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**Tuesday, March 8, 2005**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez**

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## Standing Committee on Official Languages

Tuesday, March 8, 2005

•(0910)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.)):** Good morning and welcome everyone. We are fortunate to have with us the minister, Mauril Bélanger, who is accompanied by representatives from the Department of National Defence.

As you know, there are two points on the agenda: official languages accountability and the coordination framework of the Action Plan for Official Languages, and the official languages overview of the Department of National Defence. Since the minister must leave at 10:30 at the latest, and since the mother of one of the members of our committee has passed away, we are going to limit our work to one of these two issues. Since the representatives from National Defence are with us, we are going to discuss that topic.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ):** Point of order, Mr. Chairman. I would like to clarify something. I know that Mr. Bélanger is doing excellent work as Minister responsible for Official Languages, but as far as I know, the Minister of National Defence is Mr. Graham. Has he been invited to appear, or was this an initiative taken so that Mr. Bélanger could wear two hats?

**The Chair:** No. He was invited because he is the Associate Minister of National Defence.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** Was the Minister of National Defence invited to this meeting?

**The Chair:** No.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** Mr. Chairman, who took this initiative? Mr. Bélanger is Minister responsible for Official Languages and Associate Minister of National Defence. He will listen closely to the recommendations to National Defence. Then, as minister responsible, he will give orders to National Defence. I think something is unclear. I am prepared to hear from Mr. Bélanger this morning, but I would like Mr. Graham to be invited, to appear, and to address the issue of official languages. Last night, CBC broadcast reports that did not speak very highly of the Department of National Defence. Mr. Graham is accountable for what happens at National Defence. I do not want to object to what you negotiated with Mr. Bélanger, but I would like Mr. Graham to be here at a future meeting.

**The Chair:** Okay. If that is the wish of the committee, that is what we will do. For now, Mr. Bélanger is here, and he can contribute a lot and enrich our discussion. Representatives from the Department of National Defence are here. If you agree, we are going to separate the agenda into two parts. We will deal with the accountability framework at a subsequent meeting. If it is the wish of the committee, we will invite Mr. Graham to a future meeting.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** Mr. Chairman, I want to reiterate. I am prepared to hear from Mr. Bélanger, but I would like the committee to make a decision now on the possibility of inviting Mr. Graham to a future meeting.

**The Chair:** That is what I was saying, Mr. Desrochers.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** We are now assured that Mr. Graham will be invited to appear.

**The Chair:** Is it the wish of the committee?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** So Mr. Graham will be invited to appear.

Mr. Bélanger, you have the floor.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Minister responsible for Official Languages):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank committee members for the invitation to appear.

What I am about to say may clarify some things, or perhaps it will have the opposite effect. Minister Graham has made me responsible for certain matters within the department. As Associate Minister, I am responsible for ensuring full compliance with the Official Languages Act by the Department of National Defence. So it is in my capacity as Minister Responsible for Official Languages at the Department of National Defence that I was prepared to speak to you in the first part of the meeting. My colleague, Minister Bill Graham, will certainly also be pleased to appear before you, if you invite him. He may ask me to accompany him, since I am in charge of the file. We will see when the time comes.

I will make a short presentation that follows on the one made before this committee in June 2003 by the Minister of Defence at the time, the honourable John McCallum, but I am going to start by asking the people who are accompanying me to introduce themselves. Then, I will make my presentation, and we will proceed the way you wish.

**Col Mark Dussault (Director of Official Languages, Department of National Defence):** My name is Colonel Mark Dussault, and I have been Director of Official Languages at the Department of National Defence for about two years.

[English]

**Major-General Paul Hussey (Commander of the Canadian Defence Academy, Department of National Defence):** My name is Major-General Paul Hussey. I am the commander of the Canadian Defence Academy in Kingston, and I am responsible for professional development in the Canadian Forces. That development includes second-language programming.

**Ms. Carole Jolicoeur (Chief of Staff to the Assistant Deputy Minister, Department of National Defence):** My name is Carole Jolicoeur. I am the acting assistant deputy minister, human resources, civilian. I've been in the position for about four years, not as acting, but as chief of staff.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** When he appeared before the committee on June 10, 2003, the Honourable John McCallum, then Minister of National Defence, acknowledged from the outset, without even having been asked to do so, that there were serious problems with the administration and enforcement of the Official Languages Act at the Department of National Defence. He made a formal commitment on behalf of the department to fulfil five specific objectives. I would like to take this opportunity today to provide you with an update on the five specific objectives that he brought to the attention of this committee at that time.

The first commitment was to raise by 5 per cent per year the percentage of bilingual military positions that are occupied by individuals who meet the linguistic requirements of their posts. That was a commitment for the following three years, until the department reached the level of 70 p. 100.

In 2003, the department was below 50 per cent, at about 42 per cent. The minister committed to increasing this percentage during the 2003-2004, 2004-2005, and 2005-2006 fiscal years.

The objective was met for the 2003-2004 fiscal year. The percentage of bilingual positions increased from 42 per cent to 47 per cent. For the current year, 2004-2005, we do not have the most recent figures, but we can already expect to meet or even exceed 50 per cent, with the objective being 52 per cent. At the end of the fiscal year, we will be able to provide you with the final figure. We recognize that the second year has been more difficult than the first. Nevertheless, there is ongoing progress with respect to this first commitment.

We would like to take this opportunity to explain that the difficulty in moving more quickly is due to the use of a traditional assessment method for bilingualism in the public service, which is perhaps inappropriate in the case of the Canadian Forces.

In fact, military human resources representatives in the Canadian Forces do not fill positions in the same way that their civilian counterparts do. Members of the Canadian Forces regularly change positions in keeping with specific and operational requirements. The method used in the public service is designed for stable positions. So it is easy to understand that the method does not work well for the Canadian Forces.

• (0915)

[English]

In the Canadian Forces, bilingual personnel are shifted to ensure that bilingual services or functions are provided where and when required. This is referred to as the functional approach to providing bilingual capacity. As part of this approach, we are now conducting a review of the functions that should be provided in both official languages. We're doing this in order to accelerate the realization of that first commitment. As I've already said, our record has not been

perfect, but National Defence is working hard to eliminate all causes for complaint.

