

Federal institutions must use media in both official languages to reach the public

Sections 11 and 30 of the *Official Languages Act*

When federal institutions want to communicate information about federal services and activities, they must make sure that it is equally available in English and French and that it is of equal quality in each official language. The goal is to provide all Canadians with information of equal quality in both official languages, regardless of where they live in Canada.

Examples of how federal institutions use the media

Here are some reasons why federal institutions might choose to use the media (newspapers, magazines, billboards, radio, TV, websites, etc.) to communicate with the public:

- Announcing a new program
- Advertising an upcoming event
- Posting a job opportunity

In some cases, they must use written media to communicate **official notices or advertisements**. These are communications that an institution publishes because a federal law authorizes or requires them to do so. Here are some examples:

- When a federal institution is taking ownership of land, it must inform the public in the area with something called an expropriation notice.
- When a federal institution is planning to hold certain types of hearings, it must let the public in the area know.

In the two cases above, federal institutions must use the available English and French written media to provide information of equal quality in each official language.

Federal institutions must use English and French media publications to reach the public

Federal institutions often choose to communicate with the public in written media. In most cases, the best way to reach members of the public in their preferred official language is by publishing the information in English in an English-language publication and in French in a French-language publication.

For official notices and ads, federal institutions must always use written publications that are “in general circulation,” which means they are easily accessible to the public by subscription, on newsstands or for free. Examples include newspapers, magazines and federal institutions’ official websites.

Federal institutions are free to choose which type of written media they use, unless the law specifies a particular publication (for example, the *Canada Gazette*). But once the choice has been made, they must use the same type of media in both official languages. For example, if they post the English version on an English website, they must post the French version on an equivalent French website. If they decide to use two types

of media (newspaper and website, for example), they must use the English and French equivalents of each type of media.

For communications that are not official notices or ads, federal institutions may use another type of media (for example, radio or TV) but must still use the same media in both official languages.

Federal institutions must follow certain rules when choosing media

When deciding which media to use, federal institutions must follow certain rules to make sure all Canadians get the same information in the official language of their choice.

Publications must be of equal quality in each official language

All efforts must be made to provide English- and French-speaking Canadians with information of the same quality. Here are some examples:

- Ads or official notices should take up the same amount of space on the page in English and French publications.
- Information must be published in English and French publications at the same time.

Federal institutions must make sure that their information appears in English and French media at the same time. The goal is to ensure that both language groups have equal opportunities to see the information.

When it is impossible to publish the two language versions at the same time, all efforts must be made to reach the linguistic minority group. For example, let's say a region has a daily newspaper in the official language of the majority, but only a weekly newspaper in the official language of the minority. If a federal institution places several ads in the daily paper during a three-week period, it would be acceptable to place the same ad in the weekly paper every week for three weeks.

Official notices of national interest must be published in English and French media across Canada

If a federal institution publishes an official notice that is meant for all Canadians, it must be sure to reach French speakers across the country. This can be difficult because there are no national French-language daily newspapers. If the institution publishes its English notice in a national English-language daily paper (like *The Globe and Mail*), it would have to publish its French version in a French publication in each province and territory.

In some cases, bilingual messages can be used

Federal institutions should normally publish English messages in the English media and French messages in the French media, as this is considered the best way to reach everyone in their preferred official language. But if an institution can show that publishing a bilingual message would be a more efficient and effective way to reach the linguistic minority group, it can do so. Here are some examples:

- If there is no newspaper in the official language of the minority in a region, federal Institutions can publish a bilingual notice in a newspaper in the official

language of the majority if this is more effective than using other media. The notices in each language should be side by side.

- Federal institutions that use a multilingual social media platform for their notices or ads, like Facebook, can publish a bilingual message if it is the most efficient way to reach both English and French audiences on this platform.
- If a federal institution is trying to reach a specific audience through specialized media that is available in only one official language, like an industry magazine, it can publish a bilingual notice or ad without placing it in a publication of the other official language. An example would be *Ontario Reports*, an English publication that all Ontario lawyers use as their main source of legal information.

When publishing something bilingually, federal institutions must make sure that:

- the text is the same size in each language;
- the texts are presented side by side, if possible; and
- the text in the official language of the province's majority population is presented first.

In exceptional circumstances, federal institutions can use just one official language

In very rare situations, a federal institution can use just one official language to communicate with a linguistic minority group in order to support its development. For example, if an institution wants to congratulate Nova Scotia's Acadian community for a successful anniversary event, it could publish the message only in French in a French-language publication because it is the best way to reach this audience.