

Contributors

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# Confusing and Conflicting Agendas: Federalism, Official Languages and the Development of the Bilingualism in Education Program in Ontario, 1970-1983

Matthew Hayday

The Bilingualism in Education Program began in 1970 as a federal government initiative to promote official minority language education and second-language instruction in the provinces. This article, a study of the development of language policy under the Trudeau government, examines the evolution of the programme over its first 13 years of operation in the province of Ontario. Over this period, friction developed between the federal and provincial governments and the Franco-Ontarian lobby groups as the programme evolved away from the original objectives of the federal government. Constrained by provincial jurisdiction over education under the Canadian federal system, Ottawa was unable to control the implementation of this programme. Consequently, the programme grew to cater more to the interests of the anglophone majority of Ontario, than to its francophone minority. As the negotiation process proceeded, issues of control and finance came to take precedence, while pedagogical issues tended to fall by the wayside.

Le Programme de bilinguisme en éducation a débuté en 1970 en tant qu'initiative du gouvernement fédéral pour promouvoir l'éducation dans la langue de la minorité officielle et l'enseignement de la langue seconde dans les provinces. Étude du développement des politiques du langage sous le gouvernement Trudeau, l'article examine l'évolution du programme pendant les treize premières années de sa mise en application dans la province de l'Ontario. Au cours de cette période, des désaccords sont survenus entre les gouvernements fédéral et provinciaux et les groupes de lobbyistes franco-ontariens alors que le programme s'éloignait progressivement des objectifs premiers du gouvernement fédéral. Parce que le système fédéral canadien accorde aux provinces la compétence en matière d'éducation, Ottawa a été incapable de contrôler la mise en œuvre de son programme. Par conséquent, ce dernier a fini par répondre davantage aux intérêts de la majorité anglophone de l'Ontario qu'à ceux de sa minorité francophone. Au fur et à mesure qu'avancait le processus de négociation, les questions relatives au contrôle et aux finances ont fini par prédominer alors que les questions pédagogiques étaient plus ou moins laissées pour compte.

As we enter the new millennium, Canadians can enjoy a daily breakfast of *Flocons de maïs*, obtain government services in both English and French and sing the national anthem in both official languages at hockey games. The vast majority of our children receive some form of basic instruction in their second official language, and have the option of enrolling in French immersion programmes. Francophones in the English-speaking provinces and anglophones in Quebec have access to school systems that operate in their own mother tongue; however, official bilingualism in Canada is a relatively recent phenomenon. From 1912 to 1929, in the era of Regulation 17, teaching in the French language was banned in the province of Ontario. French-speaking federal civil servants encountered serious obstacles to promotion until the 1960s. French immersion programmes were only developed in the mid-1960s, and both second-language instruction and education services for official-language minorities were quite limited before the 1970s.

Over the course of the 1960s, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (RCBB) began to explore ways of alleviating some of the tensions that existed between Canada's two dominant language communities. Many of the RCBB's recommendations were adopted as government policy, including the Official Languages Act, 1969, which declared French and English to be the two official languages of Canada. Under the terms of Section 92 of the British North America Act, 1867, education is an area of exclusively provincial jurisdiction, except if confessional school rights are violated. Notwithstanding this provision, the RCBB made a number of recommendations advising the federal government to fund minority official-language education.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on these recommendations, the federal government entered into negotiations with the provinces to create the Bilingualism in Education Program (BEP), renamed the Official Languages in Education Program in 1979, which was launched by Secretary of State Gérard Pelletier on 9 September 1970. Under the BEP, the federal government agreed to reimburse the provinces for additional costs that they incurred as a result of providing minority-language education and second-language instruction. This programme would prove to be extremely complicated and created much friction between the federal government, the provincial governments and their respective constituencies, particularly the official-language minority communities.

To date, research on the federal government's attempts to promote bilingualism in the 1970s has been extremely limited. The BEP itself has not been the subject of any study from a political or historical perspective; studies of the programme have focussed on the pedagogical issues involved in French language instruction and its effectiveness.<sup>2</sup> Other research on this period has been largely limited to political science analyses of the desirability of a national programme of official bilingualism, typified by the work of Kenneth McRoberts,<sup>3</sup> or mini-case studies of particular

programmes, such as Leslie Pal's study of the Official Minority Language Groups Programme.<sup>4</sup> The remaining literature in this area concentrates on demographic shifts in Canada's language populations, including work by Charles Castonguay<sup>5</sup> and Richard Joy.<sup>6</sup>

Our present examination of the Bilingualism in Education Program will trace its development in the province of Ontario, the province with the largest francophone minority, from its beginnings in 1970, up to 1983 when the main period of turmoil in federal-provincial BEP discussions concluded. This analysis will first outline the initial formulation of the BEP, the objectives and concerns of the federal and provincial governments and the francophone lobby groups, and the structures created for the functioning of the programme. It will then proceed to determine why tensions arose between the two levels of government and the pressure groups affected by the programme, and how divergent, confused and often incompatible conceptions of the programme affected its implementation. These conflicting agendas meant that intergovernmental manoeuvrings over control of the BEP often overshadowed both the concerns of official-language minority communities and issues of the programme's pedagogical effectiveness. Finally, the 1983 agreement will be examined in order to determine how and why the programme had changed from its original conception.

## Background and Context

The Bilingualism in Education Program was introduced in response to the RCBB's report on education,<sup>7</sup> which included some important recommendations for minority-language education. Recommendations 26 and 27 read as follows:

26. We recommend that the federal government accept in principle the responsibility for the additional costs involved in providing education in the official minority language.

27. We recommend that the federal grant to each province be based on the number of students attending official-language minority schools in the province, and that the grant be 10% of the average cost of education per student within the province.<sup>8</sup>

The commission further advocated making second-language instruction a mandatory part of Canadian education. No mention, however, was made of the federal government assuming a role in the funding or provision of such instruction.

