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Mr. Steven Blaney

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• (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)):
Good morning, everyone.

Welcome to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Today is meeting 35, pursuant to Standing Order 108, the study of broadcasting and services in French of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games.

We have the *plaisir renouvelé* to have with us the Commissioner of Official Languages, Mr. Graham Fraser.

We welcome you and your guests to the committee.

[Translation]

Mr. Fraser is accompanied this morning by Johane Tremblay, Acting Assistant Commissioner, Policy and Communications Branch. We also welcome Ghislaine Charlebois, Assistant Commissioner, Compliance Assurance Branch.

Mr. Fraser, welcome to our committee.

I invite you to make your opening address.

Mr. Graham Fraser (Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Honourable members, members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, Mr. Chairman, good morning.

It is a pleasure to talk to you about my follow-up report on the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games, which was just recently released.

Your committee adopted a motion on April 28, 2009, asking me to provide regular updates on respect and promotion for linguistic duality at the Vancouver Games. In July, I provided you with my first update. My follow-up report is a second update.

My presence here today gives me an opportunity to share with you the most recent developments in this file. Your committee's interest in this issue has contributed significantly to the progress made in this important area.

[English]

In December 2008, I published a report on the significant official languages shortfalls of the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, VANOC, and of Canadian Heritage. I highlighted not only VANOC's goodwill and

commitment but also the many challenges that still had to be overcome in order to make the 2010 winter Olympics an event that reflects Canada's identity and linguistic duality.

I noted that several federal institutions did not realize that the games are an important test of their capacity to serve the public in both official languages. My staff therefore launched an awareness campaign for federal institutions last winter. Now, five months before the games begin, I see that significant progress has been made. VANOC has accomplished a great deal, and some federal institutions have launched innovative initiatives to provide the public with an Olympic-calibre performance that is also authentically Canadian.

However, the follow-up report that I have published also highlights many important areas for improvement. If these shortcomings are not addressed soon, they could compromise the success of the games where official languages are concerned. The deadline is looming and it's time for an extra push. There are only 113 days until the opening ceremonies. To be fully prepared when the flame is lit, VANOC, Canadian Heritage, and the various federal institutions that will be providing services to Canadians and visitors during the games must take decisive action in the coming weeks.

[Translation]

My follow-up report contains 11 recommendations. Some are for VANOC, others are for Canadian Heritage in its coordination capacity, and a number of others are for federal institutions, especially those present in Canada's major airports.

Most of the recommendations for VANOC deal with recruiting and training volunteers, signage, translation and the delivery of services to the public.

I was pleased to learn that the federal government announced an additional \$7.7 million for translation, signage at Olympic venues, permanent signage and the medal ceremonies.

Given the urgency and importance of this issue, VANOC and Canadian Heritage needed to find a solution to the problem as soon as possible. This announcement was certainly a positive one. VANOC is now fully equipped to succeed and to ensure that all clauses of Annex A of the Multiparty Agreement are respected. My expectation is for these additional funds to produce concrete results that will enable athletes, media representatives and Canadians to have a positive experience of the Games.

That being said, the other challenges identified in my report should not be ignored.

[English]

Recent changes to the model that VANOC plans to use for outdoor signage are very encouraging. However, I am still concerned that VANOC's municipal and provincial partners have not shown enough urgency in this respect. The Olympic oval in Richmond is a symptom of a larger problem. The additional funds for signage should help prevent this type of situation from occurring in the future.

Regarding volunteers, the follow-up report notes that the assessment of their levels of bilingualism is adequate. In addition, VANOC seems to be on its way to reaching its objective of having 3,500 bilingual volunteers out of the total 25,000 volunteers. However, this 14% proportion leaves very little room to manoeuvre in cases where personnel may need to be moved or replaced. The volunteer deployment plan should include provisions for posting bilingual volunteers wherever they are required, at any time.

As many of you have already noted, I also found the countdown ceremony to be very disappointing in how it reflected the country's francophonie. The quality of the cultural festivities surrounding the games should be much higher in order to reflect all Canadians and provide a complete image of Canada's cultural richness. This is especially true for the games' opening and closing ceremonies, which will be watched around the world.

