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Mr. Pablo Rodriguez

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• (0835)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.)): We will begin. I would ask you to take your seats please.

[English]

Today's meeting will be divided into two sections. The first section is related to the security regarding President Bush's visit.

[Translation]

In the second half, we will deal with the Action Plan on Official Languages with the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada.

Firstly, I would like to say thank you to our witnesses who are here today. Thank you to the members of the committee who came here a bit earlier this morning, since we are starting approximately half an hour earlier than our usual time.

We have set aside one and a half hours for the first part, which may be a bit long, but we will take the time we need, and following that we will discuss the Action Plan for Official Languages.

[English]

Thank you very much for being here.

[Translation]

We will first hear a brief presentation, and following that we will move to questions.

Mr. Pierre Lange (Deputy Commissioner, Federal Services, RCMP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good day, members of the committee. It gives me great pleasure to be with you today to discuss the use of bilingual personnel during the visit of US President G.W. Bush. I am Deputy Commissioner Pierre Lange, and as such, I am responsible for RCMP Federal Services in the Central Region; I am accompanied by Staff Sergeant Yves Rainville, who is responsible for overseeing a section of the office and staff assigned to the security of Parliament Hill and the region of Ottawa.

Assistant Commissioner Dwight McCallum, Director of Protective Services, who reports to me, is ultimately responsible for the security of Parliament Hill. In fulfilling this responsibility, he is assisted by Line Carbonneau, Officer in charge of Protective Operations, Staff Sergeant François Desfossés, Non-Commissioned Officer in charge of Parliament Hill, and Inspector Louis Lahaie, Officer in charge of Major Events, and therefore in charge during the visit of President Bush.

On Parliament Hill, the provision of security is a function that is shared among three partners having distinct roles. Inside the buildings, security is provided by the House of Commons Security Service and the Senate Protective Service, while the RCMP is tasked with ensuring the security of the grounds and the outside of the buildings.

First, let me assure you that the RCMP is fully committed to providing bilingual services while carrying out its responsibilities on Parliament Hill. Concretely, you may wish to know that 32 bilingual members are permanently assigned to the Parliament Hill detachment, that is to say, 100% of the assigned security staff are bilingual.

In preparation for US President G.W. Bush's visit, a number of additional resources were requested to assist, as the normal contingent of members at the Parliament Hill detachment was insufficient. At the outset, 37 officers were assigned to Parliament Hill. Most of these were regular Parliament Hill detachment members with a few additions from the Supreme Court and the General Duty Protective Policing section. Of these 37 persons, only one member has been identified as being unilingual English.

In planning and organizing any major event, the safety and security of internationally protected persons as well as that of the Canadian population is of the utmost importance to the RCMP. In ensuring the safety and security of all involved, we must balance the charter right to protest and the security measures we implement.

Based on intelligence, threat assessments, the high profile of the visit as well as the number of demonstrators anticipated on Parliament Hill, personnel assigned to this site had to be increased. On the day preceding the arrival of the US President, an additional eight members were requested, five of whom were unilingual English, which brought the number of unilingual English-speaking members on the Hill for this event up to six. On the morning of the event, an additional 25 members from C Division in Quebec were deployed to Parliament Hill.

Therefore, the RCMP's security contingent on Parliament Hill on November 30, comprised 70 members of which six members were unilingual English. I can assure you that these six members were never very far from another member who could have spoken to citizens in the language of their choice if they had made the request.

I would like to emphasize that both supervisors for this event, Inspector François Déléseleuc, Site Commander, and Staff Sergeant François Desfossés are bilingual.

Thank you for your attention; I am now ready to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lange.

[English]

Mr. Parker, any comments to add?

Mr. Neal Parker (Director, Security Services, Parliamentary Precinct Services, House of Commons): Thank you, no, Mr. Chair, I don't have any comments.

• (0840)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Scheer.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): I'll go during the second round.

The Chair: Okay. Monsieur Desrochers.

[Translation]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): That's what you call diving in quickly.

Good morning, Mr. Lange, Mr. Rainville and Mr. Parker. On the day of the President's visit, I noticed that there were a lot of police officers who were speaking only in English. There was a detachment that came from Toronto. How many police officers came from Toronto in order to reinforce the assigned staff during President Bush's visit?

Mr. Pierre Lange: I cannot give you the exact number of police officers from Toronto who were assigned during Mr. Bush's visit. I do not have the figures. Mr. McCallum, who is responsible for security on Parliament Hill, can do so.

I can however say that according to the information I have, of the 70 police officers who came from Toronto, none were assigned to Parliament Hill. Only those from the National Capital Region and from Quebec City were.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: I know that those people are bilingual. Were instructions given according to which any security-related communications on Parliament Hill should be in English, given the fact that American police officers were on site?

Mr. Pierre Lange: No, except with respect to radio communications, if that's what you're talking about. There were no specific instructions. People communicate in the language of their choice.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: To my knowledge, Americans are unilingual English. There must have been a lot of collaboration between the two police forces.

Mr. Pierre Lange: The Americans were not partners of the RCMP when it came to crowd control and security on Parliament Hill. Of course, they were present to ensure coordination and the security of their President. Nonetheless, security on Parliament Hill falls within the exclusive purview of the RCMP.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: If I understand correctly, you are telling me that there was no partnership between the American security agents and RCMP agents with respect to security?

Mr. Pierre Lange: I want to be very clear. The RCMP is solely responsible for security on Parliament Hill, that is to say for crowd control and everything else that falls within our jurisdiction on the ground. We were supported by the municipal Ottawa Police Force, but everything remained under the sole control of the RMCP.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: The Official Languages Act is still in effect. In the case of a visit from a foreign dignitary such as Mr. Bush, were you not tempted to communicate strictly in English in the interest of uniformity, so that communications proceeded smoothly and so that you could speak with the Americans? I have a hard time believing what you're telling me: the Americans did their job and the RCMP did theirs. I don't understand that. There must certainly have been communication between the two.

Mr. Pierre Lange: Communications are categorized according to needs. Crowd security is looked after by a different group than the one assigned to accompany the President. This last group works very closely with the Americans. With respect to security on Parliament Hill, I maintain that given that the RCMP had total control, there was no need to give an order to the effect that communication should be made strictly in English.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: On Parliament Hill, just how far out did the security perimeter extend to?

Mr. Pierre Lange: I would not venture to answer that question because I was not responsible for either the development or approval of the plans. I can tell you that...

Mr. Odina Desrochers: That's where we noticed the short-comings, on both sides.

Mr. Pierre Lange: Outside of Parliament Hill, we obviously do not have a mandate; the area comes under municipal jurisdiction. I can tell you that our jurisdiction extends to the very outer limits of the grounds of Parliament Hill. Outside of these limits, the municipal police force is responsible.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Someone had to be in charge of this police operation. Whether it was the RCMP, or the police officers, someone had to be making decisions. Who drew up the operation plans for that day? Who was doing what? Who saw to it that there were municipal police officers—unilingual police officers, as you've said—close to the security perimeter for which you were responsible? Who coordinated all of that? You know that both official languages must be respected at the House of Commons. You also know that there are unilingual French-speaking parliamentarians. Some of them left the perimeter and when they returned, because of security measures, they were met by police officers who spoke to them strictly in English. Who, at the RCMP or in the House of Commons, developed this police operation plan? Who did not take into consideration the linguistic needs and rights of certain French-speaking parliamentarians?

• (0845)

Mr. Pierre Lange: The person responsible for security planning is Inspector Louis Lahaie, Chief of Major Events. The planning of the event itself, as it was a major event, was his responsibility. For the service itself, the officer responsible for operations that day was Chief Superintendent Line Carboneau. Final approval of the operational plan as a whole fell to Assistant Commissioner Dwight McCallum, who reports directly to me. I can assure you that the need for bilingual services was fully included in the operational plan, with respect to access and security presence on Parliament Hill.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Including the area close to the barricades that sealed off the security perimeter?

Mr. Pierre Lange: Absolutely.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: On the one side, you had anglophone municipal police officers, and on the other side, there were bilingual RCMP officers. Is that correct?

Mr. Pierre Lange: No. I cannot confirm that to you in absolute terms. That question must be put to the Ottawa Police, as to the number of bilingual staff members available. I am also not aware of discussions that would have taken place with the Ottawa Police on the need to provide bilingual personnel. I think you have to ask the Ottawa Police that question.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Did your superior require that bilingual personnel be assigned, since he knew that these people would be working in the vicinity of Parliament Hill?

Mr. Pierre Lange: We would only have had some input with the Ottawa Police had they provided staff members to ensure security on Parliament Hill, but that did not happen. We work in partnership with these people, and this partnership may lead us to work beyond Parliament Hill. In any case, only the RCMP ensures security on Parliament Hill and within the immediate perimeter, for access to Parliament Hill.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Is my time up, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desrochers.

Mr. Godin, you have a question?

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Welcome. This will continue this afternoon in the Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. We are investigating the events which occurred during Mr. Bush's visit. I did not have a chance to listen to what my colleagues had to say.

That certainly poses a problem here, in Ottawa, in the National Capital Region. It is a city which was practically created to serve Canadians. You are here to represent the law and to enforce it. You are in the best position to understand our problem. Today, we are receiving complaints because people could not obtain service in their language during this visit.

I recall, in certain areas, that police officers who wore blue armbands spoke only to those who also wore blue armbands. The same goes for those who wore yellow ones. It's almost as though police officers do not talk amongst themselves, that they do not want to talk to each other, that they don't recognize one another, that they do not want to respect one another. Each one remains in his own police force and tells the other that he must not meddle in their business. They are there to make sure that law, order and justice prevail. In the present case, members believe that there was no justice. However, the law is very clear in Canada; one has the right to express oneself in one's language. However, the way these people were treated is no laughing matter.