Political leaders at both the provincial and federal levels had their own conceptions of language issues that were not entirely in line with the RCBB. These must be examined in order to understand the direction the programme took. Pierre Trudeau, a vigorous advocate of the promotion and protection of individual rights, wanted

the federal government to be responsive to all Canadians, regardless of mother tongue. He supported the principle that all individuals living across Canada should have access to services in both official languages, where there were sufficient numbers to warrant it.<sup>9</sup> This principle was in opposition to territorially based conceptions of language policy that would restrict minority official-language services to regions with very high concentrations of the minority official-language population. Most territorial models proposed for Canada envisioned English as the language of service in the nine anglophone provinces, French in Quebec, and bilingual services in a narrow geographical band from eastern Ontario to western New Brunswick, in contrast to the liberal approach of bilingual districts scattered across the country where a minimum number of francophones (or anglophones) were concentrated.

For the purposes of crafting an education agreement, it was likely that Trudeau's liberal conception of access to education would be favoured. It is also clear that the predominant focus of the federal government with respect to language policy was on the rights of francophones. In particular, it was concerned with those francophones living outside of the province of Quebec, as they lacked a champion, the Quebec government having abandoned them, and the Catholic Church no longer having the desire or finances to support them.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, prominent demographers had pointed out a number of disturbing trends regarding Canada's francophone population, which were a major concern of francophone lobby groups such as the *Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario* (ACFO). The "bilingual belt" stretching from northern and eastern Ontario to western New Brunswick was becoming home to an ever-greater proportion of Canada's bilingual and francophone populations, as francophones intermarried with anglophones or otherwise assimilated into the English-speaking majority in the rest of the country.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, young francophones were found to be adopting English as their language of daily usage at much higher rates than their parents.<sup>12</sup> Given these realities, the number of francophones outside the bilingual belt was likely to continue to decline if no remedial measures were taken.

Federal intervention in an area of provincial jurisdiction, such as education, was not a novel concept. Such arrangements normally entailed provincial implementation of federally funded programmes that were to meet national standards. A study conducted by the federal government in 1970 found that 90 per cent of Canadians supported government initiatives to encourage the teaching of English in French schools, and 86 per cent supported encouraging the teaching of French in English schools.<sup>13</sup> Only 49 per cent of English-speaking Canadians, however, supported making French a compulsory subject in English schools. The study also showed a considerable lack of enthusiasm for government action – 74 per cent of French Canadians, but only 45 per cent of English-speaking Canadians – to help francophone students outside of Quebec maintain their own language.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the

federal government was in a conundrum, given that its primary objective – promoting the education rights of francophone minorities – was politically unpopular.

French-language education in Ontario, previously either non-existent, illegal or poorly funded, had begun to evolve in the few years prior to the start of the BEP. On 24 August 1967, Premier John Robarts announced that his government would establish and fund French-language public secondary schools where numbers warranted it,<sup>15</sup> extending the system beyond its established publicly funded French-language elementary schools. In 1968, provincial regulations were amended to permit the establishment of French-language secondary schools or classes by local school boards.<sup>16</sup> The Schools Administration Act, 1968, introduced under Education Minister William Davis, made the establishment of French-language elementary school classes mandatory when requested by a minimum number of francophone ratepayers in the district.<sup>17</sup> It must be noted that the system of education in the province of Ontario was a highly decentralized one, in which local school boards made most of the curriculum decisions, including whether or not to offer French-language classes. The provincial government acted largely as a funding agent, providing grants to the boards on a per-student basis.

The 1967-68 changes to Ontario's language education policies stemmed predominantly from the political thought of Premier Robarts and Education Minister Davis. Robarts was determined to help stop Quebec's drift towards separatism. He viewed Ontario's recognition of the French fact in the province as a visible symbol of Ontario's commitment to national unity.<sup>18</sup> Davis was committed to fostering French-language minority education, but recognized that this must be done in a financially responsible manner and only if numbers warranted it.<sup>19</sup> Both men were well aware also of the general reluctance in WASP Ontario to expand French-language education, and feared a backlash if the government were to take such a step as to declare itself officially bilingual.<sup>20</sup> Robarts believed that pursuing programmes such as "French as a second language" and "French immersion" would help build support among the electorate for French minority-language education and thus avoid a backlash. Indeed, studies from the 1970s and early 1980s showed that students enrolled in these programmes and their parents tended to be more open to providing services for Franco-Ontarians.<sup>21</sup>

### **Provisions of the Bilingualism in Education Program**

In light of these conflicting federal and provincial conceptions of bilingual education, the provisions of the initial agreement may now be examined. On 9 September 1970, the Secretary of State issued a news release announcing the signing of the "Protocol for financial assistance for the federal-provincial programme on bilingualism in education." Its two main objectives were to allow Canadians the opportunity to

educate their children in the official language of their choice and to give children the opportunity to learn, as a second language, the other official language of their country. The federal government specifically noted that the arrangements were designed to make federal support of those objectives possible without infringing on provincial jurisdiction in the field of education.<sup>22</sup> This qualifier was necessary, as the federal government was acting without any specific legislative authority for such a programme. The Official Languages Act, 1969 makes no reference to programmes in the field of education or to a role for the Secretary of State, and these would not be given official standing until the act was revised in 1988. The revision retroactively justified federal involvement in this domain, involvement that it had hitherto justified as acceptable under the "constitutional principle that the Parliament and the legislative assemblies may promote the equality of status and use of English and French."<sup>23</sup>

The Secretary of State aimed to achieve the objectives of the Bilingualism in Education Program by paying for the additional costs required to provide minority-language education and second-language instruction at the primary, secondary and post-secondary (non-university) levels. Funding arrangements fell into two major groupings. The lesser of the two, in financial terms, was the non-formula payments. These included grants for teacher fellowships, travel bursaries, student official-language fellowships, language training centres and, later, special projects. The non-formula payments tended on the whole to be directly payable to individuals, and did not account for a substantial portion of the total cost of the programmes. Accounting for less than 10 per cent of the total cost of the BEP, and generally not a contentious set of programmes, they will not be discussed in detail here.

Of much greater significance were the formula payments. Under the terms of the 1970 agreement, the federal government agreed to pay a fixed percentage of per capita costs of instruction for students studying official languages. The federal government committed itself to paying nine per cent of the costs of instruction of a full-time, minority-language student. Assuming that the extra costs would be lower for second-language courses, the federal government agreed to pay five per cent of the costs of instruction for students studying the second language, payable on a pro-rated, per-student basis. The agreement was retroactive to January 1970, and would run to March 1974, with \$50 million committed for 1970, and the expectation that the total cost of the programme would run to \$300 million over the course of the following five years.

