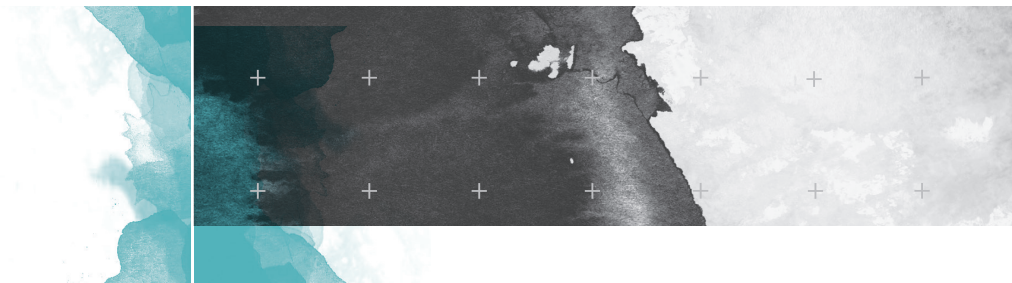




# CELEBRATING CANADA

A GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL BILINGUAL EVENT



Canadians love celebrations. Whether it's to join neighbourhood festivals, watch fireworks, listen to jazz or celebrate an Olympic victory with friends, Canadians are passionate. Even our seasons are celebrated. Winter festivals are held across the country and, just as the first sign of spring is in the air, a festival celebrating tulips in Ottawa or local gardens seems second nature. Canada's upcoming 150th anniversary will be no different, as regional and national activities provide opportunities for us to come together in this celebratory spirit.

But events, big or small, don't organize themselves. Behind every celebration is a team that has worked for months in advance to make sure the event is a success.

To those who work tirelessly to bring Canadians together to celebrate or work together for a common goal, I offer this guide to a successful bilingual event, to ensure that both Anglophones and Francophones feel welcomed and represented. In this guide, you will find good practices to assist you in your work. Those of you organizing events of a larger scope will want to read our more complete publication on this topic: [\*Organizing a Major Sporting Event in Canada: A Practical Guide to Promoting Official Languages\*](#).

Our official languages are a defining characteristic of our Canadian identity. English and French belong to all of us and are part of our national identity, even if we don't speak both of them. The goal is for all of us to fully embrace Canada's official languages, no matter what language we speak.

These events are opportunities for members of Canada's two official language communities to discover and learn about one another. By making everyone feel included and by seeking to tell a story of our past that everyone can appreciate, we can help to bring our great country closer together. The guidelines found in the following pages provide practical tips to help foster this Canadian spirit.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Canadians, and I wish you some well-deserved rest after the last guest has left your care.

**GRAHAM FRASER**

Commissioner of Official Languages

# CELEBRATING CANADA

## A GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL BILINGUAL EVENT

All events celebrating Canadian history and culture—from major national or international sporting, cultural or artistic events to smaller-scale events held in communities—can showcase our two official languages and acknowledge the country's English and French-speaking communities.

### COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC

Events involve a considerable amount of communication with the public. One way to ensure that members of the public feel comfortable using the official language of their choice is through the use of a pictogram or bilingual posters to show that services are available in both languages.

Another way is by simply greeting people with the phrase “Hello! Bonjour!”

#### How can you showcase Canada's official languages?

- Signage is in English and French.
- Documents and verbal messages for the general public are available in both official languages.
- Web sites and social media communications are available in English and French.
- Easily identifiable bilingual employees and volunteers are assigned to service points.
- Unilingual employees are familiar with the procedure for enlisting the aid of a bilingual co-worker.
- Procedures are in place to ensure that safety and emergency services are provided in both official languages.

Translation and interpretation needs are sometimes underestimated and tend to increase significantly as the event draws closer. It is therefore wise to solicit, from the outset, the help of language professionals who have experience meeting high demand. Be careful not to use machine translation software, which provides inadequate results at best. Poor translation impedes clear communication with your audience and can ultimately be embarrassing to your organization. Through its [Support for Interpretation and Translation program](#), Canadian Heritage has funding available for organizations that need access to these resources.





## ON YOUR MARK, GET SET, GO!

Organizing an event carries its fair share of challenges, even at the best of times. When planning begins, it may be difficult to see how you can include official languages while meeting budgets and deadlines. Nonetheless, if official languages are taken into account right from the initial planning stages, it is entirely possible to meet and even surpass the public's expectations.

First and foremost, the event must be planned far enough in advance, and collaborative relationships must be established with a variety of partners, including the local French-speaking minority community if your event is being held outside Quebec or the local English-speaking minority community if your event is being held in Quebec. In addition, if the organizing committee has enough members who are aware of or have been trained to understand the sensitivities and cultural references of both official language groups, things will run all the more smoothly.

### ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

The organizing committee is responsible for planning, organizing, funding and staging the event, while ensuring that all of its services are provided to the general public or key audience in both official languages.

When working directly with third parties or any level of government, raising awareness of the need to create a bilingual environment through services, documentation and signage in both official languages is as an excellent approach to ensure that all Canadians feel welcomed.

### GOVERNMENT OF CANADA AND FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS

If you have a funding agreement with a federal institution, such as Canadian Heritage, it probably comes with official languages requirements. The federal institution must provide the organizing committee with assistance and guidance, and ensure that the committee fully understands and complies with the language requirements associated with organizing and staging the event.