An example of our efforts is that over 98% of all our civilian executives working in bilingual regions or positions have a profile of C-B-C or better. The remaining 2% of civilians have training plans in place or are already on training. Moreover, with respect to the remainder of our civilian workforce, approximately 85% of all our bilingual civilian positions are filled with qualified staff.

[Translation]

If you take a look at the minister's second commitment, you can see that convincing progress has been made there as well. This commitment was aimed at raising the percentage of individuals promoted from the rank of lieutenant-colonel to colonel who have at least a CBC profile to, eventually, 70 per cent. I am pleased to inform you that the Canadian Forces are well underway to achieving this goal and that a special committee will ensure that the annual objectives of this commitment are reached.

The third commitment has also been successful. The objective was to integrate official languages capability in the performance management agreements with senior personnel. In 2004, we went even farther than this policy by applying the bilingualism requirement to civilian EXs. In addition, these two groups must participate actively in the promotion of bilingualism.

[English]

The fourth key commitment by the Department of National Defence consists of re-establishing a policy that makes military profiles valid for only five years, regardless of whether the member changes positions or even serves in a bilingual position, the two criteria for which civilians are normally retested. This will ensure that service personnel maintain their bilingual ability over time as they rotate between jobs and tasks. We are currently exploring ways of ensuring high success rates for this policy.

[Translation]

The fifth and final commitment pertains to junior officers who enrol in the Canadian Forces and must attain a BBB profile as soon as they begin their career. This is currently the case for military-college graduates, and we are looking at ways to apply this situation to other junior officers. Since I have been the associate minister of National Defence for several months now, I can assure you that we have a plan and we are very well aware of the objectives. This is an ambitious but realistic plan. In addition to the five main commitments, which you already know, many other innovative initiatives are already underway.

I would draw your attention to the National Defence Annual Review on Official Languages. This document, which if I am not mistaken was submitted to the clerk in July, clearly indicated that corrective measures were required with respect to the department's official languages obligations. Further to the will expressed by Minister McCallum in 2003, the department prepared a three-year strategic plan. You have received this plan, as well as the first review. The second review will be released this summer, at the end of fiscal year 2004-2005.

Progress has been achieved for the five key objectives established by the department, and my role as associate minister responsible for this file is to ensure that things continue along the same lines. I wanted to give you an overview; some of my colleagues may want to add something. I will now turn the floor over to Colonel Mark Dussault.

• (0920)

**Col Mark Dussault:** Minister, you presented the five key commitments made by Mr. McCallum and I would like to simply talk about the functional approach. We are convinced that taking the functional approach as opposed to the public service position approach will go a long way to helping us achieve better compliance with the Official Languages Act.

It should be pointed out, however, that at the Department of National Defence, we will always have to deal with some relatively unique challenges. For example, bilingualism is not a pre-requisite to recruitment: we do not have, as is the case in the public service, imperative staffing. We do not hire officers who are immediately assigned to senior positions. The majority of our staff work across Canada. Accordingly, bilingualism is clearly a considerable challenge, particularly for our new colonels, who have worked almost exclusively in unilingual regions for the most part of their career. The members of the Canadian Forces, bilingual or not, always work almost exclusively in unilingual regions, where opportunities for using their second language skills are very limited. That is the only point that I wanted to add, Minister.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister Bélanger, and thank you, Mr. Dussault.

We will now go to questions, beginning with Mr. Poilievre.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC):** I would like to thank all of the witnesses who have appeared before us today. I agree with my colleagues from the Bloc that we should invite the minister to appear before the committee. I am very pleased that Mr. Bélanger is here.

[English]

I would like to begin my questions with respect to the overall success of the efforts of your department to reach the goal of having a more bilingual armed forces.

Dyane Adams, the Commissioner of Official Languages, said on February 24 that not very much has changed within the federal government, and there has been very little progress in the Department of National Defence with respect to enhancing linguistic duality.

I note here that in the annual review on official languages for the Department of National Defence for April 2003 to March 2004, dated July 2004, the report on pages 69 and 71 says that the department spent \$46 million on military second-language training. Very little progress has been made after that kind of an expenditure. That's an expenditure that was made, an accumulated total between April 2001 and March 2004. If very little progress has been made with the expenditure of \$46 million, can you please explain to us how this can possibly be a success?

• (0925)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Would you please give us the page references again?

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Pages 69 and 71.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I don't have it. Do you?

[English]

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** We're referring to the accumulated total of expenditures on language training. I'm wondering, in light of the fact that a total of \$46 million has been spent on second-language training, why is it that not more progress has been made?

**Col Mark Dussault:** Essentially, I think our approach in the past has been to offer second-language training on a universal basis. I think what we need to do to make greater progress is really to change the orientation to a staffing orientation in the future.

A lot of the money that we've spent has been designed for courses at a very low level, as opposed to fewer courses at a very high proficiency level, making a higher contribution to compliance to the Official Languages Act. So the simple answer is that the problem with the amount of money we've been spending is we've been spending too much money on low-level courses and not enough on fewer courses but at a higher level of proficiency.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** And you intend to change that?

**Col Mark Dussault:** We will change that. In fact, General Hussey here is responsible for second-language training within the department. He could perhaps emphasize that.

**MGen Paul Hussey:** Thank you, Mark.

I don't want to sound defensive, but I would challenge that progress has not been made. We focused on the C-B-C program for senior officers in the last couple of years. We've now transferred what we have learned with respect to senior level to our interrupted, if you wish, end-to-end review of our second-language program to achieve functional bilingualism, the B-B-B level.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** So you disagree with Ms. Adams in her assessment that little has been accomplished.

**MGen Paul Hussey:** I do.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Well, according to the Department of National Defence 2003-2004 annual review on official languages, 4,147 individuals—that's only 47%—met the language requirements of their positions. I want to emphasize this: 47% are meeting their requirements.

