

# FRENCH and ANGLAIS

Our two official languages have been around for a long time, but the story of bilingualism in Canada hasn't always been an easy one.

**T**he first Europeans to settle permanently in Canada came from France. They were soon followed by settlers from England. For these early Europeans, language and religion were all mixed up together. If you spoke French, chances were very good that you were also Roman Catholic. If you spoke English, chances were very good that you were not — you probably went to a Methodist, Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian or other Protestant church. (There were, of course, lots of Roman Catholics — mainly settlers from Ireland — whose language was English or Gaelic.) Protestants and Catholics often didn't like each other. French and English often *really* didn't like each other. So there was no guarantee things would work out in Canada, either.

There were lots of fights over language and religion. And yet, Canadian history also has many stories of French- and English-speaking people getting along, especially (amazingly!) political leaders. Right from the time Canada was created in 1867, the *British North America Act* made it clear that both languages could be used in the House of Commons, in the Supreme Court, and in official laws and documents.

But in real life, English nearly always won out. People who spoke French found it very hard to get information or service from the Canadian government in their own language. Although there were organizations of francophones in nearly every part of the country, the reality was that outside Quebec and New Brunswick, there were only a few spots in Canada where the French language and French culture were treated equally.



In 1963, Prime Minister Lester Pearson appointed André Laurendeau and Davidson Dunton, shown at right, to lead the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. Its job was to look into how English and French were treated in Canada. It took seven years. The report of the Bi and Bi Commission, as it came to be known, was clear: It said the government needed to do better at making sure Canadians all over the country could be served in English or French, and that people had the same chances of getting a job with the government whether they spoke one language or the other. So, on September 7, 1969, the government of the next Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, passed the Official Languages Act and created the Commissioner of Official Languages to help put it into action.



# FRANCOPHONE

SOMEONE WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE IS FRENCH

# ANGLOPHONE

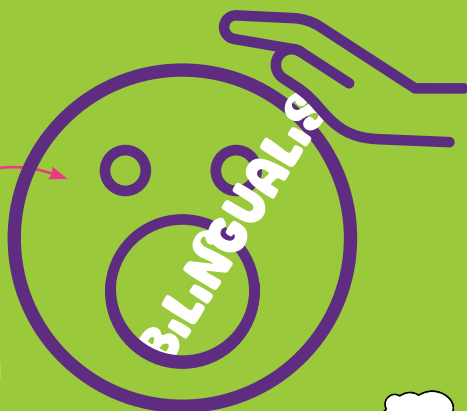
SOMEONE WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE IS ENGLISH

**We speak English /  
Nous parlons Français**



What official  
bilingualism  
meant

What official  
bilingualism  
did not mean





## Lord Durham's Détestable Report

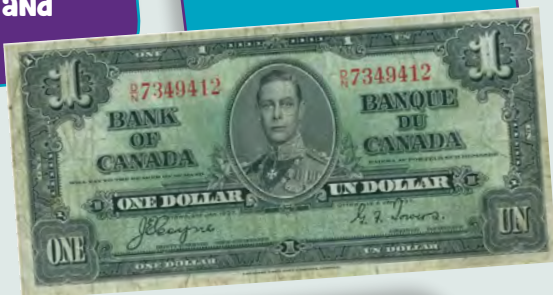
"I wish to give the Canadians (French Canadians) our English character." His plan had more to it than that, but that was the basic idea of what Lord Durham reported back to the government in Great Britain in 1838. Some of his ideas were put in place, but French Canadians did not give up their language, culture or religion. As the group Le Vent du Nord puts it in their song "Lettre à Durham," "Nous serons là que nous serons debout" (We are here and still standing).

**TO MARK 60 YEARS SINCE THE FIRST FOUR PROVINCES GOT TOGETHER TO CREATE A COUNTRY, CANADA POST RELEASED CANADA'S FIRST BILINGUAL STAMP IN 1927.**



**THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT FORMED ITS NATIONAL RADIO ORGANIZATION IN 1932. THE BROADCASTER HAD STATIONS RUNNING BOTH FRENCH AND ENGLISH SHOWS.**

**CANADA ISSUED ITS FIRST BILINGUAL PAPER MONEY AND COINS IN 1937.**



*Chez Hélène* was a short program on CBC-TV from 1959 to 1973. Host Hélène Baillargeon and her puppet, as well as children on the show, spoke a mixture of French and English.