A number of aspects of this initial arrangement require additional comment, as they became increasingly important over the course of the BEP. In addition to providing for minority-language education, which was recommended by the RCBB, the federal programme also made provisions for funding *second*-language instruction in the official languages, which had not been recommended. In a 1976 speech

to the Canadian Teachers Federation (CTF), Jane Dobell of the Secretary of State Department emphasized that one of the programme's objectives was to provide Canadians with the opportunity to become bilingual.<sup>24</sup> It is also likely that the governments wished to make the programme more palatable by including the promotion of second-language instruction, which had been found to be more acceptable by the general population, in order to soften the impact of providing minority-language education, which was unpopular in English-speaking Canada. By fostering individual bilingualism in anglophones, the programme would also eventually produce qualified applicants for civil service positions.

Another notable feature of these arrangements is the manner in which the formulas were constructed. The formula payments were based strictly on the number of students *currently* studying the other official language. The provinces with the most poorly developed minority-language education systems were in western and Atlantic Canada, particularly compared to Quebec's complete system of English school boards. These two regions were the main target of the BEP when it was conceived, and the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, with much more developed programmes, were fit into the formulas afterwards.<sup>25</sup> Due to the funding structures established for the formula programmes, the regions with low enrolments ended up receiving only a small share of the total amount of funding, while Ontario and Quebec received hefty subsidies for their pre-existing programmes.

Moreover, the figures of nine per cent and five per cent were estimations by federal officials,<sup>26</sup> who lacked hard statistical data upon which to base their percentages. The concept of paying only for additional costs was not made a condition of the programme, and thus federal funds could very easily be used to pay for pre-existing provincial programmes. Furthermore, the provinces were not required to demonstrate how they were using the federal funds. The formula arrangements were linked to provincial costs and were of an open-ended nature, with no fixed cap. Accordingly, the initial \$300 million budget could prove to be grossly inadequate if these costs increased substantially over time. Finally, the federal government had not implemented stringent controls on the use of its funds and thus loopholes existed for the provinces to pursue their own agendas and divert funds accordingly.

### **Implementation of the Programme**

It was on the basis of this initial agreement that the province of Ontario proceeded with the implementation of the BEP. In April 1972, the Ontario Ministry of Education created the Council on French Language Schools, under the chairmanship of Dr. Laurier Carrière.<sup>27</sup> This council played an advisory role to the ministry on the implementation of various aspects of French-language teaching in the province, including



the recommendations of the Symons Commission, a provincial commission on the teaching of the French language in Ontario that submitted its report in 1972.

The province established a minimum of 20 minutes per day of French-language instruction as the benchmark for school boards to receive funding under the "French as a second language" (FSL) component of the BEP.<sup>26</sup> The option of increasing this time allocation was left to local authorities.

Whereas the federal funding formulas assumed that the higher costs would accrue from providing minority-language education, the province found that more substantial costs per FTE (full-time equivalent student) came from teaching core French to a large number of English-speaking pupils than from the provision of full-time minority-language education to Franco-Ontarians.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, the province funnelled additional BEP funds into paying for the costs of second-language instruction. A 1973 study conducted by Pierre Allard and published in *Le Droit* found that of the \$36.4 million (out of a total of \$47.5 million Ontario had received as of March 1973) that was earmarked under the formulas for minority-language education, only \$17 million was spent on such education.<sup>30</sup> This resulted from the provincial practice of performing formula-based calculations, then paying block grants to school boards without restrictions on how the monies were used, thus making it virtually impossible to track funds.<sup>31</sup> Education Minister Thomas Wells admitted that although the federal formulas were not being respected, all of the federal funds were being allocated to "bilingual education."<sup>32</sup>

While there were certain problems with the allocation of funds between minority-language education and second-language instruction, the province did take steps to encourage the establishment of additional French-language programmes. In 1974, the provincial government established a programme to reward schools that established new "French as a minority language" (FML) classes. The province also provided extra funding to francophone schools in remote areas to cover additional teaching and transportation costs.<sup>33</sup> In 1972, the federal government agreed to fund English-language students in French immersion programmes at the FML rate of nine per cent.<sup>34</sup>

The new provincial and federal initiatives had a significant impact on the teaching of French as a minority language in the province. The period from 1969 to 1971 witnessed a growth in French secondary school enrolment from 21,590 to 28,007 and the creation of 15 new publicly-funded French secondary schools.<sup>35</sup> The number of anglophone students at the elementary school level receiving second-language instruction also rose significantly over this period, from 32.15 per cent to 38.56 per cent of all students.<sup>36</sup>

The province of Ontario did have some concerns regarding the BEP's funding arrangements. In 1973, the federal government paid the province \$15 million to support its official-language education programmes, but the real cost to the province in transfers to the school boards was in fact \$17 million. This discrepancy was due to

the higher than anticipated costs of the second-language instruction programmes.<sup>37</sup> At the time of the first renewal agreement, however, most of the provincial concerns centred around the finer points of the non-formula payment programmes and the possibility of either cancelling or transferring funds between these programmes.<sup>38</sup> The provinces, Ontario included, also began to move towards using the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) as a vehicle for discussions with the federal government about the BEP.<sup>39</sup>

### Policy Disputes and Conflicting Agendas

In 1974, the federal-provincial agreements for bilingualism in education were renewed, without significant changes, for a second five-year period; however, some concerns over the programmes had begun to surface, and these grew in number and degree over the course of the second agreement. Many francophone associations were very upset with the manner in which these funds were being allocated by the provincial government. They also decried the lack of provincial control over the school boards. In 1972, for instance, the town of Sturgeon Falls, a community that was 87 per cent francophone, had to settle for a bilingual school, due to resistance of the local anglophone-dominated school board in North Bay to a French-language one.<sup>40</sup> Of much greater concern, however, was the fact that monies allocated for minority-language education were being diverted into second-language instruction, while French-language schools were being shortchanged.<sup>41</sup> A demand from the *Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario* that the provincial government explain the shortfall<sup>42</sup> was met with a provincial reply that full-day programmes in the minority language cost the province less than the 20-minute-per-day programmes for core French as a second language. The 1973 Allard study also triggered a similar study of the local school board by the *Union des parents et contribuables francophones* (UPCF). Under the federal formula, the Carleton Catholic Board should have been receiving \$82.80 per student in the FML programme. Instead, it was receiving \$47.36 per student, the same amount as it received for FSL on the English side of the board. In fact, instead of pro-rating the students on the English-language side at the rate of 15:1, the board was receiving funding on a per-student rate, and not on the basis of full-time equivalents. This averaged out to a shortfall of \$200,000 per year that was diverted away from francophones in this particular board.<sup>43</sup> While all the funds received by the province were going to bilingual education, the anglophone population was getting the greatest benefit from federal funding administered by the province.