You spent \$46 million to achieve a 47% success rate. How can you possibly consider that to be a success?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** On the matter of the 47%, when the minister at the time, Minister John McCallum, appeared in front of this committee in 2003 he recognized before even a single question had been asked that DND had a hell of a lot of work to do to correct the situation. One of the five commitments that he undertook on behalf of DND was to increase by 5% a year the number of people occupying bilingual positions and meeting those requirements. It stood at 42% at the time—dismal. We recognize that. After 2003-2004 it had increased by 5% to 47%.

At the end of this year we should be at 50% or better, the objective being 52%, but the year is not quite over. There's not much to do, but we haven't got stats for the last quarter. We're ranging about 50% now. So the objectives are being met.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** It will take you ten years to fill all of the bilingual positions with bilingual personnel. It's going to take you ten years at 5% a year. For the next decade, you're going to continue to roughly spend between \$15 million and \$20 million a year over a ten-year period. Canadians are going to have to wait ten years for these objectives to be achieved. Is that a successful initiative?

**Col Mark Dussault:** In fact, this is where the functional approach comes into play. I recognize that 5% a year is going to take far too much time, but the one thing that we need to highlight here is that the military capacity is much bigger than the actual number of bilingual positions that we have. We have one military person out of three who has a linguistic capacity of some sort.

The problem is that the system we currently have doesn't recognize and is not harmonized with the actual counting system. When we send an individual to a unit, that person could be moved from one location to another, from a transport section to a supply section. As far as the central agencies are concerned, that individual is not accounted for in the bilingual position. The reality is that the commanding officer of the unit moves people around and ensures that the bilingual services are provided.

The point I'm trying to make, sir, is that in reality we have far better statistics actually than the 47% or 50% that we're presenting today.

• (0930)

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** These are positions that are designated to be bilingual, and 47% are. The minister is telling us that if we wait around for a decade, at our present growth rate, we might eventually accomplish our goals. I'm saying that when you're spending 15 million to 20 million tax dollars per year, to achieve that kind of success rate is a failure.

**Col Mark Dussault:** Again, on the issue of money, we spent \$18.6 million last year on second-language training. I go back to the point that I initially made. I have a table showing what we get out of that \$18.6 million.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** It's not a lot of value for money.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. André.

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Good morning, everyone.

At the outset, I would like to point out that it is International Women's Day. I would like to greet all of the women who are here as

well as those who have had the courage to join the Canadian Forces over the past few years.

According to a report on Radio-Canada yesterday, it is not always easy for women to join the Canadian Forces and it is also difficult for some francophones to be shown proper respect.

This is the issue that I wanted to talk to you about.

Yesterday, you may have heard about an internal Canadian army document obtained by Radio-Canada. Apparently, the soldiers in the land forces are intolerant to having women and ethnic minorities in their ranks.

These investigations also revealed that Canadian troops no longer have confidence in their senior officers and the Canadian government. These conclusions were based on two internal investigations on military values that were carried out amongst the ranks of the Canadian army.

Apparently bilingualism, which has been present in the Canadian Forces for many years now, is also perceived as an irritant by Canadian soldiers, for the most part anglophone. The report states: According to retired Colonel Michel Drapeau, who analyzed the document for Radio-Canada Radio, English is the dominant language everywhere in the Canadian army with the exception of Quebec-based units. According to Mr. Drapeau, the obligation to work in both languages poses a problem to many officers and soldiers. (Translation)

On this topic, I would like to hear Colonel Mark Dussault and Commanding Officer Paul Hussey complete the interventions made by Ms. Jolicoeur and Mr. Bélanger.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** We do not have this report that Radio-Canada reportedly released yesterday, and which was mentioned in the media both yesterday and today. It would therefore not be appropriate for me to comment on it. However, I do intend to get a copy of this report and see what it is all about.

That being said, if this internal report obtained by Radio-Canada proves to be true, we will have to challenge certain attitudes. I have a responsibility for official languages and I will leave it at that. Nevertheless, if within our armed forces there is a negative attitude with respect to the presence of women or representatives from ethnic minorities, visible or not, then this attitude will have to be changed. I say this without any hesitation and the Canadian Forces will have to take the requisite action.

As for official languages, it is understandable that there is more French used in Quebec and more English used in the other provinces. However, I can tell you, since I have visited certain military bases such as Gagetown, in New Brunswick, that training, including basic training, is given in English and French. The attitude of the new recruits with whom I have had the opportunity to talk is positive with respect to official languages. It is not impossible that, in some sectors, in some places, there may be people who are resistant to official languages. We even see this in Parliament, in certain parties. So it is not unusual to find that this is somewhat the case in the Canadian population. But from year to year, from generation to generation, the acceptance of official languages is becoming much more sincere and much more real. We can see that, in the public service, through policies and legislations, there are more and more means to ensure that the Official Languages Act is respected.

• (0935)

**Mr. Guy André:** I only have a few minutes left, and I would like to hear...

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** You are putting them in a delicate situation...

**Mr. Guy André:** Mr. Bélanger, I would like to hear...

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Certainly, but I will finish my sentence.

Mr. Chairman, may I finish my sentence?

**The Chair:** Quickly, please.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Since they have not read the report, you would be putting these people in an awkward situation. Caution is required.

**Mr. Guy André:** Mr. Chairman, I had asked Mr. Hussey and Mr. Dussault the question.

**Col Mark Dussault:** In the report entitled *Walking the Talk: Language of Work in the Federal Public Service*, the Commissioner of Official Languages stated that, essentially, the biggest obstacle with respect to the enforcement of the act was the lack of knowledge on the part of supervisors. National Defence is working on this aspect very hard. In my opinion, it is not so much about attitudes as it is about understanding supervisory obligations.

We have prepared an information campaign to better understand supervisory obligations. We are working on this.

**Mr. Guy André:** Were you taken aback and surprised by the content of this report released by Radio-Canada? You do not see such attitudes with respect to women and official languages in the Canadian Armed Forces?

