

# informATIO

March 2008

Number 1

## Another Issue on Community Interpreting?

By Nancy McInnis, President

**Y**es! There have been many developments in this field in recent weeks as the Healthcare Interpretation Network published its National Standard Guide for Community Interpreting Services and received major press coverage in a December issue of the *Toronto Star*. And then there are all the comments we received from our last issue on the subject. So in an attempt to allow you to express your views, we have dedicated this whole issue to community interpreting once again. Please look inside for feedback from members of the Association, plus opinion pieces by Board members Dorothy Charbonneau and Marco Fiola. This is a rapidly developing issue in the language industry, and we are working hard to stay on top of it—and to stay abreast of your opinions on the matter. Thanks for sharing your point of view!

## We Have More in Common Than You May Think

By Dorothy Charbonneau  
Director, Conference Interpreters, ATIO

**W**hen the ATIO Editorial Board chose to devote an issue to community interpreting, I was asked to submit an article, but I couldn't get a feel for what was expected of me. Upon reading the newsletter, I felt it important that I write an article in response, if only to clear up a few things and point out some important facts.

In my view, community, court and conference interpreting are intricately related facets of the same language profession, namely, interpreting. The only difference is the context where it is carried out and, tragically, the level of training, recognition and remuneration.

Simultaneous interpreting involves much more than being able to speak two or more languages fluently. It is actually a highly complex intellectual activity comprised of several steps occurring *at the same time*. To wit, the interpreter is listening to what the speaker is saying in the source language, decoding the message into its constituent parts,

## Community Interpretation and the Other Language Professions: Examining the Disparity

By Marco Fiola  
Director, Terminologists, ATIO  
Translation Victoria Ralph, C. Tran. (Canada)

**O**ver the past two decades, the importance of community interpretation—the “dean” of language practices—has received greater recognition from its users and society in general. But despite this increased visibility and legitimacy, community interpretation is still tarnished by a reputation for amateurism. Far be it from me to claim that the true value of language professions has been fully recognized. The professions recognized by ATIO have made remarkable progress in recent years, particularly through the protection offered by professional certification, but it would be unwise to rest on our laurels and think that the battle is won. Promoting language professions is a long-term project, and we must maintain our efforts so that we do not lose ground. This desire to see the value of community interpretation fully recognized is also motivating the members of a small group of community interpreters in Ontario, and we are pleased to note the creation of a new organization for these language “cousins.” Their enthusiasm should be applauded because

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## We Have More in Common Than You May Think

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checking their mental “database” for language equivalents, reassembling the message correctly into the target language and delivering that message out loud. All in a continuous loop. Sometimes for long periods. It is an incredibly taxing mental exercise and requires an extreme level of concentration. In fact, interpreting ranks a close second to air traffic control in stress levels. That is a skill that goes far beyond the ability to speak two or more languages fluently. Studies have shown that only 2% of the general population has the ability to intellectually multitask in this way, and has the requisite right brain/left brain connection. These steps apply whether the interpreter is interpreting from a booth, with all the technical equipment that implies, or providing whispered or elbow or liaison interpreting to a client, without the benefit of a booth or other equipment. Consecutive interpreting also involves the same mental exercise, albeit with a greater time lag.

The training offered by the Cultural Interpreter Language and Interpreting Skills Assessment Tool (CILISAT) and the Interpreter Language and Interpreting Skills Assessment Tool (ILSAT) is clearly inadequate, both in duration and focus. The most important thing to assess, after language fluency, is a person’s ability to intellectually multitask as described above, and this is not being done, nor does 100 hours constitute sufficient training. It is generally accepted in the profession that it takes up to five years for an interpreter to become fully experienced, and even those students who have completed the Master’s in Conference Interpreting require supervision after having completed a one-year full-time course of study. They are generally assigned as an additional member of a team of interpreters with one interpreter assigned to supervise and provide concrete feedback on their work. Similarly, the Language Interpreter Training Program now being offered in several colleges in Ontario is similarly flawed. One does not learn interpreting, whether consecutive or simultaneous, by listening to lectures; one learns through practice, practice and more practice, under proper supervision and with great care given to the accuracy of language transfer, something that the course in its current format does not adequately provide. From the information that I have been able to gather, one of the major problems in the development of the curriculum is that the advice of professional and properly trained interpreters was not sought. By properly trained, I mean someone who holds a master’s degree in interpreting, because that is the appropriate level for this type of training, as evidenced by the numerous schools around the world and in Canada (at the University of Ottawa) that have been training interpreters for years. There are close to two hundred professional conference