I did not hear your opening statements and I do not want to repeat the same things. However, it would be important, when such things occur, that there at least be a dialogue between the police forces. They cannot just tell themselves that they are only responsible for part of the situation and that what happens elsewhere is of no concern to them. There must be coordination between police forces to solve these problems. You won't turn English-speakers into French-speakers, or vice versa. On the other hand, let us take an example. When Parliament resumes, on the four street corners

leading up to Parliament Hill, if there are several police forces present, there's no reason not to have a mix of unilingual and bilingual people. A police officer approached by a person in a language that the police officer does not speak could ask his colleague to intervene. Has this ever occurred? Did you think about it?

• (0850)

Mr. Pierre Lange: Thank you for your question, Mr. Godin. Yes, we thought about it. I do not want to repeat the comments I made earlier, but we are very proud of the planning that took place. We are also proud of the coordination and cooperation between the police forces who helped us, in particular the Ottawa Police Services, during the planning stages, to ensure security on Parliament Hill.

Firstly, all of our staff members are bilingual. We had to bring in more people to meet our obligations, particularly during Mr. Bush's visit. There were 70 police officers on site. There were six unilingual English police officers, and services in both official languages were ensured at all times, in that we were able to answer our clients in their preferred language.

The RCMP was present within the immediate perimeter of Parliament Hill. Once outside this perimeter, the Ottawa Police had jurisdiction, and it was responsible for ensuring people's safety. I cannot answer on behalf of the Ottawa Police on...

Mr. Yvon Godin: I am sorry, but you are not answering my question. I asked you whether you thought about holding meetings before Mr. Bush's visit, given that things would be going on. Did you think about the fact that there were two other police forces involved, that people were going to want to get to the Parliament buildings, and that you would have to talk to them? In Canada there is the Official Languages Act. Were there any discussions on this subject? Did you think about the two official languages?

Mr. Pierre Lange: Yes, that is part and parcel of our security planning. There are permanent plans and plans which change according to the specific needs of a given day. The issue of bilingualism is always considered during planning.

We held meetings with the Ottawa Police Service. I was not present at these meetings, but I can confirm that there was a coordination process. With respect to immediate access to the perimeter of Parliament Hill, the services were provided by bilingual officers.

The Chair: You have one minute remaining, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You were not there, but you can assure me that bilingual services were planned.

Mr. Pierre Lange: Absolutely.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Who requested additional police forces? Was it the City of Ottawa or the RCMP? Who was responsible for the security of Mr. Bush? Was it the City of Ottawa or the RCMP? Were you responsible for coordinating the movements of all police forces, or were you strictly responsible for Parliament?

Mr. Pierre Lange: The duty to ensure the security of a head of state is the responsibility of the RCMP. The entire operation is done in partnership, because during such a visit, as you can understand, it is not just a matter of ensuring the protection of a high profile person, but also of ensuring the security of Canadian citizens and the free movement of parliamentarians, as well ensuring security on Parliament Hill.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It didn't work well. The rules changed once one set foot 10 feet beyond the line.

• (0855)

Mr. Pierre Lange: I cannot speak specifically about security during the day as such, because I was not responsible for operations. However, I can say that we are responsible for planning what goes on on Parliament Hill. The planning of all aspects that fell under the jurisdiction of the Ottawa police was carried out in partnership with the latter. Indeed, it was the responsibility of the Ottawa police to ensure security beyond Parliament Hill.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Simard, you have the floor.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, gentlemen. My first intervention is more of a comment. We, the members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, are responsible for ensuring that all government agencies comply with their obligations with respect to official languages. Many of our challenges, oftentimes, come from the regions. However, when these problems occur on Parliament Hill, that poses a real problem for us, because this is the centre of government. When there are problems so close to the centre, that is very troublesome to us.

What is the percentage of bilingual RCMP officers? Is bilingualism a criterion when the RCMP hires new staff? Do you know?

Mr. Pierre Lange: Are you talking about the entire organization of the RCMP?

Hon. Raymond Simard: Correct.

Mr. Pierre Lange: I believe that the rate of bilingualism is more than 20%. However, I cannot give you an exact figure.

Hon. Raymond Simard: I presume that many of your bilingual RCMP officers are located in Quebec, on the other side of the Ottawa River?

Mr. Pierre Lange: The vast majority of our bilingual staff members are located mainly in the three central provinces, Quebec, Ontario, and especially in the National Capital Region, as well as New Brunswick.

Hon. Raymond Simard: I presume that you were able to call on bilingual police officers in the region.

Mr. Pierre Lange: Absolutely. More than 75 per cent of RCMP members working in the National Capital Region are bilingual.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Let's talk about security on Parliament Hill. It is often said that Senate security is different from House of Commons security. Can you explain the structure to us? Is the RCMP responsible for all of this?

Mr. Pierre Lange: To my knowledge, within the buildings, security is shared between the Security Services of the House of Commons and the Security Services of the Senate.

We are responsible for security outside the buildings and on the grounds. If you would like more detail, you can direct your questions to Mr. Parker. He is the director of Security Services of the Parliamentary Precinct. In addition, as he is a former member of the RCMP, he is very much aware of the situation and can clarify certain points, if necessary.

Nonetheless, I can assure you that security around Parliament is the responsibility of the RCMP.

Hon. Raymond Simard: In my opinion, you are here because certain members of Parliament were told—and I can refer you to my colleague—that their language could not be understood and that, as a consequence, they were being denied access to Parliament. In my opinion, to be told this by a member of our police force is the ultimate insult, for a parliamentarian.

Those were the comments I wanted to make.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I will take a few minutes of your time to quickly ask one or two brief questions.

My first question is not directly related to official languages. Are parliamentarians not entitled to enter the House of Commons at all times?

Mr. Pierre Lange: Absolutely. It is a fundamental right.

The RCMP is fully aware that once a person is adequately identified on site, they have that right.

The Chair: Very well, but we had to take all of these detours. We were stopped at the barricades, like everyone else.

• (0900)

Mr. Pierre Lange: Access was granted everywhere on Parliament Hill. We would have to look at a specific situation in detail.

If a crowd of demonstrators was blocking access to a certain place, such as Wellington Street, we did not have the necessary resources to force entry, except in the case of an emergency or to ensure the security of the VIPs' motorcade.

The Chair: I presume that American security was ensured by FBI agents.

Mr. Pierre Lange: No, there was no presence...

The Chair: Who was it?

Mr. Pierre Lange: Officers assigned to ensure Mr. Bush's personal safety were present. Security was not ensured by the FBI, but by the secret service.

The Chair: If I understand correctly, these people were armed.

Mr. Pierre Lange: I do not have this information.

The Chair: They were, according to what I gathered from committee reports.

I just want to know if these people were always surrounded by bilingual people, meaning RCMP officers or anyone else.

Mr. Pierre Lange: Absolutely. The single role of the Americans was to insure immediate and personal protection...

The Chair: At close range...

Mr. Pierre Lange: ... of Mr. Bush. But the overall security provided, for example motorcade vehicle escort, crowd control and all the rest of it, was the RCMP's sole responsibility. And it was indeed provided by bilingual staff members.

The Chair: Of course, in the past, there have been many other visits by heads of state.

Was there a difference between this visit and other ones? Have you been in this position long enough to know whether there has been an evolution and an improvement in terms of bilingualism?

Mr. Pierre Lange: There certainly has been an evolution. I have 34 years' experience in the RCMP and my first duties as a policeman in Ottawa related to security. So I can definitely assure you that there has been an improvement over the past 34 years. This improvement took place mainly during the past 15 years, that is since a number of studies were carried out. Efforts are made to ensure the linguistic balance of security at all levels, whether it be for escorts, crowd control, etc.

[*English*]

The Chair: Merci.

Mr. Scheer.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: I don't want to get bogged down in this question too much, because I know this is about bilingual service, but there's a barrier in between West Block and Centre Block, and I was prevented, as were several other members walking behind me, from crossing over there to get into Centre Block. We had to get directed through West Block.

You were saying before that when the RCMP had identified that someone was a member, they were then allowed into the buildings, but clearly, here we were, all being herded away. Was that part of the original plan, or was that just something that fell through the cracks?

Mr. Pierre Lange: We're talking about the exterior of the building?

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Yes.

Mr. Pierre Lange: I don't have these details with me, I'm sorry. Again, Mr. McCallum is the person responsible for the delivery of service, but probably more precisely, Chief Superintendent Line Carbonneau was responsible for delivering the security. I'm really not familiar with the precise nature of any barricade on the Hill itself.

Mr. Parker, who's present here, might know a bit more through his coordination, but I certainly cannot answer that question. I could undertake to find out, if required. I do know that Mr. McCallum is going to testify at the process committee. That's the committee that will address the specific operational aspects of the security. He would be the best one to answer that question.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Okay.

Basically, if I heard you correctly, on that day you had 70 members, of whom only six were unilingual, in your department.

Mr. Pierre Lange: That's correct.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: How much time in advance did you have to plan the event and to plan the strategy?

Mr. Pierre Lange: We had not much more time than from the time the public became aware of the visit, which means a few weeks. I don't know the exact number of days, but it was a few weeks.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: I really can't speak to any personal incidents, because I had only the one incident. I'll defer the rest of my time to other members who may have encountered other problems. I wasn't really aware of any, or didn't encounter any. I'll pass.

The Chair: Mr. Poilievre, there are three minutes left.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): I'd like to thank our witnesses. For us bilingualism is a principle that brooks no compromise. We strongly support it. Is there something this committee could do to help you do a better job of providing services in both official languages?

