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Bilingualism and the Canadian House of Commons 40 Years after B and B

Bruce Hicks
Associate, Canada Research Chair in Electoral Studies
Université de Montréal

PARLIAMENTARY PERSPECTIVES

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INTRODUCTION

Forty years after the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism published its findings on the views of Members of Parliament towards bilingualism and bilingual services in the House of Commons, Bruce Hicks revisits this issue.

In reviewing the history of the debate over official languages policy in Canada, Hicks suggests that Parliament can claim to having undertaken one of the most successful affirmative action programs in history, transforming the federal government in one generation from an English-dominated organization to a bilingual operation where French-speaking and English-speaking staff work together at every level. He notes, however, that it took two royal commissions, political unrest and social upheaval to accomplish the transformation.

During this period, bilingual services within the House of Commons have gone from sporadic and weak to efficient and commonplace. Spoken French in the Commons Chamber has gone from being a rarity heard mostly in Throne Speech debates to a large percentage of the daily question period. And discussion about language skills of politicians has gone from whether French-speaking members of the federal cabinet should be permitted to answer questions in French in order to prevent misunderstanding to whether ministers should be bilingual.

Using data he collected as part of the 2004 “Canadian Candidate Survey,” Hicks finds that the views of politicians have also evolved along with the development of bilingualism. However, the remnants of the tensions along regional and party lines that the Royal Commission noted in its research four decades ago remain present today.

Bruce Hicks worked for many years on Parliament Hill as a staffer, a political strategist and a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery. He was a reporter for print and radio (NPR), Ottawa bureau chief for United Press International (UPI) and a syndicated columnist for, mostly, Thomson newspapers. From 1988 to 1993, he was Editor-in-Chief of *The Financial Post's Directory of Government*.

Bruce Hicks is currently attached to the Canada Research Chair in Electoral Studies at the Université de Montréal. His recent work has appeared in *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, *Electoral Insight*, *Review of Constitutional Studies*, *Policy Options* and *IRPP Policy Matters*.

Canada's constitution has, since 1867, required that "either the English or French language may be used by any person in the debates of the Houses of the Parliament."¹ Yet it is also a country where bilingualism is not a skill that has been ever reported by more than 18 percent of the population.² In fact, Canadians are less bilingual than the British³, who have no official language and can properly lay claim to being the birthplace of the English language.

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the issue of whether or not English-French bilingualism is a prerequisite in order to be a legislator in the Parliament of Canada has been a point of debate for the political elites in Canada since well before the country was formed.

What do MPs and candidates for Parliament think of the need for bilingualism in their own job? What percentage considers itself bilingual? Does this group think differently about bilingualism than political candidates who have never served in Parliament? Are there dramatic differences by party? And do politicians think the linguistic job requirements for a minister are different than for an MP?

To explore this question, this paper begins with a brief look at the historical developments that led to official bilingualism at the federal level. While it obviously will not be possible to review the hundreds of books, articles and speeches that have contributed to the debate over bilingualism in Canada, a review of this history is important to provide context for an examination of the changes in services that have affected the House of Commons and the views of MPs and Parliamentary candidates.

It should be noted that prior to the emergence of the welfare state the federal government and Parliament were both largely concentrated in what is now the parliamentary precinct. As a result, debate over bilingualism often concerned both Parliament and government together; at the time of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (often called "B and B"), the two were closely linked. Furthermore, the adoption of official languages policy directly affected the hiring of personnel within Parliament as the staff of the House of Commons, Senate and Library of Parliament are all constituted as government departments⁴ and largely subject to government hiring practices.

The paper then reviews the key changes in service that have taken place in the House of Commons in the middle half of the 20th century.⁵ The two most significant were the creation of a Bureau of Translation in 1934, and the introduction of simultaneous translation in 1959. These two services have direct relevance to the day-to-day operations of the House of Commons, and the Parliamentary debate provides a glimpse into the views of MPs and political parties of the time.

The paper then looks at the most substantive examination of bilingualism among MPs that has been carried out by academic researchers. This was done by David Hoffman and Norman Ward in 1964, for the B and B Commission; they collected survey data through a questionnaire administered to and interviews conducted with members of Parliament.

Following a brief review of the language services currently available to MPs, this paper examines the views of candidates for the House of Commons and Members of the House of Commons today. Using data collected as part of the 2004 'Canadian Candidates Survey', which is the most recent survey that has looked at the views of candidates on this question, the paper evaluates the progress that has occurred during this 40-year period.

1 *Constitution Act, 1867*, formerly the *British North America Act, 1867*, "Appendices", *Revised Statutes of Canada* (RSC 1985), s.133.

2 Linda Cardinal, "The Limits of Bilingualism in Canada", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 10(1) (2004), p.93.

3 *Ibid.*, p.79.

4 *Financial Administration Act*, RSC 1985 F-11, s.2

5 For a good historical survey of bilingualism in Canadian legislative chambers from before Confederation until the end of the 1950s, see David Hoffman and Norman Ward, "Historical Basis of Bilingualism" (Chapter 1), *Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the Canadian House of Commons* [Documents of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism: 3] (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966)

I. Historical Context

As noted, the *Constitution Act, 1867* guaranteed the right to use English or French in debates in the two houses of Parliament. However, for the first century after Confederation, English was clearly the “day-to-day working language of the Parliament, and French the language of translation.”⁶ This was, in part, due to numbers. Legislators elected outside Quebec have always outnumbered those elected from the Province of Quebec. This, in turn, has been exacerbated by practicality since, aside from speeches delivered in the Chamber aimed not at colleagues but at constituents back home, it was often important to speak in the language of the majority in order to win converts to one’s cause. Furthermore, then, as now, it was more likely for a French Canadian legislator to be bilingual than it was for an English Canadian MP from outside Quebec.

Elisabeth Bird undertook a sampling⁷ of the debates in the House of Commons for the B and B Commission and found that prior to 1957, the amount of French spoken in the Commons accounted for less than 5 per cent of the general debates.⁸ She also found, in each of the years sampled, that twice the amount of French was spoken during Throne speech debates than in general debates. Following the advent of simultaneous translation in 1959, the amount of French spoken in both types of debate rose to just over 20 per cent by the time of the B and B Commission.

The tortoise-paced incremental increase in bilingualism at the federal level was reflected in the fact that postage stamps became bilingual only in 1927, followed by bank notes in 1936. In 1938, the *Civil Service Act* was amended to direct that local federal government offices should be staffed by employees who speak the language of the majority of people with whom they do business.⁹ In 1961 this was extended to other government departments in order to allow *effective service to the public* in French or English or both.¹⁰

Corresponding with the beginning of the ‘Quiet Revolution’ within Quebec, the strongest call for wholesale reform of the federal public service began when the Government of Progressive Conservative Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker appointed the Royal Commission on Government Organization (popularly known as the Glassco Commission). This commission noted the linguistic reality of the time: that the public service of Canada was overwhelmingly unilingual Anglophone; that the French language, bilingual services and Francophone employees were limited to local offices; and that in many cases central administrative agencies could not communicate with their regional employees.¹¹

In 1963, in its final report, the Glassco Commission recommended “special efforts be made to increase the extent of bilingualism among public servants”¹² and emphasized the need to attract and retain more highly qualified employees from French Canada. None of this sounds particularly radical today. However, what makes this commission so interesting is that it identified a solution for achieving this end that was novel for the era.¹³ “A distinctive feature of

6 Hoffman and Ward, *Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the Canadian House of Commons*, p.5.

7 Ten-year increments prior to 1950 and shorter increments between 1955 and 1963.

8 A summary of Bird’s paper “The use of French in the House of Commons” can be found in Hoffman and Ward, *Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the Canadian House of Commons*, p.6.

9 This act modified the merit principle (s.20) of the *Civil Service Act* (SC 1927, c.22) and added a new clause that required an employee hired under competitive examination should, in a local office in a province, also be “qualified, by examination, in the knowledge and use of the language of the majority of the persons with whom he is required to do business: provided that such language shall be the French or the English language” [*An Act to amend the Civil Service Act*, SC 1938, c.7, s.1].

