

## **French Language Education Enhances Career Opportunities**

Source: Canadian Parents for French - French Second Language Education, A Millennium Challenge

Business and High Technology French language skills improve access to jobs.

Canadian businesses recognize the value of French language education in the global economy. It prepares young Canadians for careers with a future.

David Stewart-Patterson is Senior Vice president of Policy and Communications at the Business Council on National Issues. The BCNI represents the largest companies in the country. He points out Canadian enterprise is going beyond Canada's borders.

As a result, the most exciting career opportunities open to Canadians will probably involve operating internationally. "The more adaptable you are to other languages and cultures, the better off you will be in terms of career prospects," says Mr. Stewart-Patterson.

He goes on to explain that Canadians are able to function effectively as global citizens in large part because of the qualities and skills they gain from learning French as a second language. These include flexibility in thinking, discipline and cultural openness – all traits that come with learning a second language.

In Europe, people learn three or four languages as a matter of course. "Because Canada is a bilingual country, it makes sense to start off with learning French," he says.

### *The advantage of French in the High Tech Field*

Raymond Bourret, Vice-President of The ADGA Group, an Ottawa-based group of systems engineers, agrees that those Canadians who know at least French and English have a key advantage in the industry.

"All the big names in the industry – Nortel, Newbridge, Corel – do business internationally and need people who can communicate in the primary languages of business, one of which is French," says Mr. Bourret.

Mr. Bourret's view is endorsed by Joe Blanchard, the Director of youth employment initiatives at the Information Technology Association of Canada.

He says, "French language ability is definitely an asset for work in the high-tech sector."

Customer service and technical support positions are the front line roles in the industry. Mr. Blanchard says French language skills are very important at this level. French is necessary to respond to requests that come from clients across Canada and also to sell high-tech products to foreign markets.

Robin Wilson, Executive Director of Canadian Parents for French (a volunteer organization), notes that corporate job postings for bilingual candidates have been increasing in number.

He points to the Globe and Mail's new advertising angle, where businesses that take out ads seeking bilingual staff with the standard ad in the Globe can also choose to publish an equivalent ad in Les Affaires, the French-language business publications published weekly in Quebec.

"This is a clear indication that increasingly corporate recruiters are looking for bilingual personnel," Mr. Wilson says.