● (0905)

Mr. Pierre Lange: As I mentioned previously, because of the development that occurred over the past years, I can assure you that the level of service we provide is far above the requirements and the spirit of the Official Languages Act. We make a point of seeing to it that the service respects and even exceeds bilingualism standards. This is definitely the case here.

Although we did not have much time for planning, we do nonetheless have some time to think about this kind of visit, since they occur frequently in Ottawa. In other words, the plans are already in place. It's just a matter of fine-tuning. To answer your question, I can assure you that we exceed the standards. I cannot think of any possible additional effort.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Francophone members of Parliament have mentioned certain incidents where they were not able to obtain service in French. You tell us that this was not possible since almost all your officers were bilingual.

If certain members were unable to receive service in their language, I think that is awful. If that did indeed happen, if francophone members did not receive service in French, would you agree that this is a serious problem?

Mr. Pierre Lange: Absolutely. As far as the services provided by the RCMP within its jurisdiction, it is not acceptable for a member not to have access to bilingual service. Unilingual anglophone members of Parliament must have reasonable and acceptable access to a bilingual staff person. To answer your question, it would be absolutely unacceptable if one of our MPs did not have access to this type of bilingual service.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Would you be willing to speak directly to each member who had an experience where he was unable to receive service in French? Would it be possible for these members to meet you and tell you about their experiences?

Mr. Pierre Lange: Absolutely. I can assure you that any incident would be investigated so we can get to the bottom of it.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: I see; thank you. Once the investigation of all these incidents is over, would it be possible to provide the committee with a report so that we can be informed about the results?

Mr. Pierre Lange: Absolutely. I will inform you about the result of each complaint that is investigated following these meetings.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Thank you.

Let me conclude by repeating that the principle of bilingualism is essential. On this, there can be no compromise. We are ready to help you provide service in English and French.

The Chair: Before turning the floor over to Mr. D'Amours, I'd like to ask you a question that may seem somewhat bizarre. Is there a reason why you are not speaking much or giving much information, for example because there are two of you present?

Mr. Pierre Lange: Mr. Parker is responsible for the situation inside Parliament. I was not the one who asked him to be here this morning. He was asked to replace Mr. Cloutier, the Sergeant-at-Arms within Parliament.

• (0910)

The Chair: I simply wanted to find out whether each of you was limiting his answers because of the presence of the other one.

Mr. Pierre Lange: No. In view of the fact that planning outside the building is the sole responsibility of the RCMP, there is no division of duties in this respect.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. D'Amours, go ahead.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, although we may notice the occasional oversight, we do receive good service from the RCMP. As you know, I am a new member of Parliament but in discussing this matter with my colleagues who have been here for several years, I realize that we have no fault to find with the service provided by the RCMP on the Hill. Personally, I'd like to congratulate you.

Things work even better once people recognize the person and know which language he speaks. At the beginning, it is not something that is obvious. Some of our colleagues have French family names but are English-speaking. The opposite is also true. I have been pleasantly surprised at how well things have worked out.

However, you did mention something that I found surprising. The RCMP is a Canada-wide police service. I realize that in some provinces, for example in New Brunswick, the members of the RCMP provide provincial police service. However, the 20% bilingualism figure surprised me. I would have expected a level of bilingualism of at least 50%. I'd be interested in hearing your comments on this. I realize that this question has no bearing on the immediate situation on Parliament Hill but it will probably come up as an issue in the future. Have you set any objectives in an attempt to improve this percentage?

Mr. Pierre Lange: You must understand how the RCMP provides its services. More than two thirds of the police force works on contract, that is, the service provided to the people of Canada is the subject of a contract with different authorities, including the province

of New Brunswick. Each of the provinces of Canada, except for Quebec and Ontario, enter into a contract with the RCMP for their services. In Quebec and in Ontario, there are provincial police forces, the Sûreté du Québec in Quebec and the OPP in Ontario. But elsewhere in Canada, it is the RCMP, in all the counties of the provinces and territories.

In addition to these provincial contracts, there are also municipal ones. The most important municipal contracts are in British Columbia in places like Surrey and Burnaby. They have very important detachments because they have a very large population. In several of these towns, the requirement for bilingual service is very minimal. I don't mean that there aren't any bilingual members of the RCMP. There are in fact several bilingual members in each of these large detachments, in the big municipalities and the provinces.

The police force, with approximately 22,000 employees, does not necessarily work in a bilingual environment. In order to respect the spirit of the law, we must assess the potential number of bilingual persons that our staff will be responding to.

For example, in New Brunswick, in certain detachments, even though the population is mostly English-speaking, there is still a certain requirement for bilingual services. Furthermore, New Brunswick is an officially bilingual province and the needs are therefore greater. Almost all of the staff in Quebec is bilingual. There is also a fairly large number of bilingual staff members in Ontario as well as New Brunswick. But for Canada as a whole, the percentage is smaller.

I wouldn't venture to provide a figure as to the desirable percentage of bilingual staff for the RCMP. I would have to consult the person responsible for human resources to find out what the precise objective is. I don't have this information.

• (0915)

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Mr. Chairman, the purpose of our meeting here this morning is to hear the RCMP talk about the visit of President Bush. As far as I know, we are not here to consider what the bilingual police forces are in Canada as a whole. I'd like us to return to our subject, that is the work of the RCMP during the visit of President Bush here on Parliament Hill. Thank you.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Chairman, the reason for my intervention is simple. If certain people identify problems on Parliament Hill, it may be because there is a lack of bilingual staff. That is the present situation. If there are shortcomings, then we'll have to look towards the future and consider appropriate action. It's important for us to find out what the situation is to make improvements for the future.

That was the point I wanted to make.

The Chair: It has been duly noted.

We'll continue with Mr. André.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Good afternoon, Mr. Lange, Mr. Rainville and Mr. Parker.

Let me recapitulate. You were saying that 20 per cent of the members of the RCMP in Canada are bilingual. During the visit of George Bush, there were six unilingual anglophone RCMP officers.

I'll be direct. Did you receive any complaints about this?

Mr. Pierre Lange: I don't know if they are official complaints. I was not made aware of any specific official complaints relating to bilingual service.

Mr. Guy André: So there weren't any official complaints. You were informed of the fact that certain members and officials did not receive service in French on Parliament Hill during the visit of George Bush.

Mr. Pierre Lange: In fact, I did not receive any information to this effect. The reason why I am here is that I was told that certain people were approached in English only. I have no information to the effect that service was not available in both official languages.

Mr. Guy André: Certain officials and members of Parliament told us that they did not receive service in French during George Bush's visit. How do you explain that?

On the one hand, you tell us that there were 70 RCMP members on Parliament Hill, only two of whom were unilingual anglophones. On the other hand, we have received comments to the effect that services were provided by the RCMP in English only on that particular day. Several francophones noted that they were not receiving service in French. Those are two different points of view. How do you explain the situation?

Mr. Pierre Lange: As I was saying, since we did not receive any specific complaints allowing us to undertake a precise investigation, it is hard to answer that question. As for security on Parliament Hill, we can assure you that at all times bilingual service was offered. Of course, in the City of Ottawa, there were all sorts of events taking place. Even close to Parliament Hill, there was a lot of commotion and a lot of demonstrators. A whole set of events could have taken place outside the jurisdiction of the RCMP. I can only answer you about the RCMP staff that was present on Parliament Hill and within the immediate perimeter. The service offered was in both official languages.

• (0920)

Mr. Guy André: So you did conduct an investigation on the services offered during that day in order to be able to make that statement.

Mr. Pierre Lange: Yes, indeed. I made the appropriate checks with staff responsible for the delivery of service so I could answer your questions.

Mr. Guy André: I see. That is fine with me.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. André.

Ms. Boivin, go ahead.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): Good morning and welcome. I'm sorry I was late. It was the event known as the Grande Guignolée des médias, so I was standing at a street corner from 6 o'clock this morning until just past 8 o'clock.

That being said, you said that you prepared for the visit of President Bush and that bilingualism was a factor that came into consideration among the different police forces. Does that mean that when it came to deploying staff, you did make an attempt to ensure that there was always at least one person able to provide service in both languages at every location?

Mr. Pierre Lange: Absolutely, Ms. Boivin. There were sufficient staff members to provide bilingual service at all points of entrance. That was part of our planning.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I'm not really asking whether the staff was sufficient but whether orders were given so that there were a certain number of bilingual police officers at the entrance of the West Block, for example. I'm trying to understand how it was planned. I'm trying to understand the transition between making bilingual service available and the way it took concrete form.

You still had six unilingual anglophones. Were things organized in such a way that these unilingual persons were always accompanied by bilinguals? I'm trying to figure out how things actually happened.

Mr. Pierre Lange: In actual fact, we do have supervisors on the spot who ensure that service is provided in both languages. There is the distribution of the overall staff. I cannot give you a specific example of directives that were issued to ensure that we would respond to the demand. I can only tell you that when the event was planned for, we ensured that all the locations would be covered by bilingual service, both for supervision as well as the immediate response to intervenors.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Normally, this should make its way all along the chain of command to those in the field?

Mr. Pierre Lange: Absolutely.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I can understand that you did not have a lot of time to get ready but still there was the visit of President Fox not so long ago. I imagine the concept is the same. You must ensure that members of security are bilingual. So you were prepared. I imagine that the time should not be a factor for us.

Mr. Pierre Lange: That is correct. As I mentioned, major events on Parliament Hill and in Ottawa are frequent. That means that we have almost permanent plans that must simply be adapted to the specific requirements. There is continuous planning that benefits from past experience.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Was this particular visit different from that made by President Fox several weeks earlier? In view of the person of George Bush himself?

