a variety of engagement methods, the Francophone Affairs Secretariat – which was tasked with coordinating the consultations – looked for the perspective of Manitobans on several questions related to the concept of a truly bilingual province. The feedback provided will serve as a starting point for the creation of a new provincial strategy on bilingualism (please see Next Steps section below).

Context

The territory that makes up the province of Manitoba has been the home to numerous Indigenous languages for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans. The policy of preserving and promoting languages must always respect the original Indigenous languages that have evolved and continue to grow here. Protecting languages is not exclusive, but rather a shared endeavour for all Manitobans.

Francophones have been in Manitoba for over two hundred years. When the province entered the Canadian Confederation in 1870, they made up about half of the population. Bilingualism in the judicial and legislative sectors was enshrined in The Manitoba Act, as well as the right to confessional education (offered in French at the time). The arrival of waves of English-speaking migrants and immigrants changed the demographic weight of Francophones, and the adoption of The Official Language Act in 1890 essentially put an end to bilingualism in the province.

The Language Crisis of the 1980s led to the restoration of the linguistic rights established by The Manitoba Act, and the provincial French Language Services Policy was adopted in 1989. The Policy aims mainly to ensure that departments and other government agencies provide services in French as well as in English in the regions of the province where the Francophone population is concentrated. In 2016, the Legislative Assembly adopted The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act – an act that proposes the framework necessary to promote the flourishing of the Francophone community and support its development. The act strengthens the roles played by the minister responsible for Francophone Affairs and the Secretariat, creates the Francophone Affairs Advisory Council, and establishes the obligation for all public bodies to develop and implement multiyear strategic French language services plans.

Based on the 2021 census data, only three percent of Manitoba's population has French as its first official language spoken (40,265 individuals). As 112,741 people declared that they could understand French, the majority of French speakers in Manitoba are bilingual Anglophones.

Engagement Overview

Several activities were organized in order to ensure the largest participation possible and to collect multiple perspectives.

Survey on Engage Manitoba

An online survey was made available in French and in English from June 9 to October 31, 2025. The survey asked eight questions – a mix of open and multiple-choice questions, as well as one question where respondents had to rank certain ideas by order of importance. There was also a field for additional comments.

There were 1,654 replies, of which 587 were in English (35.5 percent) and 1,067 were in French (64.5 percent). The age group with the most respondents was between 35 and 44 years old (26 percent), followed by those aged between 45 and 54 (18 percent) and those who were aged between 25 and 34 (14 percent).

Just over 58 percent indicated that French was their first language, while 26 percent said French was an additional language they had learned. Seven percent of respondents did not speak French but had a particular affinity for the language – usually because of a child or grandchild studying in the French immersion system.

The vast majority of respondents live in Winnipeg (1,113 people, or 67 percent). There were also many respondents living in the fifteen rural bilingual municipalities (15 percent). Public Round Tables

The Secretariat organized public round tables targeted at different regions of the province. Ten sessions were held, of which seven were in person and three were virtual. Three sessions took place in Winnipeg. There were also sessions in Ste. Anne, Brandon, St. George and Notre Dame de Lourdes. One virtual session targeted the residents of more remote regions in the North and West of the province, and another targeted English-speakers. One hundred and five members of the public participated in these sessions.

The objective of the round tables was to seek the personal perspective of regular people - Madame and Monsieur Tout-le-Monde – in order to feed the reflection and to be able to advance recommendations that will make a real difference in the daily lives of Manitobans. We were looking for specific examples of what works well, what poses a challenge, and what could be considered as an opportunity to improve the situation.

Targeted Consultations

A series of targeted consultations took place between July and November. These were held with board chairs and executive leaders of community organizations, municipal elected officials and administrators from the bilingual municipalities, seniors, young adults and postsecondary students, immigrants, stakeholders from the economic sector, jurists, stakeholders from the education sector, university professors, and people who have played a significant role in the development and evolution of services in French in Manitoba. One hundred and fourteen people participated in these sessions.

Participants responded from the perspective of their clients or partners. It was an opportunity to deepen our understanding of certain challenges and gaps that affect specific sectors and to explore their impact.

Written Submissions

Finally, people were provided the option of submitting written documents – discussion papers, letters or emails. The Secretariat received 55 documents, of which 23 were discussion papers and 32 were letters and emails. Most of the discussion papers were submitted by community organizations, although some people who had already completed the survey or attended a round table session also decided to add to their earlier comments through written materials.



Online Survey Results

There were eight questions in the online survey housed on the Engage MB website, as well as a field for adding comments. For certain questions, participants could choose not to reply or could select more than one option, so totals do not necessarily equal 100 percent.

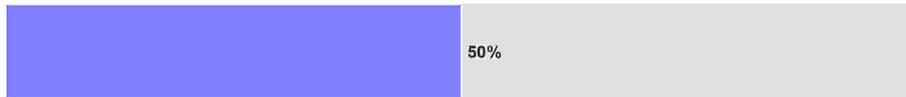
Question 1

First of all, we wanted to know what a truly bilingual province meant for the participants.

Fifty percent of respondents talked about access to services as the most important element of a bilingual province. The presence of both languages in the public sphere and the ability to live fully in one's official language of choice was cited by 19 percent of respondents as essential components of a bilingual province. An approach that targets equality between the two languages was favoured by 12 percent of respondents - an inclusive province, where English and French speakers have the same opportunities for success, where both languages are valued in the workplace, and where everyone is treated equitably. Education was mentioned by ten percent of respondents, and five percent spoke about the introduction of legislative measures.

Question: "A truly bilingual province" — what does that mean for you?

