

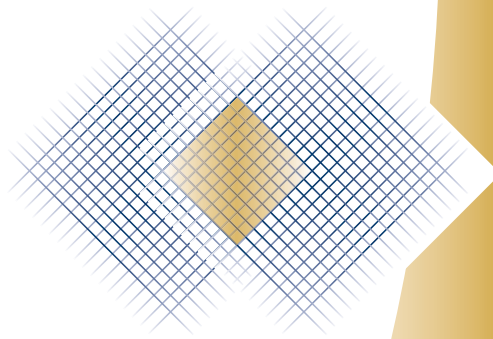


Office of the
Commissioner of
Official Languages

Commissariat
aux langues
officielles

Towards Real Equality of Official Languages:

Language of Work Within Federal
Institutions of New Brunswick



To reach the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, dial toll-free 1 877 996-6368.
www.ocol-clo.gc.ca

© Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada 2006
Cat. No.: SF31-85/2006
ISBN: 0-662-49276-5
OCOL-CLO PP009-06-2006

For a listing of any errors or omissions in this publication found subsequent to printing,
please visit our Web site at www.ocol-clo.gc.ca.

This document presents the results of a study of the language of work in New Brunswick, where English and French are the official languages of work in federal institutions. This is the third study from the Commissioner of Official Languages about the language of work in federal bilingual workplaces as defined in subsection 35(2) of the *Official Languages Act*.¹

Overview of findings

In September 2005, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages surveyed 1,800 federal public service employees who occupy bilingual positions within 22 federal institutions located in New Brunswick. A total of 515 questionnaires were filled out, for a response rate of 29%. In addition, focus groups were held in Moncton and Fredericton, New Brunswick, and in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Here is a summary of the findings.

- A majority (72%) of survey respondents said that their first official language is French.
- English is predominant when carrying out routine tasks that include communication with management, despite the fact that a majority of management positions are occupied by bilingual individuals.
- English predominates in the workplace: 98% of employees are able to communicate in English and 26% are unilingual Anglophones. Francophones say they have a good command of English while Anglophones, who occupy most of the managerial positions, recognize that they are less comfortable in French.
- Francophones have an excellent knowledge of English because they routinely use it as the language of work, especially during meetings. Some even say that they become less confident about using French. At the same time, some Anglophones are concerned about their own under-use of French, which results in their being less confident about using French.
- Anglophone respondents have a relatively high degree of confidence in their oral and written comprehension of French. This is an excellent foundation for greater use of French during conversation if the environment is conducive to the use of both official languages.

1. The first study, published in March 2004, was *Walking the Talk: Language of Work in the Federal Public Service*. It dealt with the use of the two official languages within federal institutions located in the National Capital Region. The second study, published in April 2005, was *Making it Real: Promoting Respectful Coexistence of the Two Official Languages at Work*. It dealt with the use of the two official languages at workplaces in the bilingual regions of Quebec.

- Respondents from both language groups are critical of the limited availability of language training and of programs to facilitate learning retention.
- Supervision and personal and central services being provided from offices located in Halifax, which is in a unilingual English region, do not respect the language rights of New Brunswick Francophones.
- There are misunderstandings about the rights and obligations of public service employees under the *Official Languages Act*.
- In some institutions, positive changes were observed, and these are attributable to support from senior management.
- Respondents noted that cultural change is under way in the New Brunswick region and in Halifax. Some said there is tangible progress and, generally speaking, the use of the two official languages in the workplace is now better accepted.

This brief overview leads to the initial observation that there is work to be done to achieve respect for the right of employees to work in their language, as set out in section 34 of the *Official Languages Act*.

Personal and central services

One of the obstacles to the respect of language rights is the provision of central and personal services in the employee's language of choice. In some cases, supervision, personal and central services for federal employees in New Brunswick are provided from Nova Scotia, a unilingual region. This creates obstacles to respect for language rights because employees encounter problems being supervised in French and receiving personal and central services in French.

Leadership

The culture of an organization is greatly affected by the leadership provided from the executive level. As long as management and executive positions are not filled by bilingual people having adequate language skills and taking a lead role in the area of language rights, it will be difficult to create a workplace in which there is respect for linguistic duality.

The Commissioner points out again, as she has in previous studies of language of work, that an effective official languages program in federal institutions rests on three strategic priorities that must be constantly and simultaneously cultivated: leadership, institutional capacity, and the personal capacity of public service employees in their second language.

A number of institutions are lagging with regard to leadership, and this is hindering the achievement of the government's basic objectives in creating a workplace where the two official languages coexist. For example, Anglophones and Francophones may fear that they will lose acquired rights or opportunities for promotion. To counteract these fears and achieve full compliance with the *Official Languages Act*, there should be a clear commitment and concrete actions by management.

There are also shortcomings with regard to institutional language capacity. Often there are no assessment and training mechanisms or other ways to make the official languages program known. Every department needs to develop a results-based management framework, including indicators related to the use of the two official languages. The Treasury Board policies and directives on language of work include some performance indicators to assist institutions in evaluating their outcomes. However, these indicators are not sufficiently focused on results related to the actual use of the two languages.

Employees should be given more encouragement to develop their personal capacity in their second language. Aside from acquiring second language skills, both employees and managers must recognize the importance of actually using the two languages in the workplace, as well as the need to respect the language rights of colleagues and subordinates as a core value.

Recommendations

At the end of this study, the Commissioner has reiterated five of the recommendations she made in the previous studies of language of work, and she has added six further recommendations. The recommendations, which are addressed to the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency, the Canada School of Public Service and the Treasury Board Secretariat, cover three strategic areas: leadership, language training, and promotion of organizational culture conducive to the respect of language rights.

The difficulties that arise in achieving respect for linguistic duality are encountered in every bilingual region. Government organizations need to create an educational program to demystify the various policies and guidelines governing the application of the *Official Languages Act*. Executives and supervisors have a key role to play in achieving a workplace that is respectful of language rights. They must themselves have a high level of ability in the two languages and meet the linguistic requirements of their position. They must actively participate in achieving a bilingual environment. Steps must be taken without further delay to increase the language training available to federal employees as well as require and support learning retention.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

HIGHLIGHTS	.i
OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS	.i
PERSONAL AND CENTRAL SERVICES	.ii
LEADERSHIP	.iii
RECOMMENDATIONS	.iv
INTRODUCTION	.3
OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	.5
METHODOLOGY	.6
THE SURVEY	.6
FOCUS GROUPS	.6
INTERPRETATION NOTES	.7
RESULTS OF THE SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUPS	.9
USE OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES IN THE WORKPLACE	.9
First official language and oral communication	.10
First official language and written communication	.13
Writing in English: the easiest way	.14
SELF-ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE SKILLS	.18
CHANGES IN LANGUAGE SKILLS SINCE JOINING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	.21
AVAILABILITY OF WORK INSTRUMENTS AND PERSONAL AND CENTRAL SERVICES IN BOTH OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	.21
Delivery of personal and central services	.21
Differences in the delivery of personal and central services by region	.24
Problems in communicating with the regional office in Halifax	.25
The different realities as identified in the focus groups	.25
Retaining French skills in mostly English-speaking environments	.26
Which positions should be bilingual?	.27

