



# MASTER OF CONFERENCE INTERPRETING

*A clear voice for the world's stage*



FUNDED IN PART BY THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S  
CANADIAN LANGUAGE SECTOR ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM





**THE NEW MASTER OF CONFERENCE INTERPRETING (MCI) AT GLENDON SEEKS TO PREPARE A NEW GENERATION OF SKILLED AND KNOWLEDGEABLE PROFESSIONALS FOR A REWARDING CAREER IN THIS DYNAMIC, FAST-PACED FIELD.**

The demand for qualified conference interpreters is at an all-time high, and is only expected to grow. It is a discipline that can take you from the boardrooms on Toronto's Bay Street, and the corridors of power in Ottawa to other important world cities beyond Canada's borders. It may lead to a rewarding career working for a national government or for an international organization, for example, or a lucrative one in the private sector. In addition, graduates of the MCI program may elect to enjoy the flexibility of a busy freelance career that this in-demand field readily affords.

As home to the Centre of Excellence for French-language and Bilingual Postsecondary Education, and with a venerated tradition in languages and liberal arts, Glendon is the ideal environment for this two-year intensive program. Recent grants and funding have resulted in new conference facilities, fully equipped for simultaneous interpreting. As well, numerous internship and networking opportunities mean that graduates of the MCI program will be very well positioned to launch an exciting career - at home or abroad - within unlimited areas of interest.

**EVERY DAY IS DIFFERENT**

*Gila Sperer,*

CONFERENCE INTERPRETATION MANAGER FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, DESCRIBES WHAT IT TAKES TO EXCEL AT INTERPRETING



Her job is demanding - constantly testing her mental stamina and ability to multi-task. Yet for the last two decades, Gila Sperer has had the feeling she's been getting paid to enjoy herself.

**“Being an interpreter is a great job,” she says. “You’re never bored because every day is different.”**

Sperer started her career as a Montreal-based translator for the government of Canada. One day she saw a notice on the office bulletin board inviting applicants to come to Ottawa to be tested as interpreters. Sperer took the aptitude test and was offered a spot in the government's interpreter training program.

She spent several years as a parliamentary interpreter and later as an interpreter for government conferences. In 2009 she was promoted to her current position, where she is responsible for, among other things, hiring and training interpreters.

*So what does she look for when assessing a job applicant?*

Proficiency in languages is obviously important, says Sperer, but even the most brilliant linguist would not necessarily make for a competent interpreter.

“You need to have a systematic approach to researching and preparing for an assignment,” she says. “You need to learn the particular vocabulary in the area you’re working in, the acronyms, the latest developments in the news.”

The best interpreters, she says, are those who can create a seamless line of communication between speakers and their audiences.

“The idea is for us to disappear,” she says. “So, for example, when the French minister is having a dialogue with an English-speaking minister, he is looking at the English speaker and hearing the messages from me. If I do my job well enough, he becomes hardly aware of me and it is as though he is communicating directly with the other speaker.”

## IN DEMAND AND ON THE GO

*Karine Rossbach,*

FOR FREELANCE INTERPRETER KARINE ROSSBACH, EVERY DAY IS AN ADVENTURE

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Karine Rossbach's client list reads like a directory of corporate Canada, with companies that are among the biggest in the country - from Best Buy and Sears to Deloitte and Kinross Gold Corporation. As a freelance interpreter, Rossbach works for them all - and enjoys every minute on the job. "I love the fact that I'm exposed to new things almost every day because of the variety of the assignments," she says.

Rossbach, who is based in Toronto, started her career as a full-time conference interpreter for the government of Canada. She decided one day she wanted to work freelance, and has never looked back.

**"I have never had to look for work," she says. "I'm always busy."**

In addition to working for Canada's major corporations, Rossbach also interprets at government conferences. Her work takes her all over Canada and the U.S., with the occasional overseas jaunt squeezed in between her North American assignments.

The assignments don't always require her to work full days, so she often gets a chance to see the sights or relax by the pool. Outside of these welcome breaks, however, Rossbach works hard at her job. Days before an assignment, she spends hours reviewing and researching the topics to be covered during the event.

Because of the intense concentration required in interpreting, Rossbach's work day is usually structured so that she interprets for 30 minutes at a time and takes an hour-long break between sessions.

Rossbach has interpreted for some very high-profile speakers, including former governor general Michaëlle Jean, Prime Minister Stephen Harper, former Soviet statesman Mikhail Gorbachev and the prince of Belgium. "My parents are Belgian," she says. "So when I told my mother and grandmother about interpreting for the prince of Belgium, they were thrilled."