interpreters in Canada, a number of whom could have provided valuable and constructive advice in this area. Many of these interpreters have been active on the international stage and are well versed in training methods and requirements, as a number of them have considerable experience teaching interpreting. In addition, the program does not require a sufficiently high degree of fluency in the student’s second language, which is another major flaw.

One misconception advanced in the *InformATIO* issue appears to be that conference interpreters can somehow “specialize and only work in a limited amount of fields,” as stated by Ms. Fragkou and Ms. Demko in their article. Believe me, as a professional conference interpreter with over 20 years of experience, nothing is further from the truth. I have been called upon to interpret in more areas than I can count, sometimes with little or no documentation with which to prepare, ranging from agriculture to heart surgery to aircraft mechanics and everything in between, with clients ranging from community participants to parliamentarians and international dignitaries. Conference interpreters are jacks of all topics and masters of none. Of course, some of us do develop expertise in certain areas over the years if we are called upon to work in that area often enough, or if a topic is of particular interest, but interpreter training prepares us to interpret *any* topic by giving us the tools we need to land on our feet, so to speak, in any context. I also have to disagree with the statement that “a community interpreter is a professional who helps people communicate in critical situations where human emotions usually come into play.” Communication always involves human emotions, no matter the setting, and this statement is simply a reflection of their lack of knowledge of what interpreting at any level and in any context is all about. I would venture to guess that when I interpreted debates on highly emotional topics, such as capital punishment or abortion, the speakers were expressing emotion, which an interpreter has to faithfully reproduce both in tone and content no matter how they may feel personally about the issue. When interpreters were called upon to interpret at various royal commissions (violence against women, airplane disasters and medical ethics, just to name a few), we were dealing with highly emotional issues there as well. And collective bargaining, for example, is nothing if not emotional. I am not trying to diminish the importance of community interpreting, I am just trying to point out that interpreting at all levels—community, court and conference—has much more in common than some people seem to believe.

Another misconception advanced by Lola Bendana in her article is that “the presence of the community interpreter is much more noticeable in the communication process.” Not quite. Conference interpreters often work out of a booth, it

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is true, but our presence is no less “noticed” and our services are no less essential to ensuring that people speaking different languages can understand each other and communicate, it is perhaps just not as immediate a physical presence, although that cannot be said for meetings, where there is a relatively small number of participants and where we cannot help but be noticed. Also, conference interpreters are just as likely to be called upon to provide whispered or elbow interpreting, subject to the nature of the meeting and the languages involved, making us just as “noticeable” as community interpreters. I have to admit that I am not entirely certain what Ms. Bendana means by “noticeable,” so I will come at it from another perspective as well. If by noticeable she means that the interpreter has to step out of “interpreting” mode at times, that is also true for conference interpreters. In fact, it is our professional duty to explain to the participants, when required, how we will go about doing our job and what our role in the process is, namely, to act *solely* as a language professional ensuring that the message is faithfully and accurately transmitted from one language to another. Allow me to illustrate with some examples. Recently, I was spending a great deal of time in a hospital tending to a sick relative. The medical staff knew what I do for a living and came to me for assistance in interpreting instructions on how to use a medical device for another patient and their family. Before even going into the patient’s room, I insisted that the doctor explain the ins and the outs of the device to me, so that if I was unclear about any aspect, that could be addressed outside of the patient’s presence. Once I was clear on this point, we entered the patient’s room. Before starting with the doctor’s instructions, I explained to the patient and family that I was there as an interpreter only, that I would be repeating exactly what the doctor was saying to them and any questions that they had to the doctor, and that the participants could essentially ignore my presence and address their comments directly to each other. In essence, I had to be “noticeable” to explain to all parties involved the parameters of my responsibilities before the actual exchange of information began. Both parties were extremely pleased with the results. In fact, both parties felt that I essentially “disappeared” once the actual information exchange began, which is as it should be. The doctor later wondered out loud why it wasn’t always this seamless and told me of the many occasions where there were actually doubts as to whether the information had been properly transmitted. So I provided a crash course in working with an interpreter, for which the doctor was very grateful. Conference interpreters also have to be “noticeable” on occasion—we arrive at our assignment up to a half hour before the meeting actually begins, as we often have to explain to the meeting convener how interpreting works, that microphones must always be used, etc. We also have to request documents if none were provided beforehand, and sometimes other technical matters