In their 1977 manifesto, *Les héritiers du Lord Durham*, the *Fédération des francophones hors Québec* (FFHQ) demanded that the federal government request a satisfactory accounting of how the funds were being used by the provinces.<sup>44</sup> When Jane

Dobell was asked by representatives from teachers' associations how the funds were being used, however, she replied that these associations should ask those questions of their provincial governments. She considered that the associations were in a better position to demand answers than the federal government, which, by posing the same questions, would be viewed as meddling.<sup>45</sup>

The federal government shared the concerns of these associations. In January 1976, Secretary of State Hugh Faulkner declared that the federal government was not content merely to finance the status quo, and demanded proof that the programmes were in fact having an impact. He suggested that a more flexible approach to funding, perhaps on a case-by-case basis, might be a more effective manner of sponsoring bilingual education in the country.<sup>46</sup> Jane Dobell noted that although the federal government respected the provincial decision to grant autonomy to the school boards, the boards could be requested to provide information as to how the funding was being used. Secretary of State officials Dobell and Peter Roberts indicated to Ontario's provincial officials in their April 1976 meeting that they were not in favour of reopening the formula agreements. Without a full accounting of how funds were used, however, the decision of whether to continue funding might become a purely political one, and the programme might be cut in order to appease critics of the government's bilingualism agenda.<sup>47</sup>

The levels of funding were also becoming a concern for the federal government. Expenditures by the federal government on the BEP formula payments had risen from \$12.1 million in 1970-71 to \$27.6 million in 1975-76 in Ontario alone as enrolments increased, and costs seemed likely to rise even higher with inflation.<sup>48</sup> The lack of public visibility of the programmes, and the lack of credit given to the federal government in the publicity that did exist, was also a major concern. To the surprise of federal officials, even teacher delegates at a 1976 conference on the BEP were largely ignorant of how the programme functioned.<sup>49</sup> This prompted requests by the federal government that the province make an effort to mention the federal contributions on all publicity related to bilingual programmes funded by the Secretary of State.<sup>50</sup> An evaluation of the programme's effectiveness was also needed in order to deflect criticisms, especially in 1977, when crises such as the *Association des gens de l'air du Québec* dispute and Québec's Bill 101 prompted some backlash against official bilingualism in both English-speaking and French-speaking Canada.

Such were the concerns of the players involved as renewal negotiations to extend the BEP a second time began in 1977. The April 1979 deadline passed without any agreement, and the programme went into limbo, with the federal government providing limited funding on a yearly basis. The negotiations would not be concluded until 1983. The contentious issues in the negotiations may be grouped into two large categories. The first concerns financial matters; the second relates to procedural and constitutional questions.

Ontario's first major financial concern was the allocation of the formula payments, which it found unsuited to its needs. Second-language instruction was a much higher priority for the province, as it served a much larger segment of the population and was more popular politically. The provincial government claimed that the cost of providing core French second-language instruction in small time units to anglophones (\$525/FTE) exceeded that of full-time French minority-language education (\$274/FTE),<sup>51</sup> and thus wanted the levels of the formulas altered. Accordingly, in 1977, the CMEC proposed that the percentage level for second-language instruction be raised to 15.8 per cent.<sup>52</sup> The figure for minority-language education was left at the lower level of nine per cent, reflecting the general lack of interest in the provinces for the minority-language aspects of the federal programme and the lower FTE costs.

Ottawa was not receptive to the provincial demand for increased levels of formula funding. Federal officials did not like the fact that these formulas involved uncontrolled expenditures that had steadily risen over the course of the decade, and thus the federal government refused to consider increasing the formula payments.<sup>53</sup> In fact, one of the first steps taken by the federal government after the expiration of the five-year agreement in 1979 was to impose a \$170 million cap on funding to the BEP, of which \$140 million would go to formula payments.<sup>54</sup> This represented a reduction of \$38 million<sup>55</sup> from the previous year. Once funds were proportionately allocated, the provinces received less than the percentages indicated under the original formulas.

A key element of the federal negotiating position was its desire to fund new developments in official-language education programmes, rather than merely subsidizing provincial education costs. This was especially true in the cases of Ontario and Quebec, where the bulk of the federal monies went to pay for programmes initiated before the BEP came into existence. One of the caveats of the original agreement for the Bilingualism in Education Program was that the funds would go towards funding "additional" costs incurred by the provinces as a result of their providing second-language and minority-language education; however, this concept of an "additional cost" had never been defined. Seeking to rectify this situation, the federal government announced its intention to allocate a certain proportion of the BEP funds to new programmes of a developmental nature, instead of merely funding long-term maintenance costs. The federal government proposed that this proportion be set at one-fifth of the total funding for the first year of a five-year agreement, and this was to increase by one-fifth for each year of the programme, so that by the fourth year of the agreement only one-fifth would be allocated to ongoing maintenance costs.<sup>56</sup>

The federal government also wished to have an accurate accounting of the extra costs incurred by the provinces. Indeed, a federal study found that Ontario's calculation of extra costs included several expenses that would have been incurred

regardless of the existence of the programme.<sup>57</sup> The provincial interpretation of “extra costs” was quite creative, and included all staff working in contact with francophone students and programmes, regardless of the fact that these staff and services, including secretaries and accountants, would be a budget requirement regardless of the language of the student.<sup>58</sup>

If the federal government was cool to the provincial proposals to hike funding for second-language instruction, the response of francophone groups was icy. The FFHQ claimed that a policy of increasing the amounts paid to second-language education to 15.8 per cent while continuing to divert funds from the minority-language programmes would increase the rate of assimilation of francophones and harm an already ailing minority-language education system. At the very least, the FFHQ asserted, the per capita funding given to second-language instruction must not be allowed to exceed that which was allotted to minority-language education.<sup>59</sup> The FFHQ also attacked the CMEC for refusing to consult with it on issues of minority-language education.<sup>60</sup> It was supportive, however, of the federal plan to focus on development projects. The FFHQ had long advocated more stringent controls on the implementation of BEP funding, and this new shift would bring with it greater accountability, as the funds for development would have to be demonstrably targeted at specific education initiatives.<sup>61</sup>

