

Petition to Set Aside Bill S-209: An Act to amend the Official Languages Act

Bill S-209 proposes to amend the Official Languages Act to expand bilingual services to the public by expanding the definition used to calculate “where numbers warrant” from the current “mother tongue” and/or “language spoken at home” to include those with “knowledge of the second official language”. This means that a person whose “mother tongue” and/or “language spoken at home” is French but who has some knowledge of English, regardless of proficiency, would be included in both the French and English numbers, and vice versa for primarily English speakers with some knowledge of French.

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our Senators and any elected officials to set aside the aforementioned Bill for the following reasons:

1. The proposed expansion to include “knowledge of the second official language” is completely unnecessary. Any reasonable person knows that the public will communicate with the government in the official language that is their “mother tongue” and/or “language spoken at home” to ensure accuracy, not in a second official language of which they may have less, more limited knowledge.
2. The true financial costs of this unnecessary amendment are being hidden from the public. The Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer cost estimate for 535 proposed newly bilingual offices is \$147 million for implementation costs (one-time) and \$9 million ongoing costs (annually). However, the costs for the 1,129 proposed newly bilingual offices of Canada Post are being hidden from the public under the guise of confidentiality.
3. The social costs of this unnecessary amendment are being hidden from the public, in particular for Canada Post. The stated purpose of S-209 is to increase front line bilingual services. For Canada Post, this means the clerks that serve the public at Canada Post outlets. Most postal outlets are located in stores, and employees are hired by the stores, not Canada Post. Will a unilingual French employee at a store outlet in Quebec be fired when the "office" is now newly designated bilingual? Or, unilingual English employees elsewhere in Canada. Are some small family-owned corner stores going to lose their postal outlet because no one in the family is bilingual, or will they be forced to hire a bilingual person that they cannot afford?

Full Name (all capitals)	Signature	Full Address	Telephone #	Email Address