have to be addressed *before* the actual meeting begins. Again, this is part and parcel of our responsibility as a language professional and can be essential to ensuring that once the meeting actually begins, the interpreter “disappears,” and the communication between the parties is seamless.

Ms. Bendana also states in her article that conference interpreters work in a “limited number of languages of international diplomacy and commerce,” again indicating a clear lack of knowledge of the interpreting profession outside her orbit. The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) represents professional interpreters in over 50 languages and is the association responsible for developing the standards, ethics and working conditions to which professional interpreters subscribe worldwide. We, at ATIO, have based our standards, ethics and working conditions for conference interpreters on those developed by AIIC, as have the other professional associations in Canada. Those working to professionalize community and court interpreting would do well to do the same.

I have had the opportunity to review the proposed Canadian National Standard Guide for Institutional/Community Interpreters and while it is a useful first step, it is flawed. The standards were prepared by non-interpreters with little knowledge of how the profession has evolved over the years and, while I am sure it was prepared with the best of intentions, it demonstrates a lack of understanding of the profession and how best to ensure quality services, again because professional interpreters did not participate in the process from the outset. It also relies heavily on American sources, yet another flaw in my view, as the legislative framework and the interpreting profession has evolved differently in Canada. However, the Americans are doing one thing I would love to see emulated here, namely, the fact that some states now require court interpreters to have a master’s degree in legal interpreting. One thing we should most certainly not emulate is the increasing use of telephone interpreting for any and all circumstances, something I refer to as “sweatshop interpreting,” as there is even less regard for professional standards and working conditions, and the remuneration is nothing short of criminally low. Again, in the conference interpreting world, there are technical standards that apply for video and teleconferencing; community and court interpreters would do well to adopt them and insist that they be respected, not only to protect their own health and safety on the job, but to ensure that the interpreting they provide is of the highest possible quality.

In my humble opinion, *all* interpreters, no matter what setting they operate in, *must* have the same advanced training as conference interpreters and should respect the international standard on team numbers and length of interpreting time

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in order to ensure that each and every person relying on the services of an interpreter has the same high level of quality service, no matter where they may be. I feel strongly that this is how to professionalize community and court interpreting. Would you have a student doctor who has only 300 hours of training perform heart surgery on you? Would you have a first year law student defend you on a charge of murder? I think not. You want only the best trained and most highly qualified professionals. The same should apply to the language professions of translating and interpreting, which are related—yet not interchangeable—activities.

For community interpreters to become recognized as professionals, they have to train as professionals and hopefully some day be remunerated as professionals, which is sadly not the case in Canada today. There appears to be a misconception among the general public that bilingualism or multilingualism alone an interpreter makes. Sadly, this belief also appears to be held in some institutions, as well as, and even more tragically, by some unscrupulous service providers. As I explained earlier, nothing could be further from the truth. The public at large must be made aware of just how complex a profession this is. Decision makers and service providers must be made aware of this as well, and until such time as this is accomplished, community interpreters will continue to be seen as the poor relation of the profession where someone who is bilingual will do. A most regrettable viewpoint. Is a patient not entitled to the highest quality professional service, properly remunerated? Is a defendant in a criminal trial or a party to a civil matter not similarly entitled? I think so.

Ideally, all interpreters should be trained at the master's level, with the ability to specialize in health or court interpreting, as I recognize that some different conditions apply in those areas. If community interpreters were able to band together and demand such training, and if decision makers and service providers were to understand just how demanding a profession this is, and how important it is to respect the working conditions as developed by AIIC over the past 50 years, we would all be better off. As it stands, the situation is far from ideal, and it is the innocent who suffer. How many people have been granted a driver's licence who should not be on the road? How many patients have misunderstood a doctor's instructions with potentially tragic results? How many people have been unjustly convicted? How many refugees have been denied entry into Canada? All because of unqualified interpreters.