The provinces were not supportive of the new federal directions regarding the allocation of funding under the Bilingualism in Education Program, and demanded that the formula payment structures continue at their existing levels at a bare minimum and that such payments be unconditional and made automatically to the provinces.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, they claimed that the federal government had an obligation to sustain the provincial initiatives that had been started in response to the BEP.<sup>63</sup> Accordingly, the provinces insisted that one of the guiding principles of the new agreements should be that the federal contributions to the BEP recognize the “absolute necessity” of maintaining existing programmes, while also recognizing the “desirability” of introducing new programmes.<sup>64</sup>

The second issue of concern raised by the provinces over the proposed new directions stemmed from this same issue of sustainability. The provinces considered it unacceptable for the federal government to expect them to start up new programmes when continued funding for these programmes would not be forthcoming.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the shift from maintenance to development was unlikely to lead to the creation of new programmes, as the provinces refused to be responsible for expanding their services without financial guarantees. One cannot help but note the lack of provincial enthusiasm for supporting official-language education programmes with provincial dollars. As a rule, the provinces did not seem to be concerned about the prospect of their language programmes ceasing to progress. Indeed, securing federal funding to support their education ministries seems to have been their primary objective.

The federal government did relent somewhat on what could be funded under the “developmental” portion of the formula payments. The Secretary of State agreed in 1979 that the funds under this portion of the formula could be used to pay for “demonstrable extra costs that flow directly from the provision of this education.”<sup>66</sup> Much negotiation took place, however, to determine what could be considered “extra costs.”

The provinces were very concerned also about the duration of the federal funding, and called for the next agreement to last for a minimum of five years, longer if possible, to allow for continuity.<sup>67</sup> The federal government, for its part, was leaning towards shorter-term agreements, closer to a three-year duration.<sup>68</sup> Another viewpoint on the duration of any future agreement came from the Canadian School Trustees Association (CSTA), which expressed the need for even longer-term agreements, in the range of 10 to 15 years, which would allow for better teacher training and curriculum planning.<sup>69</sup> This reveals a key aspect of the negotiations. Issues of implementation and the continuity of the programmes themselves seem to have been overlooked in deliberations about levels of funding and the duration of the agreement.

The form that any future agreement was to assume was also a contentious issue. The federal government favoured shifting from a blanket formula that covered all of the provinces at the same rate to an *accord cadre* approach, which would permit bilateral arrangements with each province that were more sensitive to regional needs.<sup>70</sup> The federal government also considered changing the means of calculating grants to a system based on the size of the minority population of the province, or of the total population of the province as a whole so that provinces with less-established programmes would have a greater opportunity to develop services for their populations.<sup>71</sup> Until the early 1980s, however, led by a CMEC heavily influenced by Quebec, the provinces favoured the blanket formula approach and maintained a united front against the federal proposals.

Constitutional issues complicated the resolution of the federal government’s concerns about the operation of the BEP. The federal government was operating outside of its constitutional jurisdiction, and as such was not permitted to evaluate directly whether its expenditures had been effectively used. Moreover, some external observers had noted that the provinces were willing to be obstructionist in the interests of protecting their constitutional turf.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, in order for new agreements to proceed effectively, the provinces and the federal government had to arrive at a consensus on how certain aspects of the programme would operate.

While the federal government wished to be involved in the planning and evaluation of the programme, the provinces were reticent. In June 1977, the CMEC declared that the only role for the federal government should be a financial role and that its contributions should be granted to the provinces with no strings attached.<sup>73</sup> The provinces wished to maintain federal support for the BEP, however,

and were concerned that the federal government might cut the programme altogether. This was particularly true in Ontario, which discovered in 1978 that its French programmes were almost completely paid for with federal dollars, despite being part of the core curriculum, and there was no contingency plan to provide these services without federal funding.<sup>74</sup>

As noted above, the federal government had grown increasingly discontent with the large amounts of money being devoted to the Bilingualism in Education Program. It had even considered scrapping the programme altogether rather than renewing it for the 1979-84 period.<sup>75</sup> The BEP did manage to survive the chopping block, but its counterpart, the civil service bilingualism training programme, was cancelled. The federal government decided to focus on a "youth option," and saw school programmes, rather than retraining a unilingual civil service, as the best means of meeting the administrative needs of the federal government and of promoting bilingualism in Canada.<sup>76</sup>

While the federal government wanted to continue with the BEP, it did not want taxpayers' money to go to waste. It had been under increasing pressure since the mid-1970s to account for the spending of hundreds of millions of dollars under this programme and to determine whether it was having the desired impact. As such, the federal government insisted that the provinces report on their use of the funds.<sup>77</sup> This would entail proving that the federal dollars were in fact going to minority-language education and second-language instruction and were not merely subsidizing provincial education costs.<sup>78</sup> Evaluations of the use of non-formula payments had been successful, and the federal government wanted to extend this evaluation to the formula payments. The Secretary of State was aware of the difficulty in assessing these payments, as the provinces varied widely in their stages of development. It was, however, considered essential that some form of accounting be implemented.

Official-language minority communities had long been concerned about the manner in which the provincial governments used the federal funds. Even before the federal proposals were made public, the FFHQ had made public its call for a "precise system of control ... whereby the provinces prove that they are in fact using federal funding for the minority groups in the manner in which they were intended."<sup>79</sup> The Ontario partners in the FFHQ had raised concerns over the previous decade about how these funds were spent, such as in the Carleton Catholic School Board, and argued for more provincial accountability in the use of the funds.<sup>80</sup>

In 1977, Ontario was in the process of working on a long-term evaluation of the programme and expressed the hope that the federal government would support its approach.<sup>81</sup> That agreement notwithstanding, the provinces were still not eager to have excessive federal meddling in their evaluations. The federal government suggested that it be allowed to work with the province to determine actual expenditures on French-language education; it was turned down.<sup>82</sup>