DIRECTIVES ON THE EQUITABLE USE OF THE TWO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES IN THE WORKPLACE27
PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF ENGLISH AND FRENCH28
Solutions to obstacles29
RECENT PROGRESS: A CHANGE OF CULTURE UNDER WAY30
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS32
LEADERSHIP33
LANGUAGE TRAINING35
PROMOTION OF AN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE CONDUCIVE TO RESPECT FOR LANGUAGE RIGHTS35
APPENDIX Language profile of respondents for the survey of federal public service employees in New Brunswick38

INTRODUCTION

The *Official Languages Act*, adopted in 1988, provides for equality of English and French as the languages of work within federal institutions. Thus, in regions designated bilingual, these institutions must ensure that their work environments are conducive to the effective use of both official languages and they must accommodate the use of either official language by their officers and employees. Institutions must comply with certain minimal obligations:

- make available in both official languages services that are provided to officers and employees, including services that are provided to them as individuals and services that are centrally provided by the institution to support them in the performance of their duties (such as payroll, training, professional development, administrative services and computer services);
- make regularly and widely used documents and work instruments (including manuals, policies, directives and software) available to officers and employees in both official languages;
- ensure that supervisors are able to communicate in both official languages with officers and employees in carrying out their supervisory responsibility; and
- ensure that senior management has the capacity to function in both official languages.

In an area as complex as language of work, the attitudes of the people involved combine with operational needs in a way that does not always facilitate the free choice of language. It is important that senior management be aware of this situation and make the necessary efforts to reconcile these factors. Linguistic duality can only spread on the basis of mutual understanding and respect.

The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages has been seeking a better understanding of how Anglophone and Francophone public service employees interact in bilingual workplaces. In recent years it has been gathering quantitative and qualitative data so as to better discern what happens in bilingual workplaces and thus be in a position to show the federal government how to achieve respect for language of work rights.

Thus, in March 2004, the Commissioner made public an initial study of the language of work in departments located in the National Capital Region, entitled *Walking the Talk: Language of Work in the Federal Public Service*. This sociolinguistic analysis brought to light the predominance of English as the language of work within federal institutions.

Then, in April 2005, the Commissioner published a second study, this time on the language of work among public service employees working in departments or Crown corporations in bilingual regions of Quebec. Entitled *Making it Real: Promoting Respectful Coexistence of the Two Official Languages at Work*, this study revealed that in the bilingual regions of Quebec French predominates in federal government departments, whereas in Crown corporations there seems to be a more balanced use of the two languages.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This is the third in a series of studies by the Commissioner of Official Languages on the use of the official languages in bilingual workplaces. Its purpose is to determine whether public service employees are able to use the language of their choice and to what extent institutions are creating an environment conducive to the use of the two languages. Specifically the study seeks a better understanding of how Anglophone and Francophone public service employees who occupy bilingual positions in New Brunswick deal with the requirements of the *Official Languages Act*. The study also looks at positions in Nova Scotia that supervise or deliver internal services to employees in New Brunswick. As well, it looks at the problems that public service employees may experience in exercising their language rights, and it suggests practical solutions tailored to the environment in which they work.

The research underlying this study is partly quantitative sociolinguistic research (a survey) and partly qualitative (focus groups).

The survey

Francophone and Anglophone federal public service employees whose workplace is located in New Brunswick were surveyed.²

A total of 1,800 public service employees³ occupying a bilingual position in 22 federal institutions⁴ located in New Brunswick received the questionnaire. The respondents were selected at random from the database of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada. The sample was designed to reflect the proportions of respondents within institutions by official language and employment category.

After elimination of incomplete questionnaires, the valid response rate was found to be 29%, or 515 employees (147 Anglophones and 368 Francophones).⁵ The margin of error for the study is 4%. This sample provides a good indication of the level of use of English and French and of the employees' preoccupations. Furthermore, some elements mentioned in the focus groups reinforce the data gathered in the survey.

Focus groups

Focus groups were held with federal public service employees occupying bilingual positions who work in New Brunswick or—in the case of those who supervise or deliver personal and central services to New Brunswick public service employees—in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Members of the New Brunswick Federal Council also agreed to take part in a focus group.

2. The survey questionnaire is available on the Web site of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages at: www.ocol-clo.gc.ca.

3. The sample was established from data from the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada: 5,158 people are employed at federal institutions in New Brunswick at the officer, administrative support, middle/senior manager and executive levels.

4. Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Canada Firearms Centre, Canadian Heritage, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Correctional Service Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Health Canada, Industry Canada, Justice Canada, National Defence, National Parole Board, Natural Resources Canada, Passport Canada, Public Works and Government Services Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Social Development Canada, Status of Women Canada, Transport Canada and Veterans Affairs Canada.

5. See Appendix for details on the methodology used.

In all, seven focus groups were held, two in Halifax, three in Moncton, and two in Fredericton.

The focus groups sought to achieve a better understanding of the situations surrounding the use of English and French by employees located in New Brunswick. Special attention was paid to the situation of those who are supervised from Nova Scotia. We also tried to identify obstacles to using the two official languages in the workplace.

The findings from the survey and the focus groups were analyzed in co-operation with the Antima Group, a partner of TNS Canadian Facts, which is a public opinion research group. The questionnaire was the same one used in the study of April 2005.

Interpretation Notes

In reviewing the results of the study, all of the responses were taken into consideration, and the respondents' first official language and employment category were used as the key analytical variables. Consequently, the report carefully examines all of the possible differences in the way the representatives of the groups reacted to the questions.

It should be kept in mind that the answers to the questions on the Likert scale (one to five) are summarized in the total of the higher ratings (combining the percentage of respondents who gave either positive answers—"Mostly agree" or "Completely agree"—or negative answer—"Mostly disagree" or "Completely disagree"). The statistical differences⁶ in the ratings of the subgroups (generally based on first official language and employment category) are highlighted in the report. In addition, the tables and figures include the "n" value, which is the total number of respondents to whom the set of questions was submitted (where respondents who did not give a valid answer might have been excluded). In those cases, the "n" value refers to the unweighted number of respondents in the category.

6. Statistical differences were identified using a series of statistical tests (chi square, t tests and variance analysis). For each statistical procedure, a threshold of significance of 0.05 was used.

In reviewing the report, it is also important to keep in mind the other key interpretive elements:

- The term “respondent” is used in reference to unweighted survey data; for example, in the section of the study on respondent profile (see Appendix).
- The term “employee” is used in reference to weighted survey data. Since the survey results are representative of employees, the weighted data from the respondents are attributed to them.
- The terms “Anglophone” and “Francophone” are assigned based on the respondents’ first official language.

Note: Percentages in tables may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

R

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUPS

English is often predominant in the respondents' workplace despite the fact that almost three quarters (72%) said that French was their official language. To fully understand the respondents' reality, we looked at:

- the differences in employment categories,
- use of the official languages in the workplace,
- the respondents' self-assessment of their language skills,
- changes in language skills since joining the federal government,
- the availability of work instruments and personal and central services in both official languages, and
- directives aimed at ensuring equitable use of the two official languages in the workplace.

We also looked at employees' attitudes toward language of work.

Use of the official languages in the workplace

Table 1 shows the proportion of work time during which Anglophones and Francophones use each language of work for various tasks.

