# The French Language in Québec: 400 Years of History and Life

## Chronology

### Part One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1534</td>
<td>Jacques Cartier makes his first voyage to Canada.</td>
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<td>1605</td>
<td>Founding of Port-Royal, in Acadia.</td>
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<td>1606</td>
<td>First performance in New France of the play <em>Théâtre de Neptune</em>, by Marc Lescarbot, at Port-Royal.</td>
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<td>1608</td>
<td>Québec City is founded by Samuel de Champlain.</td>
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<td>1611</td>
<td>The <em>Jesuit Relations</em>, the principal written testimonies of yearly events in New France, are written and published until 1680.</td>
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<td>1627</td>
<td>The Compagnie de la Nouvelle-France is established by Richelieu.</td>
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<td>1629</td>
<td>Québec City is captured by the Kirke brothers and is in British hands for three years.</td>
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<td>1632</td>
<td>Gabriel Sagard publishes <em>Le Grand Voyage du pays des Hurons</em> (along with the <em>Dictionnaire de la langue huronne</em>).</td>
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<td>1635</td>
<td>Founding of the French Academy. Founding of the Jesuit College in Québec City.</td>
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<td>1639</td>
<td>Founding of the Ursulines school in Québec City. Between 1639 and 1672, Marie de l’Incarnation writes her letters and accounts.</td>
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<td>1640</td>
<td>Founding of the Imprimerie royale in Paris.</td>
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<td>1642</td>
<td>Maisonneuve founds Montréal (Ville-Marie).</td>
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<td>1647</td>
<td>Publication of <em>Remarques sur la langue française</em>, by grammarian Vaugelas.</td>
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<td>1657</td>
<td>Marguerite Bourgeoys opens a girls’ school in Montréal.</td>
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<td>1663</td>
<td>Founding of the Séminaire de Québec. Louis XIV makes New France a royal possession. The Custom of Paris remains the law in New France. Between 1663 and 1673, the filles du roi arrive in New France.</td>
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<td>1665</td>
<td>Jean Talon, Intendant of New France (1666: first census).</td>
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<td>1672</td>
<td>Frontenac, Governor of New France.</td>
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<td>1682</td>
<td>Cavelier de La Salle discovers the mouth of the Mississippi and names this territory “Louisiana” in honour of Louis XIV.</td>
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<td>1701</td>
<td>Great Peace Treaty between Montréal and the Aboriginal peoples.</td>
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<td>1713</td>
<td>Treaty of Utrecht: Acadia, Newfoundland and Hudson Bay are ceded to England.</td>
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<td>1729</td>
<td>Gilles Hocquart, Intendant of New France.</td>
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<td>1743</td>
<td>Until 1758, Father Potier, first lexicographer of Canadian French, compiles his glossary entitled <em>Façons de parler proverbiales, triviales, figurées, etc., des Canadiens au XVIIIe siècle</em>.</td>
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<td>1744</td>
<td>François-Xavier de Charlevoix publishes his <em>Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle-France</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1755</td>
<td>Beginning of the deportation of Acadians.</td>
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<td>1756</td>
<td>Beginning of the Seven Years War between France and England.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1759</td>
<td>Capitulation of Québec City.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1760</td>
<td>Capitulation of New France.</td>
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PART TWO