# PROTECTING FRENCH IN QUEBEC

By Alexis Bédard-Fiset  
Translated by Nancy Payne

Quebec's **Charter of the French Language**, often known as **Bill 101**, went into action on August 26, 1977. The Charter's mission? To ensure that French stayed the official language of Quebec, as well as the one that most Quebecers used for school, work and other parts of their lives.

Maybe you're wondering why French in Quebec needed protecting. According to many historians, the issue dates back to the British Conquest of New France. In 1763, after signing the Treaty of Paris, the French turned over all of their colonies in Canada to the English. French-speaking people continued to use their language, but the future was uncertain.



The Canadian Press, Public Domain

Two hundred years later, in the 1960s, francophones started once again to want more respect and better lives for the French language and French-speaking people. It was a time when Quebec anglophones earned much more money than francophones, and more than eight out of every 10 employers — people who hire other people to work for them — were English-speaking. It seemed like English was in charge. For all of these reasons, people favoured the ideas behind Bill 101.

These days, some people think that Bill 101 is too strict and not flexible enough. Others say that the law is essential to ensure French does not disappear. One reason that is often mentioned is that Quebec is becoming more multicultural all the time. Bill 101 requires immigrant children to go to school in French in order to help them become part of the society around them.



**ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN NEW BRUNSWICK CAN SPEAK BOTH FRENCH AND ENGLISH.**

### C'EST AWESOME

People in parts of New Brunswick have a unique way of speaking. It's called Chiac (SHEE-yak), and it's more than 300 years old. It's mostly Acadian French, but it throws in a lot of English, too. Instead of "J'ai traversé la rue," or "I crossed the street," a Chiac-speaker might say "J'ai crosé le street." There's even a cartoon character who speaks Chiac: Acadieman. His creator describes him as "Le first superhero Acadien."

# NOUVEAU/NEW BRUNSWICK

Canada has just one officially bilingual province: New Brunswick. In April 1969 it declared that English and French were its two official languages. That means people have the right to get information and help from the provincial government in either language. In 2002 New Brunswick widened bilingual rules to include major cities and communities in which a large group of people speaks the other language. It also named a Commissioner of Official Languages to help francophones and anglophones get equal treatment.



Alamy, Dano Leblanc



**ONTARIO IS NOT BILINGUAL, BUT IT DOES HAVE 26 PLACES WHERE FRENCH-SPEAKING PEOPLE CAN BE SERVED IN THEIR LANGUAGE. IN THESE AREAS, ABOUT ONE IN 10 PEOPLE IS FRANCOPHONE. IF IT'S A CITY, AT LEAST 5,000 PEOPLE MUST SPEAK FRENCH.**



# DIVING IN

Immersion means putting something completely under water. French immersion is kind of the same idea for English-speaking students. In some places French immersion starts on the first day of school. In others, it can begin as late as Grade 7.

Parents first started trying to get better French classes (known as core French) for their kids in the 1950s. Two parents started the private Toronto French School in 1962 because they felt it was important for anglophone students to speak French and understand francophone culture.

In the early 1960s, a group of parents in St. Lambert, Que., decided it was wrong that anglophone kids were graduating from school without being able to speak French. Their school board started experimenting with French immersion in 1965.

The idea took off in the 1970s and spread across the country. Today there are about 425,000 students taking French immersion in Canada.



**IF THERE AREN'T A LOT OF FRENCH-SPEAKING STUDENTS OR TEACHERS IN AN AREA, FRANCOPHONE STUDENTS SOMETIMES END UP IN FRENCH IMMERSION CLASSES INTENDED FOR ANGIOPHONES. AS ONE ALBERTA PARENT TOLD THE CBC IN 1988, "BASICALLY OUR STUDENTS ARE GOING TO A SCHOOL DESIGNED BY AND FOR ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE. AS A RESULT THEY'RE GETTING A SECOND-CLASS EDUCATION."**

## EQUALLY IMMersed?

Many kids in French immersion come from families that already have more money and better education than the average student's family. There are generally more girls than boys in these programs, and fewer kids with disabilities.

