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Mr. Guy Lauzon

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•(0910)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC)): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to our guests. We will be beginning our meeting with a reduced quorum since there's one member missing. We will begin hearing from our witnesses, beginning with Ms. Achimov.

Ms. Donna Achimov (Assistant Deputy Minister, Citizen and Community Services, Service Canada): Mr. Chair, committee members, good morning.

My name is Donna Achimov; I am the Assistant Deputy Minister of Citizen and Community Services at Service Canada. With me today is Ms. Francine L'Espérance, who is the Acting Director General of Labour Market Information, also at Service Canada. Thank you for inviting us to appear before the Standing Committee on Official Languages. This morning, we will share our experiences with and the results of Job Bank's automated translation system, as well as present a solution we are exploring to improve the quality of the service.

The objective of the presentation is to inform members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages about Job Bank operations and the Job Bank translation service. We will present a solution to improve the quality of the service and respond to questions from committee members.

As indicated on page 4, the National Employment Service, maintained by the Commission and under the Act, provides information on local employment opportunities in all regions of Canada for the purpose of assisting workers in finding suitable employment in their community, their province or in other regions of Canada. The National Employment Service also assists employers throughout the country to find workers who meet their needs by providing information on available positions and the skills that they seek.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Pardon me, Mr. Chairman. Which document are we looking at?

The Chair: Indeed, we are having some trouble following your presentation.

Mrs. Francine L'Espérance (Acting Director General, Labour Market Information, Service Canada): It is the French text of the document submitted by Service Canada.

Ms. Donna Achimov: Employment Assistance Services have existed for over 40 years and were first provided through local offices. Following progress in technology, Job Bank became one of

the first on-line job posting and job search services. It is available at no cost to employers.

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Pardon me, I want to point out that the text she is reading cannot be found in the document.

Mrs. Francine L'Espérance: Indeed, some of the remarks are not written on the slide. The presentation contains only the essential. You will therefore have to listen to us.

Ms. Donna Achimov: Under labour market development agreements, all provinces except Quebec and Saskatchewan have decided to continue using Job Bank for their online employment services.

As it is a national service, we upload the offers from Quebec and Saskatchewan, which are then made available to all job seekers in Canada. Employers post job offers online using pre-translated skills checklists and some free text for additional information if required. Job seekers fill out job profiles using the same skills checklists and are then matched with employers.

I am now on page 4, where we talk about the problem. To understand why we have adopted an automated translation system, it is important to know the scope and nature of the service. I believe this to be the main issue of today's discussion. With approximately one million job offers averaging two to three positions per offer, job seekers had access to three million job opportunities last year. In addition, Job Bank logs over 60 000 user sessions per year.

Over the past two years, we have seen an annual increase in demand of 30%. The objective of Job Bank is to respond to the pressing needs of job seekers and employers—hence the quick posting, limited lifespan, and simple and repetitive language of job offers. The service is transactional in nature. I would point out that this service is always very urgent for employers. We receive a very high volume of texts, and documents that come to us externally differ greatly from the static content for official publication by a department.

Further, in order to meet our service standards, we have a short turnaround time for the translation and revision of free text. The turnaround time is approximately four hours per text. As the lifespan of offers posted is approximately two weeks, the level of translation quality we demand is different from that of larger texts that are available over longer periods. The translation system has equal capacity in both official languages and depends above all on the language quality of the source text.

I am now on page 5 of the presentation, on which we talk about challenges in relation to translation. As these texts are written by a third party, Service Canada is not legally required to translate them under the new directive which states that third parties are not subject to the OLA. Service Canada does so, as requested by the Commissioner of Official Languages, in order to support official language minority communities and to encourage workforce mobility.

In 2002, when Job Bank gave access to employers to post their own offers directly online, we identified problems related to the translation of job offers. We approached the Translation Bureau, which estimated the cost of translation of the 450,000 jobs offers available on the site at the time without relying on technology to be \$25 million. Given time and cost constraints, and considering the large quantity of offers to be translated on Job Bank, we opted for the use of pre-translated checklists as well as an automated system accompanied by human revision to review free text, and hired a team of revisers.

●(0915)

In addition, we followed the recommendations of experts at Technolinguistic Services at the Translation Bureau to develop our system.

In most cases, automated translation is not appropriate; however, where there is a large volume of texts to be translated in a very short time, it is impossible to use human translation to deliver texts quickly enough and costs become exorbitant. In addition, since the messages are simple and repetitive in nature, fast revision of translated texts is possible in order to ensure comprehension.

Now on to page 6, where we talk about our three-year action plan and objectives. To resolve the problem of translation quality, in 2003 the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and the department approved a three-year action plan. The objectives of the plan were to reduce the quantity of free text to be revised by expanding the pre-translated checklist, to improve the translation system by adding a translation memory, to integrate quality-control mechanisms and to increase the proportion of offers being revised, all the while ensuring consultation and evaluation processes.

To ensure effective service management, we adopted a segmented service approach, providing priority service to bilingual communities and positions requiring bilingual capacity, thereby concentrating our efforts where they are most needed.

I am now on to page 7, which further talks about the three-year action plan. The creation of a revision team along with the combination of various technologies has enabled Job Bank to optimize the performance of its translation system. In fact, almost 90% of all job offers currently posted are of good linguistic quality in both official languages. This percentage covers 100% of bilingual communities and positions requiring bilingual capacity.

These results were achieved through improvements to the translation system, specifically by increasing the pre-translated checklist to 95% of offer content, limiting free text to 300 characters, adding new components—specialized dictionaries, a recurring text database, a translation memory and a new spelling and grammar

checker to support employers when creating job offers, and increasing the number of revisers.

We have not only saved millions of dollars through our automated translation system complemented with revision, we have also put in place a system that is recognized as a leading example by language technology experts in Canada and internationally.

Now on to page 8, on which we talk about where we are now. The number of complaints has decreased drastically, from 16 in 2003-2004 to seven in 2004-2005 and falling to three in 2005-2006. Problems in terms of quality that we currently face are restricted to the 13% of offers that are not revised due to time constraints.

