

The Commission confirmed that relations between French- and English-Canadians had reached a crisis level, and that the growing cultural segregation between the two language communities could no longer be tolerated.

On the basis of these assertions, the Commission recommended that the government adopt a large-scale program of intervention to strengthen and consolidate the bilingual character of the country as a whole. The federal government ratified most of the Commission's recommendations, and in 1969 Parliament adopted the Official Languages Act, section 2 of which reads as follows:

"The English and French languages are the official languages of Canada for all purposes of the Parliament and Government of Canada, and possess and enjoy equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all the institutions of the Parliament and Government of Canada."

It is important to note that this act rests far more on the principle of personality than on that of territoriality, a point I will return to later.

Among others, the act contains a series of related measures pertaining to the following:

- ways and means of promulgating official texts in the two languages;
- equal status for both versions of these texts;
- the public's right to be served in its own language;
- the obligation of federal departments and agencies to provide service in both languages;
- use of the two languages in a legal context;
- creation of the office of Commissioner of Official Languages, a sort of language ambassador who audits the government's adherence to the rights created by the act and generally serves as a spokesman on language questions.

On the recommendation of the Royal Commission, the government accepted two basic principles that were reaffirmed in the declaration it made a month ago: namely, the crucial importance of language rights for the country's unity and identity, and the important role conferred upon the federal government, even in an area such as education, which lies exclusively within provincial jurisdiction. For example, for the past 12 years the federal government has been supplying the provinces with funds to improve the quality and availability of instruction in the other official language.

The Official Languages Act is also based on the principle of "personality", by the fact that it guarantees to *all* Canadians the right to receive public service in either official language, as opposed to the principle of territoriality, which recognizes language rights by region of residence only. Herein lies one essential difference between Belgium and Canada.

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