10 The 1961 amendment to the *Civil Service Act* on bilingual services reads: “The number of employees appointed to serve in any department or in any local office of a department who are qualified in the knowledge and use of the English and French language or both shall, in the opinion of the Commission, be sufficient to enable the department or local offices to perform its functions adequately and to give effective service to the public” [*An Act respecting the Civil Service of Canada*, SC 1960/61, c.57, s.47].

11 Royal Commission on Government Organization, *Management of the Public Service* [Vol. 1] (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1962).

12 Royal Commission on Government Organization, *The Organization of the Government of Canada* [Vol. 5] (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1963), p.103.

13 This commission reported two years before the *Civil Rights Act* was adopted in the United States, which contained rudimentary measures U.S. federal courts could impose under the label “affirmative action”.

the Canadian setting is the existence within the country of two language groups, with a long history of political union but so little intermingling that bilingualism is rare in most parts of the country,” observed the Commission.¹⁴ The solution, with so few bilingual people to draw from, was to give language training to public servants “to the point, ideally, where two languages can be used interchangeably for internal communication.”¹⁵

The Commission went even further: “If the objective of ‘representativeness’ suggested earlier is to be met, a career at the centre of government should be as attractive and congenial to French-speaking as to English-speaking Canadians.”¹⁶ Through bilingual training and, by implication, the rapid advancement of French Canadian employees into the upper echelons of government, a wholesale shift would occur that could transform the place of French Canadians in government and thereby transform Canadian society.

In short, Glassco and his colleagues were suggesting affirmative action in an attempt to make the government bureaucracy more responsive to French Canadians. While not expressly mentioned by the Commission, changes in Parliament would be equally important to this reformation. After all, for young French-speaking people, in Quebec in particular, to look to Ottawa and see a future for themselves – a future that would encourage them to take certain post-secondary educational training and embark on specific career paths – they would need to see themselves represented at every level of government.

While the Glassco Commission may be able to lay claim to having first prescribed the solution, the roadmap to that solution was laid out in the various reports of the B and B Commission. Appointed in 1963 by the Government of Liberal Prime Minister Lester Pearson, this commission was a direct “response to the increasing tension between Quebec and the rest of Canada,”¹⁷ including the events of April 20 and 21, 1963, when Molotov cocktails and dynamite time bombs planted by *l’Armée de libération du Québec* exploded in English-speaking areas of Montreal. The Commission’s mandate was to examine the state of bilingualism and biculturalism, and recommend improvements to the “Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races, taking into account the contribution made by the other ethnic groups.”¹⁸

Its six volumes of findings and recommendations shed further light on the stark reality of Canada at the time: Francophones could not expect to receive services in their own language from the federal government; they did not have access to the same level of education; they earned less than their English-speaking coworkers; and they were underrepresented at the decision-making levels within government departments.

Before the work of the B and B Commission was completed, some of the ideas contained in its mission statement were being challenged by Canadian society-at-large. This was reflected in the Commission’s own final reports and in evolving government policy. For example, the concept of ‘peoples’ came to replace ‘races,’¹⁹ and multiculturalism replaced biculturalism.²⁰ However, in its commitment to the general principal of ensuring an equal partnership between the French and the English, the Commission was unwavering.

14 Glassco Commission, *Management of the Public Service*, p.28.

15 *Ibid.*, p.29.

16 *Ibid.*

17 Michael Oliver, “Reflections of the B&B Commission”, *Isuma [Canadian Journal for Policy Research]* 2(2) (Summer 2001), p.121.

18 Established by Order-in-Council P.C. 1963-1106 under Part I of the *Inquiries Act* (RSC 1952, c.154) on July 19, 1963.

19 Interestingly, the word “*peuples*” appeared instead of “*races*” in the French version of the commission’s mandate.

20 Oliver, who was head of research for the Commission, suggests “Pierre Trudeau, who had urged on the Commission a strict adherence to language recognition rather than cultural or constitutional questions, undoubtedly gave strength to this substitution of terms by his enthusiastic endorsement of multicultural policies” [Oliver, “Reflections of the B&B Commission”, p.122].

However, Bernard Ostry the deputy minister most responsible for federal multiculturalism policy, disagrees: “After the final volume reported that Canada was not bicultural but multicultural, Ottawa began to develop policies on multiculturalism (this was not the brainchild of Pierre Trudeau and his Quebec lieutenants, as has been suggested)” [*Globe and Mail*, October 15, 2005, p.A27].

Irrespective of who blinked first, commission or government, there were a number of interest groups at the time who were opposed to biculturalism and who from the beginning advocated recognition of cultural pluralism.

Central to its numerous recommendations was the principle that “English and French be formally declared the official languages of the Parliament of Canada, of the federal courts, of the federal government, and of the federal administration.”²¹ The Commission suggested that this principle should be given constitutional weight through an expanded section 133 of the then *British North America Act, 1867* so that the equality of these languages would be assured in all parliamentary debates and journals, and all acts of Parliament.²²

Most of the B and B commission’s hundreds of recommendation “were implemented with unusual alacrity,”²³ even some of those outside federal jurisdiction. For example, all nine of the predominantly Anglophone provinces reformed their minority language education programs and, with financial assistance from the federal government, dramatically increased instruction in French as a second language. New Brunswick accepted the recommendation that it formally declare itself officially bilingual²⁴ and Ontario, while it did not officially do likewise, dramatically improved bilingual services.

At the federal level, eight months after the Pearson Government delivered a public commitment at the constitutional conference of February 1968 to implement the B and B Commission’s recommendations that fell within federal jurisdiction, the newly elected Government of Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau introduced the *Official Languages Act*. The Government took the unusual step of having the Commons first go into Committee of the Whole House in order to debate and adopt a motion with a commitment to the central principle of official bilingualism before it tabled the bill.

Trudeau began the preliminary debate by stating that it was a unique debate for Parliament (not just in process, though it was that) because, rather than dealing with a specific problem or region, what was being discussed was “a reflection of the nature of this country as a whole, and of a conscious choice we are making about our future.”²⁵ All party leaders gave their support to the initial motion, though the legislation itself was the subject of lengthy debate that lasted for an entire year. Interestingly, both Progressive Conservative Leader Robert Stanfield and the New Democratic Party Leader David Lewis expressed concern, right from the start, that the *Official Languages Act* not result in reverse discrimination that might “permit the creation of new inequalities in Canada”²⁶ and that it be “achieved without discrimination and without compulsion, without creating some new injustice.”²⁷

In laying out the purpose of the *Act* at second reading, Secretary of State Gerard Pelletier addressed a popular misconception about the legislation that persists in many quarters to this day, namely that the law “concerns not individual bilingualism, but institutional bilingualism; that is, the use of the two languages by government services in their dealing with the public.”²⁸ In essence, the *Act* extended the guarantees in section 133 of the *BNA Act* throughout the federal government.²⁹ To that end, as adopted in 1969, the *Act* states that: “The English and French languages are the official languages of Canada for all purposes of the Parliament and Government of Canada, and possess and enjoy equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all the institutions of the Parliament and Government of Canada.”³⁰

21 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, *The Official Languages* [Report: Book 1 “Recommendations”] (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1967), p.147.

22 *Ibid.*, p.149.

23 G. Laing, “Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism”, *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Historica) [accessed on July 10, 2006 at <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/Params=A1ARTA0000741>].

24 This was later given constitutional status through the *Constitutional Amendment, 1993 (New Brunswick)* which added a 16.1 to the *Constitution Act, 1982* (proclaimed on March 12, 1993).

25 *Hansard* p.1481 (28th Parliament, 1st session).

26 (Mr. Stanfield) *Hansard* 28(1) p.1484.

27 (Mr. Lewis) *Hansard* 28(1) p.1486.

28 *Hansard* 28(1) p.8787.

29 Mr. Pelletier’s speech provides a good summary of the rationale behind the major provisions of the act relating to bilingualism in Parliament and government departments. [*Hansard* 28(1) pp.8785-8790.]

30 *An Act respecting the status of the official languages of Canada*, SC 1969 c.54, s.2.