Services



Normalisation / use



Language equality



Education



Legislative measures



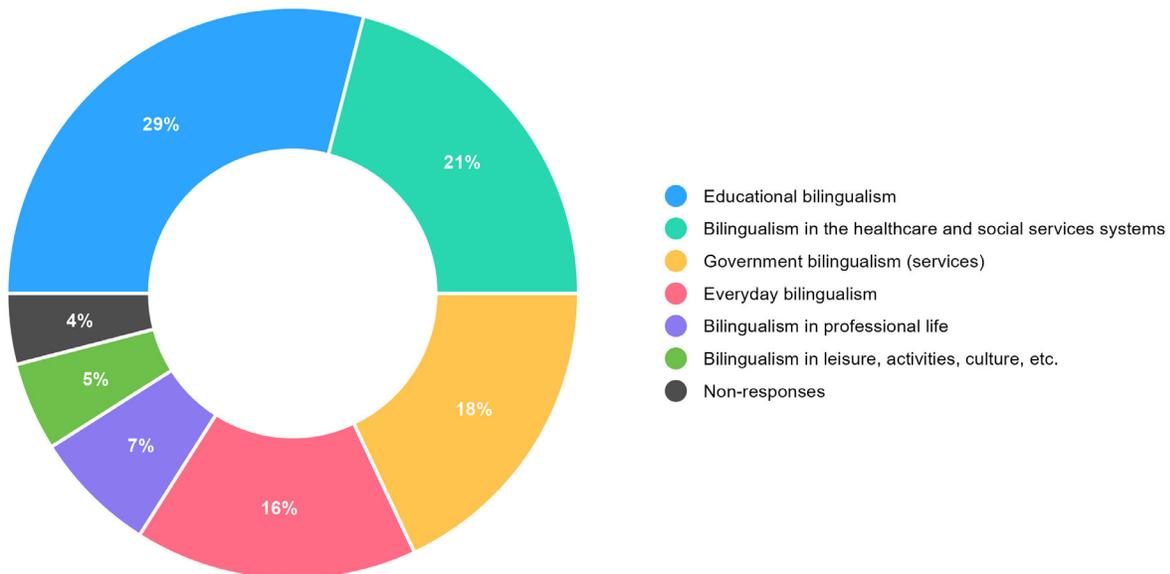
Question 2

The second question presented a list of different sectors that could be targeted for bilingualism. Respondents were asked to rank them by order of importance.

Bilingualism in the education sector was considered to be the most important, with 29 percent of respondents putting it first. Bilingualism in the healthcare system was ranked first by 21 percent of respondents, and government services were ranked first by 18 percent. Bilingualism in the workplace or for recreational activities (sports, culture, etc.) were not ranked as highly by survey respondents but were referenced in the round tables and written submissions.

Note: many respondents remarked that the question did not give the option to rank all sectors as equally important – they would have liked to say that the government should target them all at the same time.

Question: Bilingualism could target numerous sectors. Please put the following in order of importance for you.
Top priority selected by respondents



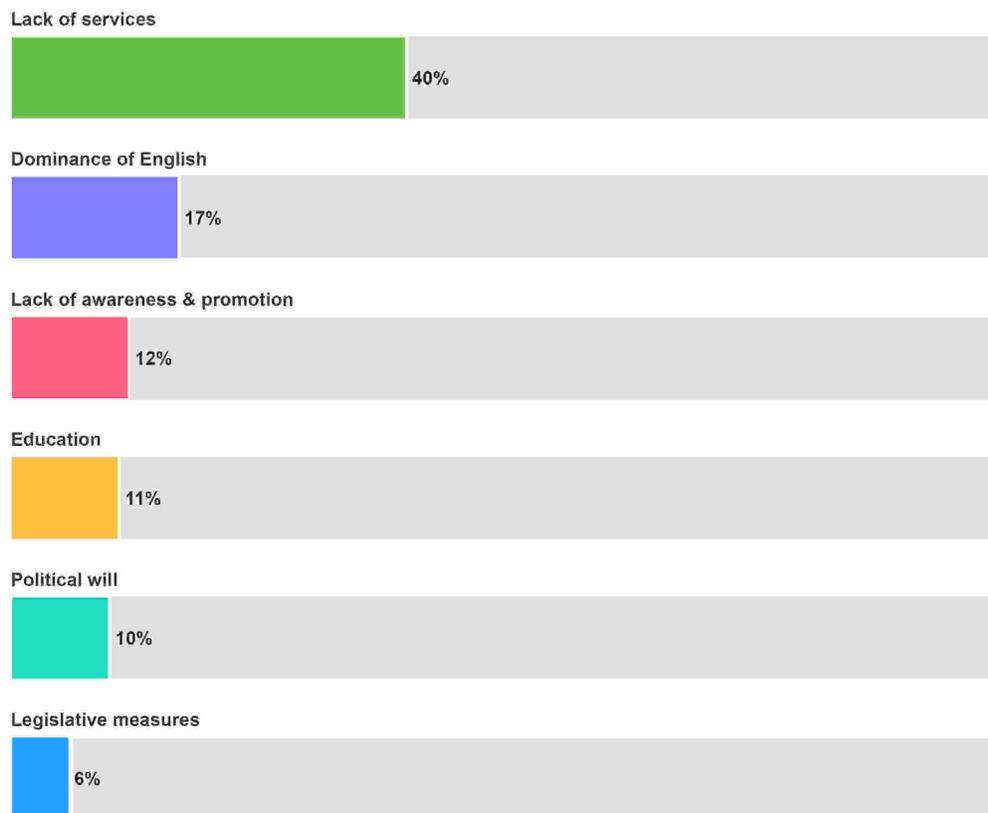
Question 3

Respondents were then asked to explain the gaps that currently prevent Manitoba from being bilingual.

The lack of services in French was mentioned most often, with 40 percent of respondents listing it as a challenge. Furthermore, eight percent felt that the absence of services is frequently linked to the lack of truly bilingual staff. Seventeen percent of respondents talked about the small proportion of French speakers compared to the total population of Manitoba, the tendency for Francophones to speak English among themselves (especially when an English speaker is present), and the lack of motivation to speak in French (for those for whom French is their first language as well as for those who have French as an additional language) as significant gaps.