The provinces indicated to the federal government that they were willing to be held accountable for the use of their funds, but only on certain terms. They were inclined to provide quantitative data on the outcomes of the programme, such as per student costs, enrolments and instruction time. Priorities in the evaluation would also have to be determined in accordance with provincial objectives, using the format chosen by each province, and in a manner carried out by the province.<sup>83</sup> They also insisted that the federal government need not concern itself with the effectiveness of the programmes, since this was seen strictly as a matter of provincial jurisdiction.<sup>84</sup>

It is surprising that no major objections to this evaluation model were raised by the federal government, despite the fact that it did not deal with the qualitative success of the programme. Shockingly, the Secretary of State admitted, in a meeting with provincial officials in 1977, that he recognized that the standard programmes being funded under the BEP were unlikely to lead to any real form of recognizable bilingualism.<sup>85</sup> Its funding requirements did nothing to promote this objective. The 20-minutes per-day minimum benchmark for second-language instruction was below that recommended by education specialists for effective language teaching and had been shown to cause frustration among students trying to learn a second language.<sup>86</sup> The federal evaluation reports that did begin to appear in the early 1980s were more concerned with the quantitative measurement of rising or falling enrolment rates and the accessibility of the programmes to their constituent groups than with the actual quality of these programmes.<sup>87</sup>

The lack of public awareness of federal involvement in the Bilingualism in Education Program had been noted long before the renegotiation process had begun. The federal government had begun to apply pressure on the provinces to publicize the programmes and to recognize the federal contributions made to these programmes. This theme of seeking public visibility continued as part of the federal government's strategy throughout this period.<sup>88</sup> Greater public visibility for the programme was a concern also of groups such as the FFHQ, whose leaders saw greater publicity as a means of ensuring the programme's continuation.<sup>89</sup>

The cutbacks announced by the federal government in 1978 had public relations implications for the province.<sup>90</sup> Since education was a provincial responsibility, the province believed it would be blamed if funding were cut from these programmes. Moreover, the federal proposal to change its funding structure to finance developmental projects instead of paying for programme maintenance was of great concern to the provincial ministers. They worried that this change would create the public impression that more money was available for bilingual education, when in fact, given federal cutbacks, this was not the case.<sup>91</sup> The fact was, however, that public expectations had been built up around the programme, and neither government wanted to be held responsible for slashing it. The 1979 negotiation



document produced by the CMEC emphasized ensuring that the federal government pay for the continuation of programmes around which public expectations had been built up.<sup>92</sup>

What is striking about the negotiations between the two levels of government is what was *not* discussed. The issue of language rights did not emerge during the negotiation process. It does not seem even to have occurred to the officials involved that programmes for minority-language education might be thought of as a right of the official-language minorities and that the provinces had at least a moral obligation to provide these programmes regardless of federal funding. Neither the correspondence between the ministers involved nor the reporting of this debate in the media makes any reference to language education as a "right." This situation would change dramatically after the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which included Section 23 guaranteeing minority official-language education as one of its rights. During the negotiations, however, the provinces seemed quite resistant to the notion of expanding their minority and second-language education programmes without additional federal funding.

### **Negotiation and Compromise: Reaching a New Agreement**

After two and a half years of stalemate in the renewal negotiations, a joint federal-provincial task force, mandated to recommend principles for a third five-year agreement and alternatives regarding guidelines and mechanisms to set up such agreements, was established in November 1979.<sup>93</sup> Through the work of this committee, progress began to be made.

Until 1981 the provinces had been negotiating under a united front, but the issue of accountability triggered a schism among the provinces. The government of New Brunswick, led by Premier Richard Hatfield, was committed to the principle of a bilingual system and was moving in 1981 to have the province declared officially bilingual under the Constitution. Moreover, being a "have-not" province, it relied heavily on federal funding to maintain its official-language education programmes. It was thus much more willing to compromise on the issue of providing wide-ranging information to the federal government on its programme implementation than provinces such as Quebec.<sup>94</sup> By September 1981, New Brunswick was willing to break with the united front in order to keep its programmes operational and flourishing.

A breakthrough on the issue of extra costs also was imminent. The federal government acknowledged that extra costs could vary widely from province to province, and could range from programme costs for smaller projects to generally higher costs in some provinces for the overall operation of the education system. Secretary of State Francis Fox indicated that the federal government was willing to be flexible on this point.<sup>95</sup>

From these developments, a framework for a new agreement was born. In December 1981, the CMEC proposed a new framework for the multi-year agreements, whereby provinces would be able to choose between two options. The first option would be the “entitlement” option, which would function basically as the programme had in the past. The second option was dubbed the “negotiation” option. Under this plan, the province would prepare its own claim for federal funds, based on its calculations of the costs involved. The province would have to justify its proposals to the federal government and provide evaluation data to be negotiated bilaterally between the two governments. The federal government also agreed to try to raise the level of funding for the Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP), as it was renamed in 1979, particularly with respect to the fixed levels of the entitlement option, if funds could be found.<sup>96</sup> This had been a major concern among the provinces, since the real value of the percentage payments had dropped precipitously under the funding cap, from nine per cent to 6.65 per cent, and from five per cent to 3.69 per cent in Ontario.<sup>97</sup>

Progress had also been made on a number of other fronts. The provinces agreed to provide more public visibility to the programmes and to credit the role of the federal government in funding them. They recommended an annual publication by the CMEC on minority- and second-language education as well as an annual edition of their newsletter dedicated to activities and programmes sponsored by the Secretary of State.<sup>98</sup> The provinces further agreed to recognize federal contributions in press releases and publicity related to the OLEP.<sup>99</sup>

By early 1982, issues of accountability and funding levels had also been largely worked out. For the “entitlement” option, which later became known as the “basic plan,” while existing statistical information would largely be used, the federal government could also ask for additional detail in areas where the statistics provided were not clear.<sup>100</sup> Funding levels also were guaranteed not to drop from the total level of 1981-82. Funds allocated under the basic programme option would be calculated on the basis of the national average cost per full-time equivalent (FTE) student, multiplied by the number of FTEs in the province.<sup>101</sup> Immersion programmes, a major undertaking in Ontario, were to continue to receive funding as part of minority-language education, and part-time immersion programmes would now become eligible for funding.

The only real point of contention holding back the agreements was the issue of their duration. The provinces had wanted a programme of at least five years, but preferably of an open-ended length.<sup>102</sup> The federal government was holding out for a shorter agreement, preferably of three years. As a result, the actual signing of the agreement took longer to gain federal cabinet approval than might otherwise have been the case.