In 1982, with the patriation of the Canadian Constitution from the United Kingdom and the entrenchment of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and an amending formula, the Trudeau Government was able to constitutionalize official languages policy – or, more accurately, expand the constitutional commitment to official languages by adding many of the guarantees identified by the B and B Commission as deserving of this level of legal protection.³¹ Among the added protections are confirmation that English and French are the official languages of Canada and have equal status and rights and privileges in all institutions of Parliament and the Government of Canada (s.16), the right to use either language in any debates or other proceedings of Parliament (s.17), the publication of journals and statutes in both languages with each being equally authoritative (s.18), the right to plead in court in either language (s.19) and the right for the public to receive services from head or central offices of Parliamentary and government departments and agencies (s.20).³²

In the end, it can be argued that achieving these changes took two royal commissions, enormous political will, external factors such as social upheaval in Quebec (beginning with the Quiet Revolution and culminating in acts of violence and threats of separation) and significant and painful internal restructuring that was often not entirely successful and sometimes divisive. At the same time, it can be argued that in just one generation the face of government in Canada was transformed through one of the most successful affirmative action programs in history.

That being said, it is one thing to institute language training, pay incentives and even rapid advancement of a minority group in order to transform a workforce. But to change a democratically-elected body one needs popular will and, quite often, institutional rule change. What then have been the developments within Parliament with respect to bilingualism?

II. Historical Evolution of Members' Services

The first major change in bilingual services that directly affected Parliament itself occurred in 1934, when the federal government created a central Translation Bureau. As already noted, this was still an era where servicing the public in the language of its choice was utterly novel. The creation of this bureau provided for the first time a professional class of translators who could service the entire government, thereby giving Members of Parliament support for the translation of documents – not the least of which was the transcript of the *Debates* of the House of Commons (the published version of which is referred to as *Hansard*), which was routinely delayed because of problems with accurate translation.³³

Introduced by the Government of Conservative Prime Minister R. B. Bennett on January 29, 1934, the bill³⁴ was supported by then independent MP Henri Bourassa, though opposed by the Liberals' Quebec lieutenant, Lionel Chevrier. In introducing the bill, Secretary of State Charles Cahan summarized the dire situation that existed throughout the Government, but especially within the House of Commons (government was a much smaller enterprise in this pre-welfare state period), by pointing out that he been forced to get a friend to translate the Speech from the Throne³⁵, and that “carelessness, if not incompetence in the preparation of the copy which was being submitted by translators”³⁶ regularly resulted in cost overruns for publications such as *Hansard*. In particular, “publications of French translations of public

31 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, *The Official Languages*, p.149.

32 *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Part I of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, RSC 1985 “Appendices”. The *Charter* also enshrined minority language rights enabling children to be educated in the language of their parents and in the same language throughout their primary and secondary schooling (s.23).

33 *Hansard* (17th Parliament, 5th session), p.982.

34 *An Act respecting the Bureau of Translations*, Bill No. 4 of the 5th session of the 17th Parliament.

35 *Hansard* 17(5), p.9. Peter Veniot, the Liberal MP for Gloucester (N.B.), later referred to the translation of the Speech from the Throne as “an example of the worst French that has ever appeared on paper” [*Hansard* 15(5), p.1244].

36 *Ibid.*, p.980.

documents were frequently so long delayed as to impair, if not to destroy, their usefulness to the Government and to the public.”³⁷

In opposing the change for the Liberals, Chevrier’s largest concern appears to have been cost, which is perhaps not surprising because cost savings were part of the Government’s rationale at the time for creating a centralized bureau. However, Chevrier also expressed concern that the House of Commons’ 35 translators³⁸ would be merged with the 41 translators working for government departments, resulting in a diminution of services to the Commons.³⁹

Debate in the House of Commons on the *Bureau of Translations Bill* began on January 26, 1934 and ended on May 25, 1934. It takes up 198 pages of (English) *Hansard*. Interestingly, the debate on providing simultaneous translation in the House of Commons, which was admittedly just a motion and not a bill, took only one day (August 11, 1958), consumes only 10 pages of print and was carried without the need for division. This difference clearly reflects the evolution in thinking among Canada’s political elites towards linguistic service and of changes within Canada and elsewhere.⁴⁰ It definitely does not reflect the relative import that these changes had with respect to the way the Commons operates.

While revamping the translation services for the House of Commons may have had a tangible impact on quality of services and been an issue of concern to MPs, for full participation in Parliamentary debates the spoken word is paramount. Therefore it is not understating the situation to say that the most dramatic change in the advancement of linguistic equality in the House of Commons came about when simultaneous translation was first provided to that Chamber. Introduced by the Diefenbaker Government, the change was promised in the first Speech from the Throne following the 1958 election. In introducing the motion, Diefenbaker said he had first heard that the change was being contemplated in 1952 or 1953 when the previous Liberal Government of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent had been in power.⁴¹ He nonetheless pointed to one of his own backbench MPs, Louis-Joseph Pigeon, as being the primary agitator for this change (in 1957 Pigeon had proposed establishing a committee of the House to study this matter⁴²).

Pigeon, in turn, provided the most straightforward explanation of the impact of this change by pointing out that from that point on “English-speaking members will be able to follow speeches delivered in French by their French-speaking fellow-citizens, and vice versa”.⁴³ He went on to say “this system of simultaneous translation might well prove the greatest step towards national unity since Confederation” and suggested it would have the blessing of Sir John A. Macdonald, who in 1867 said of the *British North America Act*, “I have no accord with the desire expressed in some quarters that by any mode whatever there should be an attempt made to oppress the one language or to render it inferior to the other... we have a Constitution now under which all British subjects are in a position of absolute equality, having equal rights of every kind -- of language, of religion and of person”.⁴⁴

For his part, the Leader of the Opposition, Lester B. Pearson, began his speech in halting French (“*Monsieur l’Orateur, c’est avec un grand plaisir que j’appuie le projet de motion à l’étude.*”⁴⁵) before describing his being a unilingual Anglophone as a “disability” and saying

37 *Ibid.*, p.979.

38 There were three translators working in the branches of law translating, two in journals, 16 in debates, and 12 in parliamentary, as well as two (formerly three) in the Senate [*Hansard* 17(5), p.987].

39 *Hansard* 17(5), p.987.

40 It is worth noting that simultaneous translation in both English and French had been available in the United Nations since its founding in 1945. While there are now six languages that are simultaneously translated at the U.N., the first two languages for which translation and interpretation was provided and the language of the U.N. bureaucracy are English and French.

41 This was either reflective of rumours at the time or a clever use of innuendo by Diefenbaker to coerce Liberal support by implicating them in the change.

42 *Hansard* (24th Parliament, 1st Session), p.3331.

43 *Hansard* 24(1), p.3336.

44 *Ibid.*

45 *Hansard* (French) 24(1), p.3499 (translated as: “Mr. Speaker, I take great pleasure in supporting the motion” in English *Hansard* at p.3333).

that this new service was necessary to help disabled persons such as himself. Interestingly, Pearson's is one of the few speeches delivered in Parliament in a debate over some aspect of official languages policy or language services where a politician expresses a dream of bilingualism at the individual level. Most federal politicians are careful to describe official language policy as being institutional rather than individual, with the goal simply being better service with no obligation on the part of the average Canadian. (This is exemplified in Gerard Pelletier's contribution to the debate over the *Official Languages Act*, cited above.) Pearson went so far as to express hope that in the not too distant future "simultaneous translation will not be needed and the facilities for that purpose can be taken out of the House as not needed and moved over to the museum or the public archives".⁴⁶ The CCF also supported the change, suggesting that simultaneous translation would not only fulfil a constitutional obligation, but that the moves to advance equality of languages in Canada reflected a country whose "stature in the world has been growing year by year" and was quickly becoming a truly tolerant nation.⁴⁷

The result of the introduction of simultaneous interpretation was a wholesale change in behaviour within the House of Commons, providing further evidence that the lack of simultaneous translation had been creating an English work environment. Based on the data Bird collected for the B and B Commission, from 1957 to 1963 the amount of French spoken in the House of Commons during general debates rose from 4.1 to 20.5 percent.⁴⁸

III. The House of Commons 40 Years Ago

As part of the B and B Commission's research program, political scientists David Hoffman and Norman Ward were asked to examine the state of inter-language relations within the House of Commons. Their study employed a number of interesting markers.⁴⁹ While party differences and regional differences resulted in variations in attitudes among MPs expressed on each of the markers, language was still the most consistent factor that explained differences between MPs on such things as their ability to form friendships outside of their cultural group, their impressions about how 'at home' French Canadians might feel in Ottawa and their perspectives on the role of an MP.