To conclude, let us move on to page 9 where we talk about considerations. I hope that we can ensure translation and revision for all jobs requiring bilingual capacity and all jobs for bilingual communities. Our goal for next year is to improve the translation system and reach our 100% goal.

I am now on to the last page.

●(0920)

Our goal is to review 100% of job offers. However, even if we were to increase the number of revisers, given the constant increase in job-offer volume, on certain days we would be unable to review all offers within our four-hour turnaround time.

I hope that you consider that our very specific goals for next year, as outlined in our action plan, will indeed contribute to improving the process.

I conclude my presentation, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation, Ms. Achimov.

We will begin our first round of questions with Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Thank you very much for your presentation. It was very clear.

I wish to make a comment. The reason why we request documents in French is because we live in a bilingual country. To my mind, this means that information must be available in both French and English, and when I talk about French and English, I am also, necessarily, talking about the quality of language.

As a French speaker, I find it unimaginable that a government website should contain text in unintelligible gibberish. This is a matter of respect, of rights, and of the role that I play in this society. I am constantly receiving letters from people who tell me about what they have read on a Government of Canada website, whether it be Job Bank or elsewhere. This is very serious, especially because I know that we have highly competent translation services, with people who know what they're doing and are able to do it.

You talk, first and foremost, about cost. There are costs associated with living in this country and we must assume them. It is obvious that we are dealing with this situation in Quebec. We understand time and time again that it is impossible to receive equivalent services, and we want to bail out. However, so long as we are here, we are perfectly entitled to make sure that things are done right.

I would like you to meet some of the people who write to me. Those people feel hurt, troubled and devalued. If you say that there are fewer complaints, it is because people have given up. People no longer bother to lodge complaints or write letters to their MPs or newspapers. For those people, it is mission impossible. You admitted so yourself when you said that it was impossible to revise everything. For me, this is a sign of failure.

What I am calling for is not revision. I expect to be addressed in language that is correct, idiomatic and grammatical. That is my first comment and it comes straight from the heart, because it is our very presence in this country that is at stake. However, time and time again, we find ourselves dealing with this problem, it becomes very demotivating, and even more so for those looking for a job. When I visit the website to look for a job, which is supposed to be drafted in French, and I am unable to understand it, it is even more demotivating.

How can you fully assume your responsibility to post job offers in French? You seem to be saying that you do not have the resources. What must be done for things to change?

● (0925)

Mrs. Francine L'Espérance: Thank you, Ms. Barbot.

You are quite right. We should not post poor quality text. That is not the intention of the system. I will explain to you why we moved to an automated system.

First of all, there were financial considerations. At the time, without automated translation, it cost \$25 million to translate the offers. There were 450,000 at the time. Currently, we receive over a million and the number increases by 30% per year.

The limited life span of postings on Job Bank is another reason to move to an automated system. Job Bank is a transactional service. It allows employers to post their job offers across Canada. For them, the priority is to receive applications from job seekers as early as possible. It is the same thing for job seekers. They want to become aware of an offer, apply for the position and be matched with an employer as quickly as possible. The goal is to allow people to find employment as quickly as possible. Is that an excuse for poor quality? No.

We adopted an automated system after having consulted experts in the field. We took the existing translations and incorporated them into a translation memory. Every time a text goes through the memory and corresponds to another text held in the memory, it has no errors and can be posted directly without revision.

We have also begun to use pre-translated checklists. Using the National Occupational Classification, which is recognized throughout Canada, we have put together pre-translated checklists of skills. When employers post their job offers, they consult this list and check off the skills they require. All of this is pre-translated and there are no errors in the text.

It is in free text that we find errors. Free text is limited to 300 words. This is a space that is made available to employers so that they can add particular details concerning the offer, details that do not appear in our pre-translated checklists. Errors slip into this text.

When we started doing automated translation in 2002, we had a level of quality of only 20%, which was a poor result and things could not continue in that way. The deputy minister at the time approved a budget to refine our translation system. We went from 20 to 87% quality. We therefore have made enormous progress.

There are still 13% of the offers that cannot be revised. Some days, we revise them all. Other days, we receive up to 5,000 offers and we cannot revise them all. This is why we still have some of poor quality. Today, we are proposing not to post job offers that have not been revised, so that there will be no more poor quality texts in the system.

● (0930)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. L'Espérance. We are short of time. It is now Mr. Godin's turn to ask a question.

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

I would like to thank our two witnesses for sharing their perspective with us.

It is shameful that a country like ours, that has legislation on official languages, publishes such things. I find it absurd, unacceptable and insulting.

I granted an interview to the magazine *Paris Match* last spring. These people gave us an example of the quality of work done by automated translation software. They published a photograph of Ted Menzies, whom the current government had appointed parliamentary secretary and, inset in the article, a photo of Stephen Harper under which it said something like "anglophone minister for the French language, Roberti Menzi". That gives you an idea of just how ridiculous automated translation can be.

It is no news to you that I have already filed a complaint on this issue. Letters from the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages prove that this situation is not a new one; it dates back to 2002, perhaps even earlier. In 1999, she wrote the following:

I have been concerned about this issue for several years; in 1999, the Commissioner published two studies on the presence of French on the Internet and on official language issues on government sites. In 2002, two other studies focused on the same issue and made 28 recommendations [...]

Alluding to the fact that I had submitted a complaint, she said in the first paragraph:

In fact you have given several examples in your letter. The cases you have identified have merit pursuant to the *Official Languages Act*.

If you are informing us today that unverified information will no longer be posted on the site, I conclude that that would be a very good thing. A poor quality translation that has not been checked does not deserve to be posted.

Imagine what the new members of the committee will think when they see this site. We are talking here about Service Canada's site, therefore the government. An article in the September 16 edition of the daily *Le Droit*, gives the following account:

Bidding on a federal government contract is not always an easy thing, particularly for a francophone contractor.

The MERX site, exclusive provider of the federal government's electronic tendering service, is fertile ground for dubious translations, some even literally incomprehensible.