[English]

**MGen Paul Hussey:** Certainly not to women. I come from an occupation that actually began in the early 1970s with the integration of women into the Canadian Forces, that being air traffic control. I have seen the changes in attitudes from the very beginning, when we started to have females in occupations right up through... I think we're the only armed forces that has cleared every occupation in its business to have a full integration of women and men at work in combat, in all of those issues. So I am surprised by the attitude with respect to women.

With respect to second languages, I think that Colonel Dussault is correct. We tend to have certain parts of the country that default, if you wish, to say English first. I do believe that there is perhaps an attitude that we need to acculturate, where perhaps you should start meetings

[Translation]

in French, from time to time. We may also hold every second meeting in French. This is what is done at the Canadian Royal Military College. For two weeks, meetings are held in French, and during the next two meetings, they are held in English. That was working very well. At the college, women are all very well integrated into the supervisory system, etc. I was very surprised by the question of the attitude towards women.

**The Chair:** I would like to remind committee members that, despite the importance of other topics, our responsibility is limited to official languages. I would therefore like to see our discussion focus on official languages.

**Mr. Guy André:** It is good to point this out all the same, Mr. Chairman.

• (0940)

**The Chair:** It is good to point it out, but I maintain what I said.

Mr. Godin, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to point out that, a little earlier, Mr. André asked a question and it was the minister who answered it. I think that the members of parliamentary committees are entitled to ask questions of the witnesses of their choosing. If not, I would recommend that the representatives of the Department of National Defence appear without the minister to defend them. When parliamentarians put questions to representatives of the Department of National Defence, it is incumbent on them to answer us.

I think that this is sad. You have said that we should perhaps not talk about women, but today is International Women's Day. It was sad to hear yesterday's report because it talked about minorities, ethnic groups, the francophonie, francophone minorities and anglophone minorities. Everything was covered. National Defence is there to defend us. It is about respecting our country. National Defence has to believe in our laws, since it defends our rights and, especially, it has to be able to respect them.

It is most unfortunate to hear representatives from National Defence say that it will take 10 years before this is achieved. It takes seven years to become a doctor in Canada, but it will take ten years to respect a Canadian law, the one that deals with bilingualism, particularly with respect to senior positions. I think that this is unacceptable. The time has come for National Defence, a department that presents itself as our advocate. It sings the praises of our country throughout the world, we have a good international reputation, but at home, we have a problem.

Take the case of the chaplain, Louis Turcotte, who was fired. Unless he is lying to us, he was fired. According to the Radio-Canada report, Louis Turcotte said that he had simply asked whether the Official Languages Act applied to the services provided within the Cold Lake Fourth Wing. The reporter then asked him if that had been enough grounds for prohibiting him to say mass. He replied by saying that they had adopted a hard line approach and he was let go. The journalist then said that what he said would surprise people, that this was surprising. Louis Turcotte answered by saying that this was sad, but that was the way things were. The spokesperson for the Cold Lake Fourth Wing confirmed that Chaplain Turcotte had been relieved of his duties, but refused to comment since there was an investigation under way.

What is going on with this case? This is unacceptable, totally unacceptable. This occurred nearly a year ago. A chaplain who had been transferred out west was relieved of his duties and we are still talking about it one year later, on March 8, 2005. This morning, we heard about this again on the news. Last evening, we heard about it again on the news. This is not nice. The Canadian Forces do not have a good image. What did the commanding officers and those in authority do?

If we can dismiss a chaplain, just imagine what an individual from a minority at a lower rank experiences upon his or her arrival in such a region. This goes much farther than simply training soldiers. What steps do senior officers take when such things occur? Some people testified last evening. Retired commanding officers dared to testify because they were retired. I apologize for saying these things publicly, but this needs to be done.

I would ask that the minister not answer my question. Otherwise, Mr. Chairman, I will ask that the representatives of National Defence appear by themselves. I want them to answer us. How can we accept that it has come to this in a bilingual country such as ours, with the laws that exist?

Mr. Dussault, can you answer?

The chair has asked who should answer the questions. I want Mr. Dussault to answer.

**The Chair:** The question is for Mr. Dussault.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Chairman, on a point of order.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chairman, we are the ones who ask the witnesses questions. The witnesses cannot raise points of order. We are the members of the committee and we have summoned witnesses to appear. It's not up to witnesses to raise points of order. We are the ones to do this.

**The Chair:** Mr. Dussault will respond and Mr. Bélanger may add something later on.

Mr. Minister, do you wish to respond?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Chairman...

• (0945)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I do not accept that. I do not want the response from the minister.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Chairman, with all due respect...

**The Chair:** Listen, please. I asked the clerk what we should do in such a situation, and he told me that the individual to whom the question was addressed should answer.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Dussault must answer.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Chairman, I'm asking...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** On a point of order, Mr. Chairman. I do not accept the intervention from this witness. We did not ask the question of him.

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin, I would like to hear Mr. Bélanger on...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** No, Mr. Chairman, I do not accept having a witness, to whom a question was not asked, intervene. The question was asked of another witness, and the House of Commons Standing Orders stipulate that when a witness is asked a question, he must answer it. That is what the clerk said.

**The Chair:** Mr. Dussault will answer your question. I simply wanted to hear what Mr. Bélanger had to say with respect to this point of order.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Chairman, I was invited, and as the Associate Minister of National Defence, I am authorized to speak on behalf of the Department of National Defence. These people are accompanying me and it is not unusual for me to ask them to answer questions. However, I am the one who was invited here as the spokesperson for the Department of National Defence, as the Associate Minister. Of course, I will agree to ask Mr. Dussault to answer, but I would like to have the opportunity to respond and to add something. Otherwise, it's not working anymore.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chairman, it is true that certain things may be added, but my question is intended for Mr. Dussault. If there are other witnesses who would like to respond afterward, they can do so. Normally, when a question is put to a witness, it is the witness who must answer it.

**The Chair:** I understand, Mr. Godin. Mr. Dussault will first of all answer your question and then we will hear what Mr. Bélanger has to say.

**Col Mark Dussault:** Mr. Godin, you raised two points in your intervention.

First of all, you said that we take too long staffing bilingual positions. I would repeat the comment I made earlier. The system does not accurately reflect how we comply with the Official Languages Act. We have a much greater number of bilingual people than our central agency statistics show. Our people move within these units. It is not static. The public service data base is static, and it is unable to follow individuals within the unit. The unit commander is responsible for moving people within the unit in order to provide bilingual services.