While not directly relevant to our examination of the views of MPs today, the general findings of their survey questions on attitudes could be summed up by saying that they reflect a widespread lack of understanding and very little communication between the two linguistic groups in the House of Commons. This is consistent with the Royal Commission's more general findings about relations between the two groups in the federal public service at the time, as well as at every level of Canadian society.

It is noteworthy that French-speaking MPs were generally more sympathetic to their English-speaking colleagues than the other way around⁵⁰, and it is even more striking that 21 percent of English-speaking MPs said they had become less sympathetic since entering the House of Commons. The two main reasons for this increased hostility were increased demands for use of French, particularly in the House of Commons, "and irritation with the behaviour of certain French Canadian Members in the House or committees."⁵¹ This, in turn, can be partially explained by frustration over slow implementation of bilingual services and the lack of uniformity of access.

46 *Hansard* (English) 24(1), p.3333.

47 Hazen Argue (MP for Assiniboia), *Hansard* 24(1), p.3334.

48 Bird in Hoffman and Ward, *Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the House of Commons*, p.6.

49 Hoffman and Ward, *Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the House of Commons* [Volume 3: Documents of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism] (Ottawa: Queen's Printer for Canada, 1970).

50 Of English-speaking MPs, 46 per cent were sympathetic to French Canadians before they entered the House of Commons and 30 per cent became more sympathetic subsequently (for a total of 76 per cent sympathetic); compared to 70 per cent and 27 per cent of French-speaking MPs, respectively (97 per cent in total) [*Ibid.*, p.172].

51 *Ibid.*, p.173.

TABLE 1
In 1964-65, effects of bilingualism on the operations of Parliament, by language group
(of MPs' who reported effects)

	Mentioned by English-speaking MPs (%)	Mentioned by French-speaking MPs (%)
Cause delays	64	40
Expensive	23	11
Causes problems at committee level	49	58
Causes problems at caucus level	6	16
Other effects	21	16

Note: As some MPs reported more than one effect, percentages total more than 100.

Source: Commission (Hoffman & Ward, 1966)

Table 1 shows a number of concerns MPs conveyed to the B and B Commission researchers concerning bilingual services in the Commons. The percentages are of those mentioning an effect, and it should be noted that half of respondents to the survey thought there was no special effect. However, the table does illustrate a level of frustration, especially within committees, a feeling shared by French-speaking MPs.

British Columbia MPs and Atlantic MPs were more likely to see problems with bilingual services in the House, with the former pointing equally to delays and problems in committees and the latter more likely than other MPs to complain about delays. "The expense of the system was not very important for the vast majority of MPs, with the Prairies and Ontario accounting for most of the references to this particular effect".⁵²

Simultaneous interpretation was introduced slowly throughout the Parliamentary precinct, committee room by committee room, because of the renovations required and the associated costs (much in the same way as television cameras have been introduced by committee room more recently). By 1964, simultaneous interpretation was not available at all committees and all French-speaking MPs thought this should be the goal whatever the cost (24 percent of English-speaking MPs did not agree; 4 percent were not sure).⁵³

TABLE 2
English-speaking MPs' opinion, in 1964-65, on whether translation facilities should be extended to all
committee rooms whatever the cost, by party

	Should be extended (%)	Should not be extended (%)	Not sure (%)
Liberal	81	17	3
Progressive Conservative	52	41	7
NDP	89	11	0
Social Credit	10	0	0

Source: B AND B Commission (Hoffman & Ward, 1966)

As Table 2 shows, differences over whether translation should be extended to all committee rooms emerge along party lines, with Progressive Conservative MPs being the most opposed to extending interpretation services at any cost. Not shown is that these differences also diverge to a lesser extent along regional lines (as already noted Quebec MPs were

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.208.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.215.

unanimous in wanting the extension of bilingual services, and at the other end of the spectrum were MPs from British Columbia who were more opposed).

Equally reflective of the era was the question on language use by Ministers. At the time of the B and B Commission, French Canadian Cabinet Ministers were often obliged to answer questions in English, which sometimes created confusion due to unclear responses. The question posed to MPs reflected this reality and asked if they agreed with the statement: "It would be better if French-speaking Ministers always spoke French; they would express themselves more satisfactorily". Table 3 presents the data.

	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Not sure (%)
<u>(i) by language</u>			
English	38	49	13
French	85	15	0
<u>(ii) by party</u>			
Liberal	55	39	6
Progressive Conservative	23	58	19
NDP	22	67	11
<u>(iii) by region</u>			
BC & Yukon	30	60	10
Prairies & NWT	31	54	15
Ontario	44	47	9
Quebec	85	15	0
Atlantic	43	36	21
<i>N=104</i>			

Source: B AND B Commission (Hoffman & Ward, 1966)

This table shows some similar results to the ones found on other questions in the survey, including the fact that Francophones, Liberals and MPs from Quebec were each the most supportive and that MPs from BC were the most opposed to the idea of a Minister being able to answer all questions in French.⁵⁴ On a related question, when MPs were asked about what role the Speaker provides in the provision of services, the majority of MPs mentioned the importance of his being personally bilingual, "thus giving formal recognition to the two languages."⁵⁵

This research led Hoffman and Ward to conclude, 40 years ago, that: "Bilingualism in its present form in the House of Commons is resented by some but acceptable to most. Meaningful extensions of it, although obviously desired by nearly all the French-speaking MPs, would not be favoured by a number of English-speaking MPs, particularly English-speaking Conservatives."⁵⁶

54 Hoffman and Ward admit problems with this question's wording, though they point to the similar responses on this question compared to others as evidence that possible ambiguity probably did not significantly affect the data [pp.213-4].

55 Once again, this was more significant to French-speaking MPs, as was the Speaker's role in supervising the administration of bilingual services at the rate of approximately two-to-one (with 73 per cent of Francophones identifying formal recognition of their language and 38 per cent identifying administration) [p.210].

56 *Ibid.*, p.215-6.

IV. Current Members' Services

In spite of resistance from some MPs, bilingual services have expanded dramatically in the House of Commons. Of the 1,031 translators who work for the federal government at a cost of just over \$67.6 million⁵⁷, approximately 110 are translators working for Parliament and an additional 52 persons are employed as interpreters⁵⁸. The former are responsible for the written 'translation' of documents and the latter are responsible for the oral translation (or 'interpretation') of the debate as it is occurring in the Senate and House Chambers and committee rooms.

Today, documents printed by the House of Commons are produced in both English and French simultaneously. Ministers of the Crown or parliamentary secretaries acting on behalf of ministers are *required* to table documents in both official languages.⁵⁹ "Everyone else, including Members of the House of Commons, may submit written material in either or both official languages. Each committee decides, by way of routine motion, whether documents submitted to it in only one official language will be distributed to members immediately or only once a translation is available."⁶⁰

Timely translation of documents is obviously essential to the work of parliamentarians. It permits those who do not understand the language in which original documents were prepared to participate fully in their analysis and to inform their opinions and positions. Similarly, it permits MPs to communicate in print and in writing with their constituents in the language of the constituents' choice.

In addition to written translation of government and Commons documents and simultaneous interpretation of debates in the House of Commons, caucus meetings and all committees, Members of Parliament today receive extensive language services to ensure that they can function as MPs and communicate with their constituents in either official language.

From the day his or her election is published by the Chief Electoral Officer in the *Canada Gazette* until 10 days after the dissolution of Parliament, each MP is entitled to translation services in his or her second official language for such things as householders (four per year), sections of speeches (approximately 1,000 words per speech), letters to constituents, documents related to legislation, party research material, Web homepage and biographies, and season's greetings.⁶¹ There are some exclusions, but most involve material that is being translated by another division of the House of Commons or federal government, so in practice almost everything is provided to and for MPs in both official languages. Additionally, most MPs benefit from the informal services of bilingual staffers in their House of Commons and constituency offices.