This is, in sum, what my report says about elements that are under the responsibility of VANOC. There have been some changes since my report was published, which I can respond to if you have questions.

- (0910)

[Translation]

For most people who will travel to Vancouver to celebrate the event, work at the Games or participate in the competitions, the Olympic experience will start at the airport and in other places where federal institutions will be in contact with the public. This is why my report examines in detail the measures taken by these institutions.

We have also made a series of in-person observations on the availability of service in numerous locations. I am highly concerned about the results of our study. Our analyses of on-site observations show that, despite efforts made by some institutions to improve their results, there is still no instinctive reflex to actively offer service in English and in French, despite the efforts made by some institutions to improve the result.

In general, the airports are not prepared to welcome visitors in both official languages. There is often a complete lack of French-language service. And when it is present, employees still tend to make initial contact with visitors in English only. At Vancouver Airport, the gateway to the Games-security screenings, Air Canada and even the airport authorities obtained particularly alarming results, including a score of zero for bilingual greetings by commercial tenants at the Vancouver Airport.

As host airport and official supplier for the Vancouver 2010 Games, the Vancouver International Airport will be welcoming thousands of travellers. If the observation results are any indication, a business-as-usual approach is clearly insufficient. The situation is

also far from perfect at Toronto's Lester B. Pearson International Airport, which is Canada's largest airport as well as a major hub. A large number of visitors will be passing through Pearson while travelling to the 2010 Games.

[English]

On a more positive note, I should stress that the employees of Parks Canada and Service Canada can provide bilingual services in nearly all cases. However, these institutions need to ensure that all their employees greet visitors in both official languages to let them know that bilingual services are available. To achieve this, Parks Canada has developed a video for its employees on the active offer of services in both official languages. It has been quite successful and has been used by many other institutions since then.

I really want to underline the value of that video, which I found to be very impressive. For its part, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which administers the important Granville Island site, also seems to be able to provide bilingual services, but has the same issues with bilingual greetings.

Some institutions have already reacted positively to my report since it was published. We met the retail tenants' association of the Lester B. Pearson International Airport and had a productive discussion. Last week I was invited to speak to close to 300 employees of the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority about my report and the importance of bilingualism at the Vancouver games. I am encouraged to see that it's already had an impact.

[Translation]

In my report, I asked each of these institutions to provide me with an assessment of their official languages performance after the Games. I hope that these will be stories of success and innovation, not embarrassing failures.

In conclusion, I would like to clarify one last thing. The Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games belong to all Canadians, and it is essential that they reflect Canadian values, including linguistic duality. I do not want visitors to be greeted with "Sorry, I don't speak French." There needs to be a system, a protocol or a method in place where volunteers, VANOC personnel, security officers or other employees can say, "Un instant s'il vous plaît," and refer a visitor to a bilingual colleague.

[English]

In western Canada, 600,000 people are fluent in both our official languages, about half of whom live in British Columbia. Many federal institutions prove every day that official languages are an important part of quality service, and for every challenge there is a solution. These solutions may be those developed by the various players themselves or put forward in my report. I am pleased to see the progress made so far, but worried that certain key elements are still not in place.

Everyone involved must act now to give it the necessary push. The games are an international event and a unique opportunity to showcase linguistic duality as a fundamental Canadian value. The international francophonies' expectations for Canada are high.

• (0915)

[Translation]

As pointed out by Mr. Jean-Pierre Raffarin, former French Prime Minister and Grand Témoin de la Francophonie at the Beijing Games, "Since Canada is an officially bilingual country, no one would understand if French were to take a back seat during the Games."

Thank you. I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, commissioner.

Mr. Rodriguez, go ahead please.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, commissioner. It's always a pleasure to have you with us.

Good morning, Ms. Tremblay and Ms. Charlebois.

"Sorry, I don't speak French": isn't that the title of an excellent book?