Since August 31 last, the Department of Public Works, for example, invites its suppliers to bid on “le mur de canal de Rideau repare” [the wall of canal of Rideau repair]

The document is careful to point out that the work involves “l’entree de garage de elizabeth de reine, la cinquieme avenue pour courber au parc de lansdowne et aux cochons soutient la route (chemin Hogs Back !) le pont de balançoire au pont fixe” [the entry of garage of Elizabeth of Queen, the 5th Avenue to curve with the park with the Park of Lansdowne and the pig supports the road (way Hogs Back!) the bridge of swing to the fixed bridge]

Imagine a tender like that appearing on Canada's website. The article also states:

The documents are also available, still quoting the call for tenders, “pour regarder aux bureaux de travaux et au gouvernement public entretienent Canada dans Willowdale » [to look at the offices of work and the public government maintain Canada in Willowdale] The businesses interested in bidding on this project, whose value varies between \$500,000 and one million dollars, must however keep in mind that “ la norme nomme de le et les conditions pour cette acquisition sont incorporées par la partie de reference et forme des documents tendre et de contrat ” [the standard names of and the conditions for this acquisition are incorporated by the part of reference and the tender shape of the documents and of contract]

• (0935)

I also have a document that dates from May 23, 2006. It calls for:

Slaughter, découpeur de viande, porcupine plain. L’employeur cherche slaughterer ayant de l’expérience pour la viande empaquetant l’usine (la plant). Les candidats devraient aussi avoir la réduction de viande et la saucisse faisant la capacité. [Slaughter, carver of meat, porcupine plain. The employer seeks slaughterer having experience for the meat packing up the factory (the seedling). The candidates should also have the meat reduction and sausage making the capacity.]

It is unbelievable!

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoulu, CPC): One wonders what they want.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's unbelievable! And you are telling me that we've made progress? Just imagine, these absurdities now represent only 13% of the total, and we are the laughing stock of the world. Only 13% such offers are left in English and in French. It's totally unacceptable for our country. We have an Official Languages Act. I would call upon the Government of Canada to stop this immediately. It's completely unacceptable!

At the end, it says:

A translation is provided for guidance only. Due to tight job posting deadlines and to the significant quantity we receive each day [...]

Just imagine, all they're saying is that they're trying to help us.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, you have 30 seconds to ask your question.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, we are at the point where there are no more questions left to ask. We simply want it to stop. We are asking the Canadian government to stop this immediately. If we are incapable of providing good quality translation or creating documents which are not as bad as these, this is not the type of thing we want to see on a Government of Canada website. That is simply the message I am trying to get through.

The Chair: Thank you. We will move on.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I still have 15 seconds left. Perhaps the witness could answer.

The Chair: Yes. Would you like to respond?

Mrs. Francine L'Espérance: I would.

Mr. Godin, you are right. We are suggesting that we will not post badly written texts anymore and will only post those which have been proofread.

The Chair: We will now give the floor to Mr. Harvey.

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): I was listening to Mr. Godin and I was, frankly, embarrassed. Since coming to Ottawa—which is recently—I find that the services provided to members of Parliament are excellent. I have met with officials who provided high-quality services in both languages.

Today, I find myself laughing at a job posting in which candidates for a meat cutter's job are asked to work on a “seedling”. Ms. L'Espérance, this is so ridiculous that I can only say, as Mr. Godin did, that it is unacceptable.

I worked in the field of electronics for many years. You said that your software has a translation memory. Perhaps you should add a bit more memory, because there are problems. If the quality of texts is currently in the order of 87%, I would be afraid to find out what it was when the quality stood at 20%. What a joke. When everyone is laughing, from the Bloc Québécois members to the members from the New Democratic Party, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, it's because it truly is a joke.

Today, I would be embarrassed to say that I was the head of your service, and I would be embarrassed to present this to the committee. I'm normally a calm person, but as one of my colleagues said, “It gets my goat.”

This is not rocket science. If the quality of a text is in question, it would not be difficult to get a red light to flash. So instead of proofreading every single text, people could at least concentrate on the 13% which are at issue.

We must also be careful. If ensuring that an adequate translation is provided means that it takes four or five days longer for French-speaking candidates to apply for a job, they are the ones who risk being at a disadvantage. So should a job posting be delayed by five to seven days if it is to appear simultaneously in both languages? Again, it's a problem.

Please understand that you have a responsibility. On page 5, you say that you are not legally bound to translate these texts because they come from third parties. However, they are posted on your website. So don't tell me this is not your responsibility. It is your responsibility. If something falls into my jurisdiction, I am responsible for it. So you are responsible because these things fall under your jurisdiction. Regardless of the source of a text, you have to make sure that it makes sense. Perhaps an idea might be to create 175 standard sentences which people can select to correspond to their criteria. This might not result in a fantastic description, but at least, with 175 or 200 sentences, the content might be about right.

I'm embarrassed. I'm portrayed as an idiot in the foreign press because people say that our translations are idiotic. Ms. L'Espérance, we are in Canada. It's your job to make sure that the texts make sense.

Since I have to ask you a question, I have a good one. Out of the 800,000 job postings which are on your website, how many have been machine-translated?

● (0940)

Mrs. Francine L'Espérance: The answer to that question is that all requests are automatically translated and then revised. However, we do not have time to revise every text. Therefore, we intend to stop posting job offers which have not been revised in order to avoid the problem of bad quality translations.

You suggested that the client select pre-written phrases. That is exactly what we have been doing with our pre-translated lists for the past three years. The plan was approved and developed in cooperation with the official languages commissioner, the same person you were referring to earlier. Our objective was 100% quality, but supply has increased considerably since 2002, namely by 30% per year.

I agree that Canada should not make international headlines for the bad quality of its work. However, if we do not resort to machine translation, we would not be able to strike a balance between sufficient time to post an offer and making sure a quality translation has been provided.

We have specialized dictionaries, pre-translated lists, grammatical proofreaders, and we are in a process of installing a source grammatical proofreader linked to the employer's text.