Mr. Pierre Lange: For every visit, there is a specific threat evaluation. Of course, the threat evaluation justified the presence of higher security for President Bush.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Would it be possible for us to inform our witnesses about the complaints from members that we are talking about? I have the impression that they are not exactly familiar with the contents of these complaints. It's a bit like blind man's bluff here, we are asking questions without the witnesses really having an idea of the complaints that were made.

Mr. Pierre Lange: The complaints were not made to us but to the RCMP. Were there official complaints from you?

The Chair: Mr. Desrochers, you may respond quickly.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: There weren't any official complaints. It isn't my turn to speak but if you are here this morning, it's because you know that certain things took place in English only during the demonstration.

• (0925)

Mr. Pierre Lange: Just a second, Mr. Desrochers, we'll first of all conclude our exchange with Ms. Boivin. I simply wanted to tell you that we are not the ones who received the complaints, but the RCMP.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: The witness says that they did not receive any complaint. The question that I would like to put to the chair of the committee is the following: Would it not be appropriate for us to transmit to them information about the complaints that are the subject of this question of privilege raised in the House of Commons by my colleague Mr. Guimond? They would then be able to investigate as they mentioned in our answer to Mr. Poilievre and come back to us with a precise answer relating to the content.

If someone came in and said: Hi, how are you and then there was a complaint because this remark was made in English only, then I might not be quite as sympathetic to the complaint. If the response had been in French, then it's quite possible that the other person would also have spoken French. I would really like to know about the contents of these complaints. I think that we're going about this backwards. We are asking questions of the witnesses about matters of which they have not even been informed.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Just a second.

The Chair: Mr. Desrochers, wait a minute. It's a good point. On the other hand, it's not up to the committee to go and see each party. I would ask the representatives of each party to find out from their colleagues whether they wish to make an official complaint. In fact, the committee has no such mandate.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: What is our mandate?

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Our mandate, Mr. Chairman, I think...

The Chair: I'd like to know whether you have finished.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I simply would like to understand the mandate. I know that in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, where we are reviewing the entire visit with respect to security and parliamentarians' access to Parliament Hill, we made a point of hearing the complainants at the beginning. We heard Mr. Guimond and company. I'd like to know what the complaint is.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Let me answer on that point. After the events that occurred on Parliament Hill, my colleague and I asked the RCMP and the House of Commons to appear to find out whether the status of official languages had been respected. I think that the subject itself justifies the presence here of Mr. Rainville, Mr. Lange and Mr. Parker.

No official complaint was made. However, we did hear this morning that there was unilingual English-speaking staff. That corroborates some of the remarks that we heard from our colleagues. It is one of the facts noted by the RCMP.

I know that we cannot go any further because we are not here to conduct an investigation. Nonetheless we can understand, based on the documents of the RCMP, that it is quite possible that services were not provided in both official languages. We have found out that there were six unilingual anglophone members close to the barriers preventing access to Parliament Hill.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Chairman, I can't say that I agree. I don't know whether the persons who complained about this service happened to come into contact with the six unilingual anglophones.

It may be that they were dealing with a bilingual person who spoke to them in English because he thought they were English. Then they may have complained because they were addressed in English. I have no way of knowing. I don't want to accuse the RCMP, even though I do want to make sure that bilingualism is respected and that there is service in both languages.

It seems to me that starting with your premise, Mr. Desrochers, you very quickly jump to a conclusion. We do not know whether those who are complaining happened to come across one of these six unilingual persons.

I don't know. I don't want to accuse anyone.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: I don't want to start a legal debate.

The Chair: Let me conclude on this point. I think it is an important one. I invite each of the parties to find out whether there are any official complaints submitted to the RCMP. If not, you can collect the information and bring it to the attention of the committee. I still think that their presence here is relevant because the event has just taken place. Bear in mind that we wanted to meet them as quickly as possible so that there would not be too much time elapsing between the President's visit and our meeting with the representatives of the RCMP.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Would the complaints be made to the RCMP or rather to the Commissioner of Official Languages, when it comes to the failure to respect the two official languages on Parliament Hill?

The Chair: It is up to the complainant to decide to whom he wishes to make his complaint. He may go to see the Commissioner of Official Languages but it is not up to us to say how he should do so nor even whether a complaint should be made. It is quite possible that persons may have been offended but eventually decided that they would not make any complaint. It depends on the individual.

Thank you, Ms. Boivin.

[English]

Should we go for a last quick round? Is there anything more?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: That's it.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Desrochers, briefly.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Ms. Boivin knows my background, with her experience at the microphone. I sometimes tend to ask questions like a journalist rather than a parliamentarian. But when something isn't clear, I ask questions.

Mr. Lange, you say on page 3:

Based on intelligence, threat assessments and the high profile of this visit as well as the number of demonstrators anticipated to attend Parliament Hill, resources assigned to this site had to be increased. On the day preceding the event, an additional eight (8) members were requested...

You tell us that you already had a plan dealing with risks and dangers. How is it that on the day before the arrival of Mr. Bush you decided that you would take on an additional eight members, five or whom were unilingual, when you know very well that in the vicinity of Parliament Hill, bilingual service must be provided. Explain that to me.

• (0930)

Mr. Pierre Lange: This is how the planning is done. There are permanent plans, depending on the level of security. Once the security level is established, the persons are deployed. Initially, we required a total of 37 persons to ensure security. However, as time passes and the event gets closer, we carry out a threat assessment and our plans are adapted to the results. That may change from day-to-day and hour-to-hour. That is what happened. As we received the assessments, we decided to add additional staff.

In the present case, it was redeployment. We did not go very far to find these people. They were on other sites and in most cases, they were people who came from Quebec and who were practically bilingual. We ended up with 70 persons, six of whom were unilingual, but still with a capacity to provide 100 per cent bilingual service.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Mr. Parker, were the RCMP officers inside Parliament during the visit of President Bush?

M. Neal Parker: Yes.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: How many RCMP officers were inside?

Mr. Neal Parker: Inside the buildings there were liaison officers for personal security as well as a tactical group ready to intervene. I don't have the exact figure.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Were all these people bilingual?

Mr. Neal Parker: As far as I know, yes.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Thank you. That ends my questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desrochers.

Mr. Godbout.

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): I just have a short question, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, welcome to the committee. I agree with my colleague Jean-Claude that we are very well treated, normally, on the Hill. We have always been served in both official languages.

Let's talk about the visit of President Bush. When you carried out your planning, you involved the Ottawa police, if I am not mistaken, outside the perimeter.

Mr. Pierre Lange: Only outside the perimeter.

Mr. Marc Godbout: When you are discussing this matter with your colleagues from the Ottawa police as part of your planning, do you tell them that it would be important, even outside the perimeter, to have bilingual officers?

Mr. Pierre Lange: It is not up to the RCMP to ensure the bilingualism of members of a municipal police force.

Mr. Marc Godbout: Since you are responsible for the overall planning, it might be useful to point out to the City of Ottawa the importance of having bilingual officers. It is quite likely that they will be dealing with people who are anglophones and francophones.

Therefore, I would like to suggest that for your next planning exercise, you examine the possibility of assigning bilingual officers around Parliament Hill; this is something that can be done amicably. I will make a point of conveying the same message to the mayor of the city. But I think that if it did come from you, this message would underline even more the need to provide better official language services.

• (0935)

Mr. Pierre Lange: I don't think that having informal discussions on the matter would cause any problem whatever.

The Chair: Honour to whom honour is due: Mr. Godin, you had a last point to raise?

Mr. Yvon Godin: No, that's fine.

The Chair: Very well.

Mr. Guy André: May I say a few words in conclusion?

The Chair: You have less than 30 seconds.

Mr. Guy André: Our request has been satisfied, since we were the ones who submitted this motion.

I agree, as you mentioned earlier, that there has been improvement over the past 20 to 30 years with respect to service in both official languages on Parliament Hill during official visits. Still, I think that work needs to be done, as evidenced by the comments we heard. So I would encourage you to study the situation closely and for the next event of this type, to attempt to provide service in both official languages.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Parker, anything to add? No?

[Translation]

Mr. Rainville, you've been very silent today. You have nothing to add?

Thank you, Mr. Lange, Parker and Rainville for taking the time to answer our questions. Have a good day.

We'll now adjourn for a few minutes until our next witness.

• _____ (Pause) _____

•

• (0945)

The Chair: We shall now resume our meeting.

[English]

So now we're at the second item on the agenda, which is related to the action plan for official languages.

[Translation]

Our witness today is Ms. Michelle Chartrand, president of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada. It is a very long title.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand (President, Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada): I couldn't agree more.

The Chair: This is a responsibility that previously came under the Treasury Board, particularly with respect to staffing and bilingualism.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Our responsibility is official languages, employment equity, classification, the implementation of the new Public Service Modernization Act and the leadership network, that is the function of the centre to classify, staff and recruit our managers.

The Chair: Of course, your presence here is of interest to a number of our committee members, if not all of them, since the subject has been dealt with in the past. We did not receive all the answers we wished and that is why we invited you.

Thank you very much for coming, Ms. Chartrand. Welcome, Ms. Monnet. We will now hear what you have to say. We have an hour for our meeting today. You will be making a brief presentation and then we will begin our questioning.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: My colleague and I are very pleased to be here today. As you mentioned earlier, Diana Monnet is the vice-president of the Official Languages Program.

Let me begin by giving you a brief history of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada. The agency was created on December 12, 2003, to improve human resources management. I already listed the functions that were transferred from Treasury Board to the agency. Its creation resulted in the transfer of all Treasury Board Secretariat official languages responsibilities to the agency.