Table 1 - All respondents
Use of the official languages for various tasks

Official Languages	Reading		Writing		Speaking		Listening	
	French	English	French	English	French	English	French	English
Francophones (n=368)	25%	75%	28%	72%	49%	51%	45%	55%
Anglophones (n=147)	11%	89%	8%	92%	23%	77%	25%	75%
All respondents (n=515)	21%	79%	22%	78%	41%	59%	39%	61%

Q16. What percentage (%) of your workday is spent doing the following?

Francophones use their second language more often in performing all their routine tasks, in contrast to Anglophones, who mostly use their first language.

The significant use of English is mainly observed for “reading,” where 79% of all respondents said that they use English, and “writing,” where 78% of all respondents said they use English. On the other hand, the use of English was slightly lower for “speaking” (59%) and “listening” (61%).

The following tables pertain to the use of the respondents’ official language in oral and written communication. The tables also take account of interaction with the public.

First official language and oral communication

Table 2 shows the proportion of employees who always or usually use their first official language in oral communication.

Table 2 - All respondents
Proportion of employees using their first official language (oral communication)

Situation	Francophones (n=368)	Anglophones (n=147)	Total (n=515)
With their supervisor	66%	75%	69%
With their immediate colleagues	57%	70%	62%
With their subordinates	31%	43%	57%
During meetings with colleagues	27%	69%	40%
During general meetings	10%	67%	28%
During meetings with management or senior management	13%	63%	30%
With Francophone members of the public	81%	19%	66%
With Anglophone members of the public	5%	78%	30%

Q17a. Currently, do you use your first official language for oral communication most of the time (4) or always (5)?

In all cases (except interactions with Francophone members of the public), Anglophones use their first official language more in various work situations than Francophones. The difference in use of the first official language is more pronounced for meetings. For example, in general meetings, two-thirds of Anglophones use their first official language most of the time or always, compared with only 10% of Francophones. Observations made during the focus groups help explain the situation as follows:

Many Francophones choose to use English during meetings in order to ensure that all attendees are able to take part in the discussions, since Anglophones do not have equal proficiency in their second official language.

Although the study is on language of work, we included questions on service to the public as an indicator of the understanding of language obligations. Nineteen percent of Anglophones reported that they address Francophone members of the public in English, and 5% of Francophones address Anglophone members of the public in French. This suggests that some public service employees do not understand their language obligations with regard to service to the public.

Table 3 shows the preference of employees regarding the use of their first official language in the workplace.

Table 3 - All respondents
Employees who would like to use their first official language in the workplace
(oral communication)

Situation	Francophones (n=368)			Anglophones (n=147)		
	More often	Less often	No change	More often	Less often	No change
With supervisor	26%	1%	74%	2%	9%	90%
With immediate colleagues	33%	1%	66%	7%	13%	79%
During meetings with colleagues	48%	2%	50%	6%	14%	80%
During large-scale meetings	56%	2%	41%	6%	13%	81%
During meetings with management or senior management	51%	2%	47%	5%	10%	85%

Q17b. Ideally, would you prefer to use your first official language for oral communications?

In all cases, Francophones are much more inclined than Anglophones to say that they would like to use their first official language more often, and Anglophones have more of a tendency to say that they would like to use English less often in each situation. This could be an indication that some Anglophones would like to have more opportunity to speak French at work. These results are similar to those from our previous studies on language of work done in the National Capital Region and in Quebec. Members of the linguistic majority wish to use their second language more to increase or maintain their knowledge.

Generally speaking, Francophone respondents are less satisfied with the use of their first official language than Anglophones, particularly when they are in groups, such as in meetings.

Moreover, a certain number of Anglophones say they would like to use their first official language less often at work.

First official language and written communication

Table 4 shows the proportion of employees who use their first official language most of the time or always for written communication in the workplace.

Table 4 - All respondents
Proportion of employees using their first official language (written communication)

Situation	Francophones (n=368)	Anglophones (n=147)	Total (n=515)
With their supervisor	41%	81%	54%
With immediate colleagues	31%	80%	46%
With their subordinates	31%	70%	43%
With management or senior management	19%	75%	36%
With Francophone members of the public	76%	27%	62%
With Anglophone members of the public	6%	86%	30%

Q18a. Currently, do you write in your first official language most of the time (4) or always (5)?

Except when writing to Francophone members of the public, the proportion of Anglophone employees who use their first official language for various written tasks is substantially higher than that of Francophones. This tendency is particularly evident in written communications with management or senior management, where Anglophones use their first official language far more often (75%) than Francophones do (19%).

Eighty-one percent of Anglophones use their first language when writing to their supervisor, compared with only 41% of Francophone respondents.

Writing in English: the easiest way

As reported in the focus groups, writing in English is also easier for Francophones. Many of the Francophone participants said that they prefer to write in English for a number of reasons. First, because they want to be understood: acquiring the knowledge of French technical terminology in an English work environment could be an obstacle. Another factor is that writing in French creates twice the work. Those who choose to write in French also have to write the English version or revise the translation. They therefore feel that they save time by writing in English, as illustrated by the comments quoted in the boxes.

“More and more, we alternate language use in meetings. But we are lagging behind with respect to documents. I would like to submit documents in French, but if I want senior management to understand, I must write in English. If not, I know that it will be understood poorly or not at all--so we accommodate them.” [Translation]

“For me, it’s a question of ease. I do what is easiest, which is to write in English. Otherwise, I have to write in both languages, which means twice the work, because sending documents for translation is very expensive.” [Translation]

Table 5 shows the preferences of employees who, in various work situations, would prefer to write in their first official language.

Table 5 - All respondents
Desire to use the first official language in various work situations (written communication)

Situation	Francophones (n=368)			Anglophones (n=147)		
	More often	Less often	No change	More often	Less often	No change
With their supervisor	24%	2%	74%	2%	7%	91%
With immediate colleagues*	28%	4%	69%	4%	12%	85%
With management or senior management*	41%	3%	57%	4%	5%	91%

Q18b. Ideally, you would prefer to write in your first official language?

* See note on page 8.

As in the case of oral communication, Francophones are far more inclined than Anglophones to say that they would like to use their first official language more often in various work situations. Whereas only 4% of Anglophones report that they would like to use their first official language more often in any of the three situations related to internal communication, a large percentage of Francophones say they would rather use French more often when communicating with management or senior management (41%), colleagues (28%) and their supervisor (24%).

Employees indicated the three biggest organizational obstacles in their workplace. Among the 14 items listed in the survey, we identified those that were reported in more than 20% of all responses from the two language groups.

Table 6 lists the main obstacles reported by Anglophones and Francophones.

Table 6
Main organizational obstacles to use of the employee's preferred official language

Statement	Reported first		Reported second		Reported third		Total	
	F	A	F	A	F	A	F	A
c –Discussions in meetings attended by Anglophones and Francophones are conducted primarily in one language.	18%	12%	10%	10%	9%	5%	37%	27%
h –There are not enough people who can at least read and understand their second official language.	8%	10%	8%	7%	10%	3%	26%	20%
j –There are too many unilingual people in positions of authority.	12%	7%	9%	4%	6%	3%	27%	14%
i –Supervisors lack sufficient knowledge of their second official language.	7%	6%	8%	8%	7%	9%	22%	23%
m –English is more acceptable than French in my workplace.	9%	9%	8%	4%	7%	4%	24%	17%

Q24. Please indicate to what extent you feel the following organizational obstacles render difficult to use your preferred official language of choice in your place of work?