Mr. Graham Fraser: Unfortunately, that sentence isn't obsolete. It's a sentence that is still in circulation, even though I didn't use it to promote the book, I assure you.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I know that very well. I was promoting your book because it's very good.

Is the advisory committee active? Is it working well? It took some time to start up. You also have a connection with them?

Mr. Graham Fraser: Yes, indeed. That committee is meeting today in Vancouver. Mr. Raffarin was here in Ottawa yesterday. We tried to meet, but there were unfortunately scheduling conflicts. He had some important meetings here in Ottawa. He is in Vancouver with the committee today.

In the context of the committee, I can tell you that the Prime Minister has appointed Mr. Jacques Gauthier as his personal representative to move the official languages file forward. He sits on the committee.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: It took a bit of time to start up, but it's operating.

Mr. Graham Fraser: Yes.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Among the problems, you mentioned translation, interpretation, public reception, signage and cultural programming.

Which of those items are more of a problem, in your mind? Which ones are you really concerned about because it might not be possible to correct the deficiencies on time?

Mr. Graham Fraser: I had a conversation with some VANOC people yesterday. They told me they were in talks on all fronts. There are talks with the Translation Bureau, which will be setting up a secure site here in Ottawa to do distance translation. Today, VANOC is starting talks with the mayors of the municipalities, in particular the mayor of Vancouver, the mayor of Whistler and the city's general manager. And there are discussions with engineers concerning

signage, particularly for the Richmond Oval. The discussions are underway, but I'm not prepared to tell you which file is more advanced than others.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: You'll be back soon.

What are the next stages in your follow-up process, commissioner?

Mr. Graham Fraser: We asked certain institutions, which are named in the report, to report at the end of November. We will be making observations during the Games ourselves, and we've asked the institutions to report after the Games. We don't intend to prepare a follow-up report after the Games—

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: No? Because, after the Games, it's—

Mr. Graham Fraser: —but I have made a commitment to prepare quarterly reports. If you think I should report between now and the Games, I can appear once again.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: It's up to the committee to decide, but I would like it very much, particularly since there are a number of items. It's always very enlightening when you come to present a follow-up report to us.

Vancouver Airport seems to be a major problem. What is the group or agency responsible that we could summon or call?

Mr. Graham Fraser: There's the institution itself, the Vancouver International Airport. As you know, airports are entities that have no direct relationship to the federal government, as was previously the case. However, every time an airport receives one million or more passengers, it has linguistic obligations. That's always been the case of Vancouver Airport.

• (0920)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: If you tell your contact that there is a serious problem with the airport, it's—

Mr. Graham Fraser: It's the President and CEO of the Vancouver Airport who is responsible.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: You said in your presentation that changes must happen soon, if we want to avoid certain failures. What do you mean by "soon".

Mr. Graham Fraser: I mentioned that it would take 113 days to put in place a system to improve the response. One of the things I've learned in three years is that it takes time to make changes in an institution. As soon as possible means as soon as possible to be ready for the Games.

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

We'll now continue with Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Ms. Tremblay, Ms. Charlebois and Mr. Fraser.

I was in Vancouver from October 9 to 14. The purpose of that trip was to go and see where preparations were so that Quebeckers and Canadians who want to be served in French can get adequate service. It started off very poorly. I spoke about that at the last meeting. I won't go over it again and you've received my complaint letter. It concerns what happened when I was received at Ottawa Airport.

However, things went well at the Vancouver Airport. When I asked to be served in French, the lady from the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority very politely asked me to wait a moment. Another person came and served me in French. It was very good in that respect. I must say I didn't conduct any exhaustive investigations. I didn't spend my day disguising myself and testing everyone. The fact is that the first impression is always important.

I must say that you will be receiving another complaint, this time concerning Air Canada's service. Is the Ottawa-Vancouver route a bilingual route? So I see my complaint is well founded. I was unable to be served in French on Air Canada's flight 186. The letter is in the mail, and Her Majesty's mail will convey it to you.