MPs and their spouses are also entitled to individual (i.e. one-on-one) language courses while in Ottawa, French immersion sessions at the Government-run *Campus Fort Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu* in Quebec and language courses elsewhere in Canada through an accredited

57 First quarter of 2006 (March) [Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada, *Public Service Active Employment and Payroll by Occupational Category, Sex, Employee Type and Department – Quarters from March 1983 to March 2006* (access at <http://be2020.publicservice.hrma-agrh.gc.ca/ReportFolders/ReportFolders.aspx> on July 11, 2006)].

58 Translation services are provided by the modern version of the Bureau of Translations, a special unit of Interpretation and Parliamentary Translation of the Department of Public Works and Government Services. [Board of Internal Economy, "Ottawa Office and Services", *Members' Manual* (Ottawa: House of Commons, accessed June 8, 2006 at <http://intraparl.parl.gc.ca/adminserv/house>), s.5].

59 House of Commons, "Tabling Documents in the House", *Standing Orders of the House of Commons including the Conflict of Interest Code for Members* (Ottawa, consolidated version as of April 5, 2006), p.18.

60 House of Commons, "Committee Briefs and Other Papers", *Compendium of Procedure* (accessed June 27, 2006 at <http://www.parl.gc.ca/combendium-e>, last modified March 2006). The requirement that documents be provided in both languages simultaneously is often used by individual members to prevent even urgent documents from being tabled both as a procedural mechanism in order to delay consideration of a matter and as a matter of principle in order to ensure equality of the languages before Parliament.

61 Board of Internal Economy, "Ottawa Office and Services", *Members' Manual*, s.5.

Canadian teaching institution (either individual or group).⁶² Members of their staff, in both the constituency and in Ottawa (with the exception of short-term and on-call employees), are entitled to similar training, though they must take their training in groups.⁶³ Transportation to and from immersion courses, compensation for the host family and a *per diem* for meals are also covered. For ministers, what is not covered by the House of Commons in their capacity as legislators is covered by their departments. Ministers' staff also have access to private (as opposed to group) language training and departmental document translation services.

In short, there are virtually no restrictions on language training or translation services available to ministers. This does not guarantee that ministers will be personally proficient in both of Canada's official languages, though it can, and often does, lead to a functional bilingualism that is useful for the obligations of House of Commons debate, including responding to questions in Question Period.

To the extent that ability to respond to questions in the House of Commons, or from the media outside the Commons' Chamber, in the language in which the question is asked, is a job requirement, the provision of language training takes on greater importance. After all, the number of candidates for cabinet appointment who are already bilingual can vary dramatically by Parliament and, while appointment of ministers remains the purview of the Prime Minister who will likely be sensitive to the bilingual nature of the country, she or he is often limited by regional political considerations as well as the constitutional convention that a minister must be a Member of one of the Houses or become one without undue delay.

V. The Views of Candidates and MPs

In 2004, the 'Canadian Candidate Survey' asked candidates running for the House of Commons (among other things) about bilingualism, including what language skills were necessary in order to do the job of MP and minister. They were also asked about their own language skills. The response rate was 44.1 percent.

The 2004 'Canadian Candidate Survey' was conducted from McGill University⁶⁴ during and after the federal general election that took place on June 28 of that year. The target 'universe' was all candidates who ran for one of the five parties that fielded a 'complete slate' of candidates (the Liberal, Conservative, New Democratic and Green parties, which nominated candidates in all 308 ridings across Canada, and the Bloc Québécois, which contested all 75 ridings in Quebec).

The survey took the form of two self-administered questionnaires.⁶⁵ The first, a short biographical questionnaire, was distributed along with a research consent form and a request for post-election contact information. The second, a longer (approximately 10-page) questionnaire was distributed in the three months following the election and covered political background, candidate selection, representation, social and political issues and personal background. A multi-faceted approach aimed at getting candidates to complete the questionnaire was undertaken using mail, e-mail, telephone and the assistance of the five political parties.⁶⁶ All documentation was made available in both English and French, and the longer questionnaire was made available in both hard copy and a Web-based version.

62 Board of Internal Economy, "Constituency Office and Services", *Members' Manual* (Ottawa: House of Commons, accessed June 8, 2006 at <http://intraparl.parl.gc.ca/adminserv/house>), s.5. Other: Training.

63 In the case of external courses for staff there must be a certificate provided by the institution upon completion (*ibid.*), which means that unlike MPs and their spouses, staff members must actually pass the courses. On Parliament Hill, the requirement that staff take language training in groups creates the unusual situation where staffers often are in courses with staff from opposing political parties as well as with non-political House of Commons' employees.

64 This survey was partially funded by Metropolis Canada, which funds comparative research and public policy development about population migration, cultural diversity and the challenges of immigrant integration.

65 The 'Canadian Candidate Survey' had the approval of the McGill University Research Ethics Board-I.

66 The involvement of the political parties, which each distributed questionnaires and provided letters/e-mails of support, only was solicited in the final stages of the research. This delay was to ensure that no influence could be exerted on individual responses,

In their study, Hoffman and Ward placed more emphasis on linguistic and regional differences than party differences and did not report results according to party. Presenting data on MPs and on candidates this way can be misleading. After all, one can expect individuals to self-select when deciding which party to join and for parties, in turn, to select candidates based on common values and ideology. The views of the parties on many core issues, including bilingualism, are likely fairly well known before candidate selection occurs.

Presenting results according to party affiliation is also important because response rates are likely to vary among the parties. Indeed, in our 2004 survey, the response rate was highest among Green (58.4 percent) and New Democratic (47.1 percent) party candidates and lowest among Bloc Québécois candidates (28 percent). Both Liberal and Conservative candidates had roughly average response rates (37-38 percent). Combining candidate responses would result in the Green and NDP being disproportionately represented in any summary results.

A. Bilingual Ability of Candidates

Before turning to the issue of candidates' opinions on bilingualism, it is worth examining briefly the linguistic abilities of the candidates for the House of Commons included in this study. It should be noted that this is self-reporting of bilingualism,⁶⁷ which is bound to vary dramatically with some people under-estimating their language skills and others over-estimating. However, for our purposes – that is to control for whether candidates' own language skills might influence their views on the need for bilingualism – the candidates' views on their own bilingual ability are more important than actual language skill.

TABLE 4
Candidates who considered themselves bilingual, in 2004, by party

	Total		Incumbents		New	
	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)
Liberal	36	(113)	43	(44)	32	(69)
Conservative	34	(116)	21	(14)	35	(102)
NDP	43	(143)	60	(5)	42	(138)
Green	40	(180)	--	(0)	40	(180)
Bloc	86	(21)	80	(5)	88	(16)

Source: Canadian Candidate Survey (2004)

As Table 4 shows, the Bloc Québécois had the largest number of candidates who considered themselves bilingual -- 86 percent.⁶⁸ The high percentage of Bloc Québécois candidates who reported being bilingual, both incumbents and non-incumbents, is particularly noteworthy since this party favours an officially unilingual Quebec. The majority of candidates from the other parties reported they were not bilingual. When we separate the incumbents from non-incumbents we find that a higher percentage of Liberal and NDP incumbents are bilingual (43 and 60 percent respectively) than new candidates (32 and 40 percent). This may reflect language skills acquired while in office or, alternately, the importance voters may place on bilingualism. The Conservative candidates are an exception in that they had fewer bilingual incumbents than they did bilingual new candidates. This is the first election that the new Conservative Party contested, with most of their incumbents coming from the western-based Canadian Alliance (formerly Reform) Party.

though some involvement was felt appropriate once the response rate had passed 30 percent and enough time had passed that post-election contact information may have become out of date.

⁶⁷ The question we posed of candidates was: "Are you bilingual (French and English)?" with the option of checking Yes or No.

⁶⁸ Caution must be used in drawing inferences from the Bloc results. Since this party only ran 75 candidates and had a 28 percent response rate on the survey, the N's being considered (particularly in multivariate analysis) will be small.