Note: F= Francophones, A= Anglophones.

Overall, there was a fairly strong consensus on the main obstacles. Both Anglophones and Francophones identified “Discussions in meetings attended by Anglophones and Francophones are conducted primarily in one language” as the most frequent obstacle, with a total of 34% (26% for Anglophones and 37% for Francophones).

Besides this first obstacle, based on the total number of reports in table 6, Anglophones reported the following as the most common obstacles:

- Supervisors lack sufficient knowledge of their second official language (English).
- There are not enough people who can at least read and understand their second official language (English).

The two other most common obstacles reported by Francophones were:

- There are too many unilingual people in positions of authority.
- There are not enough people who can at least read and understand their second official language (French).

In the focus groups, Francophones reported that the lack of support from middle managers is another obstacle to their ability to work in their official language of choice. However, in many cases, they feel that senior management is “on their side.” This was often heard in the focus groups:

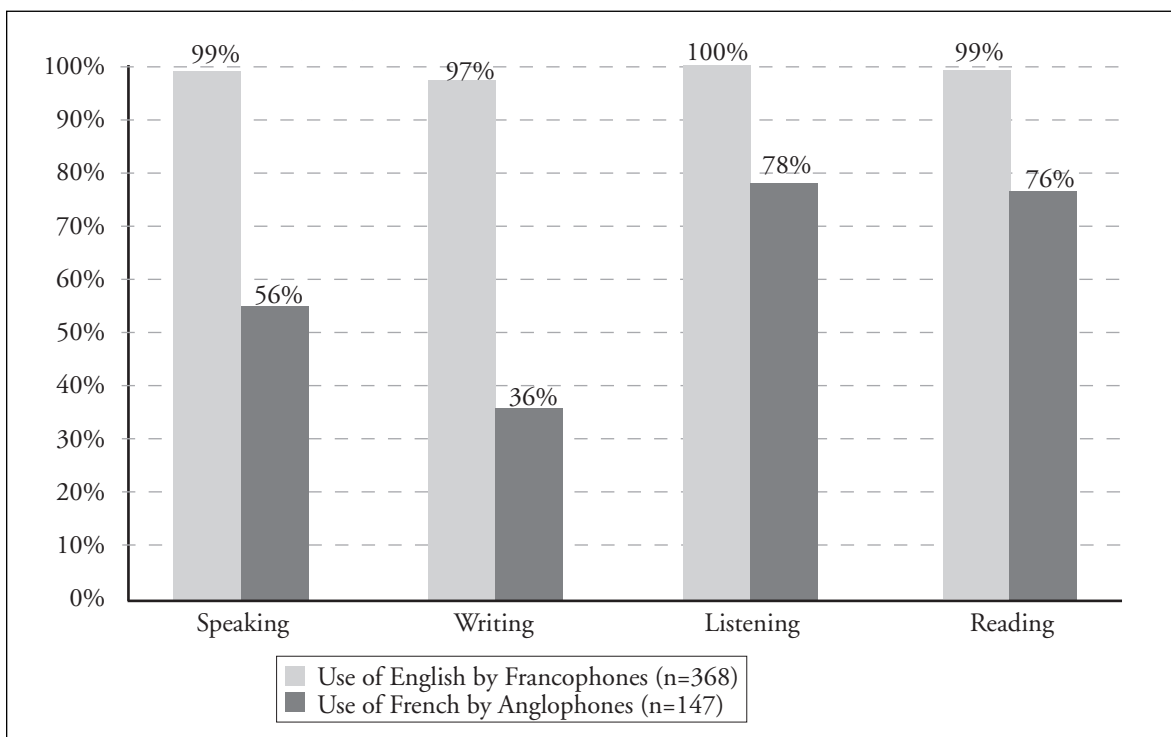
*“The shortcoming is more at the middle management level. That is where people are least convinced about official languages.”
[Translation]*

I find that senior managers are really onboard.” [Translation]

Self-assessment of language skills

Anglophones and Francophones felt they had a very good knowledge of their first official language. Regarding their second official language, as shown in Figure 1, Anglophones rated their skills lower than Francophones.

Figure 1 - All respondents
Self-assessment of language skills in the second official language



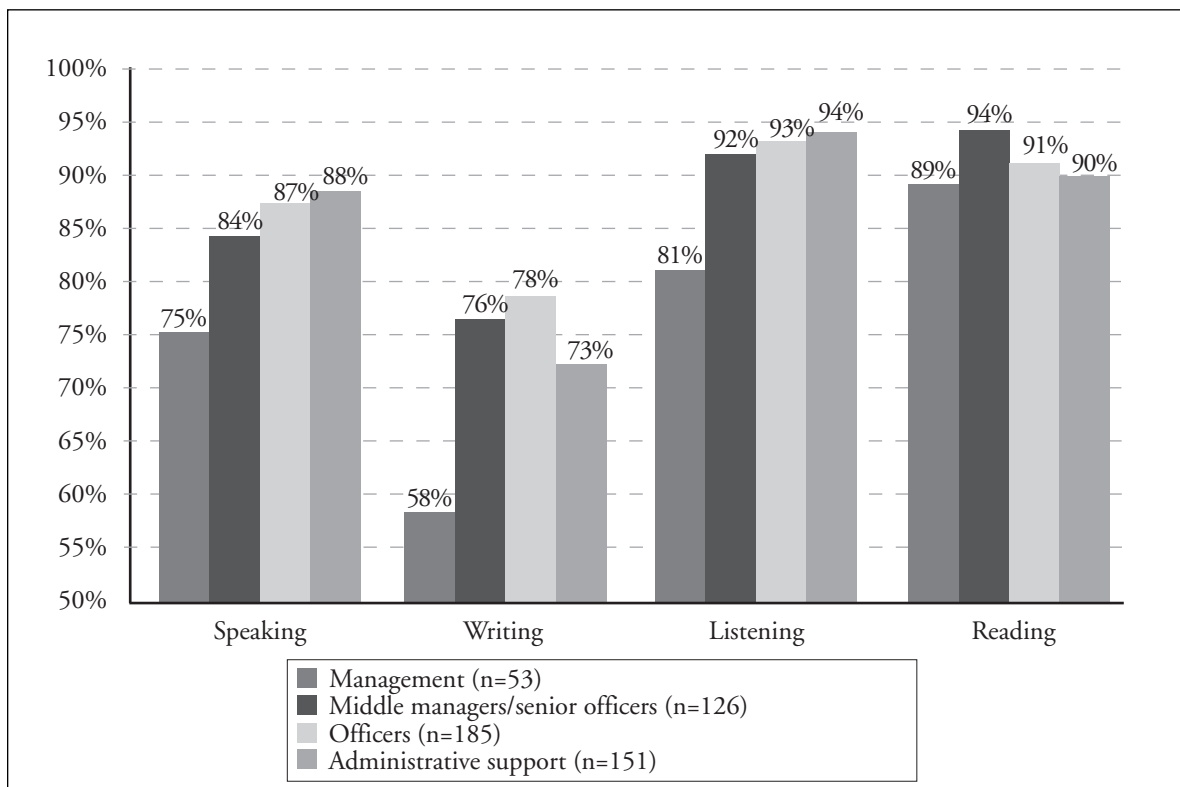
Q11. Rate your knowledge of both official languages using the scale provided?
(Scores represent the % of respondents who rated their knowledge of their second official language as either *Quite Well* (4) or *Fluently* (5) on a 5-point scale).