We want to adopt a functional approach. We want to have a certain percentage of bilingual people within a given unit, which will be a much better reflection of the capacity of the Canadian Forces. One out of three soldiers can function in both languages, which is far greater than what we see in other components. For instance, the civilian component of the department has very good bilingual staffing results because it has a static approach. However, in reality, there are actually far fewer bilingual people in this component than there are in the military component. That explains the first point you raised.

Secondly, you stated that Padre Turcotte made a complaint. First of all, he filed a complaint with the Commissioner of Official Languages about his transfer to a unilingual English region. Members of the Canadian Forces can express their opinion when they are transferred. Padre Turcotte had a level C in oral communication. He was therefore perfectly bilingual and could be transferred to Cold Lake.

The second complaint made by Padre Turcotte pertained to the documentation that had been sent to him in English. National Defence follows the regulations and policies of the Treasury Board, which are very clear: when you're in a unilingual English region, the documentation is provided in English. Our communications with the Commissioner of Official Languages lead us to believe that the complaint filed by Padre Turcotte will be deemed groundless.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Chairman, an investigation is currently being carried out with respect to this complaint, as I mentioned during my appearance. This investigation pertains to an alleged service offence. Until the investigation has been completed—and it is almost at that point—and until the provost marshal of the Canadian Forces gives his permission, the details cannot be revealed. The military complaint process is underway, and the matter will be resolved.

As far as the complaint filed with the Commissioner of Official Languages is concerned, the matter is still under investigation. The commissioner is in regular contact with the Department of National Defence on the matter, but the investigation has not yet been completed. Until she has completed the work, we will not be able to draw any conclusions.

• (0950)

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. Mr. Dussault has drawn his own conclusions by saying that the complaint may be ruled to be groundless. That contradicts your comments, Mr. Bélanger.

**The Chair:** Mr. Desrochers, I do not see how this is a point of order.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** When Mr. Dussault referred to the complaint made by Padre Turcotte, he said that the complaint may be ruled groundless. Mr. Bélanger said that the investigation is still underway. One has drawn a conclusion and the other is saying that the investigation is still underway.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** On the one hand, we have the National Defence Department investigation regarding an alleged service offence. That has nothing to do with the Official Languages Act. This is an internal investigation. Until the investigation has been

completed and the provost marshal of the Canadian Forces has authorized the matter to be made public, we cannot discuss it.

On the other hand, there is a complaint under the Official Languages Act, and we are not the ones who are doing this investigation. This is being done by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. This investigation has not been completed.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Desrochers and Mr. Godin.

Ms. Boivin, you have the floor.

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Since I am the only woman on the Standing Committee of Official Languages, I hope you will allow me to point out that today is International Women's Day and I would in particular like to recognize someone who is here today, namely Chloé Preece. Chloé Preece is a fourth year student at McGill University and she has been teamed up with me for the day. She is here as part of the McGill days at the Canadian Parliament.

I would like to congratulate every colleague of mine who agreed to join the program, because it is part of our mission as members of Parliament. It is a mission which speaks more particularly to women, because we know that in politics, and not only in the armed forces, we face a great challenge. All you have to do is look around you today, there is only one woman amongst all of these wonderful gentlemen. I am in very good company and things are lively this morning. I like that. I do not know if it is because we have officials from the Department of National Defence and from the armed forces with us today, but there is energy in the air.

In January, the Liberal Party of Canada held its winter caucus in Fredericton. I had the pleasure of meeting with military women from that area. Senator Lucie Pépin, along with certain members of the party's Social Policy Committee, organized a meeting with the spouses of Canadian forces personnel and their children. It was very interesting to hear what they had to tell us. We were told that it was not always easy for them to receive family services in French. This goes to the heart of the question I would like to ask today.

Do close family members of military personnel living on military bases have the right to receive health care education services in French? We heard about some pretty pathetic cases. Some francophones do not speak very much English—some not at all—and when they go to the hospital they do not always get services in the language of their choice. Are these rights recognized throughout Canada.

In your opinion, should the Department of National Defence be added to the list of federal institutions? That would certainly please my colleague, who is the minister responsible for developing a plan of action under section 41 of the Official Languages Act.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** The answer to the first question is yes. The policy extends to families. Colonel Dussault will be able to give you several examples. I can refer to some cases myself. However, the policy is carried out in collaboration with provincial authorities. For instance, it is carried out in conjunction with school boards to ensure that education is offered in English or in French, depending on the community.

I am also pleased to hear your second question, but I have the impression that this issue is a source of concern for the department; I will therefore take an extra minute to answer your question. The Department of National Defence recognizes that the Official Languages Act applies to all its members. It recognizes that, under section 41 of part VII of the act, which you are referring to, certain agencies and departments—about 30 in all—were mandated to develop a plan of action which would extend beyond their own department. A rather interesting phenomenon is happening: the departments and agencies which are not obliged to develop a plan of action tend to become neglectful.

When the Department of National Defence was confronted with this issue by the committee in 2003, it realized that it had to take the initiative. It developed a very complex plan of action. Indeed, some people said that it was a little too complex because it was extremely ambitious. The plan was reduced to five key objectives. From the moment the department ensured that the plan of action was implemented, the issue became a theoretical one. Because of the current debate in Parliament with regard to a bill which would affect part of the legislation, the issue could become redundant.

Can you give us some examples?

• (0955)

**Ms. Françoise Boivin:** That would be necessary, especially as regards the first question. I am pleased to learn that the services exist and that they have been recommended. However, I would humbly like to point out that some spouses of military personnel told us the exact opposite. They said that in many cases, in the areas of health care and education, they was no French whatsoever.

**Col Mark Dussault:** Since 1997, the Canadian Forces implemented a policy recognizing the moral obligation to support the families of military personnel. This policy largely exceeds the scope of the Official Languages Act. Whatever the region and whether it is unilingual or not, a level of service is guaranteed, as regards, among others, fire and security services, the mess, moving and settling services, and library and religious services. They are guaranteed from coast to coast.