You must understand, and we have already said this, that Service Canada does not have the right to change the employer's text. The employer does not always provide perfect text. When we post the original offer, it often contains grammatical and stylistic errors. And we do not have the right to provide a better translation. We may correct typos, but we must translate the original text. That is why we are going to install a source grammatical proofreader which will be available to the employer to improve the quality of job postings in both languages. This means that translation will be better because the original text for the job offer will also be better.

We therefore intend not to post mistake-ridden texts anymore. We will not be a laughing stock anymore. We will post the job offers on time and we will continue to improve our system to ensure that we can post every single offer as the system is improved and as our people proofread them.

● (0945)

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Harvey, but your time is up.

Mr. Luc Harvey: It's because the answer was so long.

Mrs. Francine L'Espérance: I'm sorry.

The Chair: Mr. Simard.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for being late, and I apologize for having missed the witnesses' presentation. As I arrived, I heard part of the translation Mr. Godin read.

I think it is important to tell you the extent to which this problem concerns us. Once again, we really have to see how bad the translation is. My colleague Marcel Proulx had his biography translated. The phrase "Marcel Proulx, qui vient de l'Original en Ontario," was translated by "Marcel Proulx from Moose, Ontario." The phrase "avec ses trois fils" was translated by "with his three wires".

This is completely unacceptable, and this is something we have to keep saying again and again. This is so bad that we have to keep saying it. The other day I was at the Ottawa Airport and on the loudspeaker I heard, "Merci de ton patience". This has nothing to do with you, but it is a matter of respect from one of the two official languages. If people at the Ottawa Airport hear this, they'll just laugh at us. At this point, we are turning ourselves into a laughing stock.

I think that your machine isn't working. I apologize for not hearing your presentation, but I feel that this country's francophones should not be prepared to accept translations like those we have received. In Ottawa, almost everything is translated from English to French. As French-speaking members of Parliament, we are often forced to wait for the translation. We wait patiently. We are ready to wait, provided that we get a quality product. As it is, that already constitutes a compromise of sorts.

I also believe that translations like these send a wrong message to French-speaking members of Parliament and Canadians. They send the message that these are second-class citizens. This is an important point. And there's worse—it sends officials the message that they are allowed to publish translations that are completely unacceptable. We have been trying to tell officials to speak French and take courses, we are encouraging them to become bilingual, but we are ready to accept documents that are full of mistakes.

That is a real problem, as far as I am concerned. If the issue is costs, let's get rid of the machine and hire more people to produce translations that make sense. You are trying to improve the machine, but for the past few years you have had no success in that. If it still isn't working, you should get rid of it and do what you need to do to give Canadians and members of Parliament translations that make sense.

I'm wondering whether you keep the machine to save money. I imagine the only reason to have a machine to do the work normally done by translators is to save money. Is that your primary concern?

Ms. Donna Achimov: The goal is not to save money. But there is a great deal of volume. In previous years, a minimum percentage of positions were posted. That percentage is increasing every year. Last year, one million positions were posted. It is almost impossible to have enough people to do all that translation.

So the reasons are translation volume and employer demand. They want positions to be posted not within a week or a couple of days, but within four hours. So demand is currently extremely high, and we have very little time to post positions.

● (0950)

Mrs. Francine L'Espérance: Exactly. We also have to understand that quality is excellent in the case of all bilingual positions and all positions posted in all bilingual communities. We ensure that employers who wish to recruit for positions in the other language receive the best quality.

You say that machine translation is poor. It is true that machine translation is poor if there is no pre-translation, if texts are not repetitive and if there is no revision. A translation machine cannot operate by itself. The technology is not there yet.

We have revised all texts produced by our machine. Now 87% of the texts are good, and that percentage rises to 100% for bilingual communities and bilingual positions. So that leaves the 13% which turns us into a laughing stock, so we will have to continue improving.

The issue is not just money, though money is not a negligible factor. If we dropped machine translation completely, we would have to spend an extra \$40 million on job offers posted on a site for two weeks at most. In those circumstances, even the Translation Bureau—and they will tell you this themselves—would use machine translation and revise the text produced. Even the number of positions we post, we simply cannot use translators alone.

Moreover, the texts are identical. When we use pre-translated lists, all employers look at the skill list and take those they need. A translator would lose a great deal of time translating the new list of skills and qualifications. We have reduced the amount of free text. We are preparing pre-translated lists so that the quantity of free text can be reduced even further.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Is it because there's not enough staff?

Mrs. Francine L'Espérance: Even if we were to double our staff, we could not fully meet demand on any given day because of the four-hour deadline. That is why we need the flexibility not to publish what has not been revised. Our goal is to revise all texts produced, but if we have been unable to do so on any given day, we don't publish what we have not revised, and no poor-quality texts are published.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Am I out of time?

The Chair: Thank you, our time is up.

Ms. L'Espérance, thank you for your testimony.

We will take a two-minute break, to allow our other witnesses to take their place. Thank you.

Mrs. Francine L'Espérance: Thank you.

• (0955)

The Chair: We are resuming our hearing of witnesses.

We have two further witnesses, Mr. Barabé and Ms. Kennedy. Please begin with your opening remarks. You have about 10 minutes.

Mrs. Francine Kennedy (Chief Executive Officer, Translation Bureau, Department of Public Works and Government Services): The opening remarks will take no longer than that.

The Chair: Very good, thank you.

Mrs. Francine Kennedy: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, honourable members.

My name is Francine Kennedy, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Translation Bureau. With me this morning is Donald Barabé, Vice-President of Professional Services at the Translation Bureau.

Let me begin by thanking you for inviting me to come and talk to you about the usefulness and limitations of machine translation systems and the possibility of using them for the Job Bank.

Before I do so, with your permission I would like to take a few moments to outline the Translation Bureau's mission and give you a snapshot of our services and the various translation tools that we have. I will also give you a brief introduction to language technologies, their potential and their limitations. Lastly, I will speak to you about the Translation Bureau's contributions and recommendations with respect to the Job Bank.

[*English*]

The mission of the Translation Bureau is to support the Government of Canada in its efforts to provide services for and communicate to Canadians in the official language of their choice.