As shown in Figure 1, all Francophone respondents are very comfortable in English (reporting that they have good knowledge of or are fluent in their second language). Anglophone respondents reported a moderate level of confidence in their comprehension skills (78% for listening and 76% for reading), but just over half (56%) said they speak French “Quite Well” (26%) or “Fluently” (30%).

Even more alarming is their lack of confidence in their ability to write in French. Just over a third of Anglophones (36%) said they wrote in French quite well (23%) or fluently (13%).

Figure 2 shows the differences in the self-assessment of French skills between the respondents from the two language communities by employment category.

Figure 2 - All respondents
Self-assessment of language skills in French by employment category of respondent

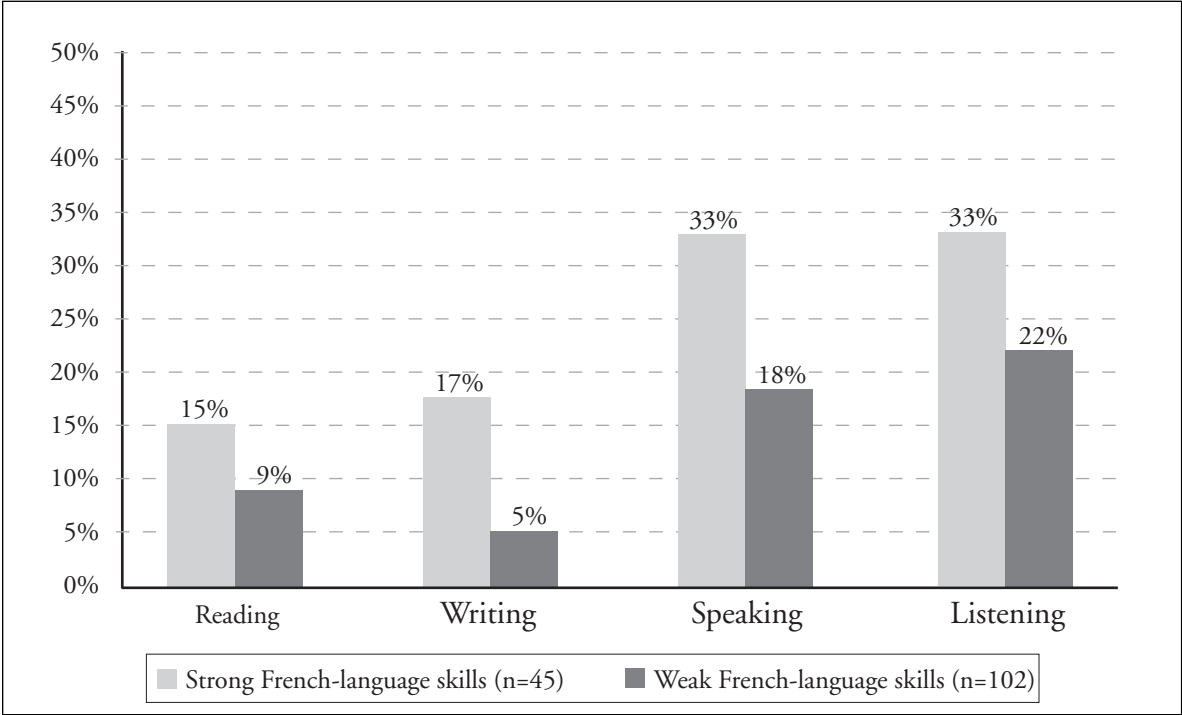


Q11. Rate your knowledge of both official languages using the scale provided? (Scores represent the % of respondents who rated their knowledge of their second official language as either Quite Well (4) or Fluently (5) on a 5-point scale).

Respondents in management positions are fairly confident about their French language skills in terms of listening (81%) and reading (89%). However, they are less confident of their ability to speak French (75%) and considerably less confident in their writing skills (58%). Managers' self-assessment of their French skills is lower than that of other employment categories.

Figure 3 shows the level of use of French by Anglophone respondents in the workplace based on their assessment of their French-language skills.

Figure 3
Use of French by Anglophones in the workplace based on their French-language proficiency



Q16. What percentage (%) of your workday is spent doing the following?
(Anglophone respondents only)

The extent of second-language use is therefore proportional to knowledge of that language. The fact remains, however, that even if Anglophones are proficient in French, they use French to a limited extent (15% for reading and 33% for listening).

Changes in language skills since joining the federal government

Francophones report that their proficiency in English has improved since they joined the federal government (70%). A slightly higher percentage of Anglophones (75%) report that their French-language skills have improved.

While only four employees (0.9%) said that their proficiency in English deteriorated (two Francophones and two Anglophones), it is somewhat disturbing to find that 89 employees or 18% (74 Francophones (20%) and 15 Anglophones (12%)) reported that their proficiency in French deteriorated. It is therefore not surprising to find that Francophone employees who feel that their proficiency in French has deteriorated are more inclined to say that they would like to be able to use French more often:

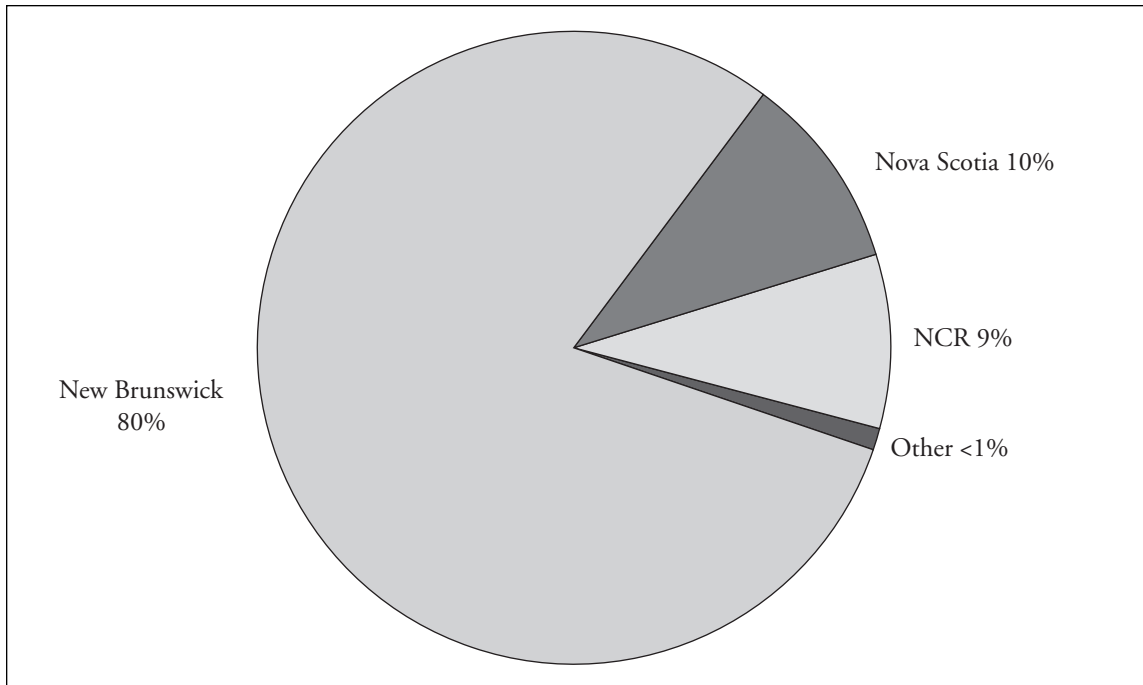
- with close colleagues;
- with subordinates;
- during meetings with colleagues;
- during general meetings with management or senior management.