As far as partnerships with linguistic minorities are concerned, I can tell you, for instance, that in the region of Cold Lake, recreational activities in French are only offered on the Cold Lake military base. They include a stadium, a pool and other things. In the region of Bagotville, the only English movies are screened on the base. Similarly, in the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia, the only French library is located at Greenwood. The Association francophone de la vallée du Comox was organized by military personnel. I could give you more examples of partnerships established with communities.

**Ms. Françoise Boivin:** To come back to health care, I would like to know if a francophone spouse who goes to the hospital with her child will receive services in French.

**Col Mark Dussault:** Several years ago, we created what are called military family resource centres. These centres must refer people to French-speaking physicians, if there are any in a particular region.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** If I may, I would also like to add that, as far as health care is concerned, an announcement was made

sometime ago to the effect that the department was partnering with the Montfort Hospital in order to relocate National Defence medical services to the hospital within the next two years. But facilities have to be built first. We want to guarantee medical services to military personnel in both languages and we want to enable health care professionals from the department to work in both languages while keeping their skills up to date. This represents tangible progress.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Ms. Boivin.

[English]

We now go to a second round, of five minutes each.

Monsieur Lauzon.

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to all.

My question is for Mr. Dussault.

You said that \$18.6 million was spent on training in the Canadian armed forces last year. Can you tell me how many people received training for that amount?

**Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.):** Mr. Chairman, a minister responsible for certain issues who appears before a committee should, in my opinion, answer questions directed at him. The minister has officials to support him, and I find that this way of doing things is completely irregular. For instance, a minister could be asked to answer a question and be supported by his officials, but telling a minister that he does not have the right to answer questions goes completely against the rules.

• (1000)

**The Chair:** That's not true: it's clear to me that the minister always has the right to respond.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Mr. Dussault said that the amount spent was \$18 million.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lauzon, if I may, I will conclude by saying that the question was put to Mr. Dussault, so he will answer. However, I will give the minister some time to respond if he has anything to add.

Mr. Poilievre.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** I have a point of order. I will repeat what has already been said. We believe that a member can ask a question of any witness and that that witness should answer. We won't change the rules.

**The Chair:** I agree with your point that the witness has to answer. The clerk is also of that opinion. However, I recognize the responsibility of the minister with regard to this issue. I will therefore also allow him to intervene.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** It's on our member's time.

**Col Mark Dussault:** The money spent each year is not wasted. The proof lies in the fact that one military member out of three is functional in both languages. Last year, we trained 2,454 members and we now see the result: about half of them have reached level AAA, 490 of them have reached level BBB and 37 have reached level C.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Thirty-seven reached level C?

**Col Mark Dussault:** Thirty-seven.

As I said earlier, perhaps we should focus more on achieving higher results and less on training people at a lower level.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Did you draw any comparisons with the public service in that regard?

**Col Mark Dussault:** As far as our success rate is concerned?

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** If \$18 million was spent and only 37 people reached level C, something is wrong.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** That's for the total number of students.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Mr. Minister, it does not take a lot of time or money to get people to reach level A: all it takes is perhaps two or three months.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** If you do the math, you will see that even if it only takes two or three months to train 2,400 military members...

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Eighteen million dollars?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Do the math and you will see that when you train 2,400 military personnel over two or three months, \$18 million are quickly spent.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** In addition to that, \$13 million was spent on translation. So, \$31 million was spent and 37 people reached level C.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** That \$18 million was spent on providing language training for 2,400 members. Out of a total budget of \$13 billion, \$30 million was spent on translation and training. That represents less than 0.1 per cent. Am I hearing contradictory messages from you, Mr. Lauzon? On the one hand, we are criticized because things are not moving fast enough. We are told to provide more training and if we go by 5 per cent per year, it will take far too long...

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Mr. Minister, if we train 37 people per year, it will take a very long time.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** No, 2,400.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** No, 2,400 people were not trained, because you are not bilingual if you reach level A.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** We are not talking about level A. The standard is BBB for lieutenant-colonels and, in that regard, our success rate is 98 per cent. For more senior officials, the standard is CBC, and most of them have met the requirements.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** You are satisfied. But there is a bit of a conflict here. Ms. Adam said that language training for military personnel is not working. But you seem to be very satisfied, Mr. Dussault, with the progress being made.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** The dichotomy is in the method, and that is what Mr. Dussault was trying to say. As long as we continue to use a non-functional method, the numbers will not truly reflect what is happening. The difference is that a member of the forces does not stay as long in a given position; he's often deployed.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** The member is bilingual working a certain position, and continues to be bilingual even when he's deployed. Surely it's not very difficult to keep track of members even if they move around a lot. Is that the problem?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Non, that's not the problem. We know how many members there are.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** You can also count public servants.

• (1005)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lauzon. Your time is up.

Mr. Simard.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to welcome the minister and the other officials.

I have to say that since I've been on the Official Languages Committee, the Department of National Defence is probably the one which gives us the most problems. There seems to be a resistance to fulfilling obligations as regards official languages. Contrary to my colleague Mr. Desrochers, I am very pleased that the minister responsible for official languages, the Honourable Mauril Bélanger, is also the Associate Minister of National Defence. If we are to make progress, we need someone who is very familiar with the issue. I am pleased to see that he is here as Minister Responsible for Official Languages and Associate Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Minister, if we want structural changes—and I think that's what we need within the department—we have to start at the top. Of course, the ministers are at the top, but there is also the new Chief of Defence Staff, Mr. Rick Hillier. Do you intend to speak to Mr. Hillier, within the framework of accountability, to see whether changes are possible? I think major changes have to take place.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** When you refer to the accountability framework, you are referring to another presentation which I would like to have given this morning, but which I did not give, but which I would be pleased to make some other time.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** That's correct.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** The answer is yes. The horizontal accountability framework based on results will apply to the entire Department of National Defence. I had the opportunity to discuss the issue, and the command leadership—not only the Chief of Staff—has been apprised of the matter and is ready to implement it. It's evident that, at least on the inside—I have to admit it's harder to recognize from the outside—there is a new awareness. The department is serious about reaching the objectives which, in 2003, were set over three years. The department also realizes that one of those objectives will be hard to meet. It therefore prefers to take a different approach. There has to be a better way of explaining it, and if we manage to do that, I think that Mr. Lauzon will also come on board.