The responsibilities of the Official Languages Branch cover nearly 200 institutions, including departments, agencies and crown corporations. I will start by discussing the agency's official languages responsibilities. I will then talk about the Action Plan for Official Languages and related activities.

[English]

The agency's primary responsibility in the area of official languages is to develop and coordinate the principles and the policies related to part IV, part V, and part VI of the Official Languages Act.

First of all, it is charged with ensuring that federal institutions offer their services to Canadians in both official languages where required; that institutions create and maintain a work environment conducive to the use of the two official languages; and finally, that institutions provide equal opportunity for the two linguistic groups, the francophone and the anglophone.

In March 2004 the government announced the action plan as a means of reinforcing Canada's linguistic duality. The action plan provides for investment in the three areas of education, community development, and the public service. Our focus is on the public service and what we have done since the announcement of this new plan.

• (0950)

[Translation]

It is important to point out at the outset that the public service is engaged in a very comprehensive modernization and reform program, including in the area of official languages. Through the

action plan, the government has invested \$64.6 million in new funding, over five years, to create an exemplary public service in terms of official languages. This investment is directed toward three initiatives: \$14 million to invest in innovation, 38.6 million to rebuild the bilingual capacity of the public service, and 12 million to strengthen the Centre of Excellence, in other words the Agency's Official Languages Branch.

As far as investing in innovation is concerned, it should be noted that the agency manages the Innovation Program. This five-year program supports innovative projects aimed at promoting official languages, whether for service to the public, language of work, or representativeness of the two linguistic groups. The Innovation Program has generated considerable interest. Projects come from different federal departments and agencies and federal regional councils across the country. There is a specific focus on western Canada and the Atlantic region. We'll get back to that later on.

The second component is rebuilding the bilingual capacity of the public service. To that end, \$38 million has been divided up. Thirty-six million dollars has been allocated to language training services and \$2 million to the recruitment of bilingual candidates. These funds are allocated over a five-year period to the Canada School of Public Service and the Public Service Commission in line with their respective responsibilities for language training and recruitment.

As I mentioned earlier, the Official Languages Branch saw its role within the agency strengthened as a Centre of Excellence, and was given \$12 million in funding over five years. That funding, which has begun to materialize, has enabled us to modernize our official language policies, which came into effect on April 1st, 2004. We emphasized the importance of imperative staffing to ensure that more public servants are bilingual at the time of their appointment to bilingual positions. From now on, imperative staffing will be the norm in the public service and over time it will become mandatory for executives in designated bilingual regions. Imperative staffing has already been mandatory for assistant deputy ministers at the EX-4 and EX-5 levels since 1998. The target date for EX-3 positions is 2005; and 2007 for EX-2 positions.

[English]

A very important aspect of our new policy affects language training. We have put the accent on proactive language training to be offered earlier on in the careers of our employees and integrated into their training plans. Language retention must also be part of the career development of our employees.

Although the agency is responsible for setting the policy, each institution is responsible for implementing those policies and achieving results. The agency is also responsible for evaluating performance and reporting to Parliament.

[Translation]

On December 3rd, the Honourable Reg Alcock, President of the Treasury Board, as minister responsible for the agency, tabled the annual report on official languages for 2003-2004 in Parliament—which you have before you. As part of the new initiatives, being implemented we now have a new accountability mechanism. The mechanism includes three functions: monitoring, auditing, and information management to support the other two functions.

The agency closely monitors the overall situation and aims to better measure the linguistic performance of institutions. That is why it has rebuilt its monitoring and auditing system. There is an increased emphasis on results and annual reviews. The analyses and follow-ups are stricter. From now on, reviews will clearly target the areas where improvement is needed. We are also working on developing quantifiable performance measures: in terms of language of work, we are continuing to monitor the situation of executives who do not meet the language requirements of their position.

● (0955)

[English]

With regard to service to the public, we audited seven airports that have significant demand. An audit of telephone services was also conducted to identify the extent to which all offices and points of service provide services in the minority language.

[Translation]

The branch is also developing a scoreboard that will include information from a variety of sources. This new approach will make it possible to provide a clear and accurate picture of an institution's linguistic performance. As a result, our annual report will be more conclusive and will reflect sound governance.

As you can see, the agency is working on several fronts to bring about lasting change in the culture of the public service.

Thank you for your attention.

[English]

Madam Monnet and I are ready to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Chartrand.

We'll start with Mr. Poilievre.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Thank you, Ms. Chartrand for being with us.

[English]

You said here that you're going to increase the number of posts that are bilingual imperative. In particular, I think you said here you want to make it mandatory for executives in designated bilingual regions by a target date of 2005. The Minister of Official Languages said recently in an interview on CBC that he believed that in some cases—in many cases actually—the public service should be allowed to recruit to deputy minister positions people who are not bilingual at all and perhaps have no facility in a second language.

I wonder how you square your remarks today that we should make bilingualism mandatory for all executive positions by 2005, when

you have a Minister of Official Languages who clearly doesn't share your point of view.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: I would like to clarify two points. The goal of using more imperative staffing is not to increase the number of bilingual positions in the public service. We have 165 positions in the public service, and only 39 of those jobs are bilingual. Of this 39, only 80% are staffed on an imperative basis. What I'm trying to say is the goal is not to increase the number from 39; it's to increase the use of imperative staffing.

To come back to your question about the statement of the minister and the requirement for our *cadre* to be bilingual, I have said that it's already mandatory for EX-04 and EX-05 to be bilingual. For EX-03, it will become so very soon, in 2005, and for EX-02, it's 2007.

But a position that is open to the public doesn't have to be staffed on an imperative basis. This gives somebody who was not exposed to the second language two years to learn the second language. So there are exceptions.

There are also other exceptions. The EX-01—you may have noticed that I never referred to the EX-01 because it's not mandatory to staff it on an imperative basis. Why? Because it's the entry level to the EX category, and it's to give a fair opportunity to anglophones and francophones who are in the feeder group.

Right now, to be frank with you, there are not enough bilingual people in the feeder group. The people in the EX-02, EX-03, EX-04, and EX-05 positions have been in the public service for a long time. They've had the opportunity to learn the second languages, except if they are coming from outside.

● (1000)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: I heard that you also believe it's important to increase the number of positions that require bilingualism at the time the job is taken. Is that correct?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Sorry, I missed your question. I didn't hear it.

[Translation]

Mr. Odina Desrochers: These are antiquated earpieces. We asked for them to be replaced, but they don't want to do that. They're happy with them. In the Senate, they have very sophisticated small earpieces. But we aren't senators, what can you do?

The Chair: Mr. Poilievre.

[English]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: I represent a constituency right here in the city of Ottawa with a large number of public servants. A large number of those public servants—who are very open-minded, extremely tolerant, and very supportive of Canada's goal of providing English and French services where the numbers warrant—are telling me they're having tremendous difficulty gaining opportunities based on merit because the linguistic requirements are not practical.

We heard a story from Mr. Godin a number of days ago about unilingual francophones who experienced the same trouble. Then we heard statistics that only 5%, 7%, or something in that neighbourhood, of unilingual public servants are francophone. I guess what I'm striking at here is that the vast majority of Canadians are not bilingual. They're either unilingual anglophones or unilingual francophones. I believe that both unilingual francophones and unilingual anglophones should have opportunities to contribute to the public service.

I wonder if you can reassure them that their opportunities will still be there, and that hiring in the public service will be based on merit alone, and not just language testing.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Your question is a very important one. First, I want to reiterate that the goal of this policy is not to increase the number of bilingual positions. That's very important, because it makes a big difference.

If we look at the number of appointments that are made, on average every year in the public service there are 66,000 appointments. These appointments involve imperative staffing only in 24% of the cases. So we still have 61% of our jobs that are unilingual: 50% English are unilingual, 5% French, and 6% either/or. So it's not a policy that is applied everywhere from B.C. to Newfoundland without any nuances. The mandatory aspect is only for EX and not for EX-01, as I explained earlier.

There is one thing I would like to underline about opportunity for promotion—because that's your point. I think it has to be clear that if somebody wants to become a *cadre* in the public service, it will be a requirement one day to learn the second language. But we have to make sure we offer and give access to language training early in the career, and maintain the second language. We need to consider the second language to be a competency, such as having a diploma in accounting—something you have to learn early in your career, not something you try to catch up on at the end or just before a promotion. So that makes a big difference.

As I pointed out in my opening remarks, there is a lot of money invested right now in language training. There are reasons for that, because public servants were complaining, with reason, that it was taking too long to have access to language training.

Frankly, our approach to language training is for 30 years. We have to modernize this important learning tool for our employees. It has to be accessible everywhere in Canada—to use the technology, the informatics, and give access to our employees.

•(1005)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Okay. I guess I would just make a general comment to you then. It is my hope that in the implementation of this action plan, you and other leaders in our public service keep in mind the need to remain focused on the practical question of how to provide the Canadian public with services. That's really what we have to focus on here. The purpose should not be language requirements for the sake of language requirements; it's language requirements for the exclusive purpose of serving the Canadian people in their own language.

Sometimes I get the impression, when this happens with bureaucracy in a variety of areas, that we've become so focused

on the requirements that they have become the end in and of themselves, as opposed to being focused on the delivery of services to the people who need them most, where numbers warrant.

That's just a general comment to leave with you.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Very good point.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Poilievre.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André.

Mr. Guy André: Welcome, Ms. Chartrand and Ms. Monnet. I have a few questions for you.

The first one has to do with the exclusion order. From what I read, I notice that the exclusion order was mainly for anglophones. For certain positions, command of both languages is not an immediate requirement. Are you considering re-examining this policy? The order was issued in 2003-2004. How do you apply this exclusion mechanism when it comes to official languages? Where are you with regard to this policy?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: I will give you a general answer, and perhaps my colleague will have some details for you.