Availability of work instruments and personal and central services in both official languages

Delivery of personal and central services

As shown in Figure 4 on the next page, eight out of 10 employees receive their personal and central services from an office located in New Brunswick. The other respondents receive those services from an office located in Nova Scotia (10%) or the National Capital Region (9%). Fewer than 1% of employees receive personal and central services from an office located somewhere else in Canada.

Figure 4
Location of office providing personal and central services



Q10. You receive your personal or central services from... (n=515)

Under the *Official Languages Act*, all employees who work in a bilingual region, regardless of their first official language, must always have access to work instruments and personal and central services in the official language of their choice. In most cases, there is no problem for personal and central services in English (at least 96% of employees reported that all five of the services listed in Table 7 on the next page are usually or always available in English).

However, personal and central services in French are not as available. As shown in Table 7, the availability of personal and central services in French is considerably lower than the availability of personal and central services in English.

Table 7 - All respondents
Availability of work instruments and personal and central services in the two official languages

Work instrument/ service	Language	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always	Top box*
Training and development courses	English **(n=494)	<1%	4%	16%	80%	96%
	**French (n=479)	7%	36%	27%	31%	58%
Work instruments	English (n=506)	<1%	<1%	9%	90%	99%
	French (n=492)	3%	19%	31%	46%	77%
E-mails	English (n=504)	<1%	<1%	6%	93%	99%
	French (n=495)	1%	12%	27%	60%	87%
Internal services	English (n=506)	<1%	<1%	6%	93%	99%
	French (n=485)	4%	11%	15%	70%	85%
Computer services	English (n=507)	<1%	1%	6%	93%	99%
	French (n=478)	8%	11%	17%	64%	81%

Q21. The following questions relate to the availability of work tools and internal services in both official languages:

* The top box combines the percentages for Often and Always.

** All of the respondents (515) answered for each work instrument and their availability in each language, but not all respondents gave answers in every section.

It is clear that the availability of training and development courses in French is a problem for employees in New Brunswick (36% say courses are offered sometimes; and 7% say they are never offered). Whether these courses are provided by a federal institution or an outside supplier, they must be available in both official languages.

It is also disturbing to find that a relatively large number of Francophone employees (22%) reported that work instruments (manuals, reference documents, guidelines) are available in French only sometimes or never.

Anglophones and Francophones agree that it is more likely that work instruments and services (such as training and development courses) will be available in English than in French. However, Francophones consider the problem more serious than their Anglophone counterparts, especially with regard to training and development courses.

Differences in the delivery of personal and central services by region

There are also significant differences in the availability of work instruments and personal and central services in French depending on where they are provided (as shown in Figure 4 on page 22).

Table 8 shows the proportion of employees, both Anglophones and Francophones, who reported that services are often or always available in French, by the location of the offices.

Table 8
Availability of personal and central services in French by location of office

Services in French	New Brunswick (n=392)	Nova Scotia (n=49)	National Capital Region (n=47)
Training and development courses	63%	43%	53%
Work instruments	79%	67%	76%
E-mails	88%	79%	86%
Internal services	88%	54%	91%
Computer services	85%	64%	70%

Respondents who receive personal and central services from an office located in Nova Scotia feel that they receive much less service in French than employees who are served by offices in New Brunswick or the National Capital Region.

There is a significant difference in the availability of training and development courses in French: only 43% when they come from Nova Scotia (compared with 63% when they are provided by an office in New Brunswick and 53% by an office in the NCR). Another telling example is the delivery of personal and central services: only 54% when the services come from Nova Scotia (compared with 88% for an office located in New Brunswick and 91% for an office located in the NCR).

Problems in communicating with the regional office in Halifax

The comments below from Anglophones in Halifax and Francophones in New Brunswick who report to a regional head office located in Halifax, speak volumes about the different perceptions of each group regarding the role of Halifax as the regional head office for New Brunswick, a bilingual region.

Francophone participants feel they cannot work in their language of choice when communicating with staff in Halifax. Anglophones in Halifax do not see the need to provide personal and central services in French, because their environment is unilingual and they do not appear to understand their linguistic obligations.

The different realities as identified in the focus groups

Anglophones said:

“Employees in Fredericton are asked once a month if they would like the emails delivered in French or English, they are happy to get them in English.”

“We are required to give service in French, is there a need to?”

“If there was a need for it that would be good.”

“I never had to deal with anyone in French in 22 years.”

Francophones said :

“When we speak with our regional office in Halifax, it’s another story. Even if positions are designated bilingual there, everything is done in English.” [Translation]

“It is a constant battle with Halifax because they don’t believe that there are enough Francophones in some places in New Brunswick to warrant bilingual services.” [Translation]

“They (Francophones) will ask for service in English because they believe that they won’t receive good quality service in French.” [Translation]

However, Francophones admit that part of the problem stems from the fact that they simply agree to communicate with Halifax in English, which reinforces the perceptions of Anglophone managers in that city, who think that it is not necessary to address the needs of Francophone employees.

As the focus groups show, in addition to the lack of awareness on the part of staff in Halifax, there seems to be a shortage of bilingual employees in that city. Although the survey did not contain specific questions on the subject, the focus groups' participants pointed out that there is a lack of qualified bilingual staff in the Nova Scotia offices to provide these services in French. It is therefore important to expand the area of selection when staffing positions in order to create a larger pool of bilingual candidates or to introduce better language training programs.

Retaining French skills in mostly English-speaking environments

Anglophone participants in the focus groups, all of whom hold bilingual positions, said that their biggest source of frustration was the obligation to take language training for long periods, only to return to an English-only environment where their skills quickly erode.

This situation is attributable to the fact that many departments have not introduced effective mechanisms to help employees retain their language skills and to make them aware of their responsibility to use French more often in the workplace.

“I’m required to be bilingual, but in my personal experience I’ve never used French in my whole career. I have to maintain my French level. I wanted to learn French. I took French classes on my own. I’m frustrated that I can’t use a skill.”

“They take you from a real environment and put you into a false environment and then put you back into a real environment.”

“It is hard to find solutions or require Anglophones to be bilingual, because we are surrounded by English-speaking provinces.”

Which positions should be bilingual?

Francophones who do not receive services in French wish there were more bilingual positions providing supervision and central and personal services. Anglophones wonder about the need to have bilingual positions when English is the predominant language in the workplace.

Based on the comments of some of the participants, there are lingering misperceptions and misunderstandings about positions whose incumbents “absolutely” must be bilingual. At the other end of the spectrum, other participants feel that bilingualism is a necessary skill for managers, which is just as important as technical competency.

It is clear that employees are unfamiliar with language rights and obligations related to language of work and service to the public.