## A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES

*Teresa Beauregard,*

MANAGER OF PARLIAMENTARY INTERPRETATION IN OTTAWA, ENCOURAGES OTHERS TO EXPLORE THE EXCITING FIELD OF INTERPRETING

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Teresa's Beauregard can trace her career as an interpreter to the darkened theatres of her childhood, when her parents used to take her to movies that had been dubbed either in English or French.

"I said 'mummy, I want to be the person talking behind the movies,'" recalls Beauregard, who grew up in Longueuil, Quebec, where she attended a French convent school and spoke English at home.

Today, Beauregard is manager of parliamentary interpretation in Ottawa, in charge of hiring and managing interpreters for Canada's parliament.

**"For the right person, interpretation is such a wonderful career," she says. "The work is fascinating, and from an employment point of view, if you've got the necessary qualifications, you'll find there are a lot of opportunities for you."**

To be considered for a job as an interpreter in Ottawa, applicants need to have solid language skills and hold a Masters degree in interpretation. But these are just the starting criteria. Interpreters need to be team players, be knowledgeable about a broad range of subjects and have "nerves of steel."

"It is a stressful job, but that's what also makes it so exhilarating," says Beauregard, whose skills as an interpreter have helped her find work easily, including international assignments in Germany and Holland.

Now that Glendon is offering a Masters program in conference interpretation, Beauregard says she hopes to see more people choosing interpretation as a career.

"I encourage people wholeheartedly to think about pursuing a career as an interpreter," she says. "In fact, I would strongly recommend that they get in touch with the interpretation bureau in Ottawa to see if they can actually spend a day here as an interpreter and see if they like it."



### *What is conference interpreting?*

Conference interpreting is a demanding occupation practiced by highly trained and knowledgeable professionals. Conference interpreters listen to speeches, presentations, debates and other forms of spoken discourse in one language, and “relay” them into another language. Most often, this work is done simultaneously—through the use of headphones and microphones— but it can also be done consecutively, with the original speaker pausing at key moments to allow the interpreter to deliver segments of the speech. The interpretations are often very technical, dealing with new laws or policies, financial or market analysis, government programs, corporate strategies, engineering or other technological advances.

Conference interpreters work in high-level settings, such as

- International organizations (the United Nations, NATO, the International Monetary Fund)
- Legislative assemblies (the European Parliament, the Parliament of Canada, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario)
- Governmental bodies (the European Commission, the Government of Canada, the U.S. Department of State)
- National, parapublic and private sector activities (union conventions, shareholders’ meetings, corporate events).

### *What is the difference between translation and interpreting?*

Translation calls upon similar skills, but there are some important distinctions between translation and interpreting. Translation is the transfer of written texts from one language to another, and is usually done before the end user of the translation reads the text. Translators can therefore take the time to use reference materials and to revise during the translation process. In contrast, interpreters work while end users are physically present and must deliver the product in real time. There is no time to consult, check, or revise - the interpretation must be delivered with confidence and without hesitation.

### *The MCI Program at Glendon*

The Master of Conference Interpreting (MCI) degree is a two-year program, lasting a total of six academic terms. Program candidates must pass an entrance examination, at which point they will enter Year One. Upon successful completion of the first three terms of Year One, students have the option of exiting the program and receiving the Graduate Diploma in General Interpreting. Those who elect to stay in the program must pass a transition examination leading to Year Two. After the successful completion of another three terms—and of the end-of-degree exit examination—students will earn the Master of Conference Interpreting degree.

Glendon has been recognized as a Centre of Excellence for French-language and Bilingual Postsecondary Education, and as such it received an infrastructure grant from the Government of Ontario that funded new conference facilities, fully equipped for simultaneous interpreting. Students in Year Two of the MCI will have the opportunity to provide interpreting services to actual clients who come to Glendon to attend conferences.

Glendon is located in Toronto, which is only a short flight from New York or Washington, D.C., and is an airline hub with multiple connections to Europe and Asia. A culturally diverse city, Toronto benefits from a wealth of linguistic resources. Within this setting, the focus of interpreter training will be international, preparing students for globally oriented work opportunities both in Canada and abroad.

### *Suitability for the program*

The ideal candidate for the MCI is someone who has an unshakeable, near-native command of her or his non-dominant languages. This command might have been acquired through extended periods of time spent living in places where the languages are spoken, advanced education in those languages, or lengthy use of them in a professional setting. The candidate’s dominant language should also be very refined, to the point where the candidate can use it to speak effectively and convincingly about an array of topics. Students in the MCI Program should be extremely well read, with a nuanced understanding of world events, financial structures and political realities.

