

The Annual Report on Official Languages takes stock of the efforts made by the Department of External Affairs in the field of official languages, in the three main spheres to which the Official Languages Act relates: service to the public, language of work, and equitable participation by both language groups.

The Report presents an assessment of the progress achieved during the past year, sets forth the new goals the Department intends to pursue and indicates the resources allocated to the Official Languages Program.

SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

In view of the diversity of services offered, and of the fact that its clientele is dispersed throughout the world, the Department has evaluated the services offered at Headquarters in Ottawa, at the regional passport offices and at the Canadian posts abroad.

In order to measure more accurately the demand for its services, the Department has conducted an analysis of statistics on the travelling public abroad. It has also formulated and submitted to Treasury Board new administrative procedures to better determine the required and actual bilingual capacity at each post. Application of these measures has revealed that of 109 posts (some have multiple accreditation), 102 have reached the capacity sought. Once all the data has been gathered on the linguistic proficiency of locally-engaged personnel, the Department will have a more complete picture of the bilingual capacity of posts. Nevertheless, it can already be stated that the posts are able to serve the public in both official languages. Further, a survey made it possible to ascertain that the posts had taken measures to ensure that services were offered after normal working hours.

With regard to information intended for the public, audits have confirmed that it is available in both official languages. New posters have been designed and distributed to the posts, bureaux and divisions in order to emphasize the availability of services in both official languages. Finally, measures have been taken to disseminate advertising intended for the public in the media of the minority language groups.

The Department is able to provide bilingual service to its clients in each of the regional passport offices. However, measures have been taken to increase the bilingual capacity of certain offices. In addition, during the last few months a conference telephone system between Ottawa and the regional offices has made it possible to handle requests where there are at present few bilingual resources.

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