

# Translators & Interpreters

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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## 1. Working as a Translator or Interpreter

### [NOC 2021: 51114/ NOC 2016: 5125]

#### *Job Description*

**Translators** convert *written material* from one language into another.

As a translator you perform the following duties:

- Translate a variety of written materials
- Maintain the content and style of the original material
- Adapt technical documents to another language and culture
- Research subject matter and terms
- Proofread and edit translated materials
- Meet with clients and supervisors
- May specialize in a particular subject

**Interpreters** translate *spoken words* from one language into another.

As an interpreter you perform the following duties:

- Listen to speakers' words
- Translate statements for audiences
- Simultaneous interpreters translate while someone speaks
- Consecutive interpreters translate during pauses in a speech
- May interpret for individuals and small groups travelling in Canada and abroad
- May specialize in conference, court, medical, or other types of interpretation
- May train other interpreters

## **Industry Overview**

Translators and interpreters usually specialize in two languages, including one of the official languages of Canada (English or French). In British Columbia, you may have an advantage in the job market if you are fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese or Punjabi. There is also a growing demand for interpreters and translators who are fluent in Spanish.

For translators, most demand is for technical materials. Employment prospects are good if you are familiar with the following subjects:

- scientific and technical fields
- law
- biology or pharmacy

Most jobs are in large urban centres such as Metro Vancouver or Victoria.

## **Job Outlook in BC**

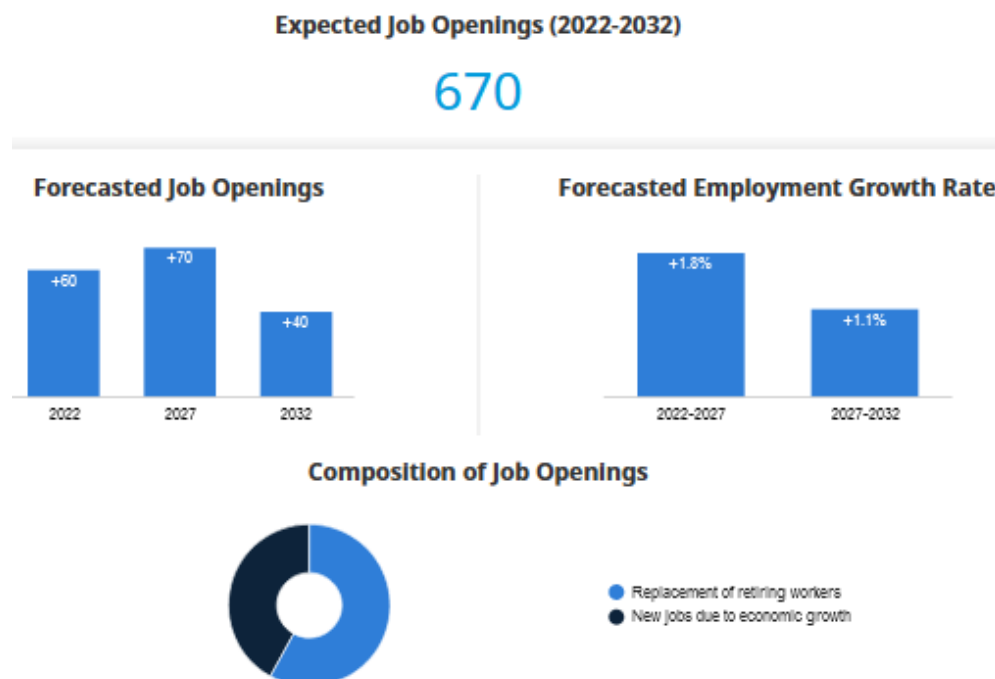


Chart from WorkBC

WorkBC provides job openings in BC regions from 2022-2032:

<b>Region</b>	<b>Employment in 2022</b>	<b>Average Annual Employment Growth</b>	<b>Expected Number of Job Openings</b>
Vancouver Island	220	1.7%	90
Lower Mainland / Southwest	1,390	1.5%	560

You can learn more about working as a translator or interpreter from:

- **WorkBC Career Profile** (Translators, Terminologists & Interpreters)  
<https://www.workbc.ca/plan-career/explore-careers>
- **Career Cruising database** (Profiles for Translator and Interpreter)  
Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library page  
<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

### ***Types of Employers***

**Translators** work for any organization that needs translation of written materials including:

- private translation agencies
- government departments
- multinational corporations
- publishing houses

**Interpreters** work for:

- government
- large corporations
- courts
- conference centres
- the media
- international organizations such as the United Nations

You may work as an independent freelancer, contracting your services to more than one organization.

## Salary

In BC the median annual salary for translators and interpreters is \$56,895. Your income depends on certification, experience, education, and type of employer. Earnings also depend on the languages you speak and the subject matter being discussed.

If you work on a freelance basis you usually earn an hourly or daily rate. Hourly wages can range from about \$18 to \$41, although some can make \$50 or more an hour.

Sources: WorkBC & Career Cruising

In BC regions you can expect to make:

Community/Area	Low (\$/hour)	Median (\$/hour)	High (\$/hour)
<a href="#">British Columbia</a>	18.00	28.58	39.02
<a href="#">Lower Mainland–Southwest Region</a>	19.00	30.12	41.00

Source: Job Bank Wages <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages>

The **federal government** publishes the salary ranges for translators from its most recent collective agreement. *2021 salaries with the federal public service* ranged from \$54,457 to a maximum of \$121,897.