1760 After the Conquest, most schools close their doors.
1763 Treaty of Paris: France cedes Canada to England. The links of the new “Province of Quebec” with the Great Lakes region are severed. Royal Proclamation: English Common Law replaces the French; the Test Oath prevents Canadians (Catholics) from acceding to public office.
1764 Establishment of a printing-works in Québec City. Publication of the first The Quebec Gazette / La Gazette de Québec newspaper: all edicts are published in French and English.
1765 A petition signed by 95 Canadians is sent to the King requesting that justice be administered in French, that the King’s orders be promulgated in French, and that Canadians be allowed to serve as jury members and lawyers. First school textbook is printed in Québec City: Alphabets ou A.B.C. français complets. The Séminaire de Québec becomes the first classical college.
1767 The Sulpicians open the future Collège de Montréal. The Ursulines de Québec begin teaching again.
1774 Québec Act: French civil laws are reintroduced, but the text remains silent on the status of the languages. Canadians are allowed to occupy administrative positions. The Great Lakes region is once again tied to the province of Québec.
1776 American Declaration of Independence.
1778 La Gazette littéraire de Montréal, the first French-only newspaper begins publication.
1783 Opening of the Bibliothèque de Québec (1,800 works, over half of which are in French). Almost 6,000 American Loyalists come to settle in Québec following the War of Independence.
1791 Constitutional Act: Canada is divided into two provinces, Lower Canada (with a strong French majority) and Upper Canada (with a strong English majority). The Act remains silent of the status of the languages.
1792 Jean-Antoine Panet is elected Speaker of the Assembly of Lower Canada, despite British opposition which raised the issue of language.
1793 Debate on the use of languages in the House of Assembly: English deputies are opposed to the official recognition of French which nonetheless will be used.
1800 As French is the language spoken in Western Canada, the North West Company hires hundreds of Canadians as voyageurs, guides and interpreters.
1802 Joseph Quesnel writes his play L’anglomanie ou Le dîner à l’angloise.
1805 Québec City’s British bourgeoisie founds the Quebec Mercury newspaper, which gave itself the mission of ensuring the supremacy of the British oligarchy. Pierre Bédard retaliates the following year, when he establishes Le Canadien to defend the interests of French Canadians.
1810 Lexicon by Jacques Viger, Néologie canadienne ou Dictionnaire des mots créés en Canada et maintenant en vogue […].
1815 Louis-Joseph Papineau, leader of the Parti Canadien (future Parti Patriote), is Speaker of the Legislative Assembly until 1837.
1817 For some fifteen years, Michel Bibaud publishes his language columns and is the force behind several newspapers.
1819 Important influx of Irish immigrants.
1822 Canadians violently oppose a plan for uniting the two Canadas which would have prohibited the use of French in the legislature, an opposition which led to a petition in the House of Commons.
1824 A law to encourage the opening of parish or vestry schools marks the beginning of a denominational school system.
1825 Augustin-Norbert Morin’s letter of argument to Judge Bowen proves the use of the French language in Canada has a legal basis.
1829 Founding of McGill University. A law on commissioner schools, funded in part by the Assembly, opens the way for a lay education system.
1830 Irish Catholics make up 20 per cent of the Québec City population.
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1831 Étienne Parent relaunches the *Le Canadien* newspaper, with the motto *Nos institutions, notre langue et nos lois* (Our institutions, our language and our laws). Alexis de Tocqueville’s comments on the language spoken by Canadians. From 1831 to 1865, the population of Montréal has an Anglophone majority.

1834 Ludger Duvernay founds the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste.


1839 In his report, Lord Durham recommends the assimilation of French Canadians, the union of the two Canadas and the setting up of only one parliament, which would only use English.

1840 *Union Act*: Article 41 makes English the only official language of United Canada. From 1840 to 1850, the economic crisis leads to the departure of 40,000 French Canadians for the United States.

1841 *School Act*: start of a true public education network, creation of school boards (in 1842, the rate of school attendance was only 4.4 per cent). Debate on language following the publication of Abbé Maguire’s *Manuel des difficultés […] de la langue française […]*.


1844 First French-language bookstore in Québec City (*À l’enseigne du livre d’or*). Founding of the Institut canadien de Montréal, which begins publishing *L’Avenir* in 1847.

1845 Beginning of the publication of *Histoire du Canada*, by François-Xavier Garneau. The Assembly sends an Address to the Queen requesting the abrogation of Article 41.

1848 Abrogation of Article 41 of the *Union Act* which prohibited the use of French in the Assembly. Publication of James Huston’s *Répertoire national ou Recueil de littérature canadienne*.

1849 Governor Lord Elgin reads the speech from the throne in English and French. Movement in favour of annexing Canada to the United States. Canada East has 2,005 public schools and 11 classical colleges. F.-X. Valade publishes the *Guide de l’instituteur*, which devotes 75 pages out of 318 to language. Around 1850, the face of the colony is entirely English (public signs, etc.).

PART THREE

1850 Between 1850 and 1940, almost 900,000 French Canadians leave Lower Canada for the United States.

1851 The population of Upper Canada exceeds that of Lower Canada.

1852 Founding of the Université Laval, in Québec City.

1855 Arrival of the *La Capricieuse*. Renewal of ties with France.

1861 French Canadians become a majority in Montréal once more.

1865 Ernest Gagnon publishes *Chansons populaires du Canada*.

1866 On Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day in Ottawa, Mgr Lafleche delivers a speech on the French language and the use of English.

1867 The *British North America Act* (Canadian Constitution) comes into force: Article 133 makes bilingualism obligatory in the Québec and Ottawa parliaments and in the Québec and Federal courts.