Between 1961 and 1981 there was an increase in bilingualism across Canada from 12 to 15 percent, in part due to a growing interest in immersion programs introduced in the post-B B Commission era. However, Sue Wright suggests there has also developed a *de facto* territorialism, resulting in “twinned unilingualism in Quebec and the rest of the country, with a ‘bilingual belt’ in parts of Ontario and New Brunswick.”⁶⁹

TABLE 5
Candidates who considered themselves bilingual, in 2004, by region

	Atlantic		Quebec		Ontario		Prairies		Pacific	
	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)
Liberal	20	(15)	75	(20)	48	(44)	5	(21)	8	(12)
Conservative	31	(13)	77	(30)	20	(46)	11	(18)	11	(9)
NDP	23	(13)	90	(31)	31	(55)	35	(20)	26	(23)
Green	45	(20)	83	(36)	25	(71)	21	(29)	32	(22)
Bloc	--	(0)	86	(21)	--	(0)	--	(0)	--	(0)

Source: Canadian Candidate Survey (2004)

Table 5 shows that bilingual ability as reported by candidates varies dramatically by region, with a low in western Canada of between 5 and 35 percent. If the unilingualism in Quebec pointed to by Wright and others is growing among the general population it is not manifest among political elites: between 75 and 86 percent of candidates in Quebec reported being bilingual, regardless of party. While the numbers do not necessarily reflect regional trends, they do clearly reflect differences in priority and opportunity that have historically been placed on bilingualism by elites in these regions.

As mentioned above, there is no way to know if there is a difference in self-reporting reflected in these numbers. For example, is an Anglophone who lives in the nation’s capital or in Quebec less likely to report being bilingual because of proximity to Francophones and a periodic need to function in the second language than someone in western Canada? If so, then the regional differences may be even more pronounced than illustrated here.

In a similar vein, and more significant for our purposes, is whether members of political parties report their bilingualism differently. For example, could a member of the Liberal Party be less likely to claim to be bilingual than a member of the Conservative Party with equal linguistic facility, regardless of region? If so, caution should be urged when using these data as a lens through which to view opinions on the importance of bilingualism for MPs.

B. Attitudes Toward Language/Bilingualism

To gauge general attitudes towards language we employed a question that is also used by the Canadian Election Study (CES).⁷⁰ The CES is a large-scale survey conducted during the campaign period of every federal election employing rolling cross-section telephone surveys and a subsequent post-election mail-back questionnaire. Its purpose is to examine why voters vote the way they do and why some parties are more successful than others.

In both the Canadian Election Study and the Canadian Candidate Survey, respondents were asked if they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statement: “We have gone too far in pushing bilingualism in Canada”. Using the same question asked to the general public in the same election allowed us to compare the opinions of candidates with those of the voting population.

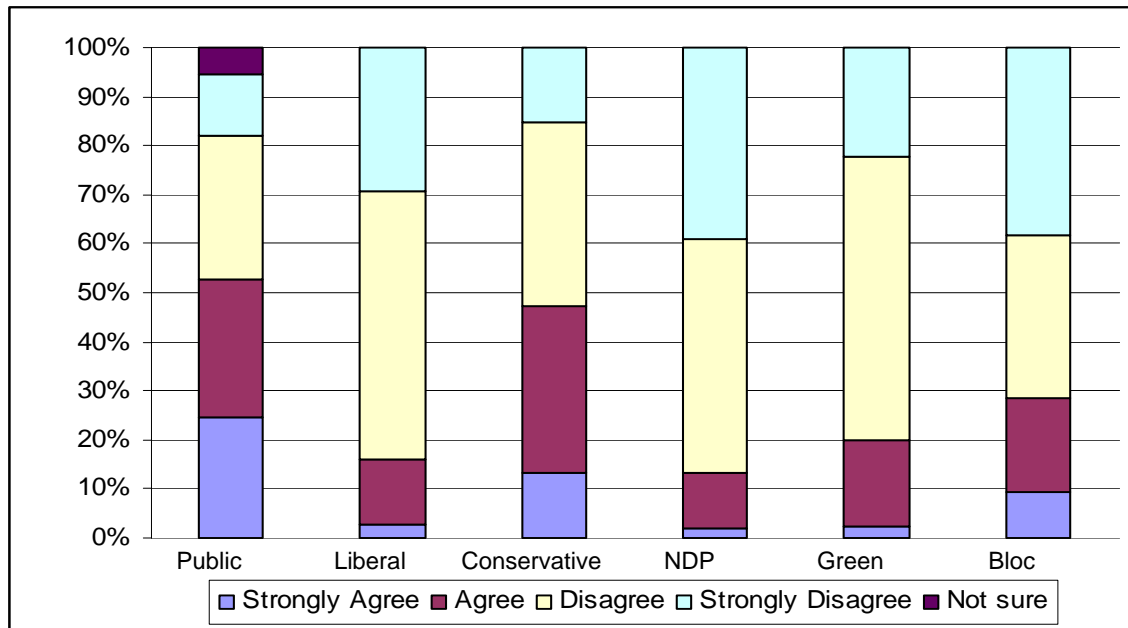
69 Sue Wright, *Monolingualism and Bilingualism: Lessons from Canada and Spain* (Cleveland: Philadelphia Multilingual Matters, 1996), p.25.

70 The Canada Election Study is conducted out of the Université de Montréal, McGill University and the University of Toronto. Principal researchers: André Blais, Joanna Everitt, Patrick Fournier, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Neil Nevitte.

The Canadian population was divided on the issue of bilingualism, with 24 percent strongly agreeing, 28 percent agreeing, 29 percent disagreeing, 12 percent strongly disagreeing and 6 percent not sure.⁷¹ Regionally, Canadians were more likely to agree in the Prairies (65 percent agreed, with 33 percent agreeing strongly), followed by Ontario (63 percent) and the Pacific (59 percent). Only in Quebec did a majority of Canadians disagree with the statement (70 percent disagreed, with 26 percent disagreeing strongly), though Atlantic Canadians were evenly divided (46 percent agreeing and 47 percent disagreeing).⁷²

The divisions among Canadians were not, for the most part, reflected in the opinions of the candidates. The majority of candidates from all parties disagreed with the statement that we have gone too far in pushing bilingualism at the rate of 87 percent for the NDP, 84 for the Liberals, 80 percent for the Greens, 71 percent for the Bloc and 53 percent for the Conservatives.

Figure 1
"We have gone too far in pushing bilingualism in this country"



Public: $N=1,674$; Candidates: *Liberal*=112, *Conservative*=112, *NDP*=143, *Green*=174, *Bloc*=21
Source: Public: Canada Election Study (2004); Candidates: Canadian Candidates Survey (2004).

Figure 1 shows the comparison between the divisions in the Canadian public with the divisions within the political parties. It has been argued that the dual roles of Parliament – representation and governance – suggest two alternate ways of comparing mass and elite opinion.⁷³ Under the former conceptualization, since the Canadian public is never united in its views, it can be argued that the party with divisions that most closely reflect the divisions in the Canadian population is best able to represent the public. This would suggest that the Conservative Party, where more candidates held the belief that bilingualism has gone to far, is more 'representative' of the Canadian public. The other conceptualization revolves around

⁷¹ $N=1,674$.

⁷² Within Atlantic Canada, the majority of people in the provinces of Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia disagreed with the statement and the majority of people in the province of New Brunswick, which is the only province in Canada to be officially bilingual, thought bilingualism had been pushed too far.

⁷³ See Jerome H. Black and Bruce M. Hicks, "Strengthening Canadian Democracy: The Views of Parliamentary Candidates", *IRPP Policy Matters* 7(2) (March 2006), p.41.

governance. The leadership of a political party presents itself as willing and able to form a government should the electorate give them a mandate through a sufficient number of seats in the House of Commons (the Bloc Québécois, which runs candidates only in Québec, is the exception since it makes no pretense of wanting to form a government). Thus, the party most committed to a policy or an ideal is the party most likely to deliver on that policy. From this perspective, the NDP, followed by the Liberals, would be the parties most likely to deliver on bilingualism policies if they won a majority and the Conservatives would be the least likely.