David Ferguson, Ontario's representative on the task force, urged Minister of Education Bette Stephenson to support the new plan. The two-option approach solved the thorny issue of accountability and extra costs that had created such tension both among the provinces and with the federal government. For Ontario, either option was acceptable, as the province had already started providing more detailed information. Ferguson noted, however, that since Ontario's FTE costs were above the national average, it was possible that Ontario could lose out on the national average formula.<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, Quebec's figures were much higher than the national average, and thus the amount of money flowing to Quebec would drop dramatically, leaving more money available for the other provinces. Moreover, Quebec's share of the total number of FTEs was expected to fall substantially over the 1980s given its restrictive English-language education policies;<sup>104</sup> Ontario could thus expect at least to break even. The only real question for the province was which option it should choose.<sup>105</sup>

A final agreement was signed between the provinces and the federal government on 20 December 1983, incorporating most of the key principles discussed above. The federal government accepted the two-option formula. For accountability purposes, statistical information from the provinces was to be provided on an annual basis, broken down into the categories of infrastructure support, programme expansion and development, teacher training and development and student support.<sup>106</sup> The provinces also agreed to provide public information about the programmes, recognizing the role played by the government of Canada. The total funds available per year were increased from \$170 million to \$200 million (and they continued to increase over subsequent years). The agreement itself was set for three years, but with a proviso that it would be extended for an additional two years if both parties agreed. In this manner, a four-and-a-half-year period of instability and insecurity drew to a close and was replaced by a stable agreement.

## Conclusion

The evolution of the Bilingualism in Education Program teaches one a great deal about the development of language policy in Canada and about the progress of the federal government's bilingualism agenda of the 1970s and early 1980s. We shall conclude by commenting on a number of these themes related to the development and formulation of this particular language policy.

One of the primary objectives of our analysis was to determine why and how, over the course of its first 12 years, the BEP came to be implemented in a manner so different from the initial objectives and principles of its framers. A number of these reasons stem from the articulation of these principles and from the translation of objectives into policy. Under pressure from the provinces, the federal government

compromised its objectives throughout the evolution of the programme, beginning with the first framework agreement. The RCBB was predominantly concerned with the rights of minority-language groups and how the federal government could assist in minority-language education. The federal government, however, in an effort to gain provincial and popular acceptance, expanded the BEP to incorporate second-language instruction, eventually including immersion programmes. This allowed the focus of the programme to become extremely blurred. By focussing on multiple priorities, it was possible for the provinces, which had control over implementation of the programme, to use the federal funding to further their own agendas. Second-language instruction and immersion programmes, which were considered a higher priority for the government of Ontario, took precedence over minority-language education, which fell into the background, and federal funds aimed at Franco-Ontarians were funnelled away into other projects.

The programme also suffered from hasty planning. The federal government, while committed to the principle of additional costs, did not ensure that this was enshrined in the agreement, and provisions for accountability were not put in place in the first agreements. Accordingly, controls over the programme that might have provided increased funding for minority-language education in Ontario were never established.

The lack of insistence on using the programmes for true additional costs also meant that another key objective of the federal government, developing and expanding key programmes, was not interpreted by the provinces as a core tenet of the programme. Funds intended by the federal government to expand programmes were used instead for programme maintenance. In fact, much of the growth in Ontario's French-language programmes stems from its own reforms that predate the agreement. While Ontario's French minority-language education programmes did expand to a certain extent in this period, they did not grow at the rate that might have occurred had all of the federal monies intended for expansion of minority-language education been used for this purpose.

One might have assumed that substantial efforts were in fact made to evaluate the effectiveness of the BEP, or that creating bilingual Canadians was central to the thinking of the participants in the negotiation processes. This was not the case. While minority groups such as the FFHQ, the CTF and the CSTA lobbied the governments on issues of quality of education, long-term planning and effectiveness of teaching, these issues almost never came into play in the negotiations between the governments. When negotiations stalled, the governments seemed more concerned with assigning blame than with resolving issues so that children would have access to official minority-language or second-language education. Above all else, securing the largest amount of funding possible from the federal government appeared to be the objective of the province of Ontario. The province was not interested in

expanding minority- and second-language education any further unless the federal government was willing to pay for it.

Though much of the blame for these shortcomings may be laid at the feet of the provinces, the federal government is not above reproach. Its criteria for evaluating the success of the programme were purely quantitative – numbers of students at desks, numbers of schools with French-language education – with little concern for the quality of this education or for pedagogical considerations. While the federal government could not develop these other criteria without provincial co-operation, little effort was made even to attempt to secure co-operation in this regard. Instead of promoting effective language teaching approaches, the federal government often reinforced an ineffective system.

Thus, one may conclude that in its early years of development, the Bilingualism in Education Program, while appearing to promote bilingualism and protect the interests of minority-language groups, was not entirely successful in achieving these ends. The negotiation process was marked by compromise on issues fundamental to children's education in the interests of reaching an agreement. The federal government, to be fair, was somewhat trapped by Canadian federalism. Education was not its area of jurisdiction, and thus it had to tread very carefully with the provinces to achieve its objectives. By using its financial clout and playing on the relative popularity of certain programmes, such as immersion and second-language instruction, it was able to open a door to a language policy that included official minority-language education. Unfortunately, the lack of fundamental agreement and of clearly defined principles and objectives in the initial agreement left too much room for interpretation and loopholes, which in turn undermined the programme. As a result, the demands from Franco-Ontarians for minority-language education were largely overlooked by the anglophone-dominated Ontario government, which funnelled money into programmes that benefited anglophone children.

Nevertheless, the federal government did learn from its experience with the initial development of the Bilingualism in Education Program. While its own confused agenda had allowed the programme to head in unanticipated and undesirable directions, the federal government did develop a means to counteract this and revamped the programme. Drawing on the lessons of the BEP, the federal government, supported by the government of Ontario, introduced new official minority-language education rights provisions under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. These provisions would give the official-language minority groups a legal basis upon which to secure minority-language education for their children, which would continue to be funded under the Official Languages in Education Program.

As this study has shown, issues of federalism can easily come to overshadow the more fundamental and substantive issues of language policy in Canada.

