

A LOOK AT BILINGUALISM

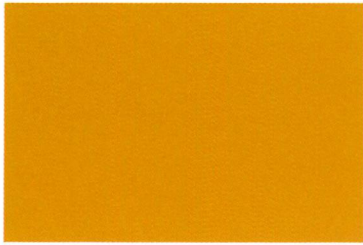


Office of the
Commissioner of
Official Languages



Commissariat
aux langues
officielles

www.ocol-clo.gc.ca



“Linguistic duality is everybody’s business. It can only succeed in Canada if the majority accepts the reasons for it and fully supports it. Bilingualism in the 1970s was aimed at institutional change, but now it can be considered a personal and collective asset in an era of globalization. To give young people a chance to be bilingual is to give them a tremendous opportunity for cultural enrichment and help them participate in the new knowledge and information economy.”

Dyane Adam, Commissioner of Official Languages

I. CANADIANS AND LANGUAGES

While 98% of Canadians speak English or French, Canada's linguistic landscape is enriched by many other languages.

The most spoken languages in Canada, after English and French, are, in order of importance, Spanish, German, Italian, Hindi, Arab, Chinese, Russian and Hebrew.

In the workplace, the second language most used by English-speaking Canadians is French, followed by Spanish, Italian and German.

In 2001, 66% of Canadians knew only one language, 28% knew two languages, 5% three and 1% four.

In comparison, 53% of Europeans know more than one language. (Source: *European Commission, Report 54, February, 2001*)

In the United States, the 2000 Census reports that:

- 215 million Americans (82.1%) over 5 years of age speak only English at home
- 47 million (17.9%) speak another language, of whom 28 million speak Spanish

"Today, the proportion of bilingual Francophones and Anglophones in the 15 to 19 age group is around 24%. The objective of the Action Plan is to raise this proportion to 50% by 2013. The federal government will provide assistance to the provinces and territories to achieve this objective, which is quite realistic."

*Action Plan for Official Languages,
Government of Canada, March 2003*

II. OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Population of Canada in 2001: 30 million

Number of people who knew English
and French: 5.2 million
(18% of the population)

Percentage of Francophones
who were bilingual: 43.4%
(48% among young people aged 15 to 19)

Percentage of Anglophones
who were bilingual: 9%
(17% among young people aged 15 to 19)

Percentage of bilingual (English/French) young people
whose mother tongue was neither
English nor French: 20%

BILINGUALISM AMONG YOUNG CITY DWELLERS

In addition to Montréal and Ottawa, a number of Canadian cities
have large proportions of bilingual young people 15 to 19 years of age.

Moncton (New Brunswick)	66%
Charlottetown (Prince Edward Island)	33%
Gander (Newfoundland and Labrador)	23%
Winnipeg (Manitoba)	21%
Yellowknife (Northwest Territories)	21%
Kitimat (British Columbia)	19%

(Source for sections I and II: Census of Canada, 2001)



“Foreign language instruction should be part of every child’s education. A language is more than sounds and syntax: it is a culture, a way of thinking, and a perspective on the world.

Each language is a precious resource that must be studied, used and preserved precisely because a language opens the mind to new possibilities. The study of language is the study of life, literature, history and thought. It is nothing less than the study of our world and ourselves.”

– U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige at the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, November 21, 2003

III. EDUCATION: AN ENGINE FOR CHANGE

A number of figures show the importance of bilingualism in our schools.

Statistics Canada reports that in the 2002-03 school year, nearly 2 million students took courses in French as a second language:

French immersion programs	357,000 students
Core French programs	1,570,000 students

That same year, there were 560,000 students taking courses in English as a second language (Quebec and New Brunswick).

Nearly 50% of students in the English-language system take French as a second language. Nearly 60% of students in the French-language system take English as a second language (Quebec and New Brunswick).

"Knowing a second language adds a second layer to every encounter with society that one could possibly have...It was after high school, however, that I began to realize the deeper benefits of being bilingual.

I am currently attending the University of King's College in Halifax...

It adds a whole new level when you can read people like Voltaire and Montaigne in their original language."

*- Immersion graduate Stephanie Dick, CPF Calgary Newsletter,
February 2003*

LANGUAGE LEARNING OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

In 2003, under the auspices of the Youth Exchanges Canada Program, some 4,300 young students participated in language exchanges that helped them improve their knowledge of their second language.

Each year, the Government of Canada provides over 7,000 bursaries to help students take language training during the spring or summer.

Other groups and programs, such as the Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges (SEVEC), Katimavik and Young Canada Works in the Two Official Languages, help young people broaden their language experience.



"Canada has become a world leader in second-language teaching. Today, Canadian-style immersion programs can be found in countries around the world, including Australia, Finland, Hong Kong, Singapore, Spain and the United States."

- Alberta Learning, Handbook for French Immersion Administrators, 2002

IV. INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE TEACHING OF SECOND LANGUAGES

All countries in the European Union require students to learn at least one second language until they are 18 years of age, and 48% of these countries even require two second languages to be learned in public schools.

English is the second language that is most often taught in Europe, followed by French. *(Source: European Centre for Modern Languages)*

V. ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF BILINGUALISM

Business leaders believe that individuals derive a great deal of benefit from knowing a second language. Half these leaders feel that people who speak more than one language are more likely to find employment more easily. Many say that those who speak another language are more culturally sensitive and more likely to get better jobs.

(Source: Chamber Weekly CEO/Business Leader Poll by COMPAS in the Financial Post, December 1, 2003)

"There is definitely an imbalance. Companies want to hire more bilingual workers and we can't find them," says François Guay, vice-president of North American sales for Drake International, a recruitment

firm. Guay says that even in the past four to six months, he has experienced an increased demand for bilingual workers. – *The Hamilton Spectator*, "It Pays to be Bilingual in Canada," January 24, 2004

"Sharing a common language has a large and significant effect on trade intensity. Two countries sharing a common language are estimated to have two-way trade flows more than 1.7 times as large as those between two otherwise similar countries."

– John F. Helliwell (1999), "Language and Trade" in Albert Breton, ed. *Exploring the Economics of Language, Canadian Heritage*

LANGUAGE INDUSTRIES: RAPIDLY EXPANDING

The language instruction and translation market in Canada is now worth \$750 million a year. Some 27,000 people are employed here.

Semi-automated translation is a new cutting-edge technology. The development of this technology is one of the tasks of the new Language Technologies Research Centre recently established in the National Capital Region.

(Source: *Les Affaires*, Special Report, September 6, 2003)

VI. LITERARY FLOWERING

Canadian artists of English, French or other origin are distinguishing themselves on the national and international scenes. Several have won prizes and awards for works in their second official language.

Whether conceived in English or French, the works of our Canadian artists often have a second run in the other official language.

In literature, Yann Martel, whose mother tongue is French, won the most prestigious award for English literature, the Man Booker Prize, for *The Life of Pi* in 2002. The French-language version, translated by his parents, is very successful in France. Nancy Huston, originally from Calgary, won the Governor General's Award for *Cantique des plaines*, which she first wrote in English under the title *Plain Song*. This well-known author in France (Goncourt des lycéens and Prix du Livre Inter) has close ties with the artistic community in Quebec.

VII. PUBLIC OPINION IN FAVOUR OF BILINGUALISM

- 97% of French-speaking Quebecers feel it is important that children in Quebec learn English.
- 55% of Anglophones who live in provinces other than Quebec think it is important that children in their province learn French.
- That percentage increases to 62% in the 18-34 age group.

(Source: Environics, March 2003)



NUMBER OF BILINGUAL YOUTH IN CANADA



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, 2001