Directives on the equitable use of the two official languages in the workplace

Three-quarters of respondents said that their organization has developed and implemented policies aimed at ensuring equitable use of the two official languages in the workplace. However, a relatively large proportion of respondents (14%) from the various employment categories did not know whether such measures had been taken. Management was the most aware group, with only 2% of respondents indicating that they were not aware that measures had been taken.

Perceptions of the use of English and French

To help them rate their comfort level with the use of the official languages in the workplace, employees were asked whether they agree or disagree with a series of statements (Table 9).

Table 9 - All respondents
Proportion of employees who agree with the following statements

Statement	Francophones (n=368)	Anglophones (n=147)	Total (n=515)
I am used to working in English	85%	99%	89%
I am used to working in French	65%	57%	63%
I have little confidence in the work that I do in English	4%	2%	4%
I have little confidence in the work that I do in French	9%	31%	16%
I prefer to use my supervisor's language	52%	50%	52%
I prefer to work in French because I want to receive due recognition for my work	22%	4%	17%
I prefer to work in English because I want to receive due recognition for my work	31%	31%	31%
I am not familiar with my rights regarding language of work	18%	50%	18%
I am not comfortable using English in my workplace	4%	4%	4%
I am not comfortable using French in my workplace	16%	21%	17%

Q26. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements?

To recap, these data illustrate the following points:

- Even though almost all employees are accustomed to working in English (89%), almost two-thirds (63%) are also accustomed to working in French.
- Anglophones are less confident about the work they do in French (31% lack confidence) than Francophones are about the work they do in English (4%).
- A larger proportion of Francophones (31%) than Anglophones (4%) prefer to work in their second official language so that they receive due recognition for their work.
- Eighteen percent of employees reported that they are not very familiar with their rights regarding language of work.
- A majority of Francophone (52%) and Anglophone (50%) respondents prefer to use their supervisor's language.
- A larger proportion of Francophones are used to working in English (85%) than in their first language (65%).

Anglophones are less confident than Francophones about their ability to use their second official language. This lack of confidence may explain why English is used more often in large groups, such as meetings.

Solutions to obstacles

As part of the study, employees were asked to give their opinion on a series of proposed solutions to the identified obstacles.

Employees were asked to identify the five solutions they considered to be the most effective. The following were the most common answers.

1. Language training should be available for everyone: 38% (30% for Francophones and 54% for Anglophones).
2. Courses focusing on reading and listening skills in the second official language should be available for everyone: 35% (27% for Francophones and 55% for Anglophones).
3. Positions that involve supervisory duties should all be filled by bilingual candidates: 34% (40% for Francophones and 22% for Anglophones).
4. Refresher courses in the first official language should be made available to staff: 23% (22% for Francophones and 24% for Anglophones).
5. Senior management should periodically remind all managers and supervisors of the importance of fostering an environment conducive to the use of both official languages: 20% (23% for Francophones and 15% for Anglophones).

Three of the top five solutions deal with language training. These responses show that language training is seen as indispensable to increasing the bilingual capacity in the public service and for promoting greater use of the two official languages.

Employees, mainly Anglophones, feel that the best way to overcome the current obstacles is to make language training more widely available in the workplace.

Recent progress: a change of culture under way

Despite the lingering problems the outlook for progress is encouraging. In the focus groups, the participants noted some improvements in recent years.

For example, Anglophone and Francophone participants alike, as well as members of the New Brunswick Federal Council, say that a change in culture is happening in the New Brunswick region and in Halifax. Focus group participants report tangible progress and more subtle changes in attitudes and culture. Generally speaking, use of the two official languages in the workplace is more tolerated and accepted, as shown by many changes in behaviour:

- Participants from the three regions (Halifax, Fredericton and Moncton) all pointed out that all official correspondence is now available in both official languages. This is standard practice, and senior management tends to apply the policy rigorously.
- In some departments and agencies, staff meetings are increasingly conducted in both official languages. Participants noted, however, that this practice had not necessarily become the norm in all workplaces. In some departments, meetings conducted in English only are still common.

“The course registration rate is high. Public servants are recognizing more and more that it is good to be bilingual. They want to learn. There is a strong desire on their part to become bilingual” [Translation]

“I feel completely accepted as a Francophone. This was not always the case.” [Translation]

“We conduct meetings in both languages.”

“We have watchdogs now. I can’t send emails in English only anymore.” [Translation]

“There is more awareness of the bilingual issue. Senior management is responsible for this. People who are looking to climb the ladder should be required to know French.”

“The websites and the information are now totally bilingual.”

“There is a change in culture occurring. At the golf tournament, there were four Anglophones who had taken language training. They decided to only speak French during the nine holes!” [Translation]

- Increased access to information on rights and obligations under the Act is making both Anglophones and Francophones more inclined to exercise their rights and fulfill their obligations.
- It appears that, over the past two or three years, employees have had more opportunity to communicate with their supervisor in the language of their choice.
- Anglophone and Francophone participants said that more managers are asking for the opportunity to improve their language skills and want to get French language training, which did not seem to be the case in the past. Participants acknowledge that the new policy on imperative staffing for the EX group has had something to do with this new attitude.
- Departments and agencies have carried out many different types of activities and initiatives to promote the use of French and enable those who have had language training to retain their skills. Specific initiatives include “French Fridays,” French-language libraries and book fairs, and French lunches.

Participants attributed these positive changes to active support from senior management. Participants from institutions where such changes have not taken place cited the lack of active support from senior management as a possible explanation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our study of the language of work in New Brunswick demonstrates that positive changes have recently begun to take place with regard to the use of the two official languages in the workplace. The attitude and the active support of senior management have contributed to these changes.

However, the study also reminds us that we are still far from the finish line, and efforts must continue to be made to preserve what has been achieved and make further progress in applying the *Official Languages Act*.

Here are some characteristic experiences of federal employees occupying bilingual positions in New Brunswick:

- Francophones often forego their right to speak French, and English often has a large place in the work environment.
- More Anglophones are applying for language training.
- There is limited access to language training and retention tools.

A concerted effort by all departments will be needed if employees are to be able to choose their language of work.

This study has revealed shortcomings similar to those identified in the two previous studies of language of work.⁷ The reality in bilingual workplaces is that very often one language predominates to the detriment of the other. Namely, English predominates in the National Capital Region and in New Brunswick; in Quebec, French predominates except in Crown corporations, where use of the two languages is more balanced.

Since some of the recommendations of the two previous studies targeted similar shortcomings to the ones revealed in New Brunswick, the Commissioner is reiterating five recommendations from those studies, which are found in this study as numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 and 9, along with six new recommendations specifically targeted at the situation in New Brunswick.

7. *Walking the Talk: Language of Work in the Federal Public Service*, 2004 and *Making it Real: Promoting Respectful Coexistence of the Two Official Languages at Work*, 2005.

Leadership

Analysis of the situation leads us to conclude that lack of leadership by the regional administrators of certain institutions is holding back employees who wish to further develop and use their second language. Now that there is more openness and respect in the workplace, regional administrators must redouble their efforts and not abandon their employees in midstream without any further resources. The balance, which has in some cases been achieved, is being imperilled by a lack of understanding of policies on the part of many employees and managers and by difficulties in accessing language training.