Within the department, there is a will to systematically improve the situation. I can confirm this because I have seen it with my own eyes.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Colonel Dussault, you said that armed forces members were often forced to work in unilingual regions. This is not necessarily an excuse, but probably a reality.

It also true that military units are often split. There are anglophone units, francophone units and bilingual ones. In my opinion, this goes against effective integration. If military personnel speaking both languages worked together, even in unilingual regions, I think that it would be easier to understand the other official language and that integration would happen more easily. Do you take this issue of integration into consideration?

**Col Mark Dussault:** Within our bilingual units, we try to have a certain percentage of members from the other linguistic community. This is already happening.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** What is the percentage?

**Col Mark Dussault:** It's about 10 per cent.

•(1010)

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Are you thinking of increasing that number?

When you work with members of the other community, you acquire a better understanding of them. It would make sense to increase that percentage.

**Col Mark Dussault:** It's reasonable and we're also thinking about it. One of the problems I mentioned at the start is when people are sent on language training. They need an incubation period after they finish their course. But there are not enough positions for anglophones in French-language units to help them apply what they have learned. So we are trying to increase the percentage of anglophones, especially in French-speaking units, to help us get a return on our investment in language training.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Our government has committed to increase our military forces by 5,000 people, so are you recruiting bilingual candidates in particular?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** No, we do not focus on bilingualism. Historically, between 25 and 30 per cent of new recruits are francophones. The recruitment is therefore a reflection of Canada's demographics. Bilingualism is not a recruitment criteria, since we provide language training, especially for officers. We are in the process of systematically implementing this training. Every officer will receive the training. In fact, the success rate for lieutenant-colonels is 98 per cent for the BBB level. We will now try to increase that to the CBC level.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Simard.

We will continue with Mr. Desrochers.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Minister, people enrol voluntarily in the Canadian Forces, but once they are members, do they have the choice of learning a second language, or is it in their interest to become bilingual if they want to move up the ranks? How does that work?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** If you want to move up the ranks and become a senior officer, you have to be bilingual. So language training is offered to anyone who is interested.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** In theory, you might be bilingual, but are both languages spoken on a daily basis? It's like that in some departments. In theory, there is bilingualism, but in practice, people only speak English.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I would invite you to visit military facilities, be it National Defence headquarters or military bases.

Do people go out of their way to show us bilingual environments? That's possible. I'll have to think about it.

As far as I am concerned, I have had the opportunity to see that National Defence headquarters is a bilingual environment. If you listen to people in the hallways, they speak both French and English. You also hear both languages spoken on military bases. And it's clear that officers also speak both English and French.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** Mr. Minister, we were told that there was a problem, that there were two types of armed forces: the eastern forces and the western forces. In the west, people don't really accept bilingualism and francophones. Did you see that?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** No.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** You did not see that in the past.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** No.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** Let's go back a little bit, Mr. Minister. You said that it is important for people to move around and for members of the military to be in places where more French is spoken. In your opinion, will the closing down of the Royal Military College of Saint-Jean advance the cause of bilingualism? We have lost an important institution which would have allowed anglophones to...

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** The Royal Military College in Kingston...

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** I'm referring to Saint-Jean, because that town is located in Quebec and its environment is much more francophone than Kingston's environment.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I had nothing to do with that situation. The decision was taken before I arrived on the scene.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** Nevertheless, the closing of the institution was discussed. As for its repercussions, don't you think that...

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** In fact, it was discussed everywhere. The decision was taken and appealed. I do not intend to come back on that matter. I would rather focus on the present and the future. The department needs good training institutions. If I may, I would ask Mr. Hussey to tell you how the system works at the Royal Military College in Kingston.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** Let's talk about the mobility of military personnel. In the past, there was a military college in St-Jean, but it is gone. It was transferred to Kingston.

Let me put the question to you. In your opinion, was that a good decision? Did it advance the cause of bilingualism?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Hussey, can you tell us how the system works at the Canadian Royal Military College in Kingston?

[English]

**MGen Paul Hussey:** The college is fully bilingual. In fact, we still have a college presence in St-Jean. Because of the difference in the grade system in the province of Quebec with the two-year CEGEP program, we recruit into the military college one year earlier there than we do in the other provinces. In order to do that, we have a preparatory year that exists at the old campus in St-Jean, and we have 120 to 140 students who then go to the Collège militaire royal à Kingston.

• (1015)

[Translation]

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** Mr. Hussey, you are talking about the current reality. Nevertheless, Kingston is an anglophone environment. When the students leave the base, they are in a unilingual environment. But when they were in St-Jean, they had the opportunity to live in a francophone environment, which helped them integrate into a francophone environment. This also helped unilingual anglophones to better understand and experience the francophone reality.

**Col Mark Dussault:** If you want to advance the cause of bilingualism, I would like to point out that, as it now stands, 100 per cent of the students who graduate from the Royal Military College in Kingston are bilingual.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Furthermore, measures have been taken to help families, Mr. Desrochers. The Government of Canada has taken measures to ensure that there are French educational services and French community centres in Kingston. As a result, the families of officers have access to community services in French.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** I would like to ask you a final question, Mr. Bélanger, because we are running out of time.

People are always referring to situations like the one in Kingston. A little earlier, I listened as my colleague, Ms. Boivin, talked about another situation in New Brunswick. Would not it be possible to have a uniform policy to ensure that bilingualism is applied from coast to coast within the Canadian Armed Forces? Would not that solve the problem? We are always trying to do this or that, to adopt a five-year or three-year plan, we throw out numbers and so on. But would that not solve the problem, Mr. Bélanger?

Can we agree that there should be a uniform policy across the country?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Sir, the Official Languages Act applies to the Department of National Defence and is therefore applied consistently across the country. Members of the military share the same rights from coast to coast as far as language training and family services are concerned.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

This will be the last intervention before the minister has to leave.

