

# Active offer as a standard in the provision of public services: Genealogy of the concept and debates on OLMC participation

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# Research questions

- What are the dominant representations of active offer among the various actors engaged in this issue?
- What is the current status, particularly in health care?

# Potential answers

1. The dominant representations of active offer are mainly formalistic or technical.
2. Those representations ignore certain elements, such as governance, co-construction and participation.

# Definition of active offer

- “Clearly indicate visually and verbally that members of the public can communicate with and obtain services from a designated office in either English or French.” (Policy on Official Languages, Treasury Board Secretariat)
- “... creating an environment that is conducive to demand and that anticipates the specific needs of Francophones in their community” (Office of the French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario)

# Genealogy of the concept (1)

- New impetus given to active offer since the first Action Plan for Official Languages (2003)
- Legal and institutional foundations
  - Ontario (2011)
  - New Brunswick (2002)
  - Manitoba (1991)
  - Federal (1988)

# Genealogy of the concept (2)

- How did active offer get into the *Official Languages Act* of 1988?
  - Debates in the House of Commons and the Legislative Committee (1987-1988)
  - Debates of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and of the House of Commons on Official Languages (1981-1982)
  - Annual reports of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (1971-1972, 1977, 1980)

# Genealogy of the concept (3)

- What can we take away from the initial representation of active offer by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages ?
  - Connection with dropping the idea of bilingual districts specified in the 1969 OLA
  - Limitations of the concepts “where possible” and “sufficient demand”
  - Importance of consulting the communities and engaging their institutions

# Genealogy of the concept (4)

- How was the initial concept adapted?
  - Report on Canada Post (about 1980)
  - First report of the Special Joint Committee (1982)
  - Treasury Board directives (1982)



# Update of the initial representation

- Active offer was not intended to have a technical or formal representation, but rather a dynamic representation.
- It pointed to a co-construction of service delivery methods.
- It opened the door to community governance of government services and public action by OLMCs.

# Thank you

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