1870 Lecture by Oscar Dunn: *Pourquoi nous sommes français*.

1871 Discriminatory measures are imposed on French-language Catholic schools in New Brunswick.

1876 Founding of the Université de Montréal.

1879 Jules-Paul Tardivel talk: *L’anglicisme, voilà l’ennemi!* Founding of the *La Patrie* newspaper.

1880 Oscar Dunn publishes his *Glossaire franco-canadien* […]. Adolphe Routhier composes the national anthem *Ô Canada*.

1882 French Canadians become a majority on the Montréal Municipal Council.

1883 The motto *Je me souviens* is added to Québec’s coat of arms.

1884 Founding of the *La Presse* newspaper (“the largest French daily in America”).

1885 The hanging of Louis Riel arouses anger in Québec: 50,000 demonstrators in Montréal.

1887 Québec Premier Honoré Mercier adopts a autonomist attitude towards Ottawa and wants Québec to assert itself as a “French and Catholic nation”. Louis Fréchette’s *La légende d’un peuple* receives an award from the French Academy.
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1888  Arthur Buies publishes *Anglicismes et canadienismes*.
      Faucher de Saint-Maurice publishes *La question du jour. Resterons-nous français ?*
1896  Henri Bourassa enters the Parliament in Ottawa. Between 1896 and 1914, over three million immigrants, mostly of British origin, arrive in Canada.
1897  One quarter of Québécois over the age of nine do not know how to read or write. The government wants to establish a Ministry of Education but is opposed by the episcopate.
1900  Alphonse Desjardins establishes a cooperative savings and credit movement in Lévis, which has become a financial power and a symbol of French-Canadian success.
1902  Founding of the Société du parler français au Canada, which begins publishing its *Bulletin du parler français au Canada* and organizes major conferences on the French language.
1904  Founding of the *Le Nationaliste* newspaper (Olivar Asselin, Jules Fournier).
1907  Founding of the École des Hautes Études Commerciales.
1908  Henri Bourassa and Armand Lavergne elected to the Québec Legislative Assembly. Founding of the first classical college for young girls (Marguerite-Bourgeoys).
1910  Henri Bourassa founds *Le Devoir*. He delivers his famous speech on language at the Church of Notre-Dame in Montréal in reply to Mgr Bourne who advocated English. The Lavergne Law for bilingualism in Québec public service companies.
1913  Creation of the Ligue des droits du français to spread the use of French in industry and trade. The Ligue begins publishing *Action française* in 1917.
1915  Lionel Groulx begins teaching Canadian history in Montréal.
1917  Creation of the *sou de la survivance française* to assist Francophone minorities in Canada.
      First campaigns in favour of putting French back on public signs, which at the time were almost all in English in Québec. Jules Fournier publishes his two letters on *the French language in Canada*.
1918  Henri Bourassa’s speech on *language, guardian of the faith*.
1922  Inauguration of the first French-language radio station (CKAC) in Montréal.
1923  Creation of the *sou de la survivance française* to assist Francophone minorities in Canada.
      First campaigns in favour of putting French back on public signs, which at the time were almost all in English in Québec. Jules Fournier publishes his two letters on *the French language in Canada*.
1930  The Société du parler français publishes its *Glossaire du parler français au Canada*.
1931  French Canadians make up 80 per cent of the Québec population. The population of Greater Montréal exceeds one million inhabitants. Québec’s rural population makes up only 37 per cent.
1933  Publication of the first number of *Action nationale*, the mouthpiece of the Ligue d’action nationale.
1934  Between 1934 and 1960, several newspapers published *Chroniques sur la langue* (columns on the language).
1936  Maurice Duplessis, leader of the Union nationale, becomes the Prime Minister of Québec. Creation of the Société Radio-Canada, which greatly contributes to the spread of standard French.
      The Parliament in Ottawa adopts currency in both languages.
1937  Second conference on the French language: there are calls for the creation of the Office de la langue française and the Comité permanent de la survivance française is established. Founding of the Éditions Fides. Publication of the collections *La Bonne Chanson* by Abbé Gadbois.
1942  Referendum on the draft: Francophones and Anglophones are divided. Education becomes mandatory.
1944  Victor Barbeau founds the Académie canadienne-française. Roger Lemelin publishes *Au pied de la pente douce*.
1946  Lionel Groulx founds the Institut d’histoire de l’Amérique française. French becomes one of the five official languages and one of the two languages of work of the newly created United Nations Organization.
1948  Birth of the Association canadienne des éducateurs de langue française (ACELF).
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1948 The fleurdelisé becomes Québec’s official flag. Publication of *Refus global* (against Québec "obscurantism").

1950 Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Gérard Pelletier establish the *Cité Libre* journal.

1952 Launching of Canadian French-language television in Montréal (in less than eight years, 90 per cent of Québec homes will have a set). Third conference on the French language.