Mr. Godin.

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

Mr. Dussault was saying earlier that Chaplain Turcotte knew beforehand that the region he was going to was English-speaking. However, I have trouble seeing whether this applies to a community and how it applies. You spoke about people in Kingston,

Mr. Dussault, who were almost fully bilingual. However, if these people ask for service in their own language, they're refused. They feel as though they are not welcome. I have a problem with this fact, because we are talking about respect for the official languages here. Saying that the chaplain knew ahead of time what the situation was in the place where he was going gives me the impression that we have regressed by 40 years. At that time, politicians more or less had to know English in order to come to Ottawa. This is almost the same thing. I must tell you in all honesty that I like what you are saying. I am not questioning, as other political parties have, the \$18 million that has been provided.

We must acknowledge that bilingualism is expensive. That is the reality of our country and that is its beauty: the fact that we have two official languages. I am not calling that into question. I am even prepared to congratulate you on the fact that almost all the military staff trained in Kingston speak both languages. Congratulations!

The problem is that bilingualism is not accepted. The chaplain who was sent there is an example of this. You say clearly, Mr. Dussault, that he knew before going that in order to live in such a place he had to speak English. However, we have to respect the two languages. I would like to know whether National Defence has to communicate with its military and civilian staff in their own language if they request this. Is it worth spending all this money if we are not prepared to comply with the Official Languages Act or if National Defence does not have to enforce the laws of Canada?

I would like some clarification, because this issue bothers me. I think that there is an impasse somewhere. Initially, we were talking about millions and millions of dollars to train people. The fact is that if people ask for documents from National Defence in their own language, they are told that in that particular part of the country, they do not have to do that. There is no respect shown for their language. I would like an explanation about this.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** There are two issues.

The first has to do with the participation of communities located around bases. Clearly, some regions are completely anglophone or more anglophone than others, while others are completely francophone or bilingual, such as the Gagetown military base in New Brunswick, the only officially bilingual province. Military personnel there can be served in French or English when they are off the base.

In the west, we can expect these areas to be more English-speaking, hence the need to enforce the Official Languages Act in the Department of National Defence. In order to do this, the department must, when the accountability framework applies—and we will come back to that—consult the communities internally and externally wherever it is possible to cooperate to offer educational, recreational and other services. Where such services do not exist, efforts must be made to establish them.

The issue of communications is governed by internal policies established by Treasury Board. I will ask Mr. Dussault to discuss specifically the policy that applies in Cold Lake.

•(1020)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** We no longer have a chair, but I would just like to ask what happens when an anglophone goes to Quebec and asks for information in English. Is it provided in English? Francophones do not get the information in French in western Ontario. The report yesterday revealed that the official languages were respected in Quebec, but that this was not the case in the west. I hope this will provide more information about the issue on which I would like an answer.

**Col Mark Dussault:** I would like to come back to your first point about the transfer of Padre Turcotte. We often have to transfer people to regions to which they do not necessarily want to go. We needed a francophone padre in Cold Lake. We had a choice between two people: one who had been posted to Saint-Jean for less than two years, and Padre Turcotte, who had been in Bagotville for over six years. In this case, the decision was relatively simple as regards career management. In the Canadian Armed Forces, people cannot always go where they want to, whichever language they speak.

I agree with you on that.

The second point has to do with the Official Languages Act, the language of work and the language of service. Padre Turcotte was going to a unilingual English-speaking region, where the language of work is English. Communications are normally in English. We at the Department of National Defence did not create our own policies. These are Treasury Board policies.

Padre Turcotte has the right, as does any member of the armed forces, to get service in French. As I mentioned, we have a policy in place which guarantees people the right to service in their language throughout Canada. The services include: relocation, pay, security, library, etc. So Padre Turcotte was entitled to get these services in French, like any other member of the armed forces. However, his language of work, the language of work of Cold Lake, is English, according to Treasury Board policy.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I have 30 seconds left, 15 for the question and 15 for the answer. The Commissioner of Official Languages has not yet submitted her report. Why were you saying earlier that the report would perhaps not find that Padre Turcotte was right? I do not understand why the Commissioner of Official Languages would release results of the report before it is completed.

**Col Mark Dussault:** There is a simple reason for this. When the Commissioner of Official Languages investigates, we in the official

languages branch conduct an investigation with her. When the investigators go to Cold Lake, we send some people as well, if possible, to conduct a parallel investigation. She asked us to be more proactive in our investigations. That is what we have done. We are in daily touch with the investigators and the commissioner. She has not yet ruled on the case of Padre Turcotte. We expect she will be presenting her report soon. Our communications with the investigators and the commissioner lead us to think that she will rule that Padre Turcotte's complaint is unfounded.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

As agreed, the meeting will end at 10:30 a.m., the time at which the minister has to leave. We have about two or three minutes left. We will adjourn, bearing in mind that the committee wishes to invite the Minister of National Defence to appear at some future date.

I would like to thank Ms. Jolicoeur, Mr. Hussey, Mr. Dussault and Mr. Bélanger for appearing before us today.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I would like to thank the committee, Mr. Chairman. We may have gotten off to a somewhat rocky start.

Various points were raised. If the official opposition critics think that the plan to increase by 5 per cent a year the number of people in bilingual positions who meet the requirements of those positions is not fast enough, I would say that the functional approach being introduced by the department is designed to speed up the implementation of this plan. I acknowledge myself that 10 years may seem long. We are going to try to speed up the process.

However, we must be aware of the nature of the Department of National Defence, where people are transferred. This is part of their work. We will try to use this functional approach in order to achieve more quickly the first objective identified by the department in 2003.

We would be pleased to come back every year, Mr. Chairman. In fact, being asked to appear before the committee helps the department to understand the information correctly and to move forward. If that is one of your intentions, I would like to encourage you to do this.

•(1025)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Bélanger. Once again, I would like to thank all our guests, as well as the committee members. Our next meeting is the day after tomorrow.

The meeting is adjourned.

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