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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 LEGAL ASPECTS OF FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN MANITOBA

In 1967, Bill 59 recognised French as a language of instruction in Manitoba's public schools. This legislation allowed the use of the French language up to a maximum of 50% of the total instructional time. In 1970, Bill 113 confirmed the equality of French and English, the two official languages, as languages of instruction. Bill 113, being an amendment to section 258 of the Manitoba *Public Schools Act*, allows for instruction completely in French throughout the school day to the third grade inclusively. English must be taught as a subject to a maximum of 25% of the total instructional time from Grade 4 through Grade 12.

The *Statutes of Manitoba — Chapter P250 Public Schools Act* stipulate that:

- where in any school division, there are 23 or more students who may be grouped in a class and whose parents desire them to be instructed in English or French, the school division must group those students and provide for the use of English or French, as the case may be, as the language of instruction in the class (section 79 (3)).
- in a school where French is used as the language of instruction for 75% or more of the school day from Grade 1 through Grade 6 and 60% or more from Grade 7 through Grade 12, the administration and operation of the school must be carried out in the French language (section 79 (5) or see Manitoba Regulation 469/88R section 9 (2)).

These provisions of the *Public Schools Act* and the regulation pertaining thereto provide the foundation for the curriculum policy presented in this document.

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## **1.2 MANDATE OF THE BUREAU DE L'ÉDUCATION FRANÇAISE DIVISION**

In 1974, the Manitoba Department of Education established the Bureau de l'éducation française (BEF) Division to support French-language education for Francophones. In 1976, this Division was given the mandate to provide leadership and orientation for educational reform as it applies to French-language education in Manitoba.

The Bureau de l'éducation française Division negotiates and administers inter-governmental agreements regarding official languages programs in education. The Bureau provides services to Franco-Manitoban schools, schools offering a French Immersion Program, and to those schools offering Basic French. In addition, the Bureau maintains a liaison with the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface.

In the context of its mandate, the Division targets the following objectives:

- to develop and recommend to the Minister of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, policies and priorities in all areas affecting French-language education
- to promote, plan, administer and facilitate programs and services in all aspects of French-language education for francophone and anglophone client groups from Kindergarten to Grade 12 and, insofar as possible, at the post-secondary level
- to collaborate with the other divisions of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (and their respective branches), as well as local communities, organisations, and all other associations at either the local, national or international level
- to assist the Minister of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth to negotiate all federal assistance programs aimed at promoting the use of the official languages in education.