Having said that, I also met with representatives of the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique. They are project partners, as it were. I also read your report, "Reflecting Canada's Linguistic Duality at the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games: A Golden Opportunity," to make sure I was on the right track and knew what I was about. We are 113 days away from the Games. As I told you earlier, we must not get stuck on sour notes; you have to remember that there is a full orchestra. Unfortunately, sometimes the guy who's off key makes the news. We know how that works.

However, there are still a lot of things to consider. I have a lot of topics, but let's deal with them one by one, and we'll see what we can do in five minutes, or in what's left of it.

I was told that the mayor of Richmond wanted to go back before the municipal council to see whether there would be any services in French during the Games. I find it quite disturbing that people still have so little Canadian pride. Pardon me for pulling a face when I say that. We still have to convince Canadians that the French fact is important in Canada when the International Olympic Committee has awarded us the Winter Olympic Games. I find it troubling that VANOC still has to convince people.

There are also a lot of other questions. Can Tourism Vancouver and Tourism British Columbia provide booths in French, or at least ensure the active offer of French? We know that, once on the ground, that's where people will go, among others, to get information. It's not the only place, but it's an important component.

The Vancouver Cultural Olympiad is also annoying the federation because the list of francophones is very short. We want the francophones of British Columbia, French Canadians, Acadians to have as much room as Quebeckers. It's the total picture and, with the Games not far off, we find this very disturbing.

The question of signage in Richmond is resurfacing. I also saw in your report that that was a problem. Will there be French signage everywhere, and will the legacy remain? It shouldn't be forgotten that the official languages will still be around the day after the Games. Remember that the act has been in existence since 1969, but if some people realize it in 2009, it will always be there.

With regard to all these files, can you give us any news or tell us what you know? I'll hand over to you.

● (0925)

Mr. Graham Fraser: First of all, thank you very much for telling us about your experience and for your constant efforts on this file. I can tell you that this kind of questioning, these kinds of meetings have done a great deal to emphasize the importance of this file. I find that reassuring. I don't at all get the impression that I am a voice crying in the desert, but rather of being part of a large team of observers of the problem. I thank you for that.

Let's go at it file by file.

The Chair: Pardon me, Mr. Fraser, but Mr. Nadeau has used all his time. You can come back to that on the next round.

We'll continue with Mr. Godin.

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

Good morning, commissioner, Ms. Tremblay and Ms. Charlebois.

You said that some \$7.5 million had been set aside for translation. That announcement was made in the newspapers. Is that money being well used? Do the people of Vancouver feel they now have the resources to do this, or is this simply an amount of money that has been announced? It is possible to make an announcement and then make it so that, afterwards, the money doesn't follow. There is a difference. I hope this isn't a program where you have to wait until May to receive money or that will require a cheque from an MP bearing a government letterhead.

Was that announcement made a number of weeks ago? In concrete terms, what can be done with that \$7.5 million?

Mr. Graham Fraser: To state specifically how that \$7.7 million is allocated, I will say that \$5.3 million is provided for translation. If I understand the method correctly, cheques have not been sent to people for them to spend as they wish. An agreement was reached with the Translation Bureau to ensure that the translation is done. I can tell you that the Translation Bureau has an international reputation for quality.

There were some fears that VANOC might want to hire students or proceed without requiring the necessary level of professionalism. The committee asked me a number of questions on the discussions with the Translation Bureau. I was pleased to learn that they were underway.

Mr. Yvon Godin: They are underway, but has an agreement been signed?

Mr. Graham Fraser: I don't know. On the other hand, I know that the Translation Bureau is trying to find a way to have documents translated remotely. To arrive at these figures, there were very detailed talks during the summer to establish the timing for the arrival of documents such as the biographies of all the athletes, for example. In some cases, those documents won't arrive before December 31 because the teams of the various countries are selected at the end of the year. The number of documents is therefore considerable. I was very pleased to learn that the process was being established.

Funding is also provided for permanent signage which, as Mr. Nadeau said, will be a permanent legacy. Yesterday I was told that the engineers were preparing the drawings for the Richmond Oval and other signs. A discussion is also being held today with the mayor of Whistler and the mayor of Vancouver concerning signage on municipal land.