Don't get me wrong, I heartily applaud all those community and court interpreters who work diligently to improve their skills and who strive for excellence in often difficult conditions. And it is a well-known fact in the conference interpreting community that several excellent conference interpreters come from the ranks of community and court interpreters. They realized that they needed more training, sought it out, learned about interpreting standards, proper working conditions, team strength and professional ethics—not to mention differences in remuneration—and became excellent conference interpreters. While I am delighted to count them as colleagues, I am sure their loss is keenly felt elsewhere. Many conference interpreters with a court background would have no objection to working in the courts, but only if the working conditions were much improved to respect international standards and remuneration was increased. Just as a point of information, I would add that in Europe, all international tribunals hire *conference* interpreters and here, in Canada, interpreting at the Supreme Court of Canada and other Federal tribunals is also provided by conference interpreters.

Conference interpreters are more than willing to advise and support our community interpreting colleagues to better their standards and working conditions and to help them someday achieve their goal of becoming certified professionals. With any luck, we may even be able to achieve remuneration commensurate with this expertise, as \$25 an hour is woefully inadequate. We still have a long way to go to achieving this goal. The *InformATIO* issue on community interpreting is but the first step on a long journey and serves to launch the debate.

As additional reading on the topic, I highly recommend a publication that was recently brought to my attention entitled *Translation, Buying a non-commodity*, Durban and Melby, 2007. While this publication deals with translation exclusively, much of the information it contains can apply to interpreting as well.

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the road will be long, and they will need our support. It is in everyone's interest to see community interpretation develop from the status of "professional practice" to full "profession." In the text that follows, I would like to set out the points that I feel we must consider in this development process.

### A Few Comparisons

It may seem unfair to compare activities whose professional status is as different as that of community, court and conference interpretation. However, that is exactly what we must do since we are examining language professions and, ideally, we should be able to make community interpretation part of nationally recognized language associations. Let's start by comparing recognition.

The recognition enjoyed by conference interpretation is closely linked to the fact that it is now considered essential to the proper functioning of our federal and provincial institutions, and rightly so. Since the founding of the country and the adoption of the *Official Languages Act*, in particular, conference interpretation has enabled the two main language communities to participate fully and completely in debates and decisions that have a direct impact on the governing of the country. It is no longer possible to consider intergovernmental meetings without the systematic involvement of conference interpreters. We need look no further than the House of Commons debates for an eloquent example of the need for conference interpretation.

Community interpretation, on the other hand, has no legislative basis for the systematic use of interpreters. While specific court decisions in certain fields<sup>1</sup> have invoked the law to justify the use of interpreters, the decision still comes down to the service providers, who unfortunately base their decision on a number of variables that encompass more than the simple issue of communication. Budgetary issues are an ongoing concern. We can say confidently that, in most situations requiring a community interpreter, either no interpreter is provided, or an impromptu interpreter is chosen on the fly from among support staff or a "bilingual" relative or friend. This lack of the systematic use of certified and properly trained interpreters, when needed, helps to convey a false impression of the actual market for community interpretation. We will come back to this point later, but let's turn now to the training of language professionals.

## Training Language Professionals

Without question, language-training programs in Canada focus primarily on the official languages. No more than two or three translation programs offer a Spanish-language option. I think this is regrettable, particularly since Canada prides itself on its multiculturalism, and our major cities are truly cultural and linguistic mosaics. Nevertheless, the programs available are exemplary and well-established, and they set the standard for people who want to enter the language professions. Based on the content of the programs, professional associations decide whether or not to sanction them and determine whether they lead directly to certification in translation, interpretation and terminology. Of course, a translation degree does not necessarily mean that the person has the skill level that can justifiably be expected of an independent linguist. That is why professional associations, aside from OTTIAQ, require candidates for certification to pass an exam (or submit a dossier). Associations feel that a linguist must meet this minimum standard before they can attest to the person's competency and thus fulfil their public protection obligations. However, there are no training programs in community interpretation equivalent to those in translation, interpretation and terminology. We could argue that translation and interpretation programs are too long (three to four years of undergraduate study, and a full year for a master's degree in conference interpretation), and that community interpretation training is different from that of other professions. However, this is the minimum established for training linguists in the official languages, and the odds are that the same amount of education is needed to train linguists in other languages. As proof, programs in Canada compare favourably with those in other countries.