1953 Creation of the Tremblay Commission which, like the Académie canadienne-française and the Société du parler français, would recommend the creation of the Office de la langue française. Founding of the Éditions de l’Hexagone. Success of Gratien Gélinas’s play, *Ti-Coq*.

1954 Founding of the Université de Sherbrooke. Founding of the Union canadienne des journalistes de langue française.

1955 Public mobilization against the naming of the *Queen Elizabeth* hotel. Riot at the Forum, following the suspension of hockey champion Maurice Richard. Félix Leclerc records *Moi, mes souliers*. The Comité permanent de la survivance française takes the name Conseil de la vie française en Amérique.

1956 Conference on the French language on the issue of re-Francization.

1957 Publication of the *Dictionnaire général de la langue française au Canada*, by L.-A. Bélisle. Creation of the Alliance laurentienne, which advocates Québec independence. 75 per cent of children of immigrants are enrolled in English-language schools in Québec.

1958 Marcel Dubé publishes his play *Un simple soldat*.

1959 The journal *Liberté* is founded by a group of writers. Death of Prime Minister Maurice Duplessis. G.-É. Lapalme proposes that the future of Québec be built “on the basis of the French fact.” André Laurendeau raises the issue of *Joual* and begins publishing Frère Untel’s comments on *Joual*.

PART FOUR
(Understandably, the space available here does permit a full account of the wealth of developments concerning language or of all Québec writing of the past forty years.)


1962 The government Francizes a number of place names of Québec toponymy. A statement by Donald Gordon on French Canadians gives rise to a demonstration. Success of the slogan *Mâtres chez nous*! Launch of the *Boréal Express* and *Jeune scientifique* (later *Québec Science*). The term “informatique” (for computer science) is coined.


1964 Creation of the Ministry of Education. An issue of the journal *Liberté* is devoted to language.

1965 The Office de la langue française publishes its *Norme du français écrit et parlé au Québec*. Gilles Vigneault sings *Mon pays* for the first time. Campaign of the RIN and occupation of restaurants to obtain service in French. May 24, a day commemorating Dollard des Ormeaux or Queen Victoria: violent demonstration in Montréal. The first agreements on Franco-Québécois cooperation are signed in Paris.
1967 World Fair in Montréal. General de Gaulle issues his cry Vive le Québec libre! René Lévesque founds the Sovereignty-Association Movement. The second Biennale de la langue française is held in Québec City. The Estates General on French Canada, which differentiates between Québécois and Francophones outside Québec, is held in Montréal. Opening of the first 12 general and professional education colleges (CÉGEP).


1971 Québec becomes a member of the Agence de coopération culturelle et technique (ACCT). Québec refuses the repatriation of the Constitution unless it obtains right of veto. Creation of the Mouvement Québec français (MQF). The 1971 Census reveals the precarious position of Francophones in both Montréal and Canada as a whole.


1975 Creation of the Fédération des francophones hors Québec (FFHQ).

1976 René Lévesque’s Parti Québécois is brought to power. The struggle of the Gens de l’air.


1978 The Sun Life insurance company announces the transfer of its head offices from Montréal to Toronto. Creation of the Ordre des francophones d’Amérique (Conseil de la langue française).

1979 The Supreme Court declares that the section of Law 101 on the language of legislation and justice is invalid.

1980 The first referendum on Sovereignty-Association is held in Québec. Beginning of the spread of the microcomputer.

1981 The Canadian government, backed by the nine Anglophone provinces, begins the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution without Québec’s consent.

1982 The new constitutional accord (reached without Québec’s consent) is in direct opposition to the section of Law 101 on access to English-language schools in Québec. Creation of Alliance-Québec. Grand congrès of the Conseil de la langue française on the theme Langue et société.

1983 Law 57 recognizes the institutions of the Québec Anglophone community (in Law 101).


1986 Bills 140 and 142.— Demonstrations on the theme Ne touchez pas à la Loi 101 (Don’t touch Law 101). Québec City, first North-American city to be designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The population of Greater Montréal exceeds three million. Publication of the Dictionnaire thématique visuel, by Jean-Claude Corbeil and Ariane Archambault.

1987 The second Sommet de la Francophonie is held in Québec City. Death of René Lévesque. In a special edition of the journal Liberté, “Watch ta langue,” writers come to the defence of the language. Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the premiers of the ten provinces sign the Lake Meech Constitutional Accord.

1988 The Supreme Court’s judgment on public signs — Adoption of Law 178, which maintains the exclusive use of French on outside public signs. Signing of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the United States and Canada. Law C-72 on the official languages (Canada).