That's more delicate, and that's why I put the emphasis on the spirit of cooperation in my report. Technically, in the act, this is a municipal jurisdiction. So there's no obligation. It takes a spirit of cooperation to succeed.

● (0930)

Mr. Yvon Godin: In fact, these discussions should have been held before the Games were awarded to Vancouver. If they aren't prepared to abide by all these rules, they shouldn't have been awarded the Games.

Apart from the Olympic Games, does Vancouver Airport receive more than a million people a year?

Mr. Graham Fraser: Absolutely.

Mr. Yvon Godin: So that means the act is being violated and not only in the context of the Olympic Games.

Mr. Graham Fraser: It's a permanent and constant problem.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Commissioner, —

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin. We can come back to that. Your time is already up.

[English]

Now we'll move on to Ms. O'Neill-Gordon.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to all.

As you mentioned, the federal government announced \$7.7 million in additional funding. That would be for such things as translation and interpretation services at the 2010 games, realizing that VANOC would not be able to fulfill all the requirements without this. This amount was intensely negotiated with VANOC. It wasn't just a spontaneous decision based on the publication of your report.

Are you happy with the amount announced?

Mr. Graham Fraser: I was very pleased by the announcement, and we are continuing to follow as closely as possible the steps that are being followed to make sure that this is not just an announcement but that there is follow-through and the money is spent in the areas for which it has been designated.

This whole exercise in which you've all been involved, in many ways as much as we have, is one to make sure that we get it right, that the games are a success in terms of Canada's face, the way in which we greet the world. Rather than simply arriving afterwards with a clipboard and listing the mistakes that have been made, this whole exercise, which started two years ago, really, has all been designed to focus on the results in terms of what happens in February and March.

I was pleased by the announcement and I am following very closely what is actually done.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon: We too, of course, want to see that it is a big success, and to be proud of Canada.

Do you think the government made a wise decision by dealing directly with the Translation Bureau?

● (0935)

Mr. Graham Fraser: Yes, I do.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon: Are you satisfied that French will have equal dimension and status for the signage?

Mr. Graham Fraser: Again, one of the challenges in terms of signage is that the Olympic experience doesn't just happen on the Olympic site. It happens when the traveller goes through airports, gets on planes, takes taxis, deals with provincial organizations, goes past municipal areas, and finally, at the end of the day, arrives on the Olympic site itself, but having gone through a whole series of visual and oral experiences. So I was pleased with the changes that VANOC made to its signage.

The federal government itself has been pretty consistent on signs. There is a challenge in terms of ensuring that other levels of government that don't have language obligations respond to the spirit of the games and the spirit of hosting an international event.

It's going slightly broader than simply the question of physical signs. You have the issue of the Internet, where, with one click of a finger, you move from a federal site to a provincial site to a municipal site, without necessarily being aware that you've shifted jurisdiction with one click. So it's a challenge, extending the spirit of the act beyond the jurisdictions where the act formally applies.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon: Yes, I realize that too. I also know that the government was upset as well when they saw that the signage was not going to be the same as the English.

How is my time?

The Chair: You have about 20 seconds.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon: I just have one more question.

In your opinion, should the Privy Council Office intervene to ensure that services are available in both French and English; and if yes, why?

Mr. Graham Fraser: In terms of the games, I think the Privy Council has a role of supervising activities of government as a whole. In the past, I have commented on and reflected on some of the problems; that the specific coordinating responsibility for official languages was transferred from Official Languages to Canadian Heritage. But I think that's a much more complex issue than dealing just with the Olympics.

If you want, we can refer you to some of the studies we've done on that governance issue.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Ms. O'Neill-Gordon.

[Translation]

Now we'll continue with Mr. Trudeau.

Welcome to the committee, Mr. Trudeau.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Thank you very much.

It's a pleasure to be here today to see what is going on and it's a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Fraser.

For some time now, we've seen in the news that, as a result of the economic situation, there is less budget. The Olympic Games won't be as grand. Has that affected the balance or the presence of French on the ground or in the budget?