- <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/agreements-conventions/view-visualiser-eng.aspx?id=26>

## Working Hours

**Translators:** If you are employed by large companies or the government you usually work regular 7 to 8 hour days, 5 days a week. In rare circumstances you may be asked to work evenings or weekends to deal with unexpected events. As a freelance translator, you schedule your own work. This can vary depending on the demand for your services.

The hours for salaried **interpreters** are often long and irregular. If you work on a freelance basis and are able to find clients, you can work as much or as little as you want.

## **2. Skills, Education and Experience**

### ***Skills for Translators***

- excellent language skills
- good attention to detail
- ability to concentrate and perform well under pressure
- proven writing skills
- extensive intellectual curiosity
- significant use of memory
- maintain high standard of professional performance
- good computer skills

### ***Skills for Interpreters***

- excellent language skills
- excellent listener
- ability to communicate ideas
- good attention to detail
- maintain high standard of professional performance
- good interpersonal skills
- a good memory
- able to concentrate and think fast

### ***Education and Experience***

Most employers require:

- University degree in translation with a specialization in translation or interpretation in two languages (including at least one of the two official

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languages)

**OR**

- University degree in a related discipline such as languages or linguistics and two years' experience as a full-time translator

**OR**

- Five years of experience as a full-time translator working in two languages, at least one of which is an official language
- Certification from the Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council may be required
- Membership with the Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia may be required

If you work in an international context, fluency in three languages is usually required.

### ***Qualifications***

**This occupation is not regulated in British Columbia.**

There are no mandatory requirements for licensing or professional certification in order to work as a translator or interpreter in BC.

However, you cannot use certain titles, including “Certified Translator” or “Certified Interpreter” unless you have passed a certification examination through the Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia.

Further information about certification is available at:

- ***Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia***  
<https://stibc.org/certification/>

### 3. Finding Jobs

You'll find job advertisements in local newspapers and electronic sources, as well as through professional associations' publications.

#### ***Local Newspapers***

You can look at the *Vancouver Sun* & *The Province* at Vancouver Public Library for free. Check the job postings daily, the careers section in the *Vancouver Sun* on Wednesdays and Saturdays and, in *The Province* on Sundays.

#### ***Online Job Postings***

- **Federal Government of Canada**  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/jobs/opportunities/government.html>  
Enter the keyword "translator" or "interpreter".
- **Translation Bureau – Opportunities**  
[https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/carrieres-careers/bt\\_carriere-career\\_tb-eng.html](https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/carrieres-careers/bt_carriere-career_tb-eng.html)
- **Indeed.com**  
<https://ca.indeed.com>  
Find jobs posted on a multitude of company career sites and job boards
- **MOSAIC Freelance Contractor Opportunities**  
<https://www.mosaicbc-lsp.org/freelancers/>
- **CharityVillage.com**  
<https://charityvillage.com/>  
Job postings within the Canadian non-profit sector

#### ***Professional Associations' Career Resources***

- **Find a Certified Translator at STIBC website**  
<https://stibc.org/find-translator-interpreter/>  
Many translators are self-employed or work on a contract basis. STIBC lists certified translators in this database so that employers can locate professionals for work.



## ***Identifying the Right Position***

When you browse job advertisements, you'll find different job titles.

For translators and interpreters, look for these related job titles:

- Conference Interpreter
- Court Interpreter
- Literary Translator
- Simultaneous Interpreter
- Technical Translator
- Translator, Technical Documents

Source: NOC <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/>

## ***Creating a List of Potential Employers***

You can use directories to produce lists of employers who employ translators in Vancouver or the Lower Mainland. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **Canadian Language Industry Association Membership Directory**

<https://language-industry.ca/en/membership/find-a-member>

- **Reference Canada**

<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/reference-canada>

Click on "Start Search" beside Canadian Businesses, then select the "Advanced Search" button. Select both "Keyword/SIC/NAICS" under Business Type and "City" under Geography. In the top search box enter "translator" and click SEARCH. Select the appropriate headings. Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the "View Results" button.

Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library page

**NOTE:** *You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database. After clicking on the database name, you will be asked to enter your library card number and PIN (usually last four digits of your telephone number).*

## 4. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume or curriculum vitae and a cover letter that identifies the position you are applying for and summarizes your relevant experience.

Use the library catalogue, <https://vpl.bibliocommons.com/> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

To learn about applying for jobs in Canada, use the following guides which are available in print at the Central Library or online at <https://www.vpl.ca/siic/>.

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**  
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/writing-resumes-and-cover-letters>
- **Networking for Employment**  
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/networking-for-employment>
- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**  
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/getting-canadian-work-experience>
- **Learn More About Working in BC and Canada**  
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/learn-more-about-working-in-bc-and-canada>

## 5. Getting Help from Industry Sources

### ***Industry Associations***

Associations for translators and interpreters in BC and Canada can provide you with information and assistance. Registration and fees may be required for membership.

- **Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia**  
<https://stibc.org/>

- **Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council**  
<https://www.cttic.org/>
- **International Association of Conference Interpreters - Canada**  
<https://aiic.ca/>
- **Canadian Language Industry Association**  
<https://ailia.ca/>
- **Literary Translators' Association of Canada**  
<https://www.attlc-ltac.org/>
- **Translation Bureau**  
<https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/bt-tb/index-eng.html>
- **MOSAIC Language & Translation Service**  
<https://www.mosaicbc-lsp.org/>

### ***Industry Journals***

Search for journals related to your industry. Examples include:

- **STIBC Voice Newsletter**  
Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia  
<https://stibc.org/boutique-events-news/the-voice/>
- **MultiLingual**  
<https://multilingual.com/>

***Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Branch,  
Vancouver Public Library or telephone 604-331-3603.***

*Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the  
Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <https://www.vpl.ca/siic/>*