Another gap that was frequently mentioned was the lack of understanding about the history of Manitoba's Francophonie and the absence of promotion about the advantages of bilingualism (12 percent). Eleven percent of respondents talked about access to education in French as a significant gap - referencing unequal access to schools (compared to English-language schools), the quality of teaching in French, and limited options to continue postsecondary education in French. Ten percent of respondents indicated that the lack of political will and commitment is another significant obstacle, and six percent identified the lack of legislation.

Question: Manitoba is not yet considered to be a bilingual province. In your opinion, what is missing?



Question 4

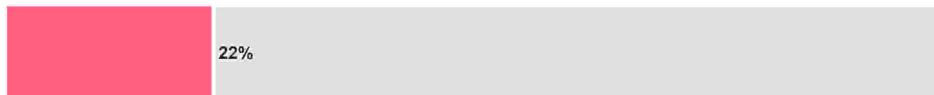
The fourth question was also linked to respondents' feelings, since it was looking to know what would change in peoples' lives if Manitoba was truly bilingual. The sense of pride and recognition was identified the most often (34 percent), with respondents talking about a heightened sense of belonging, respect and valorization. The other change that came up the most often was improved access to services in French, with 22 percent mentioning this aspect. Ten percent of responses imagined that a bilingual province would provide more employment opportunities, ten percent mentioned how being truly bilingual would support Francophone immigration and attract migration, and six percent of respondents talked about the positive impacts for the province.

Question: How do you think things will change for you personally if Manitoba becomes a truly bilingual province?

Pride and recognition



Services in French



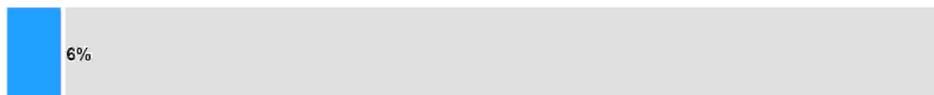
Enhanced employment



Support for immigration



Positive impacts



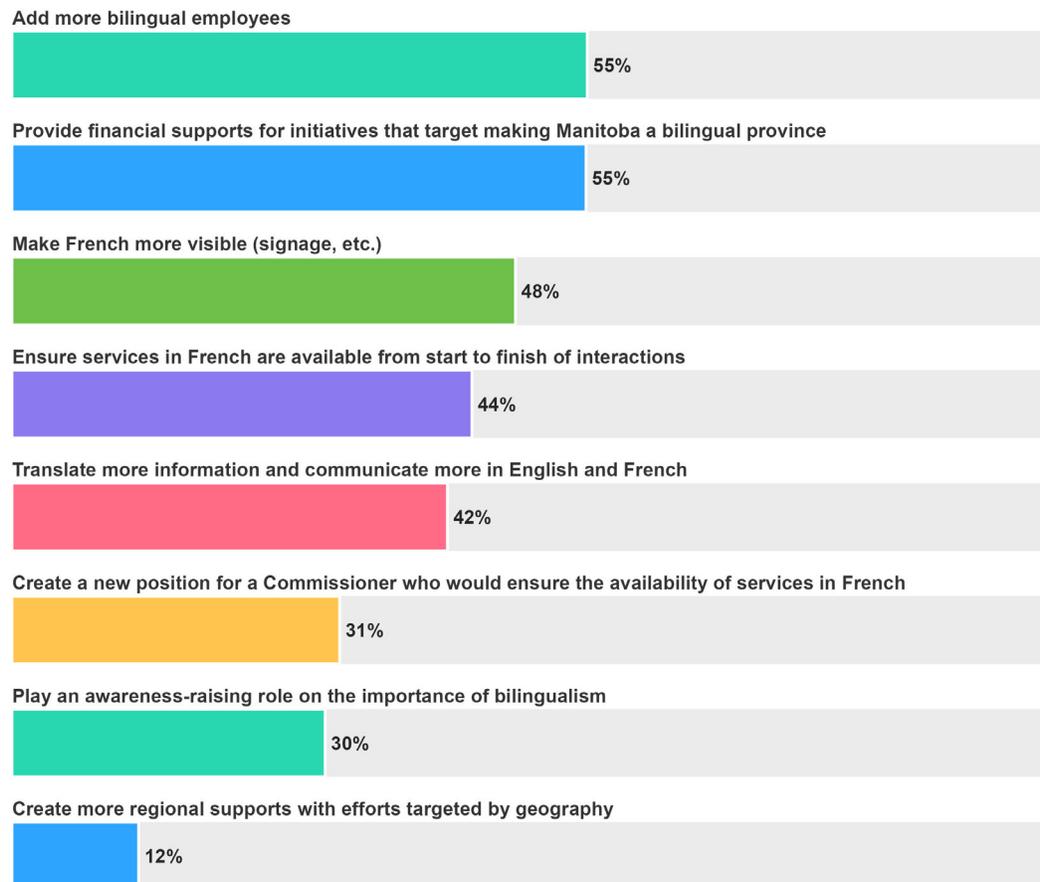
Question 5

The fifth question was a multiple choice, proposing seven measures that the provincial government could put in place to support bilingualism in Manitoba.

Two actions in particular were more popular than the others – adding more bilingual employees in the public service and providing financial supports for initiatives targeting bilingualism (55 percent for both actions). Forty-eight percent of respondents wanted to see actions to make French more visible, with enhanced bilingual signage in public spaces, for example. Forty-four percent prioritized the need to provide complete services in French – not just at the reception desk or the initial point of contact – and 42 percent noted that government should translate more documents in French and communicate more in both official languages.

The creation of a new position for a commissioner for French-Language Services who would oversee the availability of services and ensure their delivery, was chosen by 31 percent of respondents as the most important measure to put in place. Thirty percent thought the government should do more to promote bilingualism and assume an awareness-building role to that effect, and twelve percent felt regional supports should be targeted.

Question: What actions could the government take to make Manitoba a truly bilingual province?



The importance of investing more in educational programs in French, from preschool all the way through to the postsecondary level, including in the immersion system was mentioned. The need to enhance the quality of French teaching was also mentioned. Other people recommended making French-language learning obligatory across the province, and that the government should better support language learning for adults.