Nevertheless, the Bilingualism in Education Program did achieve some of its objectives regarding the teaching of the official languages of Canada. Federal funding ensured the continuation of minority-language, second-language and immersion programmes. Without this funding, these programmes might have been cut during the recession of the 1970s and early 1980s. Moreover, in some provinces, new programmes were able to develop, while others were able to expand their offerings. More importantly, the BEP also resulted in the creation of a joint federal-provincial programme for official languages in education that has endured to the present day.

#### Appendix One: Federal Expenditures under the Official Languages in Education Program

| Year    | Formula Payments to Ontario | Total Payments to Ontario | Formula Payments Nationally | Total Payments Nationally |
|---------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1970-71 | 12,164,399                  | 12,271,065                | 49,950,000                  | 50,508,933                |
| 1971-72 | 21,438,234                  | 21,830,903                | 73,257,873                  | 74,608,290                |
| 1972-73 | 18,003,334                  | 18,734,768                | 64,527,152                  | 67,582,775                |
| 1973-74 | 19,514,189                  | 22,941,084                | 80,741,361                  | 90,014,674                |
| 1974-75 | 18,901,733                  | 22,656,080                | 78,973,637                  | 90,853,838                |
| 1975-76 | 27,601,522                  | 31,281,350                | 97,421,639                  | 111,494,307               |
| 1976-77 | 30,728,030                  | 34,904,630                | 142,848,870                 | 162,809,470               |
| 1977-78 | 34,780,325                  | 40,510,808                | 195,077,445                 | 222,519,772               |
| 1978-79 | 42,019,500                  | 49,236,126                | 178,113,302                 | 209,783,349               |
| 1979-80 | 32,471,071                  | 39,051,321                | 145,515,826                 | 175,377,468               |
| 1980-81 | 32,740,864                  | 38,956,557                | 141,951,109                 | 171,770,144               |
| 1981-82 | 34,544,331                  | 41,512,055                | 141,748,213                 | 173,524,664               |
| 1982-83 | 41,071,342                  | 48,583,894                | 140,000,000                 | 176,276,619               |

## Appendix Two: Enrolment Statistics for French First-Language Programmes in Ontario

| Year    | Number of French-Language Elementary Schools | Number of Students Enrolled in French-Language Elementary Schools | Number of French-Language Secondary Schools | Number of Mixed Secondary Schools Offering Courses in French | Number of Students Enrolled in French-Language Secondary School Programmes |
|---------|--|---|---|--|--|
| 1970    | n.a.   | 90,225  | 21  | 40   | 25,212   |
| 1971    | 323  | 87,496  | 20  | 38   | 28,000   |
| 1972    | 313  | 85,239  | n.a.  | n.a.   | 29,883   |
| 1973    | n.a.   | n.a.  | n.a.  | n.a.   | n.a.   |
| 1974-75 | 302  | 82,605  | 23  | 40   | 30,000   |
| 1975-76 | 305  | 80,182  | 24  | 38   | 30,906   |
| 1976-77 | 310  | 74,933  | 24  | 35   | 31,442   |
| 1977-78 | 300  | 72,813  | 25  | 31   | 30,639   |
| 1978-79 | 301  | 70,348  | 25  | 35   | 30,499   |
| 1979-80 | 287  | 67,930  | 26  | 36   | 31,655   |
| 1980-81 | 293  | 67,727  | 32  | 32   | 28,040   |
| 1981-82 | 293  | 67,576  | 33  | 32   | 26,686   |
| 1982-83 | 289  | 67,600  | 33  | 30   | 26,000   |

Source: Ontario, Minister of Education, *Report of the Minister of Education* (Toronto: Queen's Printer, 1970-1982/83).

### Appendix Three: Enrolment Statistics for French Second-Language and French Immersion Programmes in Ontario

| Year | Total Number of Students in Publicly Funded Schools in Ontario | Number of Students Enrolled in FSL Programmes at the Elementary Levels | Number of Students Enrolled in FSL Programmes at the Secondary Level | Number of Students Enrolled in French Immersion Programmes |
|------|--|--|--|--|
| 1970 | 2,022,401  | n.a.   | n.a.   | n.a.   |
| 1971 | 2,031,360  | n.a.   | n.a.   | n.a.   |
| 1972 | 2,037,242  | 596,826  | 218,187  | 2,286  |
| 1973 | 2,008,610  | n.a.   | n.a.   | 5,198  |
| 1974 | 1,971,418  | 613,142  | 192,440  | 7,378  |
| 1975 | 2,004,610  | 651,609  | 195,234  | 10,250   |
| 1976 | 1,984,405  | 652,774  | 199,410  | 12,363   |
| 1977 | 1,954,612  | 682,305  | 200,964  | 12,764   |
| 1978 | 1,913,995  | 691,112  | 205,723  | 15,155   |
| 1979 | 1,871,195  | 691,931  | 194,940  | n.a.   |
| 1980 | 1,839,276  | 693,455  | 180,875  | 46,638   |
| 1981 | 1,806,381  | 714,276  | 171,125  | n.a.   |
| 1982 | 1,792,665  | 734,602  | 161,302  | 57,971   |
| 1983 | 1,777,829  | 741,500  | 165,404  | n.a.   |
| 1984 | n.a.   | n.a.   | n.a.   | 76,527   |

*Note:* From 1972 to 1978 French immersion students are expressed as Ontario FTEs. Post-1980 figures reflect a new nationwide standardized definition of a French immersion student.

*Sources:* Ontario, Ministry of Education, *Education Statistics, Ontario* (Toronto: Queen's Printer, annual reports); Peat Marwick & Partners and Stacy Churchill, *Evaluation of the Official Languages in Education Program – Final Report* (Ottawa: Programme Evaluation Directorate of the Secretary of State, 1987); Archives of Ontario, Education, RG 2-200, Council for Franco-Ontarian Education, 1979 – Federal-Provincial: Reconduite de l'entente 1979 – Table 2: Federal Formula Payments Adjusted to Recognize Payments on Account of French Immersion Classes as French as a Second Language.



## Notes

I would like to express my gratitude to Michael Behiels, who has helped me in numerous ways with my research on Canadian language policies. I also would like to thank Jeff Keshen, Matthew Kayahara and the two anonymous reviewers at the *Journal of Canadian Studies* who gave me valuable feedback on earlier drafts of this paper.

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