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1990
Bélanger-Campeau Commission on Québec’s political future. Creation of the Bloc Québécois in Ottawa, following the failure of the Lake Meech Accord. The Government of Québec publishes its Policy Statement on Immigration and Integration.

1991
Publication of the first dictionary of the Inuktitut language.

1992

1993
Law 86 permits the use of another language on public signs provided French enjoys a clear predominance. Democratization of Internet access. Jean Chrétien’s Liberal Party is elected in Ottawa. The Bloc Québécois becomes the official opposition.

1994
Election of Jacques Parizeau’s Parti Québécois.— A preliminary draft on Québec sovereignty is submitted to popular consultation. Creation of a continuous televised news broadcasting network in French (Radio-Canada). First Summit of the Americas: a free trade zone is planned for 2005. Radio-Québec takes over from Bernard Pivot in the international spelling championships by establishing the Dictée des Amériques in which a dozen countries participate.

1995
Second referendum on Québec sovereignty: the NO narrowly wins. The Prime Minister of Canada has a motion passed on Québec’s distinct society.

1996
Lucien Bouchard takes over from Jacques Parizeau as Prime Minister of Québec. Report (assessment) by the Comité interministériel sur la situation de la langue française.

1997
On the Island of Montréal, 71 per cent of the population speak mostly French in public, but only 55 per cent speak it at home (against 58 per cent in 1991). Adoption of Law 40, which reestablishes the Commission de protection de la langue française. Creation of the Georges-Émile-Lapalme Award (prix du Québec) for the French language.

1998
Publication of the Dictionnaire du français québécois by Claude Poirier.

1999
Death of Camille Laurin, father of the Charter of the French Language. The eighth Sommet de la Francophonie is held in Moncton. The population of Québec exceeds 7.3 million (almost 83 per cent speak French at home). Québec is the guest of honour at the Paris Book Fair. The musical comedy Notre-Dame de Paris by lyricist Luc Plamondon is a success in Paris.

2000
The government announces that the Estates General on the French Language are to be held in the autumn.

Adendum to the third edition

2000
Creation, in June, of the Commission for the Estates-general on the status and future of the French language in Québec.

2001
The Summit of the Americas is held in Québec City. – Opinion Paper published by the Conseil de la langue française on language issues in the integration of the Americas. Report of the Commission for the Estates-general on the status and future of the French language in Québec (Larose report) in August. The Québec Court of Appeal confirms the position of the Charter of the French Language as regards the predominance of French on public signs. Death of folk singer Georges Dor, who was steadfastly attached to the French cause.

2002
Bill 104 passed (ruling on access to instruction in English; measures favouring the Francization of enterprises) The ninth Sommet de la Francophonie, held in Beirut, declares its support for an international convention on cultural diversity. Death of Émile Ollivier, a novelist of Haitian origin, who enriched Québec culture in a spirit of openness and tolerance.

2003
Election of Jean Charest’s Liberal Party.
In Ottawa, a Bloc québécois motion calling for the recognition of the Québec nation is defeated in the House of Commons.
A consultation committee on the quality of the language in the Québec media is set up.
Death of economist François-Albert Angers, founder and president of the Mouvement Québec français. –
Death of Pierre Bourgault, founder of the Rassemblement pour l’indépendance nationale.

2004
Members of the Francophonie who met in Ouagadougou confirm that the twelfth Sommet de la Francophonie will be held in Québec City in 2008.
Death of Claude Ryan, who was Editor-in-Chief of Le Devoir, leader of the Québec Liberal Party and Minister responsible for the Charter of the French Language.

2005
The Supreme Court confirms the constitutionality of Section 73 of the Charter of the French Language regarding access to English-language instruction.
Alliance Québec ceases its activity.
Former Prime Minister Bernard Landry resigns as leader of the Parti québécois and as Member of the National Assembly,
Publication by the Éditions Fides of the book Le français au Québec : les nouveaux défis (A. Stefanescu and P. Georgeault).

2006
Opinion Paper published by the Conseil supérieur de la langue française on French, the language of work.
In Ottawa, the House of Commons passes a motion recognizing the Québec nation.
Publication, by the Éditions Québec Amérique, of the book Le français, langue de la diversité québécoise (P. Georgeault and M. Pagé).

2007
Creation of the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences.
The “La langue française, elle est bien québécoise” campaign on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Charter of the French Language.
A Court of Appeal judgement (judge Hilton) disallows an article of Law 104 that puts an end to the loophole giving access to English-language public schools to pupils who had previously attended a private institution.
The Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport sets up a committee of experts to draw up an opinion paper on the situation of French language teaching. The committee is chaired by the President of the Conseil supérieur de la langue française.