



ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES INTERPRÈTES DE CONFÉRENCE
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS

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Official language interpreters welcome Minister Foote's defense of Canada's linguistic duality

Ottawa – Minister Judy Foote's decision to cancel the proposed system for procuring the services of interpreters is a strong signal of support for Canada's official languages policy, according to the International Association of Conference Interpreters (Canada region).

"We are delighted with the changes Minister Foote outlined in her appearance before the Official Languages Committee this morning. She has demonstrated a keen awareness of and sensitivity toward Canada's linguistic duality," said Nicole Gagnon, AIIC Canada's spokesperson.

Today, Minister Foote canceled the proposed procurement process for interpretation services in favour of going back to the drawing board to get it right. She also has come out in favour of requiring all government departments and agencies to use Translation Bureau services to meet their interpretation and translation needs. This would go a long way to ensuring quality that can be delivered only by federally accredited interpreters.

AIIC Canada has long been concerned that the proposed system for procuring the services of freelance interpreters would undermine the quality of interpretation and Ottawa's ability to meet its obligations under the Official Languages Act because it:

Establishes a dual stream in which only a handful of federal conferences and events will be assigned to interpreters with the best skills for the job, while all the rest – about 95% - will receive the services of interpreters assigned only because they have bid the lowest rate.

Opens the door to assigning work to interpreters who do not hold federal accreditation, a practice that has become widespread since Government departments were given the green light to hire unqualified interpreters (i.e. those not employed or contracted by the Translation Bureau) creating a double standard of quality.

Further discriminates against quality as it seeks to establish one all-inclusive rate regardless of the mode of interpretation. As a result, the more versatile, specialized and experienced interpreters will lose out to the lowest bidders. This will shrink the already small pool of qualified interpreters.

“Our concern is that by undermining quality access to federal institutions in the official language of choice would suffer. Minister Foote has gone a long way to addressing our concerns today,” Ms. Gagnon said.

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