Question 6

This question proposed five actions society (community organizations, the private sector, individuals) could put in place to support the objective of creating a truly bilingual province, and respondents had to rank which actions were most relevant.

Four actions were considered far more relevant than the other. Fifty-eight percent of respondents said that people should request more services in French, and 55 percent indicated that promoting bilingualism was another measure to be prioritized. Making French more visible through the use of signage was mentioned by 53 percent of respondents, while 50 percent said that people should participate more in French activities. Only 24 percent chose submitting a complaint when services in French were not available as a priority action.

Question: What actions can society take (organizations, private sector, individuals) to make Manitoba a truly bilingual province?

Ask for services in French



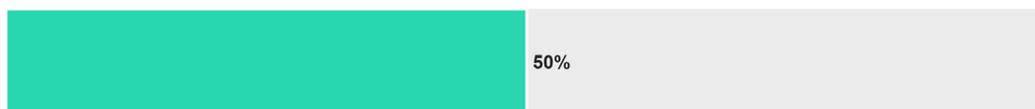
Promote bilingualism



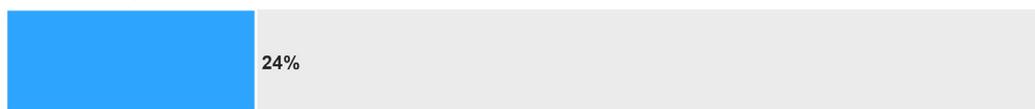
Make French more visible (activities, signage, etc.)



Participate in activities in French



Submit a complaint when services in French aren't available



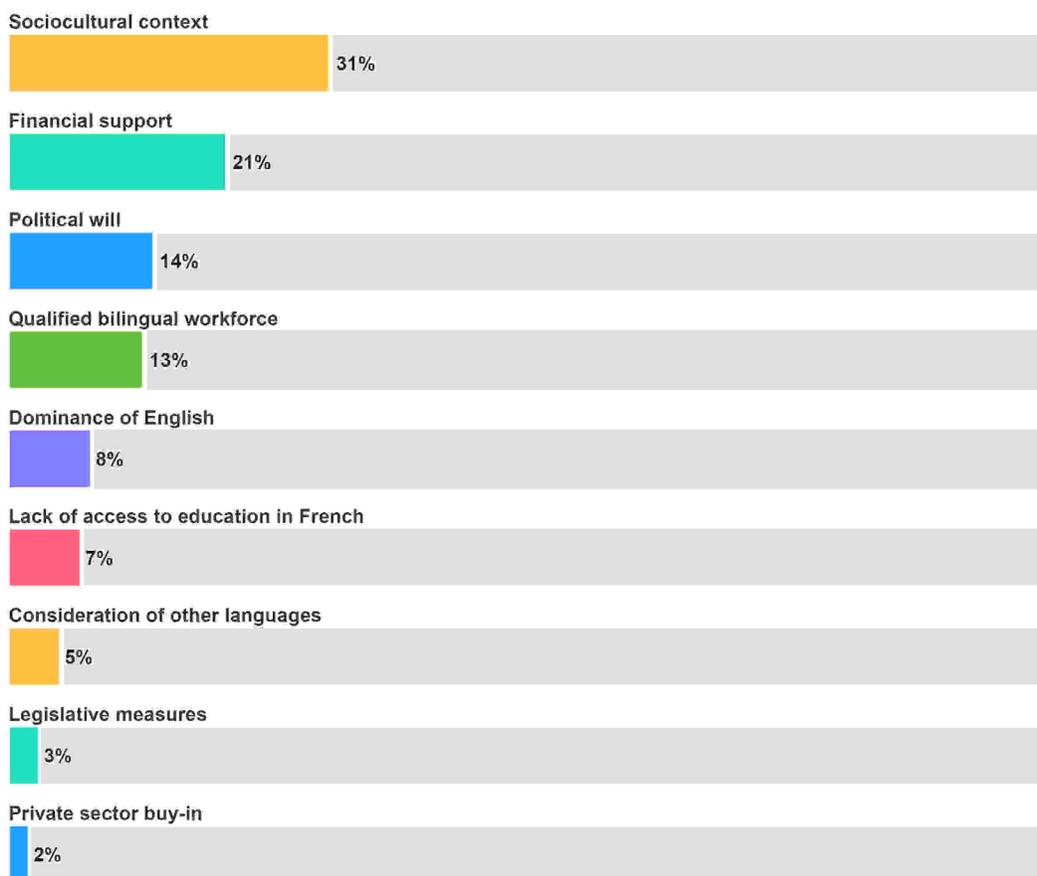
Question 7

Question 7 was interested in the obstacles that could prevent the province from becoming truly bilingual.

Thirty-one percent reiterated the sociocultural context as the greatest obstacle to success. Twenty-one percent of respondents talked about the importance of financing the bilingual province initiative properly: the high cost of its implementation was considered a significant obstacle. For 14 percent of respondents, it was the lack of political will or commitment from senior officials that posed a risk to the project. The lack of a qualified bilingual workforce was mentioned by 13 percent, with particular attention given to the shortage of educators and teachers.

The dominance of English came up in eight percent of responses, while seven percent expressed concern about the lack of access to learning opportunities in French. Other obstacles mentioned include the consideration of Indigenous and other minority languages (five percent), the absence of legislation (three percent), and problems if the private sector is not included (two percent).

Question: What are the obstacles that could make it harder to realize this objective?