To give you a simple explanation, the exclusion order exempts someone from meeting a requirement of a particular position, for instance in the case of imperative staffing. What we mean by imperative staffing is for a person to be able to express themselves in both official languages immediately.

The purpose of the exclusion order is to allow a person two years, in the case of non-imperative staffing, to learn the second language. The objective is to give a person some time when they have just been given a position to which imperative staffing does not apply. It is also meant to allow for certain exceptions, for reasons that are humanitarian in nature and that are related to health, learning disabilities, etc. There are few of these cases, but they are provided for under the order.

Ms. Barrados, who appeared before you last week, explained to you that we were currently reviewing the order. She is currently working on this, to simplify it and clarify it.

Your last question dealt with the use of the order for anglophones and for francophones. Indeed, the order is more frequently used for anglophones. There are in fact more anglophones in the group who require a two-year period for language training.

Diana, do you have anything to add?

•(1010)

Ms. Diana Monnet: No, I don't think so. That was quite comprehensive.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Unless you have another question.

Mr. Guy André: So you are currently reviewing this exclusion order.

Ms. Diana Monnet: The commission is.

Mr. Guy André: The new action plan that you are in the process of implementing would make the use of this exclusion order less frequent.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: You're absolutely correct. It's a cause and effect relationship. As imperative staffing becomes the norm, the order will be used less and less. That does not mean that we will stop having non-imperative staffing when a position will be open to the general public. We use the order for people who are appointed to a position which is non-imperative, people who need to be exempt from the requirement of bilingualism. This exemption is valid for a period of two years, to give them the time to learn the second language.

Mr. Guy André: Since the implementation of the action plan, has the situation improved with respect to bilingualism, when it comes to hiring policies?

Ms. Diana Monnet: We cannot immediately see the changes brought about by the new policies, because they have only been in effect since April 1. In my opinion, we will be able to see a difference as of the target dates.

However, with respect to training, not staffing, we are already seeing a difference. More and more employees are asking for access to training. They've understood the message: they have to be prepared to obtain bilingual positions. They've understood that if they want to be deputy minister or assistant deputy minister in the public service, they have to be bilingual, and they want to start earlier on their careers. Consequently, we have noted an increase in people signing up with the Canada School of Public Service, as well as Language Training Canada. The same is true of other tools and the private sector.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Welcome.

I would like to clarify something. My Conservative colleague used my example on several occasions. I'd simply like to remind him that I was saying that the francophone could work in the fishery because he was dealing with fish and not people. The difference with working in Ottawa is that those who work in the public sector have to serve the public. In my example, fish don't speak. I therefore found it unacceptable that in New Brunswick, the person didn't get the job that they had held for six years on a fishing boat once the position became a permanent position. This person was fishing and therefore didn't have to deal with people. He was working on the sea. The person didn't have to speak to the general public.

I simply wanted to correct that. I wouldn't want anyone to think that I am complaining or that people in my area are complaining about bilingualism. Correct me if I am wrong, but in my opinion, in New Brunswick, the number of francophones who work for the public service and don't speak English, if there are any, must be quite small.

Can you give me some figures to indicate how many francophones, in the regions outside of Quebec, work for the public service and are not bilingual?

Ms. Diana Monnet: I don't have an answer with respect to the number of people, but I can tell you that outside of Quebec and the national capital region, there are indeed very few positions for which only French is needed. There are fewer than 1 per cent. It stands at

5 per cent for the entire country, but that includes Quebec and the national capital region.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Less than 1 per cent, that means that there are 99 per cent on the other side?

Ms. Diana Monnet: No.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The parts in a percentage have to add up to 100.

Ms. Diana Monnet: There are 39 per cent bilingual positions, 50 per cent "English essential" positions, and if I recall, 5 per cent "French essential" positions and 6 per cent of one or the other, which is not specified.

• (1015)

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: I imagine that we could do the research. You want to know how many francophones are not bilingual within the public service. However, all our data concern positions. We can tell you how many francophones are in bilingual positions. We could give you this information.

Mr. Yvon Godin: No, I already know.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: You already have this information.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes. You said that it was 39 per cent. What I'm asking, is how many unilingual francophones have positions in the public service.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: We'll find you the figures. But to answer your question, they're mostly in Quebec. As you say, in New Brunswick, in general, francophones are bilingual.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'd like this information to be passed on to the clerk.

Ms. Diana Monnet: We're going to give you an approximation. Indeed, we do not have data concerning the bilingualism level of the incumbents in unilingual positions. Our systems capture information on bilingual positions. We can therefore make assumptions. A person could have a French essential position and still be very bilingual. However, we wouldn't see that in our system.

Mr. Yvon Godin: How does this document compare to the annual report on official languages that the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency is tabling in Parliament?

On page 56 of the document, we see that for western and northern Canada there were 99% anglophones and 1% francophones in 1978. In 2004, there has been a great improvement, i.e. 98% anglophones and 2% francophones. On this map, however, reference is made to 3.4% bilingual positions in British Columbia, 4.2% in Alberta, 3.7% in Saskatchewan and 7.9% in Manitoba. For the Territories, it's 5.1% and 3.5%.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: I'd like to clarify a few points. This map, which you have before you and which gives you a provincial breakdown of the data, provides a distribution of our 165,000 positions and 39% bilingual positions across Canada.

Here, you see francophone and anglophone representation. The breakdown isn't by province, as you can see, but by region. We have an aggregate number.

Mr. Yvon Godin: But if you add all that up, the total you get is not 1%. How can you get to that percentage? Whether you add the numbers or you find the average, you're looking at at least 4 or 5%.

The Chair: Can I ask a question in order to clarify this point? Did this map indicate the number of positions which must be bilingual or the positions which are filled by bilingual people?

Ms. Diana Monnet: The positions which are filled are bilingual.

The Chair: Can you please explain to us what you mean by "the positions filled are bilingual"? Are we dealing with positions which have to be filled by bilingual people or which are currently filled by bilingual people?

Ms. Diana Monnet: The departments decide that these positions require knowledge of both official languages. They are not all filled by bilingual people. I believe approximately 84% of incumbents for these positions are.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That does not clarify things. Here I have a map which refers to 4, 5 and 7% and a document on the other hand, referring to 1 and 2%. Whether you add the numbers up or find an average, the result is higher than 2%.

•(1020)

Ms. Diana Monnet: What 2% are you referring to?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: We have grouped together western and northern Canada.

Mr. Yvon Godin: If you group them together and find the average, you get more than 1%.

Ms. Diana Monnet: Yes, but table 12 refers to people, and here we are talking about positions.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: This is where the difference lies: you're not starting with the same base.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The total number of positions is 7%, but we don't have a percentage for people. So we don't have the number which indicates to us how many people are filling these positions.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: They are in training.

Ms. Diana Monnet: Possibly.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would like you to answer my question. I am the one you have to give an answer to. It's not up to other parliamentarians to answer. It may be easy for you to say possibly, but you haven't come here to give me this type of answer.

Ms. Diana Monnet: I'm trying to understand if the question has to do with positions or people.

Mr. Yvon Godin: There is a person for each position. Do you agree with me?

Ms. Diana Monnet: Yes, but...

Mr. Yvon Godin: If there is a position, there must be a corresponding person. As I was saying, in calculating the average, I find 5 or 7 per cent, but here reference is being made to 1 per cent of people who are in the positions. Does this mean that there are positions which are unfilled?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: I think we are having a hard time understanding each other with respect to the basis on which the figures are calculated. I'll try to explain one more time.

Mr. Yvon Godin: And if you don't succeed, we'll try again.

The Chair: It will have to be during another round, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I think the answer is important.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Mr. Godin, if we can't manage to understand one another, we will clarify the issue outside of this committee meeting. I can assure you that you will obtain a clear answer. Nonetheless I will try one more time.

Here, you have all the positions in the public service throughout Canada. What we try to do is to specify the percentage of bilingual positions in each province. That amounts to 39 per cent, or 65,000 positions out of 165,000. You can see how they are distributed.

In table 12—and that is why we are having a hard time reconciling the data, but we will get back to it—we try to represent self-identified francophones and anglophones, per region. To blend both would be practically impossible.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'll get back to it during my next question.

The Chair: Of course, with pleasure.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Godbout.

Mr. Marc Godbout: Welcome, Ms. Chartrand. I'm very pleased to meet you.

If you have no objections, I would like to clarify things, because I must admit that I'm having a hard time understanding. We met with Ms. Barrados, from the Public Service Commission. She said it wasn't up to her to designate bilingual positions, but that that was your responsibility. I have just heard that the departments determine which positions will be bilingual or not. I can't make heads or tails of this.

Are we going to have to call upon all departments to appear before us in order to know how this is done and who decides whether a position is bilingual or not?

I know there are orders. I'll give you an example which has been of concern to me for quite a while. Take the RCMP, for instance. And I don't think I'm off topic, Mr. Desrochers, because we are dealing with the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: If you can't take a joke...

The Chair: I'll take them.

Mr. Marc Godbout: I just want to be sure.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: I don't want to be caught in your trap. If that's how you want to be, you're going to have a rough time of it, Mr. Godbout.

Mr. Marc Godbout: We're going to have some fun together.

The Chair: Order, please.

Mr. Marc Godbout: Who effectively determines whether a position is bilingual or not?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Criteria are established by departments and managers. When a position is staffed, a manager must determine whether the position is bilingual or not. Why would this position be bilingual? For instance, it's a position requiring service to the public, or the supervising of bilingual employees. In this case, the incumbent must be able to communicate with his or her staff. Also, if the position involves internal communication with bilingual regions or communication outside of the public service, you have to be bilingual.

