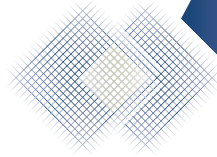




## *Myths and Reality*



### *Common Myths about Official Languages*

#### **Myth: You must be bilingual to work for the federal public service.**

**Reality:** Canadians are concerned about fair and open access to government jobs. Over 60% of all positions require knowledge of only one official language, while about 40% of federal positions require varying levels of bilingualism. The number of bilingual positions varies across the country. In the National Capital Region, where many federal offices provide services to all regions of the country, 65% of positions are designated bilingual. In contrast, only about 5 percent of positions in Western Canada and 10% of positions in Ontario require various levels of competence in both English and French.

#### **Myth: Bilingualism means that all federal services must be offered in both official languages coast to coast.**

**Reality:** The Government of Canada only offers bilingual services where there is significant demand or where the nature or location of the office requires services to be provided in both official languages.

#### **Myth: Only those who grew up in a French environment will ever become proficient enough to meet the bilingualism criteria of the federal public service.**

**Reality:** In general, the public service is becoming increasingly bilingual. According to the Canada Public Service Agency's most recent Annual Report on Official Languages, 90% of those who hold bilingual positions meet the linguistic requirements of their position. Moreover, in the 2005–2006 fiscal year, Anglophones filled nearly one-third of new appointments to mandatory bilingual positions in the public service.

What is more, the federal public service generally reflects the linguistic composition of the Canadian population. Close to three-quarters (72%) of federal positions are held by English-speaking Canadians.

#### **Myth: Official bilingualism means that all Canadians must speak English and French.**

**Reality:** Some 22 million Canadians speak only English or French. The Official Languages Act applies solely to institutions and in no way obligates Canadians to become bilingual. Official bilingualism ensures that the Government of Canada can offer services to English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians in their language of choice where there is significant demand. By using English and French, the Government of Canada can communicate with more than 98% of the population.

**Myth: Bilingualism is a failure and Canadians don't want anything to do with it.**

**Reality:** An increasing number of Canadians understand the social, political and economic benefits of having two official languages, and support for bilingualism is unprecedented. According to a survey conducted by Decima Research in 2006, 7 out of 10 Canadians are personally in favour of bilingualism for the whole country and for their own province. In addition, 77% of Canadians consider that both official language groups should enjoy education that is of equal quality, even when the groups are in a minority situation. Among young adults between 18 to 34 years of age, support for Canadian bilingualism today is 80%. As well, more than 8 out of 10 Canadians consider it essential for their children to learn a second language.

**Myth: With such diversity in Canada, there are more speakers of non-official languages in Canada than there are of French.**

**Reality:** More than one in five Canadians declares French as their mother tongue<sup>1</sup>, making it the second most spoken language in Canada. In fact, there are more French mother tongue speakers outside Quebec alone (close to one million people—more than the population of Saskatchewan or Nova Scotia) than there are of speakers of any other single language besides English. According to data from the 2006 census, only 20% of the entire Canadian population has a mother tongue that is not English or French.

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<sup>1</sup> “Mother tongue” refers to the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual at the time of the census. (2006 Census, Statistics Canada).