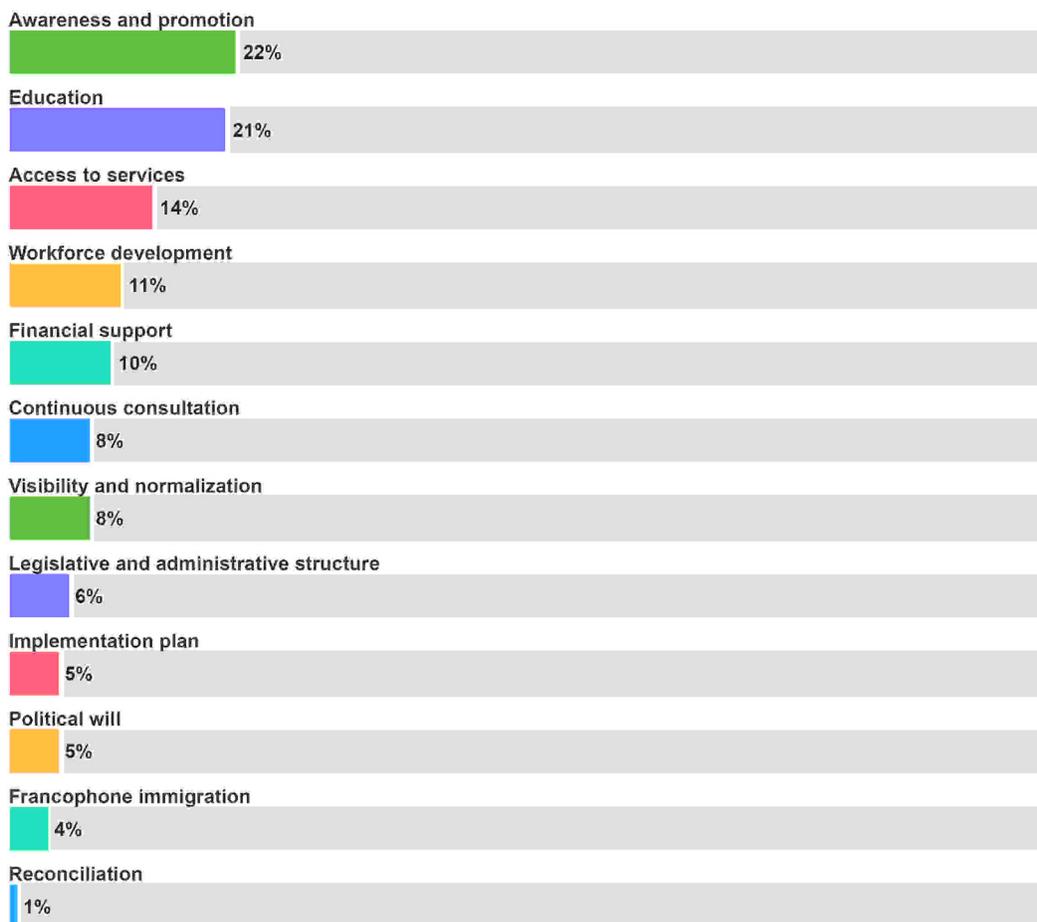


Question 8

The last question asked people to reflect on the essential elements needed for a provincial bilingualism strategy.

Participants raised issues of awareness and promotion (22 percent), the continuum in education (21 percent), access to services in French (14 percent), workforce development (11 percent), and the financial support required to implement the strategy (ten percent). Respondents also mentioned the importance of continuous consultation (eight percent), visibility and normalization (eight percent), the establishment of legislative and administrative measures to reinforce the coordination of services in French (six percent), the need to create a detailed implementation plan (five percent), the role of political will (five percent), Francophone immigration (four percent), and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples (one percent) as elements to be included in the provincial strategy. These themes were also prevalent during the round table sessions and the targeted consultations, as well as being raised frequently by community organizations in their written discussion papers.

Question: What elements need to be included in the strategy?



Thematic Analysis

Awareness-Raising and Promotion

For the majority of participants in the consultation, the most important benefit of becoming a truly bilingual province would be the recognition of Manitoba's Francophone history and heritage. People were excited and encouraged by the thought that French language and culture would be valued as much as English.

"I would be overflowing with pride, and I would see an optimistic message for future generations. Louis Riel had a dream. ME TOO!" (Translation)

A strengthened ability to live in French was considered a significant win and numerous respondents spoke about the end of discrimination from non-Francophones that would bring reassurance and a sense of ease to their lives.

"It would be a passage from linguistic tolerance to a real equality and cohabitation of two languages, that would positively transform my daily life and my future here, in this province." (Translation)

Respondents noted that greater awareness and promotion of the French language mean they would no longer need to justify speaking in French, and that their language would have the same value as English.

"It would let me live in a way that is really me. Communicating in another language, I feel as though I am a different person. A person with different values and a different identity. So being able to communicate in French in my province would be a relief and a way of maintaining who I am." (Translation)

Another element mentioned by these respondents was the possibility to pass their mother tongue to future generations without anxiety – many people mentioned the importance of knowing that their language would not be lost.

Efforts to promote and raise awareness were considered as the most important element to include in a bilingualism strategy. One suggestion was that the history of the Francophonie should be an obligatory part of the history curriculum in all schools.

"[Manitoba must] promote its Francophone and Metis history. [It must] wear its bilingualism with pride and make it a part of its calling card as an open, progressive and modern province. [...] We have forgotten our history." (Translation)

Participants also noted that the government should do more to promote bilingualism as an essential part of our cultural identity. The diversity of the Francophonie – from Francophones for whom French is their mother tongue, to bilingual Anglophones, to French-speaking immigrants – should be celebrated according to people who participated in the public consultation sessions. This sentiment was often expressed in the discussion papers submitted by community groups too.

Misinformation and anti-Francophone sentiment were identified by several participants as elements that would have to be overcome if Anglophones are to be brought onboard the project of a truly bilingual province. Memories of the language crisis of the 1980s were often mentioned as a cautionary tale, and respondents felt that the success of the initiative would depend on how the cultural and economic benefits are presented to the general population.

"We need to show people that the French language does not intend to replace their own languages, but that it wants both of them to allow the province to open to the outside world and to open more opportunities for the province in the future." (Translation)

Several participants remarked that initiatives such as the public consultations have little value if they are only addressed to Francophones or their allies. These efforts need to target the majority.

