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Vive les Canadiens

The French fact is vital in Canadian life. Some thirty per cent of all Canadians speak French. In Québec some five million people speak it every day, at work, at play, in church and around the dinner table. In Montréal there are good French-language universities and good restaurants (thousands of them) serving food with a Gallic emphasis. A quarter of all players in the National Hockey League have French names. Pierre Trudeau is the Prime Minister of Canada and the pleasant young women on Air Canada ask you to "*veuillez attacher vos ceintures de sécurité*" before you take off. French Canada is and has always been a most significant part of the country's political structure — George Etienne Cartier was a founder of the Conservative Party, Sir Wilfrid Laurier was the first Liberal Prime Minister and Louis St. Laurent was among the most respected of the political leaders of the 20th Century. In recent years, French Canada, most particularly the Province of Québec, has stretched its sinews culturally, emotionally and politically. The awakening has been traumatic, with flashes of violence, but it has had positive results — among them a determined effort to make Canada's Public Service truly bilingual — and it has reaffirmed a vital Canadian truth: Canada is one country but Canadians are by no means interchangeable.

French Canadians (for example) are not simply Canadians who speak French and live in Québec. Québec is La Belle Province but it is not *le monde entier*. There are Acadians in New Brunswick (and elsewhere) and Métis in Manitoba (and elsewhere) and at least a million other French-speaking Canadians here and there, in Ontario, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Alberta. There are daily French language newspapers in Ontario and New Brunswick and fourteen weeklies outside Québec. There are French language TV channels and radio stations from coast to coast. In and out of Québec there are French Canadians who have achieved pinnacles in the arts, in science and in industry. This issue of CANADA TODAY/D'AUJOURD'HUI is not a definitive report on French Canada — in these few pages we can only *effleurer la question* — but in them we do, at least, call attention to the second half of our name.