### *Specializations*

Interpreting is often described as taking place in three settings: conference, court, and community. Each of the three poses its own challenges and requires a specific set of skills from the interpreter. Working in the courtroom, for example, requires that interpreters strive to reproduce levels of language and tone of voice, characteristics that jury members might use to form an opinion of a witness. The interpreter must also be very familiar with legal language and court procedures. In the community—and health care interpreting is an example of community work—the interpreter may often need to facilitate communication between people with very different levels of power and knowledge: a doctor and patient, for example.

In Year One of the MCI Program, students will receive an introduction to interpreting in three settings: conferences (the exclusive focus of Year Two), the courts, and health care. Students also have the option of exiting the program at the end of Year One, at which point they will earn a Graduate Diploma in General Interpreting. This credential, together with opportunities to take important accreditation tests, such as the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General’s certification test and the examinations of the National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters, will help graduates of Year One begin to practice in non-conference settings.

### *The importance of language interpretation*

In Canada, interpreting allows all people to have access to and participate in important events and institutions. Without it, citizens would not be able to follow political debates, know what new laws are being discussed, learn about government programs, or have their say in town hall meetings.

Our federal government generates a large volume of work for Canadian interpreters. For example, interpreters work as full-time employees in the Government of Canada's Parliamentary Interpretation Service, where they interpret in the House of Commons, the Senate and in parliamentary committees. They may also work for the Government of Canada's Conference Interpretation Service, ensuring that federal meetings, town halls, conferences and other events are accessible to public servants and ordinary citizens, regardless of which of the official languages they use to communicate.

At the international level, meetings between heads of state, world summits and diplomatic events could not take place without interpreting. International cooperation in such areas as human rights, global trade and environmental protection is also dependent on language interpretation.

### *Career potential*

The employment outlook for conference interpreters is extremely positive. The majority of interpreters working today belong to the baby boom generation, which means that they have reached or are reaching retirement age. Moreover, the demand for qualified conference interpreters is very high, and it is only expected to grow. Around the world, the bodies that employ in-house interpreters are taking special measures to recruit a new generation of professionals.

There are also ample opportunities for freelance interpreters. Many freelancers earn their living from government contracts—staff interpreters alone cannot keep up with demand—and there are also very lively parapublic and private sector markets in Canada. Any union, association, bank, insurance company or other corporation that has a national profile will need to hire freelance interpreters for the press conferences, internal meetings, conventions, webcasts and teleconferences that they organize.

### *Beginning your career*

A graduate degree such as the MCI is definitely a minimum criterion for employment as a conference interpreter. The two interpreting services of the Government of Canada require a master's degree in conference interpreting before they will consider hiring a candidate, and this is also often the case with international organizations. However, a graduate degree alone is no guarantee of employment. Both in Canada and abroad, conference interpreters must be able to pass competency exams before they are eligible for full-time employment or even freelance work. For example, the Government of Canada has an accreditation examination that its staff interpreters must pass; those who work as freelancers for the government must also successfully take a version of this test. A similar process is in place at the United Nations and the European Commission.

### *Professional organizations*

By far the most important association for conference interpreters is the Association internationale des interprètes de conférence (AIIC). This organization, founded in 1953, represents more than 2,800 conference interpreters located in more than 90 countries. It plays an important role in the lives of conference interpreters by setting standards, promoting best practices, defending working conditions and even negotiating collective agreements. Interpreters may also be represented by local organizations, such as the



Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario, or the Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec.

### *Languages*

In Canada, English and French are by far the main languages used by conference interpreters, and they are also the cornerstone of a career beyond this country's borders. For these reasons, the MCI at Glendon is focused on Canada's official languages. However, since interpreters who want to work abroad need a minimum of three working languages, the MCI also allows students to train with other language pairs as well. What's more, our graduates and working interpreters alike will be able to come to Glendon during the summer months to participate in a non-credit intensive training program. The languages offered as part of this Professional Development Series will change over time in response to student interest and industry demand.

### *Internships*

Efforts are under way to create a set of local internship activities for MCI students at the end of Year One. These might take the form of opportunities for students to ready themselves for accreditation examinations in the areas of court and health care interpreting, or to familiarize themselves with the work of conference interpreters. Glendon is also making arrangements that will allow MCI students at the end of Year Two to gain experience in the booth, whether that is in Canada or abroad.

### *Support for the MCI*

Development of the MCI Program is made possible thanks to funding from Public Works and Government Services Canada's Canadian Language Sector Enhancement Program. Glendon is also working hard to ensure constant feedback on the program structure and content from key stakeholders in conference interpreting, including the Government of Canada, the European Institutions, the United Nations and the pan-American organizations. All of our instructors are practicing professionals who have worked for these stakeholders and who can teach to the standards expected by them.