It could also be argued that we cannot train interpreters in all the languages needed for community interpretation. Waves of immigration vary with the movement of people and the geopolitical changes that cause these migrations. For example, while we might see an increase in the need for Pashto-French interpretation in a given year, this demand may drop considerably the next year, and another pair of languages may be in demand in some areas. Nevertheless, in most major centres, the need for interpretation in certain languages remains basically the same—such as Italian, Greek, Cantonese and Urdu in Toronto, and Arabic and Vietnamese in Ottawa—and there is no pedagogical reason not to offer community interpretation training in these widely spoken languages. It is up to community service providers to pressure the educational institutions to offer relevant and high-quality interpretation training so that they can fulfil their mandate to provide the public with the best service possible.

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## Professional Visibility

The lack of visibility suffered by all language-related activities, including community interpretation, is due in part to the idea of quality that we associate with our work. We often measure the quality of a language activity based on its visibility: the less we are “seen” and the less of an “imprint” we leave on our work, the better it is. That is partly why we almost never hear about good interpretations or translations, yet translation and interpretation “blunders” often appear in the news or on the Websites of people who collect these gems. Community interpretation faces a dual problem—it suffers from this lack of visibility, and public service providers often wrongly think that if communication breaks down between them and their clients for linguistic reasons, then it’s the clients’ fault and the clients’ job to find a solution (by calling on an acquaintance or a bilingual relative to help them). However, when a language barrier arises, it is a communication problem between two people—the service provider and the client—who do not share a common language for communicating. Therefore, the problem is on both sides of the barrier. Furthermore, it is the service provider who is mandated to serve the entire community, regardless of the language spoken, and it is the service provider’s responsibility to find solutions and fulfil this mandate. Of course, the service provider must have the means, particularly the financial resources, to do so. Let’s take the example of a doctor and patient who have no common language: the doctor must still do everything possible to obtain the information necessary to make a diagnosis and, if required, to obtain informed consent from the patient, not the reverse. There is a lot of work to be done to raise awareness among service providers in this regard.

## Recruitment

Our industry is said to be in a crisis, and the lack of new linguists is creating serious problems for large and small firms. Universities may not be training enough translators and interpreters to meet current needs. In the coming years, we must inform young people about careers in language, as a shortage of linguists will only lead to a deterioration in service and, consequently, a decline in language professions, which must be avoided at all costs. The problem is even more acute for community interpretation because it affects the recruitment and retention of future interpreters. In addition, the problem of remuneration for community interpreters means that people who are interested in this type of work and manage to land a job do not usually stay in it. They leave this sometimes uncertain and insecure field for higher-paying and more stable employment. Given the precariousness of community interpretation, it is difficult to ask future interpreters to dedicate two or three years to training that may lead only to casual, insecure and poorly paid employment.

It might be necessary to revalue this professional practice in order to meet the ongoing demand and help create well-paid positions for community interpreters. However, to enhance the status of community interpretation, interpreters must be able to prove that their skills and knowledge extend far beyond mere bilingualism, and even beyond the few upgrading courses that some Ontario educational institutions currently offer. We should welcome the introduction of these programs, but we must acknowledge that they are clearly insufficient, as they are not as intensive or exhaustive as the programs offered for other language professions.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, I said that it would be difficult to compare activities with such a different status as community interpretation and conference interpretation. Yet that is what we must do since we are dealing with language activities. If community interpreters want to be considered language professionals, they must prove they have the equivalent training, knowledge and skills as the language professions that currently belong to ATIO. These professions benefited from government support in the late 1960s because it was recognized that there was a basic need to train language professionals. Perhaps the time has come to exert the necessary pressure on authorities so that community interpreters can benefit from the same support as that given to translation, interpretation and terminology in the past. The certification standards that the professional associations have established over the years can certainly be improved on, but they still serve to set thresholds below which professional competency and public protection may be compromised. Therefore, it is impossible to consider lowering these thresholds so that community interpretation can be included with the other language professions. If community interpretation is to be included—and I think that is the goal that everyone must aim for—then we must not lower the bar, but rather raise this professional practice up to make it a true and full profession.

