

OPEN GOVERNMENT: As more and more information becomes available to the public, federal institutions must continue to respect your rights to services and communications in both official languages.

Part IV of the *Official Languages Act*

Open government [has been described](#) as “a governing culture that holds that the public has the right to access the documents and proceedings of government to allow greater openness, accountability, and engagement.” Depending on the type of information being made available to the public, and the manner in which the public is expected to interact with the information, specific activities undertaken in the name of open government are sometimes referred to as “open data,” “open information,” or “open dialogue.”

Whatever the type of information or the way you are interacting with a federal institution, your Part IV rights continue to apply, and you can expect the federal institution to provide you with services and communications in both official languages when engaging in activities related to open government.

You have rights when interacting with federal institutions

The *Official Languages Act* aims to ensure that the federal institutions are able to provide services and communications to English- and French-speaking Canadians in the language of their choice. Federal institutions must provide services or communications in the official language of your choice without delay, and they must be of equal quality, regardless of the language you choose to use.

This means that you, as a member of the public, have the right to access information and data made available by open government in your preferred official language. It also means that you can participate and communicate with federal institutions in the official language you are most comfortable using.

Canada’s Open Government Portal

Treasury Board Secretariat [has created a platform](#) for all federal institutions to put their data and information in one place; <https://open.canada.ca>. “Canada’s Open Government Portal provides one-stop access to the Government of Canada’s searchable open data and open information, together with open dialogue, as part of the federal government’s commitment to enhance transparency and accountability.”

Federal institutions can identify whatever information or data they want to make available on the Open Government Portal. However, once it has been made available, it must be equally accessible to the public in either official language. This means that you have the right to access both small documents and large data sets, for example, in your preferred official language.

Open Dialogue

When federal institutions seek public engagement on an issue through dialogue with interested stakeholders and citizens, the objective is to make better policies, programs and services for Canadians. Members of the public must therefore be permitted to fully participate in these online consultations, or other activities, in their preferred official language.

This means that not only do you have the right to use your preferred official language when responding to questions, but you also have the right to receive services and communications, including drafts of policies, for instance, in the official language you are most comfortable using.

Other Questions:

When does Part IV of the Official Languages Act begin to apply?

A federal institution must make an active offer of service from the moment you come into contact with it. Please see the Interpretation Bulletin on Active Offer for more information.

What if it is another person or organization that is providing services and communication on behalf of the federal institution?

You have language rights when a person or organization acts on behalf of the federal institution. When a federal institution is obligated to serve you in both official languages, it must make sure that anyone acting on its behalf does the same. Please see the interpretation Bulletin in Section 25 of the *Official Languages Act* for more information.

What if another participant in the consultation is unilingual?

The *Official Languages Act* does not apply to communications made by members of the public. The federal institution, on the other hand, must ensure that participants from both linguistic communities are able to fully engage with the federal institution throughout the consultation process in their preferred official language.

Do I have rights under Part IV of the Official Languages Act even if I'm not a Canadian citizen?

Yes, you do.