

Position Description Northwest Territories Languages Commissioner

The Languages Commissioner is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly, and is appointed in accordance with the NWT *Official Languages Act* for a four year term.

Duties

The duties of the Languages Commissioner include:

- Investigating complaints that government institutions are not complying with the Act;
- Initiating investigations;
- Reporting on findings and making recommendations to government institutions;
- Preparing an annual report to the Speaker, including recommendations for changes to legislation;
- Promoting and raising awareness of the Act and the Office of the Languages Commissioner; and
- Managing the Office, including planning, budgeting, supervision of staff and contractors, maintaining a website and other public communication materials, and ensuring file and complaint management policies and systems are in place.

Note: Since 2004, the responsibility to promote, maintain and revitalize official and aboriginal languages rests with the Minister Responsible for Official Languages and the Official Languages and Aboriginal Languages Revitalisation Boards established by the Act. At the same time, the role of the Languages Commissioner was transformed into that of an “ombudsman” for official language complaints in the NWT.

Accountability

As an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly, the Languages Commissioner is not an employee in the public service, and is expected to carry out his or her mandate on a day to day basis independently of government and the legislature. The Legislative Assembly provides an annual budget, a furnished and equipped office space, and an administrative assistant position shared with other statutory officers.

The Languages Commissioner is accountable for overall performance and management of financial and human resources allocated to his or her office to the Board of Management of the Legislative Assembly, and, through annual reports submitted to the Speaker, to the Legislative Assembly as a whole. Following tabling by the Speaker, the annual reports of the Languages Commissioner are reviewed by a Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly, which typically involves a public hearing at which the Languages Commissioner appears as a witness to make a presentation and answers questions from Committee Members.

Skills and Abilities

- Ability to read, interpret and apply legislation in order to: understand and carry out the Language Commissioner's mandate; ensure compliance with the requirements of the Act; know when expert legal advice may be required; and recommend legislative changes
- Ability to conduct investigations and manage complaint files in order to: ensure fair, consistent and timely resolution of complaints in accordance with the provisions of the Act; and implement clear processes and policies for documenting, investigating and communicating with complainants and respondents with respect to complaints
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills in order to: write reports and recommendations; correspond with complainants and respondents in a professional manner; promote the Act and the Office of the Languages Commissioner through presentations, community visits and other networking opportunities; ensure availability of quality public information on the Act and Office through a website, printed materials, and other appropriate media; and respond to inquiries
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- Ability to manage a budget and human resources in order to: ensure effective and efficient use of government resources; manage contracted services; and, where appropriate, identify and substantiate additional resource needs
- The ability to speak more than one Official Language would be considered an asset, but is not a requirement.

Typically the above skills and abilities would be acquired by a degree in law, public administration or a related field combined with an interest in and sensitivity to official language issues and experience in:

- Interpreting and applying legislation and principles of administrative fairness
- Managing and investigating complaints
- Writing decisions, reports, and recommendations
- Public communications
- Budget and resource management

Remuneration

Pay will be commensurate with experience and the part-time nature of the position.