*Marco A. Fiola, C. Tr., C. Term., is an Associate Professor in the Department of French and Spanish Languages and Literatures at Ryerson University in Toronto. He teaches in the master’s degree program in Immigration and Settlement Studies at Ryerson and is involved in the joint Ryerson-York University M.A. and Ph.D. programs in Communication and Culture. Dr. Fiola recently participated in managing a research project on language barriers in the primary health-care sector, funded by Health Canada.*

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1 See *R v. Tran* (re. court interpretation): <http://scc.lexum.umontreal.ca/en/1994/1994rcs2-951/1994rcs2-951.html>, and *Eldridge v. British Columbia* (re. sign-language interpretation in health care) <http://scc.lexum.umontreal.ca/en/1997/1997rcs3-624/1997rcs3-624.html>.

Dear Nancy,

I am responding to your call for views on admitting community interpreters.

Having chaired the organizing committee of the first and second Critical Link international conferences on CI (Geneva Park, 1995 and UBC, 1998), I have had ample opportunity to watch that sector develop.

I applaud your initiative, but I think your attitude—which I presume represents the general feeling in ATIO—is too hesitant. It gives me a feeling of déjà vu, and what it is that I have already seen was ATIO's long-drawn-out reluctance to admit court interpreters. It lasted a decade, and the objections that were voiced then are much the same as you mention now—plus a few others such as “they don't have university degrees or other training, they will crowd in and swamp the conference interpreters,” etc. Looking back, I find it ironic that in the same mail as the latest *InformATIO* with your call, there was a notice of the next CTTIC court interpreter exam.

The answers to any reproaches about lack of training, standards, etc. are given in brief in the article by Lola Bendana that appears on the very next page after your remarks. Of course a distinction has to be made between the qualified and the unqualified, just as in other branches of our profession. But as Lola says, and quite rightly, “For over 20 years, several stakeholders have collaborated on building a solid foundation for the professionalization of CI through the identification of standard testing and training programs.” Prominent among those stakeholders have been the Government of Ontario and its CI pioneer, Diana Abraham. Indeed the principal institutional mechanism for safeguarding and improving standards in our province has been the local CI agencies that she encouraged.

CI interpreters are already recognized and regulated by translator and interpreter bodies in Australia and the United Kingdom. I can send you more information if it is needed.

So, ATIO should learn from its own history and get down without any more ado to the task of how to incorporate CI, just as it eventually did court interpreting. However, it should not waste time and effort reinventing the wheel. The instruments already developed for testing and accrediting CI interpreters are very serious. I say this from having been a member of the team that worked on designing the CILISAT interpretation test that Lola mentions. And once ATIO sets the ball rolling, CTTIC will be bound to pick it up.

Sincerely,

**Brian Harris**  
*C. Tran., C. Conf. Int. (Canada)*  
*Valencia, Spain*

Community interpreting has suddenly become a subject of interest, not only within ATIO but in Canadian media, from The Toronto Star to Vancouver Sun to the e-bulletin of national healthcare liability insurance provider, HIROC.

In other jurisdictions, such as Australia, community interpreting (CI), which refers to interpreting in the fields of healthcare, law and social services, is highly regulated and, as a result, those on the receiving end of professional interpretation are assured of access to these services. Within the increasingly multilingual landscape of Canada, the need for regulated CI becomes more acute each year. We cannot continue to recruit a quarter of a million newcomers to Canada annually, hand out the golden health card and turn our backs because, well, it's not our problem if they don't speak English. Similarly, we cannot embrace the concept of diversity without due concern for the groups that constitute our diverse population, which is more evident in Toronto than anywhere in Ontario.

For individuals with limited English or French proficiency, equal access to services, as guaranteed on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of Canada, depends on access to professional interpretation. In Toronto, there are hundreds of tested and trained community interpreters, as well as many individuals who consider themselves sufficiently bilingual and work for companies whose standards threaten the very safety of their clients. Errors in communication in the fields of law and medicine can have devastating effects.