Next to the Conservatives, the Bloc Québécois had the most candidates who thought bilingualism had gone too far. However, the Bloc's views on bilingualism have two dimensions, the first being its impact on Quebec and the other the need for French-language services. For many in Quebec, bilingualism is seen as a first step towards assimilation.⁷⁴ The lack of universal support for bilingualism in this party, therefore, must be seen as reflective of an ideological opposition to federal language policy rather than a belief by Bloc MPs and candidates that federal language services, in general, and bilingualism in the federal public service, in particular, is sufficient. This is reinforced by the fact that for Bloc Québécois candidates, language was the primary source of their identity.⁷⁵

TABLE 6
Importance of Language to a candidates' sense of identity, in 2004, by party and first language

Candidates	Very (%)	Important (%)	Not very (%)	Not at all (%)	(N)
<u>French (1st)</u>					
Liberal	74	26	-	-	(23)
Conservative	62	28	10	-	(29)
NDP	57	40	-	3	(30)
Green	42	34	16	8	(38)
Bloc	84	11	5	-	(19)
<u>English (1st)</u>					
Liberal	17	48	31	5	(85)
Conservative	10	57	27	5	(77)
NDP	13	45	35	6	(97)
Green	11	46	35	7	(125)
Bloc	-	-	-	-	(0)

Source: Canadian Candidate Survey (2004)

Table 6 illustrates the marked difference between all candidates, who learned English-first and French-first, in the importance language provides for their sense of identity.⁷⁶ For those who learned French as their first language, language forms a 'very important' aspect of their identity, at the almost uniform rate of nearly four to one.⁷⁷ This contrasts to those who learned English as their first language. Among Anglophones, language identity was important for the

74 Roger Bernard, *Le Canada français : entre mythe et utopie* (Ottawa : Le Nordir, 1998).

75 The identity question read: "Here is a list of factors which may contribute to one's personal feeling of identity. For each one, please indicate how important it is to your own sense of identity..." "Nation", "Language", "Region or Province", "Gender", "Ethnicity or race", and "Religion".

76 The language question was "What is the first language you learned that you still understand?" Only the cases where respondents chose French or English (not Other) are reported here.

77 While not directly relevant to this study on bilingualism, it is noteworthy that Bloc candidates uniquely reported not just one but three items as 'very important' to their sense of identity, specifically language (81 per cent), nation (81 per cent) and region or province (67 per cent).

majority but not at the same intensity as that reported by the Francophone candidates, though a greater number (57 percent) of Conservative Anglophones listed it as “important”.⁷⁸

C. Importance of Federal Politicians Being Bilingual

Candidates in a federal election are individuals who have put their name forward, or been asked to put their names forward, to represent their constituents in Parliament. Each is applying for the position of Member of Parliament, and many have aspirations of being a cabinet minister. This group has a particular conception of the skills they have or lack and what is involved in being an MP or a Minister. Therefore, the views of this group on the question of whether or not it is important for an MP or a Minister to be bilingual are extremely relevant.⁷⁹

TABLE 7
Candidates' views on the importance of being bilingual to be an MP, by party

	Important (%)	Not important (%)	(N)
Liberal	72	28	(113)
Conservative	48	52	(115)
NDP	61	39	(141)
Green	56	44	(179)
Bloc	76	24	(21)

Source: Canadian Candidate Survey (2004)

As Table 7 shows, the majority of candidates running for election from all of the political parties, with the notable exception of the Conservative Party, feel it is important for MPs to be bilingual. This ranges from a high of 76 percent among the Bloc and 72 among Liberals, to 61 and 56 of the NDP and Greens, respectively. A slight majority of Conservatives thought it was unimportant, though on this question they were almost evenly split (48 percent said it was important).

TABLE 8
Candidates' views on the importance of being bilingual for Cabinet Ministers, by party

	Important (%)	Not important (%)	(N)
Liberal	79	21	(113)
Conservative	66	34	(114)
NDP	76	24	(142)
Green	77	23	(179)
Bloc	100	-	(21)

Source: Canadian Candidate Survey (2004)

When it comes to being a Cabinet Minister, Table 8 shows the majority of candidates from all parties felt it was important to be able to speak both English and French. The Bloc was unanimous in this belief, and 79, 77 and 76 percent (respectively) of the Liberal, Green and NDP candidates agreed. A majority of Conservative candidates lined up with the majority of candidates from the other parties and said bilingualism was important to the job of being a Minister.

78 Not shown is the importance that people who learned an “other” language (not French or English) place on language for their sense of identity. Twice as many report it “very important” and about the same amount report it “important” as do Anglophones, which is still only one-third the intensity reported by Francophones.

79 The two questions asked were: “Do you think it is important for MPs to be bilingual (French and English)?” and “Do you think it is important for Cabinet Ministers to be bilingual (French and English)?”

D. Who Places More Importance on Being Bilingual?

As noted above, Francophones and Anglophones show a marked difference with respect to where they get their sense of identity. It can therefore be expected that one's linguistic group⁸⁰, and even language proficiency, might affect one's views about the need for bilingualism in the job of MP or minister.

TABLE 9
Importance of being bilingual, by party and language usually spoken at home

Candidates (%)	...to be an MP				...to be a Minister			
	Francophones	(N)	Anglo	(N)	Francophones	(N)	Anglo	(N)
Liberal	86	(21)	69	(91)	100	(21)	75	(91)
Conservative	83	(29)	37	(84)	97	(29)	57	(83)
NDP	77	(30)	56	(108)	94	(31)	70	(108)
Green	72	(36)	52	(137)	94	(36)	73	(137)
Bloc	75	(20)	100	(1)	100	(20)	100	(1)

Source: Canadian Candidate Survey (2004)

Table 9 illustrates that there are, in fact, dramatic differences in the views of Anglophones and Francophones over the need for bilingualism for both MPs and Ministers. These differences are most acute within the Conservative Party where a strong majority of Anglophones do not think it is a job requirement for the position of MP, and where half do not think it is even required for a Minister. Conversely, the majority of Francophones in the Conservative Party believe bilingualism is needed for both jobs. Even in the other political parties there are differences between the attitudes of Francophones and Anglophones, with close to half the Anglophones thinking it is not a skill needed by an MP versus three-quarters of the Francophone colleagues who disagree.

The Liberals show the largest commitment to bilingualism across linguistic group: 86 percent of Francophone candidates said both languages are needed to be an MP, and 69 percent of their Anglophone candidates agreed. Liberal Francophones were unanimous in seeing it as a necessary skill for a Minister, and 75 percent of their Anglophone colleagues were in agreement.

The Bloc only fields candidates in the Province of the Quebec it can never form a government, so opinions on what is needed to be a Minister are the view from across the aisle and from Quebec. From those two perspectives Bloc candidates are unanimous in thinking ministers need to be bilingual. However, the Bloc candidates were not unanimous in thinking an MP needs to be bilingual. These perspectives are clearly intertwined with Quebec's French official language policy. Constituents therefore would be expected to deal with their MP in French, which perhaps explains why 25 percent of the Bloc's Francophone candidates think bilingualism is not needed to be an MP.

Equally as important as linguistic group is language skill. It is possible that candidates who are bilingual might see the need for bilingualism as having greater value than those who are unilingual.

⁸⁰ Unlike with identity (Table 6), the question used in this section is "What language do you usually speak at home" and not the first language. While the first language learned is expected to have a great deal of impact on one's sense of identity, the language one uses most often at home is most likely to influence expectations of one's own ability to do a job and feel comfortable in the House of Commons, and will directly impact on what one would expect of one's colleagues and competitors.

TABLE 10
Importance of being bilingual, by party and language ability

Candidates (%)	...to be an MP				...to be a Minister			
	Bilingual	(N)	Unilingual	(N)	Bilingual	(N)	Unilingual	(N)
Liberal	85	(41)	63	(71)	90	(41)	72	(71)
Conservative	76	(38)	34	(77)	90	(38)	54	(76)
NDP	76	(59)	49	(81)	92	(59)	64	(81)
Green	82	(72)	39	(107)	92	(71)	67	(107)
Bloc	83	(18)	33	(3)	100	(18)	100	(3)

Source: Canadian Candidate Survey (2004)

Table 10 illustrates how candidates' linguistic ability will influence the position they take on the importance of being bilingual. Candidates who are bilingual were significantly more likely see bilingualism as important. This is most dramatic among MPs: a majority of unilingual candidates in every party except the Liberal party thought it was not a job skill they needed. Its impact is less dramatic on the question about Ministers' bilingualism, but it is nonetheless a significant determinant.