We establish the criteria, but each department, Fisheries and Oceans and others, decides if a position is bilingual or not.

• (1025)

Mr. Marc Godbout: If fewer than 10 per cent of positions are bilingual within a department, who will take action with this department? Is it Treasury Board? Is it the Public Service Commission? Is it your agency? Who ensures that approximately 40 per cent of positions are bilingual?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: We have a monitoring and audit function. That is when we intervene.

Every day, we offer advice to departments which have doubts as to the bilingual nature of a position. We carry out regular audits. That is our job.

We establish criteria, we support departments in making determinations regarding positions, we carry out audits and we report to Parliament. But the final decision rests with the department.

Ms. Barrados told you that it was our responsibility, and I had a conversation with her regarding that, because I read her presentation. We do not decide. We establish the framework, we do the follow-up, we get things moving and we are accountable to Parliament.

Mr. Marc Godbout: If a department does not respect the Official Languages Act, who will tell it that it must?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: We can do so. The Official Languages Commissioner can as well.

Mr. Marc Godbout: The commissioner can make things public, but someone, at some point, must have the authority to take action. The commissioner identifies the problem, but she cannot correct it.

You referred to imperative and non-imperative staffing. Non-imperative staffing is an exceptional measure, if I understand correctly. In certain departments, it would seem that the exception is becoming the rule. Do you set things straight, or does Ms. Barrados?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: It's up to us to set the tone. I did say that imperative staffing must become the norm. We have to be responsible for communications, we must urge departments to act, we are responsible for monitoring and audits.

The Chair: Mr. Godbout, I must apologize. It wasn't 30 seconds, but rather two minutes, because we are still in the first round. So you actually had seven minutes; you still have a minute and a half.

Mr. Marc Godbout: Thank you.

I'm concerned by two of the statements you made. Earlier on you said that we had to rebuild the bilingual function, meaning that there's a problem in the public service in ensuring respect of the bilingual function.

You also said that there needed to be a cultural change. It seems to me that, 30 years later, this change should have taken place. So you are expressing some concerns. I'm reassured to see that the problem has been noted. How serious is it?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Exactly, I said we had to rebuild the monitoring and audit function within the agency.

We have to make a cultural change within the public service. The official languages program has been in existence for 34 years, certain things must now be noted and certain things improved.

One of the things that have been noted is that we tend to easily resort to imperative staffing. This is why our policies make imperative staffing the norm. The idea of making it mandatory for EXs didn't happen overnight: it has been discussed for 15 years. It was announced to them 15 years ago, and we had given them 5 years. You're looking at people who are within an organization. We need non-imperative staffing to give people outside of the public service access to positions, people who do not yet have a command of their second language.

The entire language training system has aged and needs to be updated. It is outdated. What met our needs 30 years ago must now be modernized. We need instruments that are much more modern, much more accessible, not only for residents of Ottawa, but also for people who live in the regions. They must also be accessible via computer.

We must also have concern for a new group within the population: employment equity groups, specifically visible minorities, who need language training much earlier in their careers. In the public service employee poll they complain, and rightly so, that they don't have access to language training.

Therefore, we will mainly have to focus on language training, not only in the context of a competition, not only in applying for a competition, but it will have to be considered.

If there is to be a major cultural change, it will have to be to make official languages a concern for public servants early on in their careers, and not only when they stand to be promoted.

• (1030)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chartrand. I must interrupt you, as we have little time for a second round.

Mr. Poilievre.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Thank you.

I represent a riding that is for the most part an anglophone riding, and I would like to hear your opinion of francophone regions. Have you done any research to find out whether or not francophones are satisfied with the services provided by the federal government? Generally speaking, are they satisfied, or do they still encounter difficulties in obtaining services in their mother tongue?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: The public service has 12,000 service points across Canada, 30 per cent of which provide bilingual services.

Is the level of satisfaction perfect? Probably not. In fact, we are currently reviewing these bilingual service points. We received data from a recent census, according to which changes have occurred in the segment of the population requiring a high level of service. According to this data, there are service points which will disappear, roughly 90. On the other hand, 190 service points must be created in order to meet the needs of the minority population across Canada. We have to create 190 service points; this just demonstrates that there is a need and that the current level of satisfaction is not perfect.

I don't know if Diana would like to add something.

Ms. Diana Monnet: I'd like to add that a committee made up of representatives of the commissioner's office and of the communities, made up of several representatives, was struck in order to ensure implementation of the regulations and to identify the adjustments that should have been made following the 2001 census. We met five or six times and the discussion, very often, focused on the fact that the problem didn't always stem from the designation of positions, but rather the ability to properly serve the public. In other words, a position may be designated bilingual, something which meets the expectations of the community, but the quality of the service may be found wanting, because equal quality of service is expected.

I therefore cannot answer your question. We did not conduct any systematic survey across the country. However, we have heard the communities say that they are not yet satisfied. We are working to satisfy them and we are endeavouring to consolidate and improve training and sustain the gains that have been made. We want to capitalize on the good will of public servants with respect to services provided to Canadians, because another poll indicated that there is indeed good will.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: I believe that there should be more focused polls and research studies on what minority groups, or groups in general, think across Canada. Do they consider the services they receive adequate? Businesses, on a regular basis, carry out polls or use other methods to improve their knowledge of the market they serve. I believe the government should do the same thing.

This committee's challenge is to ensure that Canadians receive the services they need. Unfortunately, we cannot say that this is the case because we do not have enough information on this subject. This information is available somewhere, perhaps. Can you help us find it? For example, are people in the Saguenay region satisfied after calling the government? Do they receive an acceptable answer in their mother tongue? I would like an answer to this question. Perhaps you can tell me how I can locate this information.

• (1035)

Ms. Diana Monnet: I cannot provide that specific piece of information because no systematic poll is carried out. However, I can assure you that we remain in close contact with the communities through certain committees on which their community representatives sit. The Action Plan for Official Languages emphasizes community contact and consultation. We, at the agency, see them very often. We hear about the things that are not working, but not in a systematic manner. If we want another perspective, we question the communities and ask them for their opinion. We know that the services are not as good as they should be throughout the country. There's still work to be done.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Thank you, Mr. Poilievre

[Translation]

Mr. D'amours, the floor is yours.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have two questions for you. From what I understand, my first question relates to your responsibilities. So I will address my question to you. I am from New Brunswick, where there is a very

specific situation that I find slightly difficult to understand. We want to improve bilingualism, and to this end, we also want to make sure that there is a pool of potential employees.

I live in the northern part of the province. Now, the majority of jobs in the public service is concentrated in the south-east part of the province, and a large portion is in Moncton. It's not that I want to see my fellow citizens leave my region, but one must accept that they are seizing opportunities available elsewhere. However, because they do not live within a given distance in terms of kilometres, they do not have access to these jobs. Edmundston is 400 kilometres from Moncton; as for Restigouche, we're talking about a distance of 300 kilometres. This situation is very particular, and I would tend to call it discriminatory. I don't understand why this type of system is used. I think that if a person obtained a job, the person would move: it's up to that person. However, this is not the message I am getting. That is my first question.

My second question is just as important. The Canadian Press published an article on training federal staff members. Training is a fine thing and an important one, but public servants are not given the tools to allow them to maintain what they acquire through this training. According to this article, if a Canadian calls and speaks in a specific language, then a federal public servant can put to use what he or she has learned. Are you going to make sure that federal employees can use their training on the job? Are there already measures in place to this effect? We can start with my first question.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Your first question, which is totally relevant, deals with competition zones. Ultimately, you are asking me how it is that people in your riding, because they do not live in the required postal code area, do not have access to a federal position in Moncton. The answer is not simple. I can wash my hands of it and say that this falls under Maria's responsibility, which is the case. She is responsible for the entire issue of competition zones.

Currently, you are most certainly aware that parliamentarians are exerting a lot of pressure to establish a national competition zone. In this way, regardless of where a position is located, it would be an open competition throughout Canada. Maria is currently working on this matter. For EXs, there is already a national zone, but for others, as you know, the process is underway. I do not want to say that this new measure will be implemented tomorrow morning. It is a complex procedure which, in addition, ties into certain aspects of electronic recruitment, which have not been fully developed. I'm speaking on behalf of Maria. She would have to come back to talk to you about this issue.

To establish a national zone allowing everyone to apply for all positions in Canada, we need very good tools.

• (1040)

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: We may not have enough time for my second question, but I would like to broach another subject. I'm wondering why public purchases are made on a national scale without any problems, whereas in the current case, where we are dealing with human resources and access to jobs for people who are all equally competent, there is an obstacle stemming from the fact that they do not live in the right region.

I understand that this matter may fall under somebody else's responsibility. As regards official languages, these people must be given a chance.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: I agree with you completely, and that is why we are taking this issue very seriously. I told you earlier that this was Maria's area of responsibility, but it is not an issue that we want to distance ourselves from. As you said so well, there is a link between a national competition zone and the level of bilingualism that prevails in the public service. We are working on this currently. You will see us again, given that we appear regularly before parliamentarians for the purpose of specifying in concrete terms the progress we are making. This type of initiative has already proven successful with EXs. The next targeted group will involve all professionals.

Allow me to share a personal opinion. Let us take for example a support staff category and suppose that a CR-4 position in Prince Edward Island is made open nationwide. Interviews would have to be held, travelling and moving costs assumed, and so on and so forth. That could become very, very expensive.

Yet, it is possible, from one province to another, that people may want to keep a portion of these positions for reasons of local development. There is a type of balance to be struck between opening the highest number of managerial, professional, and technical positions, and preserving certain positions.