Since its creation in 1934, the Translation Bureau has been meeting the translation needs of federal government departments and agencies, the judiciary, both houses of Parliament, parliamentary committees, and the Prime Minister's Office. This mandate was broadened in 1987 to include vocal interpretation, sign language interpretation, and our terminology standardization program.

In 1995 the Translation Bureau became a special operating agency of Public Works and Government Services Canada. As a special operating agency, the Translation Bureau operates in a businesslike environment. Services are optional and on a cost-recovery basis, with the exception of services to Parliament and the terminology standardization program, which remain vote funded.

Federal institutions can therefore choose to do business with the bureau or to contract out their needs directly to the private sector in accordance with contracting rules. The decision is entirely up to the institution.

[*Translation*]

The Translation Bureau has 1,800 staff, including 1,200 translators, interpreters and terminologists. It has 60 points of service across the country from St. John's, Newfoundland to Vancouver, British Columbia. The Bureau provides services for over 150 departments, agencies and commissions. We translate in both official languages and in over 100 aboriginal and foreign languages. We also provide interpretation services in 40 languages.

We produce bilingual glossaries on a wide variety of subjects. For example, we recently produced one on diamond cutting, in cooperation with the Matane CEGEP, at the request of the Northwest Territories. We also have electronic terminology products, such as Termium, the Government of Canada's linguistic databank, which contains over 3.5 million terms. We also manage the Language Nook, a website that is available to all public servants to help them work in both official languages and provide them with a variety of electronic writing tools.

Last of all, the Translation Bureau supports the implementation of Canada's Official Languages Act and ensures that the federal government has the language services it needs, by supporting the development of the Canadian language industry, promoting the development and dissemination of standards in Canada and offering its specialists' support to other departments and agencies.

I will now address the topic of language technologies, their potential and their limitations. At the risk of disappointing you, I must start off by saying that, right at this moment, in spite of all the technological progress since the unveiling of the first automatic translation system in the United States in 1958, machines are not yet able to take the place of flesh-and-blood translators. Further progress would require artificial intelligence-based technology, the development of which remains a considerable way off. Translation is a complex mental process. Translators do not translate only words. They also translate ways of thinking, as well as cultural, social, intellectual, scientific, technical and other values — human values.

This is not to say that there is no place for machine translation or computer-assisted translation; on the contrary. In controlled contexts, machine translation can be an extremely useful tool that can increase the productivity of human translators. We speak from experience, as the Translation Bureau is in fact the oldest and one of the largest users of machine translation in the world.

We have been using a machine translation system for some 30 years to produce bilingual communications that are broadcast every day, come rain, come shine, going out as many as 250 times a day, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to the entire population of Canada from coast to coast to coast. As you might have guessed, I am referring to our weather reports, which we translate using a machine translation system. This entails the production of a substantial quantity of weather reports, that are translated into either French or English, depending on where the text comes from. A team of translators works on site to validate the translation, which involves reading and, where necessary, correcting the translation produced by the machine translation system.

Why, you may ask, does machine translation work well in this particular case? The key is in the writing. Weather reports are subject to controlled writing that uses a pre-determined format. The authors must, therefore, comply with a writing protocol. Controlled writing is the only possible way to use a machine translation system effectively.

Research continues and our technology watch team is monitoring technological developments in this area very closely. An interesting example is the recent development of systems based not on lexical data but on statistical sampling, which could improve machine translation significantly.

Organizers of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing gave an undertaking that a comprehensive multilingual information service would be available at the games at all times and in all locations. To achieve this, they will use state-of-the-art language technologies. Those in charge did, however, reach the conclusion that, while several technologies are mature enough to be integrated, others such as free text machine translation need to be combined with safer language transfer methods and must always be combined with the opportunity to fall back on human translation.

Other tools, such as translation memories, also provide effective solutions to the constantly increasing demand for translation, something which is not limited to the federal government or to Canada, but is a worldwide phenomenon. Translation memories make it possible to store sentences or parts of texts that have already been translated and to retrieve them for use in a new translation. Each source sentence and its translation has to be entered in the database. These systems are recommended in the case of texts that are very repetitive.

• (1000)

The Translation Bureau plays an active role in the area of technological tools. For example, we are present in all of the major international fora that deal with language technologies. We maintain close links and exchange opinions, advice and expertise with those who direct the largest translation services, including those of the European Community and United Nations. We are one of the founding members of the brand new Language Technologies Research Centre housed by the Université du Québec en Outaouais.

Let us go back to the Job Bank, however. Mr. Chair, while the Translation Bureau does not translate job offers, in recent years, it has worked with the Job Bank's team in a number of areas. During this time we have continually said that machine translation systems are still not sufficiently well developed to translate free text and that subsequent revision by a real person would be required.

We sympathize with our colleagues from the Job Bank, because the challenge they face is a substantial one. Of course the solution lies in technical improvements such as the ongoing enhancement of the dictionary, but of even greater importance is the use of menus and controlled writing, i.e., the elimination of free text.

While the solution may seem simple, its implementation may prove complicated. I can only imagine the numerous technical, budgetary and political constraints those in charge of the Job Bank have to contend with. This undoubtedly explains why the Job Bank's team followed up on a number of technical recommendations, but was reluctant to introduce a writing protocol and impose stringent limits on, or entirely eradicate, the use of free text in job announcements. We are continuing to hold discussions and are willing to offer our assistance.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. That ends my presentation.

• (1005)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kennedy. We will have only one round of questions, at seven minutes each. You may also share your time, if you wish.

We will begin with Mr. Simard.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Welcome Ms. Kennedy and Mr. Barabé.

I would like to know whether or not your budget is sufficient, because you seem to be overwhelmed with requests.

Mrs. Francine Kennedy: Essentially, our budgets cover translation services provided to the House of Commons, the Senate and our terminology program. All other services are funded by cost recovery. For us, the issue is not a budgetary one.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Very well. You said earlier that you call on the private sector to do some of the work.

Mrs. Francine Kennedy: Yes.

Hon. Raymond Simard: What percentage of your work is done by the private sector?

Mrs. Francine Kennedy: Between 35 and 40% for translation and approximately 50% for interpretation.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Do you restrict yourselves to Ottawa?