Denial of access to services, by failing to provide professional interpretation, is a violation of the Charter. Regulation of CI, through ATIO and/or legislative reform, would enhance services provided to immigrants and refugees, and mitigate the inherent risks of communication error in these sensitive fields.

The ball started rolling a long time ago. Across the country, interest groups concerned about the rights of immigrant and refugee populations to fair trials and access to health and other social and legal services have been lobbying their respective governments for almost two decades.

Professional community interpreters, and agencies that employ them, seek the support of regulating bodies to help enforce standards that guarantee clients a fair trial, a meaningful visit with a social worker or a safe visit to the doctor. Hopefully, one day, ATIO and CTTIC will have a recognized designation for Community Interpreters.

**Elizabeth Abraham**  
*C. Tran. (Canada)*  
*Manager, Interpretation and Translation Services*  
*University Health Network*

In response to the invitation issued in the October 2007 issue of *InformATIO* to debate the role and status of community interpreters within ATIO, I would like to share some comments and observations about community interpreters, myself included.

Since October 2005, I have been working as a language interpreter (English to French or Arabic and vice versa) for a community organization with links to Canada's Department of Citizenship and Immigration, called Immigrant Women Services Ottawa. When I joined this organization I discovered a new world, rich in culture and linguistic diversity.

The language interpretation program within IWSO<sup>1</sup> has offered a solid course of studies well-stocked with learning methodologies, and communication and interpretation techniques, specializing in the field of prevention of violence against women (Violence Against Women Prevention—VAWP). This is a 100-hour course in which participants are introduced to interpretation and its various tasks, such as consecutive interpretation, sight translation, note-taking, simultaneous interpretation and preparing the setting for interpretation. Participants who complete this program receive two certificates—one as a cultural interpreter (CILISAT<sup>2</sup>) and one as a specialized interpreter. The interpreter is then ready to provide interpretation services to any people, especially women or children who are victims of domestic violence, who require interpretation services in their mother tongues, in connection with various public services.

Our reward lies in seeing the obvious relief on the faces of these people when they are served in their mother tongue through an interpreter—a professional at work.

Thus, the huge importance of this mission and the extraordinary services provided by interpreters in this field must be carefully considered in order to give them the definition or status of a recognized profession. Therefore, I support all the community interpreters who are trying to make their voices heard regarding official recognition of their profession.

**Balsam Bléjani-Khalaf**

*Student Member of ATIO (Translation)*

*Translation Barbara Collishaw, C. Tran. (Canada)*

1 For further information on this subject, visit the Website for Immigrant Women Services Ottawa (IWSO) at <http://www.immigrantwomenservices.com/language.htm>.

2 CILISAT stands for Cultural Interpreter Language and Interpreting Skills Assessment Tool, a test developed by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship to evaluate an interpreter's language and interpreting skills.

As an interpreter for Language Line Services of Monterey, California, over the past 11 years, I find it difficult to grasp that Canadian professionals have made no attempt to organize a similar network of interpreters. We are all extensively trained and many are certified as medical or legal interpreters after having passed proficiency/terminology tests that cover target, as well as source languages. As for concerns about professionalism that some conference interpreters refer to, we work under a very similar code of ethics, and interpreters are constantly monitored for performance. As a quality specialist in this area, I underwent extensive preparatory training, and continue to undergo training on a regular basis.

While I certainly admire conference interpreters and their expertise, there is no reason community interpretation should not be an area of interpretation in itself. I am personally not interested in diplomacy or politics and would much rather obtain certification for this “lowly” area of interpretation through ATIO. That way I can help real people with their everyday problems and concerns, and feel gratified that yet another linguistic bridge has been built, as opposed to reading or hearing about something like recent events at the Vancouver airport, or numerous ones in just about every larger Canadian city.

I very rarely receive calls through LLS to help a Canadian company or organization talk to their client who is not proficient in English. Yet I often hear of interpreters not showing for scheduled appointments, last minute cancellations, even the wrong language ordered for court hearing or medical appointment. Mostly, companies don't even attempt to provide interpretation services, and family or friends serve as interpreters, which is legally and ethically unacceptable, not to mention dangerous in medical cases. None of the highly trained conference interpreters can help in those cases either. So as the only Canadian association of language professionals, CTIC—and ATIO in Ontario—should finally start organizing certification for these individuals, and perhaps even help build a network of certified telephonic interpreters, since it's more accessible and less expensive to use than ordinary site interpreters (who collect less than one third of the fee that local translation companies who hire them charge to their accounts).