The Chair: Mr. Desrochers.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Chartrand, was is the percentage of bilingual positions?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Thirty-nine per cent.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: In the case of a bilingual position, within a department, a person has two years to undergo linguistic training in order to become bilingual.

Once this unilingual person becomes bilingual on paper, after having passed the tests, is there a follow-up to make sure that this person truly provides bilingual services?

From what I've heard, once a public servant has the necessary document in hand, he can tell his employer that he is bilingual, because he has the certificate to prove it and has passed his exams. However, it has happened to me that I have addressed a public servant and realized, within two or three minutes, that the person could not provide service in French.

I share my colleague's opinion, who said it was a very good idea to have training. However, following this, we must make sure that services are provided in both languages. Is there any follow-up with respect to that? How are you able to intervene to make sure that those who fill bilingual positions are truly providing services in both languages?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: I will ask Diana to answer the second part of the question.

The challenge, 35 years after the implementation of the Official Languages Act, is to preserve the gains that have been made. How does someone do that, and do they use at work the language they have just learned?

The report says that we have come to realize that anglophones—I'm alluding to them because there's a larger number of them who get language training—who return afterwards to their working environment maintain their level much more easily when there are francophones around them. If they find a climate of confidence in the workplace, it is much easier for them to preserve their level. When no francophones are present, it's much more difficult.

Mr. Godbout asked a question about cultural changes. Indeed, one of those important changes is the preservation of acquired knowledge. When there are no francophones in the workplace, does the employee have access to electronic tools to enable him or her, even by himself in front of his computer, to maintain this acquired knowledge? There are many ways. However, there has to be a will as well. There are newspapers, but there are also in the regions minority groups which could contribute to preserving this acquired knowledge.

I'm going to ask Diana to answer that part of your question about the systematic follow-up.

● (1045)

Ms. Diana Monnet: First of all, we collect information from several sources. However, we do not have the capacity to perform detailed audits and follow-ups on a yearly basis.

Here are the various tools we use for that follow-up. Within each department, there is one director in charge of official languages, a champion who helps us in that follow-up and makes sure that everything goes as planned. Communities keep in touch with us on a regular basis to tell us about any problem they have. We also react when we hear of any problem within the department.

The Official Languages Commissioner also makes regular checks.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: What are your real powers?

You consult, you produce reports, positions are bilingual. When you see that someone whose bilingualism has been officially recognized through exams gives the service in one language only, what can you do to force him to obey his job description and offer bilingual services?

Ms. Diana Monnet: We have no direct power to do so, but his or her manager does, because the manager is responsible for the work performed by his or her employees. In those cases, we talk to the supervisor who has to take action.

Our policies increasingly contain measures to help us do a follow-up. We're going to be able to access more information. There's also a whole set of internal checks within the departments. We help them integrate the official languages dimension in services offered to the public, and this allows us to check that services are indeed offered in both languages. Thanks to all those sources of information, we endeavour to obtain a comprehensive picture.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desrochers. We are out of time, unfortunately, since your questions are of a very high calibre.

[English]

We're up to the last intervention. Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am coming back to my figures.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: I hope that we are going to be able to help you with this, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm also going to try and help you.

• (1050)

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Thank you.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I think I've understood.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Go ahead then.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Let's check my understanding of this.

This table shows the percentage of bilingual positions in the west and in the north. However, this other table shows that there is only 1 per cent of francophones—who are part of this 4.5 per cent—which means that there are 99 per cent of anglophones. About 4 per cent of them are bilingual and they hold bilingual positions.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: That's what I said.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Earlier on, my colleague said something which amounted to asking why more jobs were not given to anglophones. If this were done, francophones would receive none, since, as a matter of fact, there are only 1 per cent of real francophones—people whose mother tongue is French—in those regions who hold bilingual positions. The other percentage is for anglophones. In Alberta for instance, 4.2 per cent of positions are bilingual. The demand for those bilingual positions is indeed minimal.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: You're right.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In Ontario, the percentage is 10.2 per cent. There are close to a million francophones in Ontario. But despite that, 90 per cent of anglophones have access to those positions.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: You're right.

Mr. Yvon Godin: They have nothing to complain about, I think. That means then that I got it right.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Indeed.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You've alluded to people applying for certain positions and to a national competition area. I do not agree with the direction we are headed in, and I am going to explain why.

With regard to the positions that are advertised nationally, who is insisting that they be advertised nationally?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Who insists the most?

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's what I'm asking you.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Parliamentarians.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Oh, really?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Parliamentarians are exerting pressure so that areas of selection become national areas.

Mr. Yvon Godin: If I remember well, our complaint had nothing to do with the fact that a New-Brunswicker might want to apply for a position in Alberta or in Saskatchewan. It had nothing to do with the fact that people have to apply in their own area. These parliamentarians were thinking that, since the national capital belongs to all Canadians, people should be allowed to apply without having to rent an apartment in Ottawa, because if they simply rent a hotel room, it doesn't work. That's the reality. Indeed, a New-

Brunswicker who comes to Ottawa to apply for a job without having a street address cannot get it.

I don't think there was ever any complaint from politicians—and correct me if I am wrong—that jobs could not be had in Alberta. The problem was not there. We are saying that the national capital belongs to all Canadians. It's the national capital. That's where it all originates.

Is this true assessment of the situation?

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Mr. Godin, yours is a true depiction of the situation. We've not had enough time to conclude. Yet, that's exactly the case.

We have to keep local jobs and maintain the right balance. But we were interrupted just before coming to our conclusion.

However, anyone in Canada should be allowed to apply for a position as an economist, lawyer, biologist or technician in the national capital region, and residence should not be a prerequisite.

We fully understand what you mean.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I want this corrected. We never asked for a national area. I'm one of those parliamentarians who felt insulted by the fact that somebody from elsewhere cannot apply for a job in Ottawa. Ottawa represents Canada as a whole, yet you cannot apply!

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: I understand.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Ottawa does not belong only to Ontario. True, it is in Ontario, and I'm glad for the people of Ontario. However, Ottawa represents all Canadians. Parliamentarians have been complaining. They wonder why Canadian taxpayers cannot come and find a job in the capital city to work for Canadians. We are not asking for a national area, only that people be allowed to apply in Ottawa.

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: I'm really glad to hear you say that. And it's not the first time I'm hearing it.

Mr. Godin, it is clear that after today's meeting, I'll have to talk to Ms. Barrados. I'm quite sure she's going to read the transcripts. Anyway, I'm really glad that you alluded to this and I understand perfectly what you mean to say.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I cannot speak on behalf of my colleagues, but maybe would it be worthwhile for you to hear them also. But I think I'm right. We did not even anticipate that people from Ottawa would be allowed to go into the regions, unless they were forced to leave that region to get a job in Ottawa. If so, when there was something available in their region, they could go back there. That was it: the region with Ottawa and Ottawa with the region.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin. Thank you for your contribution.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Chairman, I am asking my colleagues to allow me one question. I know there's no third round, but I could not ask that question due to lack of time. Would you allow me a question?

The Chair: Is there agreement? Yes.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Thank you very much.

I would like to come back to the question put by my colleagues Mr. D'amours and Mr. Desrochers, because I do not think it has been answered. It is about the work environment. We are training people in the other language, but in the real world, what are you doing to make sure that their work environment allows them to work in their language of choice?

It would be interesting to go to the various departments and see how frequently French is used at work. That's what I would like to know. In Manitoba, we have developed bilingual service centres where French is the language of work. That approach is unique in Canada, I think.

It is all very well to train people, but if they do not practice their second language, they lose the ability. And then, they have to be trained again five or six years later at a huge cost. Would you have an answer for that, please?

• (1055)

Ms. Michelle Chartrand: Diana can give you a more detailed answer, but in the annual report, there are a lot of examples because we are a kind of best practice broker within the public service. We gave numerous examples of organizations which endeavoured to improve the language of work. They developed tools, documents, including those that are available on websites, and they held bilingual meetings. You have examples of success stories.

However, I could not tell you that this is true for the whole public service. Let me give you an example from the annual report which really impressed me. It is the Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation, where they assess on a yearly basis the language abilities of all managers in bilingual positions, in cooperation with the supervisor who must be bilingual. Moreover, they also assess how the second language has been used by the managers. It is an incentive.

As official languages become increasingly part and parcel of human resources management, results are going to improve. For performance evaluations or performance bonus purposes, language

skills should be as important as the actual accounting or science work performed by the employee.

The reason why the situation has fallen short during the last 30 years is because language abilities have always been an afterthought. This is not a full answer to your question, but I am giving you...

Hon. Raymond Simard: I would like you to understand that it is important in the workplace, to have this natural reflex to do things in French also. I'm quite sure the first reflex is to do things in English.

As for the meetings, if we were to sneak in, we would see that more often than not French is not used there. That is a problem, and I think you have a role to play in this regard.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Simard.

Ms. Chartrand, Ms. Monnet, thank you very much for taking the time to come here and meet with us. Thank you also for having answered each and every question. This meeting has been most interesting.

I would also like to thank all members for their contribution. Before adjourning, I would like to remind you that our next meeting will take place next Tuesday, and that it is going to be very important, and I would like to ask you to come prepared. In fact, this will be an in camera meeting where we are going to give our researcher our instructions for the preparation of our report on either the future of bilingualism in the public service or on the action plan on official languages.

Consequently, I need you to give me your ideas as well as further clarification on more specific directions. Then, Marion can prepare a draft report for our further consideration.

A further meeting on Thursday is very unlikely, so Tuesday's meeting will probably be our last.

Once again, thank you all, and see you soon.

The meeting is adjourned.

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