"A lot of Manitobans still see French as something that only concerns the Francophone community, instead of seeing it as a shared wealth that benefits the entire province." (Translation)

Words like justice' and 'equity' were used by many respondents when talking about what they saw as an historic recognition. Given the past struggles to preserve the French language and culture in Manitoba, several respondents also wanted the government to use the development of a strategy for a bilingual Manitoba to present its apologies to the Francophone population for historical wrongs and decisions that impacted the community's vitality.

Education

Access to education in French was a recurrent theme throughout the consultation. Whether it was participants with French as their first language or people who had learned it as an additional language, the ability to learn French was a major subject for discussion in all the round tables and in survey responses. For one third of respondents, services that support the continuum in education – from early childhood through to postsecondary and adult education – were considered essential.

"In 2023-2024, Manitoba schools welcomed almost 220,000 students from kindergarten to Grade 12. Why not start learning both languages in Grade 1? If we rely on this logic, in 12 years' time we would have 220,000 (or maybe more?) students in a school system where English and French are taught in parallel. In 12 years' time, we would have a first cohort who would have learned both languages from their very first year at school." (Translation)

The shortage of qualified teachers – for both French as a first language and French as an additional language teaching – was frequently mentioned when talking about the importance of a quality school education. Access to spaces in French daycare – again, particularly in regions outside Winnipeg – was a worry for many participants who recognize that early exposure is essential for language learning. The wish for greater investment in the postsecondary sector was expressed as another priority.

Anglophones talked about having more options for French immersion and extracurricular activities in French, especially in rural regions. Others mentioned linguistic insecurity and the fear of speaking French as obstacles. They suggested new French-learning occasions for adults who did not have the chance to learn French in school and opportunities to continue to practise their French as ways to help address this.

“Anglophones and non-Francophone newcomers have to be persuaded that it matters and is worth their time. And I get it: people are busy and have enough on their plate without also needing to learn French.”

Targeted consultation sessions were organized with stakeholders from all three levels of French-language education and with stakeholders from the immersion system. A number of discussion papers were also submitted – by the Franco-Manitoban school division, the Université de Saint-Boniface, the early childhood coalition, and the continuum of education in French table. Among the ideas presented by these groups, the most common were the need to provide adequate resources to teachers and educators, ensuring early exposure to French, the availability of French-language services that support education (various specialists but also administrative staff in immersion schools), and the promotion of professions in education.

Access to Services in French

Whether it was in response to the survey, or during discussions at the round tables, access to quality services in French was held up on numerous occasions as a pillar of a truly bilingual province. Participants prioritized government services in the fields of healthcare, education and justice, as well as those offered by Crown organizations like Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries. Municipal and private sector services were also identified as important.

“Information, services and public access should be available in both official languages, simultaneously if possible. French is often an afterthought instead of being included in project planning in government. If the province does not prioritize bilingualism, that will not set a good example for other agencies.” (Translation)

Respondents noted that walking into a government office and having the person behind the reception counter simply say ‘Bonjour!’ and then switching to English was not enough. There were also comments about the fact that many services in French are not clearly visible to clients.

“Yes, there are services in French, but they are not always available, and you really have to look for them [...] Services in French should be offered everywhere... that’s the only way that people will now it is a language that is worth learning in Manitoba.” (Translation)

Respondents added that all government communication should also be in both languages – ministers’ speeches, advertising campaigns, press conferences, etc. – and they also mentioned the significance of supporting access to cultural and recreational services, especially for young people. Several community organizations, including the Centre culturel franco-manitobain, the Conseil jeunesse provincial, and Sports en français, reiterated the importance of creating options for having fun in French.

“I think that it is essential to not see bilingualism as just adding more services in French, but rather as a real cultural richness to be preserved and promoted. It would be interesting to integrate a cultural dimension in this strategy, by supporting events, artistic projects and community initiatives that celebrate Francophone language and culture. That would allow not only to strengthen bilingualism, but also to create an environment that is more inclusive and respectful towards both cultures.” (Translation)

Workforce Development

Frequently raised throughout the consultation was the subject of the workplace and employment. Numerous participants underlined the role of work in the vitality of Francophone communities, since the ability to work in one's own language is a key element to resist assimilation.

"Employment in French remains marginal, especially in the private sector. It is difficult for a Francophone to work in French in most professional fields, and that prevents a real normalization of French." (Translation)

With the expectation to provide more services in French would come increased opportunities for employment among Manitoba's bilingual population, especially if, as some respondents suggested, a program of financial incentives is established for businesses to hire more bilingual and Francophone employees. As one survey respondent said, bilingualism in the workplace could become the norm instead of merely an advantage.

"Working in a Francophone organization is a privilege, but that should not be the exception. In a truly bilingual province, French would be integrated in all professional sectors, and young people would not have to choose between their language and their ambitions." (Translation)

Both Anglophones and Francophones talked about the benefits for the province to have a bilingual workforce and a business sector that can operate in both languages. For those people, it would be a significant occasion for the province to open up its economy to the international Francophonie, with potential for significant development related to enhanced investments, tourism, entrepreneurship and culture.

"Another bilingual province would throw light on the vivacity of the Francophonie outside Quebec. Far greater than a simple footnote in the history books, it would overthrow the current linguistic status quo." (Translation)

Other participants spoke more about challenges, especially Francophone immigrants. Credentials recognition poses a major problem for many, and some newcomers mentioned how their lack of fluency in English is a barrier for them. A suggestion was made to explore how the province could support employers so they could provide language training for employees.

"Some employers do not give newcomers the chance to work for them under the pretext that they do not speak English. But how can they learn if they are not in an Anglophone environment all the time? [...] We do not give the chance to Francophone newcomers or others who do not speak English. The language is a learned skill so employers should be more understanding." (Translation)

The specific challenges associated with finding qualified candidates in rural and remote regions were highlighted several times by respondents living outside Winnipeg, since it is already difficult to find staff to deliver the limited services currently available. Many more bilingual employees would need to be hired to deliver more services in French across the province.