TABLE 11
Importance placed on bilingualism for an MP, by party and region

	Atlantic		Quebec		Ontario		Prairies		Pacific	
	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)
Liberal	80	(15)	85	(20)	75	(44)	62	(21)	42	(12)
Conservative	39	(13)	80	(30)	38	(45)	44	(18)	11	(9)
NDP	83	(12)	81	(31)	53	(55)	40	(20)	64	(22)
Green	79	(19)	78	(36)	45	(71)	45	(29)	50	(22)
Bloc	--	(0)	76	(21)	--	(0)	--	(0)	--	(0)

Source: Canadian Candidate Survey (2004)

Region also influences candidates' views on bilingualism. As shown in Table 11, candidates from Quebec, regardless of political party, mostly saw bilingualism as essential in order to be a Member of Parliament. The majority of Conservatives from every region of Canada, except for Quebec, did not see a need for MPs to be bilingual. At the other end, the majority of Liberals in all regions except for the Pacific and the majority of New Democrats from all regions except for the Prairies saw bilingualism as important for the job of MP.

But what do MPs think? People who have already served in the House of Commons should have a better understanding of what is involved in the job. They have served on committees and worked in their own caucuses with MPs from the other linguistic group, they have used the many services available to MPs and they have dealt with inquiries from constituents and with government departments. They presumably are able to provide a more informed perspective.

TABLE 12
Importance of being bilingual, by party and incumbency

Candidates (%)	...to be an MP				...to be a Minister			
	Incumbents	(N)	New	(N)	Incumbents	(N)	New	(N)
Liberal	82	(44)	65	(69)	80	(44)	78	(69)
Conservative	21	(14)	52	(101)	39	(13)	69	(101)
NDP	80	(5)	60	(136)	80	(5)	76	(127)
Bloc	40	(5)	88	(16)	100	(5)	100	(16)

Source: Canadian Candidate Survey (2004)

Note: The Green Party has yet to elect someone to the House of Commons so is not included in this table.

Table 12 shows some very interesting trends. Liberal and New Democratic Party incumbents placed more emphasis on bilingualism than their parties' candidates who have never served in the House of Commons. For the Conservatives and Bloc, incumbents were less likely than their parties' other candidates to see the need for the need for bilingualism in their own job.

Approximately 80 percent of sitting MPs from both the Liberals and the New Democrats thought it was important to be bilingual if to be an MP and to be a Minister.⁸¹ A majority of newcomers were also supportive of the need for bilingualism, but not at the levels of their more experienced running mates.

Interestingly, 60 percent of Bloc Québécois incumbents did not see a need for bilingualism for MPs. This cannot simply be explained on ideological grounds (e.g. the need for Quebec to be legally unilingual in order to protect French in North America) since 60 percent of their non-incumbent candidates felt it was important for the job of MP. It may, therefore, be partially reflective of the constituencies these candidates represent. The Bloc Québécois has been most successful off the island of Montréal, so its incumbents are more likely to be running in ridings where the number of Anglophones and immigrants is low, whereas many of the non-incumbents were contesting the urban ridings, including those held by the Liberals. Also, there is no discounting the fact that it may also reflect the reality of the modern House of Commons where bilingual services are sufficient that an MP can function entirely in one official language.

The most dramatic differences occur in the Conservative Party where 79 percent of incumbents thought it was not important to be bilingual, a view not shared by a majority of their new candidates. This can be explained, in part, by the fact that the Conservative Party had been created just prior to the election as a result of the merger of the Canadian Alliance (formerly Reform) Party and the Progressive Conservative Party. Most of the incumbents came from the Alliance-Reform party, which had historically been more opposed to bilingualism and official languages policy.

However, there is again no discounting that the experiences gained in the House of Commons may have contributed to the Conservative MPs being personally resistant to bilingualism. As already noted (Table 4), relatively few Conservative incumbent MPs were bilingual. In the cut and thrust of Parliamentary debate, language is often used as a procedural tool, with members of a committee objecting to documents being tabled in only one language.⁸² Furthermore, the former Alliance-Reform parties frequently found themselves at odds with the Bloc on both procedural and ideological grounds. So, just as the B B Commission found that bad experiences with translation at committees was influencing MPs views towards bilingualism,

81 As the Liberal Party was in government both before and after the 2004 federal election, some of their incumbents were also Cabinet Ministers.

82 As noted above, committees often require documents to be tabled simultaneously in both official languages and often this rule can be used as a procedural delaying tactic.

it is possible that these data are reflecting some frustration over procedure and between political opponents. This could be equally true for the incumbent Bloc MPs.

VI. Conclusion

Two things become obvious when comparing the responses of MPs obtained by Hoffman and Ward, 40 years ago, with the responses of candidates and MPs today. The first is how far attitudes and views have evolved. The other is how many of the earlier fault lines continue to persist.

Forty years ago, MPs were being asked whether a Francophone Minister should be permitted to answer a question in French so as to prevent confusion over the response. Only 38 percent of Anglophone MPs believed a Francophone Cabinet Minister should be speaking French in the House of Commons. Today, we find that a strong majority of MPs, regardless of partisan stripe, believe Cabinet Ministers need to be bilingual, and many feel that MPs should be bilingual as well.

However, there continues to be resistance to bilingualism from both an ideological and personal perspective among a number of English-speaking MPs, particularly English-speaking Conservatives (especially from western Canada). Forty years ago, this resistance suggested to Hoffman and Ward that increased bilingualism, while acceptable to most, would have a hard time being extended because of the resentment of a few.

In spite of that resistance, during the intervening period bilingualism within the federal government has dramatically advanced to the point where Canada can lay claim to having one of the most successful affirmative action programs in history. In just one generation the public service of Canada was transformed from an Anglophone-dominated workforce that functioned almost entirely in English, to a bilingual environment where Francophones and Anglophones work side-by-side at every level. That said, within the House of Commons precinct, the bilingual services available to MPs, their spouses and their staff have dramatically increased to the point where this might actually be contributing some MPs' views that they personally do not need to be bilingual in order to do their jobs.

Regardless of what language skills are necessary to do the job, most MPs are not bilingual. While the number of MPs who have the ability to speak both of Canada's official languages is much larger than it was 40 years ago, Quebecers continue to be the most likely to be bilingual and Conservatives continue to be the least likely. In addition, the Conservatives continue to be the most opposed to bilingualism. They are more likely to see it unnecessary for either an MP or a Minister to be bilingual; and more Conservative candidates and MPs agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "we have gone too far in pushing bilingualism in this country".

Admittedly, the Canadian public is also divided over how far bilingualism should go, so the Conservatives can claim not to be out of step with their constituents, especially when allowing for regional differences. However, if language policy is viewed in the context of rights, as was suggested by the first Conservative Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, in 1867, then this is not an area where the views of the majority are key; rather it is incumbent on elites to be supportive of those rights and to even fight for the protection of the less able minorities.

The Liberals and NDP are clearly the most supportive of bilingualism, and this applies across all the subgroups -- region, linguistic group, incumbency and language ability. These parties clearly support the 'linguistic pluralism' idea that underlies the federal *Official Languages Act*. Arguably these two parties are the most likely to expand bilingual services and to protect existing language policy at the federal level.

Ideologically, the Bloc Québécois holds the position that the future of the French language in North America is best protected by Quebec, most effectively through sovereignty. Not surprisingly, therefore, candidates for the BQ are less in favour of bilingualism, especially incumbents when asked about the skills needed by an MP, than their Francophone and

Québécois Liberal and New Democrat competitors. However, the very presence of the Bloc in Parliament has advanced bilingualism within the House of Commons. As a political party composed entirely of MPs from Quebec, the BQ has been able to use its party status to make French an equal part of Question Period.

Language policy is always a challenging and sometimes divisive activity for a government and legislature. But it is not something on which government can remain neutral. Furthermore, language is a genuine reflection of the nature of the country. It defines the Government's relationship with subordinate groups within society and how groups interact. Many solutions have been prescribed, and they are not easily dismissed based on normative assumptions. It would therefore be surprising if all MPs and all candidates who wanted to be MPs were singing from the same songbook. The fact that so many are is perhaps the best report card for what has been accomplished within the Commons in 40 years.

And who knows, perhaps someday all MPs will be able to sing in both official languages. Then the dream of Lester B. Pearson, that simultaneous translation might be an unnecessary service and the necessary "facilities" put in a museum, may become a reality.