Regardless of whether the event benefits from federal funding, your organization may be eligible to receive support from Canadian Heritage's [\*Support for Translation and Interpretation program\*](#), which encourages the participation of Canadians in both official languages at public events and assists in increasing the number of documents available in both official languages.

## PROVINCES AND MUNICIPALITIES

The organizing committee should contact the province and municipality in which the event is being held, as they play a key role in organizing and hosting cultural and sporting events. Even if your organization has no language obligations, you still need to be aware of the importance of taking both official languages into consideration and of providing bilingual service. The host province and municipality can help create a bilingual environment during the event by ensuring that their signage and documentation are in both official languages.

## OFFICIAL LANGUAGE MINORITY COMMUNITIES

The organizing committee should consider partnership opportunities with the local official language minority community when developing its programs and services. Organizations representing this community can provide invaluable assistance and cultural awareness in preparing for and hosting the event, especially in the area of volunteer recruitment. They can also offer guidance on and help promote the historical and educational programs organized in conjunction with the event. Involving the local official language minority community along with the host municipality and local businesses helps to give visitors the impression that they are being greeted not only by the event's organizers, but by the whole community.

## SPONSORS

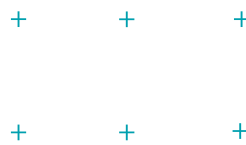
When the organizing committee partners with a sponsor, they should explore together how the sponsor's activities can enhance the bilingual character of the event. Sponsors should also be made aware of the fact that offering services in both official languages on site is an excellent business opportunity.

## OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The role of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages is to ensure that the language rights of all Canadians are respected by federal institutions and to investigate alleged contraventions of the *Official Languages Act*. It also promotes linguistic duality in Canadian society and works together as much as possible with interested parties. Organizing committees are encouraged to contact the Office of the Commissioner for help on understanding the nature and importance of bilingual events. Information on how to get in touch with our regional offices is available on our Web site at [www.officiallanguages.gc.ca](http://www.officiallanguages.gc.ca).







## SERVICE EXCELLENCE

### ASSEMBLING THE TEAM

#### RECRUITMENT

Recruiting enough bilingual volunteers and employees is a crucial challenge that must be met in order to provide service to the public in both official languages. To make best use of their language skills, ensure that bilingual employees and volunteers are assigned to jobs that involve interaction with the public and with event participants. The language skills of potential employees and volunteers should be tested before hiring, for example by asking questions in both official languages during the interview.

There are many ways to recruit bilingual resources, including the following:

- Work together with organizations representing the region's official language minority community, which often has a large number of bilingual individuals.
- Advertise for applicants in the official language minority media.
- Call upon majority language organizations that are involved in second-language learning.
- Conduct awareness campaigns in official language minority schools or in institutions that offer immersion programs.
- Participate in bilingual employee recruitment fairs or call upon firms specializing in the field.
- Contact organizations that represent retired persons.
- Broaden the recruitment area.

#### TRAINING AND AWARENESS

Employees and volunteers should be made aware of the need to offer services actively in both official languages. Actively offering services means using bilingual signage and greetings to inform members of the public that they can obtain the information or service they need in English or French.

Unilingual employees and volunteers must therefore have clear instructions on how to enlist the aid of a bilingual co-worker when someone addresses them in the other official language. Likewise, to help the public identify people who are able to provide service in both official languages, bilingual employees and volunteers should wear special identification, such as a badge.

When the organizing committee plans to communicate with the public through the media, it should consider contacting the minority language media so that both official language communities can be reached.

# QUICK REFERENCE

## COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC IN BOTH OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

- Make a list of all services and communications (e.g., Web site) that are to be provided in both official languages.
- Determine which service points will require bilingual employees and volunteers.
- Ensure that sufficient human and financial resources are available for translation and interpretation services.
- Early in the planning stage, secure the services of professional translators and interpreters who have experience handling high demand.
- Find the means to ensure translation quality.
- Plan measures to meet translation needs in the event of unforeseen circumstances and emergency situations (e.g., health and safety emergencies).
- Ensure that service providers serve the public in both official languages.
- Make sponsors, service providers and provincial and municipal partners aware of the need to serve the public in both official languages.
- Make use of the official language minority media.

## ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

- Create an official languages unit within the organizing committee.
- Create an official languages advisory committee and include official languages experts and key members of the official language minority community.
- Determine the roles that each unit within the organizing committee must play with respect to official languages.
- Encourage senior management and employees to commit to both official languages.
- Develop an internal language policy and communicate it to all parties involved.
- Make sure the team, and especially management, has enough people with an understanding of the sensitivities and cultural references of both official language groups.

### ASSEMBLING THE TEAM

- Determine how many bilingual volunteers and employees are needed.
- Develop a strategy for recruiting bilingual resources, using Anglophone/Francophone associations, schools and public calls for bilingual employees and volunteers.
- Evaluate the language skills of potential employees and volunteers before hiring them.
- Design a training and awareness program on official languages and the importance of providing services in both official languages.
- Assign bilingual resources strategically to make optimal use of their language skills.
- Find a way to identify bilingual employees and volunteers so that the public can easily recognize them.

### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Ensure that programming for cultural events includes and represents both official language communities.
- Ensure a balance of English and French in the visual and spoken components of the programming.
- Invite local and/or national artists and performers from the official language minority community to take part in cultural and artistic events.

### QUALITY CONTROL

- Tour the venues to make sure everything is ready to receive the public in both official languages, including signage, documentation and bilingual volunteers.