The results of the study *Attitudes Towards the Use of Both Official Languages Within the Public Service of Canada*—prepared on behalf of the Treasury Board Secretariat—drew attention to the existence of misunderstandings and erroneous perceptions about the rights and obligations of public service employees. The study highlights the importance of better information sharing. It recommends that the government of Canada should correct misconceptions about the scope and requirements of policies. In 2003, the Treasury Board Secretariat undertook to follow up on the report; this responsibility now rests with the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada. The Commissioner made a recommendation in this regard in her 2002-2003 annual report.

We note that the Agency has set up the Innovation Fund which helps departments undertake measures to favour the use of the two languages, and that it has started to plan a program on education and awareness for employees. However, this study has shown that there continues to be a need for such programs. Therefore:

Recommendation 1

The Commissioner recommends that the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada undertake, by December 2006, an awareness and education program for employees working in bilingual regions to eliminate misunderstandings and misconceptions about the rights and obligations of public service employees regarding the *Official Languages Act*.

The Canada School of Public Service is not providing managers and supervisors with specific courses on official languages and on their language-related obligations, because these topics are in part covered in other courses. On the other hand, the School is currently

reviewing its products and programs in the light of the learning needs of the public service. It should take this opportunity to develop specific training on official languages, with a focus on creating a bilingual work environment.

Recommendation 2

The Commissioner recommends that the Canada School of Public Service offer, by June 2007, mandatory training courses for managers and supervisors to make them aware of the impact the unequal status of the two official languages has in the work environment and enable them to put in place the necessary measures to attain a work environment that respects employees' language rights.

Recommendation 3

The Commissioner recommends that Treasury Board ensure, by December 2006, that the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada and the Canada School of Public Service have the necessary funds to carry out a government-wide awareness and education program on the rights and obligations of federal employees and institutions subject to the Act.

The findings of the present study also show that supervision in the employee's chosen language is a major problem in New Brunswick, notably because supervisors have an insufficient knowledge of their second language.

We are still awaiting the adoption of a new policy that increases the level of bilingualism for supervisory positions to a CBC level, as the Commissioner recommended in the previous studies of language of work. It is essential that the language requirements of positions be reviewed as new staffing actions are taken.

Recommendation 4

The Commissioner recommends that Treasury Board raise to at least CBC, by December 31, 2007, the linguistic profile for all supervisory positions in bilingual regions, when the incumbent is required to supervise employees in bilingual or either/or positions.

Language training

The new Directive on Language Training and Learning Retention issued by Treasury Board on April 1, 2004, recommends that training be taken as soon as possible after appointment or deployment to a bilingual position, for all employees.

The government takes the view that learning and retention of the second language by an employee is not just the responsibility of the employee but also of the employer and the department or agency. Mastery of the second language needs to be incorporated into employees' professional and career development plans, and the new policies on official languages stipulate that managers must encourage this type of training within the limits of available resources. A new model for language training has been under review for the last two years and investments are delayed.

Recommendation 5

The Commissioner supports the recommendation of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages that by December 2006 the Canada School of Public Service begin promoting its language training services and that these services be accessible to all federal employees within a reasonable timeframe, without any restrictions in terms of specific groups of employees.

Promotion of an organizational culture conducive to respect for language rights

Regional administrators must redouble their efforts to create an organizational culture that is respectful of language rights. They must explain their vision of linguistic duality in the workplace so that everyone understands it and works toward it. They must become models of bilingualism and must at all times respect the language rights of their employees with regard to personal and central services, work instruments and supervision.

A key finding of this study is that it is hard for a work unit located in a unilingual region to respect the language rights of employees located in a bilingual region. While bilingual resources are certainly lacking in unilingual regions, the main problem is simply a lack of understanding of the need to deliver bilingual personal and central services.

Tools need to be developed to facilitate the use of both official languages in the workplace. To advance the cause of linguistic duality in the workplace, deputy heads must encourage Francophones to use French and Anglophones to retain and develop the knowledge they have acquired after they return from language training. Discussions should be initiated between deputy heads and members of the New Brunswick Federal Council with a view to developing instruments to facilitate the coexistence of the two official languages in the workplace.

Recommendation 6

The Commissioner recommends that the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada take steps to have regional administrators in New Brunswick review employees' work environments by December 2006, draw up a list of organizational problems that are holding back the use of the two official languages and the full recognition of employees' language rights, and issue a five-year plan to correct the identified shortcomings.

Recommendation 7

The Commissioner recommends that the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada take steps to have regional administrators in New Brunswick establish a mechanism for consulting and meeting with members of the New Brunswick Federal Council so that the Council can assist with the work of implementing the five-year plan.

Recommendation 8

The Commissioner recommends that regional administrators set up advisory committees on official languages in order to develop strategies and prepare workshops and compendiums of good practices so as to encourage the use of both official languages in every department.

Recommendation 9

The Commissioner recommends that regional administrators evaluate directors general on the basis of the actions they take to create an environment that is respectful of the language rights of employees, and make this a prerequisite in determining performance bonuses.

Recommendation 10

The Commissioner recommends that regional administrators require directors general to establish a language mentoring service in their organization.

Recommendation 11

The Commissioner recommends that the Public Service Commission take steps to optimize the pool of candidates in appointment processes to staff bilingual positions located in Nova Scotia which provide bilingual personal and central services.

APPENDIX

Language profile of respondents for the survey of federal public service employees in New Brunswick

The total number of potential respondents (population for this study) was 5,158. That number included public service employees in bilingual positions in 22 federal departments located in New Brunswick. The survey questionnaire was sent out by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

Valid records were obtained after eliminating duplicate and invalid records (e.g., departments or provinces not included in the study, incomplete addresses, staff not designated bilingual, etc.). Once the initial sorting was done, there were 2,495 valid records remaining. A sample of 1,800 public service employees in bilingual positions in the 22 federal departments was chosen from among the 2,495 public service employees and they were sent the questionnaire. The respondents were chosen randomly from the personnel database of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada. The initially random and then stratified sample gave a proportional representation of respondents within the target institutions and provided stratification based on two key variables: first official language and employment category.

The initial data (valid questionnaires) were weighted so that the sample would reflect the same proportion of respondents in each of the two key variables as that of the population. After incomplete questionnaires were eliminated, there were 515 questionnaires remaining (147 Anglophones and 368 Francophones), for an overall response rate of 28.6%.

Table 10 on the next page, shows the link between the proportion of employees in the population (by key analytical variable), the proportion of employees who responded to the survey (unweighted data) and the weighted data. As shown in the table, the proportion of respondents represented in the unweighted and weighted data is very close, varying only 2% to 3% for most variables. Managers are the only exception: the management group accounts for 10% of the unweighted data in the sample but only 3% of the weighted data. The reason for this rather significant difference stems from the decision to have a final representation of managers in the weighted sample that was the same as the representation in the population.

Table 10
Weighting of data based on key variables

Key analytical variables	Percentage in population* (N=5 158)	Unweighted data (n=515)		Weighted data (n=515)	
		No.**	%	No.**	%
First official language					
English	31%	147	29%	160	31%
French	69%	368	72%	355	69%
Employment category					
Officers	38%	185	36%	196	38%
Administrative support	32%	151	29%	163	32%
Management	3%	53	10%	17	3%
Senior officers	3%	126	25%	138	27%

* The term "population" refers to the total number of employees, from which the sample was selected.

** Number of questionnaires analysed in the study.