Mrs. Francine Kennedy: Absolutely not.

Hon. Raymond Simard: For example, you can call upon freelance translators in New Brunswick or Manitoba?

Mrs. Francine Kennedy: Exactly. Our repertoire contains the names of freelance translators and translation firms from across Canada.

Hon. Raymond Simard: How do you determine whether a text will be translated by a machine or by a translator?

Mrs. Francine Kennedy: That is not how we use machine translation. When the Translation Bureau receives a document, we do not decide whether it will be translated by a machine or by a translator. We only use machine translation in very specific fields, such as weather reports, where the texts are repetitive and subject to controlled writing, in which drafters must comply with a writing protocol. In these cases, we may use machine translation.

Aside from that, the Translation Bureau does not use machine translation.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Finally, I can say, as Mr. Harvey stated earlier, that we are generally well served and that the translation is very good. There may be delays at times, but I think that depends on what is going on in Ottawa. You should be congratulated on the work you do. It is important to respect both official languages and to make sure documents are revised before they are published.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simard.

Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: First of all, I must start by commending you on the services you provide. Everyone agrees that when you are involved in a translation, there really is no problem.

However, I didn't realize that the Bureau was organized in the same way as any other company. You offer services on a cost recovery basis. I would imagine you have to reach a certain percentage. That calls into question the very principle of bilingualism in Canada. Your goal is not to make sure that the services you must provide to the public are accessible to everyone. You have to focus on profitability, which in some way compromises the principle that services should be provided whenever needed. Moreover, if you are a company, your clients also have financial concerns and may well choose to look elsewhere for less costly translation services. We've seen the results of competition and subcontracting in this type of context.

You stated that machines cannot yet replace human translators. Personally, I would say that machines will never be able to replace human translators. It seems to me that in every case, even in the field of artificial intelligence, it is unimaginable that a machine could

think and convey cultural, social and intellectual values. That is what human beings can do, unless we become machines ourselves, but I don't think that will happen in our lifetimes.

Nevertheless, you say that controlled writing works, which confirms what the previous witnesses said. The work of an organization such as Service Canada is technical in nature. In that kind of situation, people may well choose to make greater use of controlled writing. The service could be designed so that if an employer has something else to add, this could be done during the interview. In any event, it's unacceptable for the work to be of poor quality. In that case the service provided does not have the desired effect. I was told that they would avoid posting non revised texts. That shouldn't apply to just one language. It is a matter of justice for both official languages. It may slow down the machinery, but an advantage should not be given to anglophones or francophones based on where they live.

Do you agree with me on that?

• (1010)

Mrs. Francine Kennedy: Yes I agree with you that the Official Languages Act clearly states that information must be available to Canadian citizens in both official languages. This morning, I believe my colleagues from Job Bank said that they were working very hard to find a solution to this problem.

The Chair: Ms. Brunelle, you have three minutes left.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: I was elected for the first time in 2004. I have used your services, and I know they are truly exceptional. It must be said that it is thanks to you that French is still spoken on Parliament Hill. But it is also thanks to the needs of francophone members. This is important if we want to maintain jobs.

From the start, we've been told about the exorbitant costs of these services. We must not forget however that there are revenues involved as well because translators pay taxes. When I fill out my federal income tax return, I have access to very well translated forms. Clearly, poor quality machine translations are absolutely intolerable. It is a factor in the assimilation of workers. It reminds me of Christmas time, when you are trying to assemble a toy made in China and the French translation makes no sense and so you turn to the English. So, it is a factor in the assimilation of francophones who are basically considered second-class citizens. These people may be going through a difficult time. These jobs are often not specialized; unilingual applicants would not have access to them. Why not do what parliamentary committees do and refuse to accept or post a document when the translation is not correct?

I must say, it's rather incomprehensible to me. There are a number of multilingual countries. Just look at the European Union. You say that you are consulting. I support you and would encourage you to continue to seek out information as to their ways of doing things. They must work with a host of cultures and languages. It must be incredibly complicated. They must certainly have a great deal of experience. We simply cannot fail here, when we know how important the matter is.

What differentiates Canada from the United States is our two languages as well as the richness of the French language and culture. That was more of a comment than a question.

• (1015)

The Chair: Would you like to comment? You have 30 seconds.

Mrs. Francine Kennedy: I could not agree more. The fact that this is a bilingual country is a great asset.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kennedy.

Mr. Godin, you have seven minutes.

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

The committee is not complaining about the translation that is done by our translators. We are complaining about the increasing use of machines, which are unable to translate as well as they can. You described the problem very well.

We Acadians have a certain way of speaking which is hard to translate. You will never find an Acadian machine, because one doesn't exist.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: It would be hard to understand.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Ms. Kennedy, it was crushed 400 years ago and does not exist today. I can assure you that we will never find a machine able to translate what we say.

I'll give you an example. I would like our researcher to check something out. On Job Bank, offers are only translated from English into French. The previous witness told us that they are also translated from French into English.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré (Committee Researcher): I didn't find any. I searched for an hour. I clicked on all sorts of postings.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, I would ask that the previous witnesses give us some evidence that this is being done. Our excellent researcher worked for an hour and could not find anything. I would ask the previous witnesses to give us some proof that advertisements are being translated from French into English so that we can see what it looks like.

In a job offer dated May 23, 2006 which I have brought in, the following appears at the bottom of the page, "This job advertisement has been provided by an external employer. Service Canada is not responsible for the accuracy, authenticity or reliability of the content." Service Canada is not responsible for what appears in the advertisement, even though Service Canada is responsible for getting everything backwards.

Mr. Luc Harvey: Service Canada does not assume responsibility for this.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Service Canada does not assume responsibility, but it got everything backwards with the poor translation. As translators, you must be embarrassed by this.

Mrs. Francine Kennedy: I will let my colleague respond to your comment.