This subject was also important for community organizations, who talked in their discussion papers about the need to invest in training programs in French to ensure the bilingual workforce of tomorrow, especially in key sectors like healthcare and justice.

Financial Support

This theme was mentioned by ten percent of respondents as an essential element to ensure the success of a bilingualism strategy, and it was also raised in the round tables and targeted consultations. Almost all of the discussion papers submitted by organizations listed the need for adequate funding as a priority for the new strategy. Suggestions included targeted investments to improve regional services in French, an increase in operational funding to community organizations so they can strengthen their ability to act, bursaries for students that take at least some of their postsecondary courses in French, and financial incentives or tax credits to encourage bilingualism.

"[It would take] predictable, stable and continuous funding [...] That represents a huge mission. We will have to allocate enough money to see it through." (Translation)

Other participants simply mentioned all the investments that the government would need to make in its own services and to support its bilingual capacity. Potential infrastructure costs (particularly for new daycares, schools and road signage) were also noted.

"[We need] real resources devoted to the effort and not just strategies and action plans that will depend on organizations and the general population to be implemented." (Translation)

Consultation and Collaboration

Eight percent of respondents indicated that continuous consultation with Manitobans should figure in the bilingualism strategy. Community organizations in particular mentioned the importance of respecting collaboration and the notion of 'par et pour' ('by and for') the community.

"That genuine consultation be included as an essential priority for Manitoba's Francophone community in any summary document of the results and in the strategy or action plan that will result from this exercise."

Inclusion and diversity were also highlighted for this consultation, with some respondents saying that it should include Francophones with French as their mother tongue, immigrants, bilingual Anglophones, the Métis population, as well as considering the perspectives of the 2SLGBTQI+ community.

"As much as possible, we should work towards this goal in a spirit of collaboration not of confrontation... If we examine the history of Francophones' rights in Manitoba, it has not always been in a spirit of collaboration that we have obtained our goals. Let's hope Manitoban society has evolved..." (Translation)

Many respondents noted that the strategy would only be successful if it was a true cocreation between the government, the private sector and the community.

Visibility and normalization

Participants noted that a language lives when it is seen and used. A bilingual province needs people who speak French – as a first or an additional language – so there is a need to work on acknowledging the value of bilingualism and providing opportunities that mean life is as rich when lived in French as it is when lived in English.

The importance of seeing French in print, on signs and on buildings was noted and many of the respondents' comments focused on how government could take the lead to normalise the visibility of French in Manitoba.

“English is still the dominant language, it's more natural to speak English in our province because there aren't enough of us and there are not enough services in French, so we have to speak English in order to be part of our society.” (Translation)

It was noted that Francophones must assume the responsibility for including French in their daily lives - sending their children to school in French, attending community activities to celebrate their language and culture, and showing the value of being Francophone.

“Beyond participating in activities in French, people need to be involved, to engage in these activities to organize them, support them, promote them, in short, we must encourage people to give their time to action. The time for being a simple spectator has passed.” (Translation)

There were many proposals to create new French or bilingual events and promote existing events to encourage broader participation. The objective would be to make the French language more appealing so that its use beyond the classroom becomes normalized, including for Anglophones who have learned or are learning French.

“We should make the French language more attractive to learn and to speak. Language starts at home, then with friends and then in institutions. We can promote government services and ex-pose the population to the Francophone language with signage and Francophone adverts, but if the population is not interested in wanting to speak French at home or is not interested in joining Francophone cultural groups, the growth will not happen quickly. One reason so many Francophiles [want] to learn French is for employment opportunities. There can be many reasons, I invite you to find them to make the language more attractive.” (Translation)

Political, Legislative and Administrative Structures

There were proposals to implement legislative or administrative measures to enshrine provincial bilingualism. Participants proposed regulations to clarify the obligations under The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act, as well as statements to see an official status like in New Brunswick.

“Any linguistic regime must reflect Manitoba’s realities. We can be inspired by linguistic models from other provinces or territories, but the political, judicial and demolinguistic realities of Manitoba are distinct. Manitoba must find its own path forward and have its own model.” (Translation)

In its written submission, the Association des juristes d’expression française du Manitoba proposed creating a framework for institutional bilingualism in the justice system to ensure consistent availability of judicial services in French.

Changes to existing administrative structures as a way to support the government’s capacity for bilingualism and better coordinate the implementation of its obligations were also proposed. The suggestions included the following: strengthen the role of the Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs and of the Secretariat – possibly by creating a Department of Francophone Affairs or of Bilingual Identity; develop an ombudsman position for services in French; give Treasury Board the authority to verify that a Francophone lens has been applied to all funding submissions; and create a commissioner for the promotion of the Francophonie.

“The capacity to instill this and to maintain it over a period of time has been proven elsewhere, so there are no obstacles, unless it is not legislated. If it’s only a policy, it will not last. A change in society needs a carrot and a stick.” (Translation)

During the round tables and targeted consultations, others also mentioned legislative measures, but their perspective was that these should not be encouraged, since they believe Manitoba already possesses the necessary tools – it just needs to apply them properly.

Implementation Plan

Five percent of responses to question 8 included references to a detailed implementation plan that would include clear objectives, a reasonable timeline in order to meet goals, and public reporting throughout the duration of the strategy to keep Manitobans informed of progress. Some respondents spoke of the importance of a staggered plan that would see gradual transition and facilitate public commitment by showing the added value as each stage is completed. Planning for resistance or unforeseen obstacles was also indicated as important.

“The plan needs to be founded on results, so not the number of words translated or the number of bilingual employees in the government, but the number of Francophones graduating from high school or from a postsecondary institution, the number of places in daycare, the number of businesses with commercial exchanges with Francophone markets, the number of artists headlining festivals financed by the province, the number of televisual productions filmed in French in Manitoba, the number of French books published in Manitoba, the increase in Manitoba’s bilingual workforce, etc.” (Translation)

Government Commitment

The need to ensure the complete commitment of governments (the province and the municipalities) was raised by five percent of respondents as an essential element of the strategy.