**Goranka Šubašić-Muharemaj**

*C. Tran. (Canada)*



**T**hanks for forwarding this message. I read it with lots of curiosity. I am sorry to hear that such an important matter is being passed as a hot potato. Also I am sorry to hear that CTTIC does not even know that community interpreters abide by a code of ethics, and that, although community interpreters do not fit CTTIC profile, I wish to remind you that originally, when the UN was debating world wars and the Nuremberg trials took place, the translators and interpreters that worked there did not have university degrees in translation and interpretation. I know that standards are different nowadays, but some things in reality do not change: the need for bilingual interpreters to help in life-threatening circumstances.

I am certainly discouraged by the CTTIC response and even if I have a Master's degree in Legal Interpretation, I do not see myself differently from the community interpreters that work in rare languages.

**Noris Vizcaino**  
*C. Tran. (Canada)*

## **FOR RENT** (SPECIAL PRICE FOR ATIO)

### **VILLA FRANCE**

MÉDITERRANÉE - PORT LEUCATE (NEAR PERPIGNAN)

- 400 M BEACH
- 50 KM SPAIN
- 2 BEDROOMS (6 PEOPLE)
- PRIVATE PATIO
- PARKING

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# On the Lighter Side: E-mails that ATIO Sends You Regularly

By Nancy McInnis, President

It must have been your New Year's Resolution to respond to ATIO surveys. Either that or you really wanted to tell us what you think about the e-mail we send you! Fully 25% of ATIO members responded to the last survey.

The first few questions dealt with e-mails we send about job opportunities. 96% of respondents receive job notices by e-mail and 65% of those respondents felt they were helpful. How do they know they are helpful? 92% of those who receive job opportunities read them!

Why are our members so interested in what is going on in the marketplace? Well, they could be using the notices to compare rates and salaries. They could be looking to see who wants new staff so they can try to pick up a little freelance work. Or it could be because members are unhappy with what they are currently doing. Let's hope not! In any event, 78% of respondents told us to keep the e-mail coming.

ATIO sends out a lot of e-mails to keep you in the know. We asked you specifically what you want. The answer: most members want it all! They want to hear about networking opportunities, ATIO-sponsored seminars and events, and job opportunities.

However, the most popular e-mails are undeniably those that deal with networking opportunities. Savvy translators, interpreters and terminologists know work comes through people you know, and our members seem to be interested in getting their name out there.

The response to the last question shows that ATIO members understand the need to stay abreast of new developments in both their profession and the field in which they work. When we asked what other e-mails you would like to receive, the most popular topic was new publications on translation and interpretation. However this was followed immediately by job opportunities specific to your language combination, job-related articles, translation/interpretation-related conferences and seminars in other parts of Canada and abroad, and new technology tools, in that order.

We will continue to do our best to provide you with news of the latest developments in the language industry, as well as workshops and networking opportunities that meet your needs. You might also want to check out "News from the World" on the ATIO home page where new language-related stories from around the world are featured every day.

## *Inform*ATIO

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**The Board of Directors of the  
Association of Translators and  
Interpreters of Ontario**

regretfully announces the death of

**Peter Whelan**

ATIO member since 1999

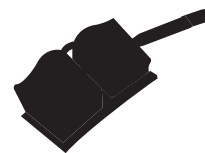
**Sonya Gervais**

ATIO member since 2003

## Calendar of Events

✓ **APRIL 2008**

**April 5, 2008: ATIO Annual  
General Meeting**  
Toronto (Delta Chelsea Hotel)



✓ **AUGUST 2008 American**

**August 1-7, 2008: XVIII FIT World Congress**  
Shanghai, China  
Information: [www.fit2008.org](http://www.fit2008.org)

### CERTIFIED ON DOSSIER IN TRANSLATION

**French-English**

Maureen Willis

**English-French**

Lise-Anne Laverdure

**Japanese-English**

Yuko Hayashi

**English-Japanese**

Yuko Hayashi