Mr. Donald Barabé (Vice-President, Translation Bureau, Department of Public Works and Government Services): As Ms. Kennedy said earlier, we have a great deal of sympathy for our colleagues have to deal with this challenge. As a translator, I feel ambivalent. I do not want machines to replace us, and I do not think

this is going to happen, as you said so well a little earlier, Ms. Barbot. At the same time, the demand is so great throughout the world that human translators cannot meet it. Consequently, technology has to help us out at some point. Unfortunately, it is not yet perfect. That is clear. That is why controlled writing is becoming increasingly important.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, I want to make the following point. I don't think we are concerned about what is happening in your shop. We have no problem with you using machines, if that helps our translators. The problem lies with the quality of the final product, which causes people to laugh at us.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: The problem is the quality.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is where the problem lies. The whole world says that Canada defends the language of the heart, and then tells us what we have done.

Mr. Chairman, I do not think we are questioning the idea of using machines. What we are questioning is the finished product for public consumption. We can use whatever tools we like when we go into our offices, but when the product is to be used by the public, we don't want such things to happen.

• (1020)

Mr. Donald Barabé: This morning, our colleagues tabled a proposal that should deal with the problem.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, the proposal is not clear. Does it state that a job offer that comes in English will not be translated if it has not been revised but that it will be made available to the public? That is another thing: these things cannot be made available to the public. When the government disseminates something publicly, it must be in both official languages. This is not clear. I would like some clarification. When will this come into effect? Immediately? I asked Mr. Brison that question when he was the minister responsible for Public Works. He told me that it would be done immediately, that no information from the Government of Canada would leave his department without being revised. We do not know when this will come into effect. I do not know whether we can call back our witnesses again before the House adjourns so that they can give the committee some clarification.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I have two points. First, I'm astounded that in 2006 texts in French are still of such poor quality. Second, if machines cannot translate properly, could there be some human support to correct the errors? Earlier, the representatives from Service Canada said that they did not correct language errors. I am sorry, but we're giving this to francophones or anglophones who live in minority situations. This material must be corrected by someone to make the job offer understandable to everyone. In 2006, we are accustomed to living in a consumer world, but the quality of our language is not something that can be consumed.

I share the opinion of my colleagues who say that when people laugh at the poor quality of our French outside the country, we have a very serious problem. We live in a bilingual world, and material should be available in excellent French. I think this is unacceptable for the francophones of this country, whether they live in Quebec, Manitoba, Acadia or elsewhere.

I come now to my question. How much more would it cost to have Job Bank advertisements translated or revised professionally?

Mrs. Francine Kennedy: I have some difficulty answering that question. The cost indicators for translation are volume, the number of notices and the length of the texts. Are we talking about texts of 300, 500 or 1,000 words? We need to look into this with our colleagues from Job Bank. We must also take the deadlines into account, as they said. Four hours is a cost indicator, because it would take many translators to produce such a volume of work in four hours. Even using technology, the cost is about two million dollars.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: You are telling us that the quality will never be on a par with the quantity. A lot of this material will be produced, because there's a great deal of demand, but the quality is being neglected.

Mrs. Francine Kennedy: You asked me what the cost would be and I told you about the factors that entail certain costs.

Is this feasible? Definitely.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: So we have to try to find a solution that gives priority to quality over quantity.

Mrs. Francine Kennedy: Absolutely. Quantity leads to higher costs, but that does not mean the work cannot be done.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: It is alarming.

The Chair: We have enough time for a one or two-minute round. Are you satisfied so far?

Hon. Raymond Simard: I forgot to make a comment earlier.

If errors of this type were made in English, there would be a significant reaction very quickly. I come back to the issue of respect for the French language. When documents are produced in this way, it is really an insult to the francophones of this country.

•(1025)

The Chair: I just gave you 30 seconds, Mr. Simard. I will therefore give 30 seconds to each party.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I would like to make a comment. Are machines in charge of us or are we in charge of them?

If the demand is too great, we will simply have to proceed more slowly, because we cannot keep up to the demand. It is not as though it were a matter of life or death. At the moment, there are debates with doctors involving money. Money has to be spent to keep me, my loved ones and everyone else alive. However, when it comes to translating documents we can insist that employers deal with translation professionals and submit texts that are correct, or we can tell them that we cannot deal with any more demand with the means at our disposal.

In no case should this situation result in an expression of contempt for the people who read these texts. Solutions do exist, but we must really look at the problem from this point of view.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Barbot.

Were you wanting to say something, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Yvon Godin: I think that Job Bank should follow the same procedure that we use in committees. We have a rule that a witness cannot table documents with the committee if they are not available in both official languages.

This would mean that an employer seeking to place a job offer on Job Bank, who has not found the time to have his advertisement translated, would not be allowed to do so.

Once again, Mr. Chairman, I would ask for clarification on the current position. It was not clear earlier.

The Chair: I will ask the Clerk to write a letter on this matter.

Mr. Lemieux, is there anything that you would like to add?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): No.

The Chair: Thank you to our witnesses, see you again!

Ms. Barbot, do you wish to table your motion?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Yes, we are ready for the motion.

The Chair: We are going to suspend the meeting for a couple of minutes.

•(1025) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1025)

The Chair: I will now ask Ms. Barbot to move her motion.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: The motion reads as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Official Languages give an official apology to His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, about the treatment which he received upon his arrival in Canada and recommends that the government do the same.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Barbot.

Is there any debate on the motion?

•(1030)

Mr. Luc Harvey: Ms. Barbot, Minister Verner will be appearing before the committee on June 8. We will be able to question her as to what actually happened. I am not asking you to withdraw your motion, but, rather, to postpone introducing it until after we have heard from the Minister. I think that would be in everybody's interest.

It is already about a month since Mr. Diouf was here. I do not think that it will make much of a difference if the motion is tabled five weeks after his visit rather than four. Thus far, members of this committee have worked together well; we understand your position and you have our support; I would just ask that you wait another week before tabling your motion. It would be most appreciated.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I understand your position; however, this is a committee proposal. I was in Winnipeg, I saw what happened, and I felt the disapproval of the other members of the francophone community who were there. Furthermore, we have asked the Minister endless questions and we always get the same answer. I am not holding out much hope that she will give us a different answer when she appears before the committee.

I want the motion to be debated now.