Mr. Graham Fraser: At the outset, it had an impact on the planning and priorities, I believe. Two years ago, there was a kind of enthusiasm among organizers, which has since declined a little under the impact of the loss of sponsors, the economic problems. It was more a question of priorities. For example, when there was a housing crisis, that was a major concern for organizers, for understandable reasons.

I think that may reflect the cracks in the organization that we identified in our first report. That may explain the need that was met by the government announcement.

• (0940)

[English]

Mr. Justin Trudeau: One of the things we talk about a lot in this committee, and we hear from you a lot, is how important it is to present a bilingual country to the world. The identity of Canada is wrapped up in its two official languages and it's something we absolutely need to showcase properly for the greatness of this country and its perception in the world.

When you're out there in Vancouver—I spent five years as a French teacher in Vancouver—is it perceived as a hassle by people that they have to provide French, that they have to deliver in French? Have we managed to communicate the larger vision and the opportunity it represents, or are people just seeing it as a responsibility, something they have to go through even though they sort of roll their eyes about it?

Mr. Graham Fraser: I've actually been pleasantly surprised on that front. I think from the outset VANOC took the view that they would surpass any technical obligations. They saw this as something that they would be very proud of, but I don't think they realized just what an organizational challenge it would be. And then when the financial crisis hit and there were other problems, they began to realize that some of their budgeting predictions had not been sufficient.

If you look at the degree to which parents in British Columbia are desirous of having their children in French immersion, if you see the degree to which the Chinese community is seeking French language training and availability, my sense is that in British Columbia... There is, of course, a realization that you can live a very successful life in British Columbia without learning French, but there's also a realization that if you want to play on the national stage, it's a critical asset.

So I think there is that sense that British Columbians who want to play beyond the provincial boundaries at a national level realize how important bilingualism is.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: And the Olympics are there for an opportunity towards that.

Mr. Graham Fraser: That's right.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: On my concern around, for example, the Richmond Olympic oval, where there has been some negative press, how are we on that file? I'm not up on all the details of it, obviously, but has there been a little openness towards...?

Mr. Graham Fraser: The discussions are ongoing. There are discussions going on this week with the engineers, and I think at the end of the day the signage issue will be addressed.

Again, I think there was a slowness to recognize that if you're going to be hosting an Olympic building in which the two official languages of the games and of Canada are English and French....

There isn't that automatic sense that this is not just a local arena we're talking about here; this is an Olympic and national institution that's being created.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Why wasn't that awareness encouraged—
[Translation]

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

We'll continue with Ms. Guay.

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Mr. Fraser, Ms. Tremblay and Ms. Charlebois.

I have a lot of questions, and, now that we're 16 weeks away from the Olympic Games, I would like us to be able to talk as quickly as possible.

Mr. Graham Fraser: We aren't five weeks away from the Olympic Games. I think there's more time left than that.

Ms. Monique Guay: I said there were 16 weeks left, not five weeks.

The fact remains, Mr. Fraser, that we have to consider the fact that we won't be here from mid-December until the end of January. That's why we'll have to move very quickly; it's almost the end of October.

On Tuesday, we heard from some witnesses with whom we spoke about airport services. When you arrive in a country, the first contact you make is obviously at the airport, whether it be in Toronto, Vancouver or elsewhere. In Montreal, I'm not concerned: service is bilingual. However, in the rest of Canada, it's disturbing. If you are poorly welcomed on arrival, I can tell you that you don't have a good stay.

They couldn't even give us any figures on the number of bilingual persons working in the customs service at Pearson Airport or Vancouver Airport. It's very troubling that no one could answer us with figures at their fingertips. I don't know whether you've done any research in this regard, but I would like to know whether you have an answer to give us on that subject. It now has to be 24/7.

• (0945)

Mr. Graham Fraser: We don't have exact figures, but CATSA is one of the institutions that we'll target for our report card. So we'll be able to take a special look at that.

Ghislaine, do you want to say a little more about that?

Ms. Monique Guay: Do it quickly, please, because I have other questions.

