



WASLI is committed to the development of the profession of sign language interpreting worldwide

Canada

Name of Association: The Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC)

The current situation for sign language interpreting in Canada

- The Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC) has approximately 647 Active members including American Sign Language (ASL)-English, Langue Des Signes Quebecoise (LSQ)-French and Deaf Interpreters. AVLIC is aware that this does not reflect the entire number of people working as interpreters in Canada, especially at the public education level as membership with AVLIC is not required to work as an interpreter.
- AVLIC is the national professional interpreting association with eight affiliate chapters across the country.
- There are currently five interpreter education programmes in Canada ranging in duration from two to four years.
- Our national testing system, the Canadian Evaluation System (CES) <http://www.avlic.ca/services.php?evaluation> is made up of four stages and is detailed below. Canada currently has 54 Certificate of Interpretation (COI) members; at this time the CES is only available to ASL-English interpreters.

Phase One: WRITTEN TEST OF KNOWLEDGE

The first phase of the CES is the Written Test of Knowledge (WTK), which is a preliminary step to ensure the candidate, has appropriate background knowledge in the field of ASL/English interpretation.

Phase Two: PREPARATION

The second phase of the CES process is the Preparation Phase and is designed to assist candidates in establishing the groundwork for the actual performance test. There are two mandatory workshops - both concentrate on discourse analysis.

Phase Three: TEST OF INTERPRETATION

The third phase of the CES process is the Test of Interpretation (TOI) which is the performance -based portion. The test verifies whether a candidate's test performance is at or above an acceptable standard.



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Phase Four: CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE

Currently being developed

Maintenance requirements of the COI have always been: adherence to the AVLIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct, and annual Active membership in good standing paid in full.

The current situation for the Deaf community in Canada

- An estimated ten percent of Canadians have some form of hearing loss and an estimated two percent of Canadians use a form of signed language to communicate. The Canadian Association of the Deaf (www.cad.ca) and the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (www.deafculturecentre.ca) are Canada's two national associations for the Deaf.
- Canada has two official signed languages: American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue Des Signes Quebecoise (LSQ), Canada has two official spoken languages: English and French
- Education for all Canadians is covered by the government until the age of 19. The individual pays college and university tuition, unless funding is found to cover cost of tuition, books, etc. Accessibility (e.g., interpreters, note takers, etc) is provided at no cost to Deaf and hard of hearing students who qualify for Disability Support Funding.
- Deaf people hold a variety of professional (teacher, lawyer, counsellor, etc.) positions as well as non-professional (secretary, mechanic, clerk, etc.) positions. However, Deaf people are either unemployed or under-employed at a significantly higher rate than hearing Canadians. Survey and data collection in 1998 shows only 20.6% of deaf Canadians are fully employed; 41.9% are under-employed, and 37.5% are unemployed. By comparison, 60.9% of all Canadians are employed and only 8.1% are unemployed. Employment Statistics from the Canadian Association of the Deaf http://www.cad.ca/employment_and_employability.php
- Canada has the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that protects persons with disabilities from discrimination. Although discrimination still exists, the Charter has been used to defend Deaf people's rights to have access to interpretation.

Important achievements since 2007



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- Biannual conference held in St. John's, Newfoundland in 2008 and Ottawa, Ontario in 2010. The next biannual conference will be held in Calgary, Alberta in 2012.
- Requirement of AVLIC membership for employment by two national bodies who hire interpreters.
- Revised membership criteria.
- A completely revised website with more general information and member services including online membership renewal.
- Development and ratification of a new vision statement, mission statement and statement of core values (all have been translated into ASL)
- Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct and the Dispute Resolution Process translated into ASL.
- The hiring of our first full-time Administrative Manager.
- Implementation of a 5-year Strategic Plan

Two major challenges for the sign language interpreting community in Canada

- Recognition by employers with regard to the importance of requiring interpreters to be trained and to be member of the professional association,
- Lack of funding of interpreting services,
- Demand and supply issues such as unequal access to enough quality interpreters in one region, and too many interpreters for the amount of work in another region,
- Challenges of inclusive education for Deaf people, and the demands for interpreters in the education setting,
- Working conditions and standards,
- Implementation of Video Relay Services and the impact this will have on our field,
- Professional regulation,
- Elimination of Audism in AVLIC and interpreters' practices

Title protection and legislated membership in AVLIC are needed for signed language interpreting to further develop in Canada. If more working interpreters are required by law to be members of AVLIC, more revenue can be generated by the national organisation to spend on important initiatives to further develop the field of interpreting.



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What AVLIC can offer WASLI in the next 2-4 years

- Sharing of expertise regarding lobbying for quality interpreter education programmes,
- Sharing of expertise regarding lobbying of employers of interpreters,
- Development of standards of practice and of education,
- Consultation on screening and testing issues,
- Consultation on effective collaboration with Deaf organisations,
- Sharing of our documents as models,
- Experience with two signed languages within one country and how to work together in this diverse climate.

AVLIC has a wealth of information available on the web at www.avlic.ca. AVLIC, as well as individual AVLIC members, can serve as a resource to others.