« Without a clear vision, without sustained commitment and without adequate means, the risk is high that bilingualism will remain a principle written on paper but rarely lived in the real world. We have to give ourselves the means to achieve our ambitions.» (Translation)

Many respondents recognized that the current government has demonstrated its commitment to bilingualism in the province and this good will should be used.

"I am so filled with hope. Hearing Premier Kinew and Minister Simard talking about a bilingual Manitoba brings tears to my eyes. Thank you for this work, let's strike gently while the iron is hot." (Translation)

Francophone Immigration

A lot of participants mentioned that a truly bilingual province would help support Francophone immigration by attracting more immigrants and helping their integration and retention.

"As a Francophone myself, an immigrant, Manitoba's success is close to my heart. Manitoba is my adopted province, it's where I have lived most of my adult life and where I hope to stay. Manitoba's success is my success as a resident of this beautiful province." (Translation)

Respondents who identified as immigrants expressed considerable frustration with the current situation, however, saying that they had been invited by the province as Francophones and told they could live in French, when the reality is that they must be fluent in English if they are to have meaningful work in Manitoba. They mentioned challenges related to having diplomas recognized, employers who do not give a chance to qualified workers who do not have excellent English skills, and the fact that many of them are leaving the province when they cannot get work.

The development of a Francophone immigration and retention strategy as part of the broader bilingualism strategy was mentioned by many respondents and by community groups that represent Manitoba's immigrant population, along with the need to better support the professional integration of French-speaking newcomers.

"We should open the door to Francophone immigrants. They have so much to offer." (Translation)

Reconciliation and Indigenous Languages

Recognition of First Nations and Indigenous languages was considered an important element of the strategy by one percent of respondents. Some also felt that other cultural communities might not understand why the government would prioritize services in French over their own languages. The question of ensuring equity for First Nations was a recommendation for all respondents who raised this issue.

"The feeling that - by promoting the status of 'two official languages' in the province - the province is damaging the renaissance and the promotion of Indigenous cultures [is an obstacle]. We must think in terms of 'and also', not in terms of 'this, instead of that'." (Translation)

Some mentioned that the work to make the province truly bilingual could serve as a model to give an official status to Indigenous languages too.

"[We need to] make sure Indigenous languages are included in the strategy - it's critical, because English and French are the languages of the colonizers and we don't want to repeat the mistakes of the past by ignoring their history, their heritage and their languages."

Next Steps

With the consultations complete, the real work begins. The goal of turning these responses and themes into visible and tangible changes in Manitoba will take commitment and effort from everyone. The Francophone Affairs Advisory Council will be taking the lead in bringing together the community, provincial and municipal governments and the private sector to build the strategy informed by the initiatives suggested through these consultations. Partners like the Société de la francophonie manitobaine and all the organizations that are members of the community's strategic plan implementation committee will look at the structures, programs and projects needed to seed and support a truly bilingual province.

Being able to use French in daily life and access services knowing that they are supported by a system of education and developmental resources – as well as commitment from governments – is at the heart of a strategy that will establish short-, medium- and long-term objectives.

These include specific calls to:

1. Create new and diverse opportunities for Manitobans to continue to engage in this new provincial bilingual strategy.
2. Recognize and promote the history and role the French language has played in our province - in its culture and its future.
3. Enhance French language learning opportunities for young and adult learners.
4. Seek out opportunities to promote the arts in French and to support Francophone cultural and recreational activities across the province.
5. Examine models for bursaries and financial supports for French language learning.
6. Provide supports to private sector businesses to develop bilingual capacity in their place of work.
7. Strengthen government's French language service plans and enhance its bilingual workforce.
8. Investigate the provision of new investments for bilingual tourism and entrepreneurship.
9. Explore how to strengthen French community organizations to provide and support bilingual services.
10. Prioritize where financial investment would best start a transition to a truly bilingual province.
11. Study potential legislative and administrative changes that might better support enhanced services in French.
12. Investigate how to support bilingual government communications.
13. Collaborate with the French-speaking immigrant community to develop successful retention strategies.
14. Share best practices with the Indigenous community and others who are working to preserve and promote their languages.

The development of this strategy will need the perspective of all Manitobans from across the province. The government is committed to seeing these actions through and is proud of everyone who has participated so far. There is a real hope that these consultations will encourage them to continue on this shared journey and inspire others to join. Investments in this strategy are already starting. The government has announced new DSFM schools (one in St. Boniface and one in Brandon), as well as supporting the French immersion system and the Francophone early childhood sector. It has opened a new judicial services centre to provide supports and resources for French-speaking Manitobans. It is partnering with the community and the federal government to better understand the health service needs of Francophones. It has also leveraged federal funds to help bilingual municipalities to produce and install French-language signage throughout rural Manitoba.

These are the first steps to building a truly bilingual province. The government is committed to the vision of a province where Manitobans can choose to live, work and play in either official language with the goal of passing on a sustained, passionate and respected language to their children and grandchildren.

Regular updates will be shared with the public through media announcements by the Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs and on the consultation pages on the Francophone Affairs Secretariat's website. The Francophone Affairs Advisory Council will also be closely following progress and supporting the government's commitment to communicate with the Francophone community at every step of the process.

Proposed Timeline:

- March 2026 – Publication of the Truly Bilingual Manitoba consultation report
- April to May 2026 – Creation of a work plan
- May to September 2026 – Working group sessions held
- September 2026 to January 2027 – Production of the draft version
- January 2027 – Presentation of the draft to the Francophone Affairs Advisory Council and stakeholders
- March 2027 – Publication of the provincial strategy on bilingualism

This detailed and collaborative approach aims to ensure that the bilingualism strategy reflects the needs and wishes expressed by Manitobans.

Questions?

Please communicate with the Francophone Affairs Secretariat by email at bilingualmanitobabilingue@gov.mb.ca to find out more.