Ms. Ghislaine Charlebois (Assistant Commissioner, Compliance Assurance Branch, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages): More specifically, the Border Services Agency will be the focus of a report card this year. We're still talking with it, of course.

Ms. Monique Guay: I can tell you that the report its representatives gave us is very troubling.

Ms. Ghislaine Charlebois: Yes. I think we share that concern as well.

Ms. Monique Guay: Can you exercise pressure so that service is really offered in both official languages?

Ms. Ghislaine Charlebois: We constantly remind them they have an obligation to provide that service. That's what's troubling.

Ms. Monique Guay: I understand you don't really have the power to make them act.

Mr. Fraser, earlier my colleague asked you what the \$7.7 million had produced. We don't know where that \$7.7 million has been distributed or what it's been used for. Do you know? Can you give us any information on that?

Mr. Graham Fraser: I can't do that contract by contract.

Ms. Monique Guay: Give us an idea.

Mr. Graham Fraser: We can nevertheless say that it's \$5.3 million for translation, \$1.5 million for signage and \$900,000 for the medal ceremonies.

Ms. Monique Guay: In your first report, you said that VANOC was considering the possibility of translating only a part of the athlete biographies into French. That's very troubling. You also said that the information on the Info 2010 media website would only be available in English at first.

I don't understand. Has that been corrected? Will there be improvements so that we have that information in both languages? We haven't been informed of that change.

Mr. Graham Fraser: We're still discussing the terms for solving that problem. Yesterday I was told that, with regard to the delivery of services, they will ensure that, in certain places where there are dealings with the public and the media, 30% to 55% of staff on hand will be bilingual. There will therefore be a strategic effort in the organization of volunteers, which is a response to one of our concerns. It's all well and good to have 12,000 bilingual people; if the right person isn't in the right place, that doesn't solve the problem. We're monitoring the application of our recommendations as closely as possible.

Ms. Monique Guay: It takes really bilingual people at customs. There's also a matter of security around this problem. If people only know a few key phrases, there's reason to be concerned about security because they won't necessarily understand what will happen.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Guay.

Do you want to comment briefly?

Mr. Graham Fraser: A distinction has to be drawn between border services and security services. Border services are offered by government employees, whereas CATSA operates through third parties, private companies that hire the staff. This raises certain additional challenges with regard to linguistic obligations.

However, as I emphasized in my statement, they've organized a special day on the Olympics for all their employees. I myself spoke about the importance of active offer and of having a system for bringing in people. This is precisely the experience Mr. Nadeau had in Vancouver, where it seems that the system worked well and that, ultimately, the service can be provided.

• (0950)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Guay.

Thank you too, commissioner, for the distinction between border services and security services in airports. We'll take note of that.

Ms. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Good morning, Mr. Fraser. I'm here temporarily, for the moment, but I'm always interested to know that French is important virtually everywhere.

In recent months, there has been a lot of talk about Canada's Olympic Broadcast Media Consortium, with regard to ensuring that the Games are broadcast in French.

Do you support the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission in its recent request to Canada's Olympic Broadcast Media Consortium and to Société Radio-Canada to at least agree on the broadcast of the opening and closing ceremonies of the Vancouver Olympic Games for all Canadians?

Mr. Graham Fraser: I think it's important that all Canadians have access to the Games on television. I know that the Consortium has done a lot of work. I very much appreciated the interest the CRTC has shown in the subject. I also testified before the CRTC on this subject and I was impressed by the Chair's determination to put pressure on the Consortium and Radio-Canada. At the same time, however, I recognize that there are major challenges for Radio-Canada with regard to the talks underway.

However, what is important is that all Canadians have access to the Games on television. I don't want to go into the details of the negotiations. I don't know whether they're continuing or whether they've hit a dead end. According to the testimony you've heard here in committee, there was quite a considerable gap at the time, despite the Chair's suggestion.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I have a question. There's a lot of talk about bilingualism. We know that we have anglophone communities in Quebec.