Mr. Luc Harvey: Ms. Barbot, I believe that you were the only member of the committee who was in Winnipeg that day. I would like to have the opportunity to put my own questions to the Minister. I may well support your motion, but I do not think that seven more days will make a significant difference. The House is still in session and we have plenty of time. I do not think that we are asking too much and we would greatly appreciate your cooperation.

The Chair: Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, I have to agree with Mr. Harvey.

It is not a matter of withdrawing the motion; it is an important motion and I am prepared to support it. Nevertheless, I would like to have the opportunity to question the Minister and her staff, because I have heard all sorts of versions of what happened when His Excellency came to Canada. We may even decide to hear from other witnesses after having heard from the Minister.

Mr. Luc Harvey: Seven days can hardly be considered a lengthy postponement.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is why you have my support; you would not have it if you wanted to postpone debating the motion until September. However, I would like to have the opportunity to question the Minister.

Mr. Luc Harvey: We would greatly appreciate that. It seems to me that we already have a good working environment, and I think that we can—

The Chair: Are there any other comments? Mr. Simard.

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

The Conference of La Francophonie took place back home, in Saint-Boniface. It was a real success for Manitoba's francophone community. I met with the Senegalese Minister of Foreign Affairs, and I can tell you that there was even talk of racism. The incident is very serious.

I agree with Mr. Godin. If the minister comes next week, we will be able to ask questions. However, it is up to Ms. Barbot to decide whether she wants to table her motion today. I can tell you that this incident was considered very serious.

The Chair: Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I simply want to tell our Conservative colleagues that I hope they will make a commitment to postpone consideration of the motion.

I do not sit on this committee, but I want to tell you that the government's position will not change on this. The same motion was tabled at the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, and it was adopted. Therefore, this motion is redundant, but I think that it is up to the Committee to make its own choices, and I will not oppose that. I will leave it up to my colleagues from the three opposition parties to make the choice.

• (1035)

Mr. Luc Harvey: We have the chance to have a one-week delay before hearing from the minister responsible for the matter referred to in the motion.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I would like to know two things. Is her visit confirmed?

Mr. Luc Harvey: Yes.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Precisely.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Okay.

The Chair: The clerk tells us it is confirmed.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: As her appearance does not deal with this topic, I want it to be on the agenda that we will question her on this.

The Chair: We can question her on any topic.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: On whatever we want.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: No problem.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Well then, let's wait a week. Thank you very much.

The Chair: We would need unanimous consent.

Mr. Luc Harvey: Someone has to move the motion. I can do it.

Ms. Barbot, do you want to second my motion?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Why not simply withdraw it?

Some hon. members: No, no!

Ms. Vivian Barbot: That is true, we are not withdrawing it.

Mr. Luc Harvey: Second my motion.

The Chair: Agreed?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Now let's talk about the revised work plan. Does everyone have a copy?

Hon. Raymond Simard: It is not completed yet.

The Chair: Have we scheduled a witness for June 6? On June 6, we will be hearing from Ms. Adam, on June 8, Minister Josée Verner, and on June 13, the Honourable Lawrence Cannon. Have you spoken to Minister Cannon?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Mark D'Amore): Not yet, but I have sent on the information.

The Chair: We hope to have Minister Cannon here on the 13th.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Chairman, I will raise the matter with Mr. Cannon this afternoon.

The Chair: Okay. On June 15, we are scheduled to study—

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I do not understand.

The Chair: If we do a report—

Hon. Raymond Simard: We want to finish the report before...

The Chair: We are going to consider it on June 15. On June 20, we will do the same thing. On June 22, we will hear from Mr. Lafrance, who is confirmed. We have a rather busy agenda.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I must say that we should get in the habit of meeting with just one person or one group, instead of two or three. When Service Canada appeared earlier, we were not all able to ask questions, much to my disappointment.

The Chair: As the clerk has said, we can invite them back if we want.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I would like them to come back, because I wanted further clarification from them. I got some answers about translation, but there were other things that I would have liked to clarify with the people from Service Canada. Unfortunately, we ran out of time.

The Chair: We never know what will happen. With the second group of witnesses, it wrapped up quite quickly.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes, I know.

The Chair: We never know how things will work out.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: When we are faced with situations as absurd as the ones that just occurred... We were all a bit surprised, and even shaken. Personally, I do not know if other committee members will support me, but I would like them to come back to give us additional information.

•(1040)

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would like to make a suggestion. When we bring in two witnesses on the same topic and divide up the time as we just did, I think we are making a mistake. At other committees, witnesses are all at the table at the same time; they make their presentations and we put questions to whomever we want.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Precisely.

Mr. Yvon Godin: They spend two hours with all of the witnesses.

The Chair: We can do that.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: If they are all talking about the same thing...

Mr. Yvon Godin: If it is on the same topic...

The Chair: You are right.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: No problem.

The Chair: That makes sense.

Do you agree with Ms. Boucher that we should invite the people from Service Canada back?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I think we should invite them back, because some things are unclear.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: No.

Mr. Yvon Godin: For example, our researcher said that he had looked for something for close to an hour but that he could not find it. I was forced to complete my meeting alone with her. It is information that you should perhaps have. She said that it existed. Perhaps it's because he did not go to the right site. She gave me her

card and recommended that our researcher call her so she could direct him to it.

The Chair: We will write a letter to her.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I will give you her card. She said it exists.

I would like to know how things unfold on both sides. People always say that we, francophones, are constantly whining and complaining. This is the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: That's the way it is in Canada! What can I say?

Mr. Yvon Godin: It is also the best country.

The Chair: Mr. Simard.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Chairman, our time here at the committee is very valuable. If we are dissatisfied with the information that our guests have provided to the researcher, we can invite them back. They made a commitment to provide the information to the researcher. If we are dissatisfied with that, we can invite them back, but we do not need to give them a full hour.

The Chair: We have not scheduled time for them in our agenda.

Hon. Raymond Simard: I guess we could do it in the fall.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes, we could do it in the fall.

The Chair: If we are not satisfied...

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I would really like to see them again, because they left me wanting to know more.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Okay.

The Chair: Agreed? Is that all?

I want to thank all committee members.

The meeting is adjourned.

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