



**SOCIÉTÉ ÉCONOMIQUE DE L'ONTARIO**

**Toronto, March 19, 2025**

**Paul Dubé**

Good evening, distinguished guests,

It's an honour and privilege to be speaking to you tonight, as we celebrate the Month of La Francophonie.

Now is an opportune time to reflect on the challenges that Francophones in Ontario are grappling with.

I want to take a quick moment to talk about the work my office does to uphold language rights in our province and help the Ontario Francophone community thrive.

This year marks the Ontario Ombudsman's 50th anniversary.

For 50 years, we have strived to ensure that public institutions serve Ontarians in a way that is respectful of their rights.

For French language services in particular, I would like to revisit what I said in 2019, when three offices of the Legislature were merged into one Ombudsman's Office.

At that time, I made a number of commitments that I continue to stand by:

- Although we did not set out to be tasked with overseeing the application of the *French Language Services Act*, nor were we consulted about this decision, we have taken this responsibility seriously since day one and remain committed to doing so.
- The government's stated goal for the merger was to enable the Ombudsman's Office to contribute its expertise to French language service matters and enhance oversight of the *French Language Services Act*.

And that is exactly what has happened.

- From the outset, my vision was for the French Language Services Unit and Commissioner to have a meaningful impact on the promotion of language rights.
- I promised that the Commissioner would be proactive, visible, accessible, and actively engaged with the Francophone community, and have a high profile within the community.
- I supported the establishment of a French Language Services Unit that is accessible, is made up of skilled and passionate people, and has the resources required to do impactful work.
- I promised that the voices of Francophones would be directly heard. AND
- I promised that the Commissioner's investigations and reports would effect positive change.

I am proud to say, we have kept our word.

In just five years, the French Language Services Unit, under Carl Bouchard's leadership, has made incredible strides in advocating for the rights of Francophones.

To list a few examples:

- AMBER Alerts are now issued in French and English at the same time.
- Improvements in governance have been made at Laurentian University to ensure compliance with its obligations under the *French Language Services Act*.
- Government advertising signage in public spaces is now also in French.
- Metrolinx has improved its French-language communications.
- The Ontario Provincial Police has enhanced its provision of French language services.

My friends, I am more committed than ever to making sure that the French Language Services Unit and Commissioner continue to drive positive change as key figures in the movement to protect language rights in Ontario.

The work we're doing together is essential to ensuring that Ontario's Francophone community thrives long into the future.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to continuing this work with you.

*Check against delivery*

*Ce discours est aussi disponible en français*