

## FOR A STRONGER LANGUAGE SECTOR

What do an asylum seeker, an Anishinaabe lawyer and a hearing-impaired woman about to give birth have in common? Under the *Official Languages Act* and the *Accessible Canada Act*, they have the right to the assistance of an interpreter in the language of their choice (French, English, Indigenous languages, Sign languages). Yet, the ongoing shortage of interpreters jeopardizes the enforcement of these Acts. The Canadian Association of Schools of Translation (CAST), which represents the main universities in the country offering translation programs, wishes to draw much needed and legally justified attention to this alarming shortage of interpreters as it has a significant impact on the daily lives of Canadians.

Whether in Parliament, in a court of law, at a hospital or during a meeting of a board of directors, interpreters are essential to ensure the flow of exchanges and communications. But there is more. Without these essential workers, the Canadian ideals of equity, diversity and inclusion—values so dear to the hearts of Canadians—are but empty promises. Saying that the shortage of interpreters threatens the very core of our democracy is an understatement. Across Canada, interpreters are unable to meet the ever-growing demand created by the multiplication of exchanges in the digital era. This reality is made even more worrisome by declining enrolments in translation programs in Canadian universities, programs which are responsible for the training of interpreters, translators and terminologists. What a tragically ironic situation—an alarming shortage of interpreters while universities are having a hard time attracting students. However, there are solutions to this crisis.

Acknowledge that interpretation, just like translation and terminology, is a fundamentally relevant career with a clear future. Why? Because new technologies have been embraced with the goal of training highly qualified professionals ready to work hand-in-hand with state-of-the-art technologies. It is also critical to debunk the myth that artificial intelligence has made university translation and interpretation training programs redundant. Quite the opposite, universities have already updated their programs to ensure that they meet the demands of the job market. The professions of interpretation, translation and terminology are holding their ground in our ever-evolving society. Recognizing that interpretation and translation provide a window on the world requires that we ensure not only the sustainability of existing programs in these disciplines but create new programs. This is not the time to suspend translator and interpreter training programs.

Faced with the current state of the interpretation profession in Canada, CAST calls upon political leaders and major players of the language sector to mobilize the necessary resources to train interpreters, and other language professionals in order to put an end to the shortage of interpreters in our country. We

call upon the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada, Raymond Th  berge, the Minister of Official Languages, the Honourable Randy Boissonnault, and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada, the honourable Jean-Yves Duclos as well as the administrators of Canadian universities to respond to our call. Canadian Interpreters and translators share the voices of the world; both must continue to be heard.

### **Canadian Association of Translation Schools – Association canadienne des   coles de traduction**

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