Do you think they will experience challenges similar to those facing the francophone communities with regard to broadcasting access?

Mr. Graham Fraser: From what I know about it, most anglophone communities have access to CTV, but there may be exceptions in the case of certain isolated communities. So the challenge remains. I don't have any specific information to give you on that subject.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: All right. I have another question.

Will VANOC's approach to the Association de la presse francophone be enough to make the Games known to the minority francophone communities?

Mr. Graham Fraser: The challenge with the AFO is that it represents weeklies in large part. There are few dailies, except in the Ottawa region and in Acadia. In a way, because of that, the information is not available in a balanced manner.

In Quebec, there are fewer problems because there is an agreement that took many months to reach. Following the agreement reached with English-language newspaper chains, an agreement was negotiated with the Gesca papers, which include *Le Droit*, for example.

I'm pleased with the agreement with the AFO, but communities served by weeklies definitely won't receive the same amount of information as communities that have dailies.

• (0955)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: So the rural or remote francophone communities may have less access to information on the Olympic Games. They'll have less information because they are served by weeklies.

Mr. Graham Fraser: That's always a challenge for remote communities.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Boucher.

We'll complete our second round with Mr. Godin.

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

We're going to talk about Vancouver Airport again. It seems that Vancouver Airport is designated bilingual. Once again, it's sad to see that, with 113 days to go until the Olympic Games, we're still wondering about the service that will be provided there.

What else can we do to enforce the Official Languages Act? You already know my opinion; I believe we could discuss that for a long time. It's all well and good to be friendly and nice, to ask and use other similar means, but if a police officer asks me to drive at 100 km/hour and he's nice with me, I may drive at 120 km/hour. When I get a ticket, I'll have to think about it.

In Canada, we have an Official Languages Act. Some institutions take the liberty of violating the act every day. At Vancouver Airport, for example, that didn't start just with the Conservative government. It was being done during the time of the Liberals and before them, during the time of Brian Mulroney's Conservatives. It's been going on for 40 years. I'm talking about a lack of respect for the act. If an institution is designated bilingual and, 40 years after passage of the Official Languages Act, it still has not adjusted, we have a serious problem.

Apart from showing good faith, what do you suggest we do to try to solve this problem? I'm talking about Vancouver, but the situation is the same in Toronto and Ottawa. It's unfortunate to see that our colleague Richard Nadeau returns to Ottawa Airport and can't get service in his language. It's the capital of our country. There's nothing more shameful. In the capital of our country, an officially bilingual country, we can't offer service in both official languages. So what else do you suggest apart from simply holding talks?

Mr. Graham Fraser: Mr. Chairman, I can tell you that, at the Office, we've set the following priority: focus on the travelling public in the next few years. The idea is not to consider a single institution but to assess the overall needs of the travelling public.

The member refers to about contraventions. I'm going to use another metaphor. If an individual gets a ticket for driving 80 km/hour in a 50 km/hour zone, he may not repeat his act, but if you don't install a stop sign at the street corner, other drivers will continue to drive too fast. There won't be any systemic change. Often, when there's a speed problem in a neighbourhood, you don't intervene with individual drivers. Instead you ask city authorities to install stop signs at intersections, to assign crossing officers there, and so on.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You install radar systems equipped with cameras that make it possible to send out contraventions through the mail. In that case, you don't need police officers.

Something has to be done. It's like for white collar criminals. If you do nothing, they'll keep committing their crimes. The act has been in existence for 40 years. I'm not attacking you, Mr. Fraser.

I'd also like to talk about security at airports. Even though CATSA operates through third parties, is it subject to the act?

• (1000)

Mr. Graham Fraser: Absolutely.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In that case, why is it so difficult?

Mr. Graham Fraser: Mr. Chairman, that's why—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Fraser, you said it was difficult.? There's an act; so does that mean that the government doesn't enforce it? Someone has to do it.

Mr. Graham Fraser: It's precisely in order to answer those questions that we decided to make it a priority, Mr. Chairman. We want to examine the language rights and services offered to the travelling public.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I know you're making it a priority. You aren't the only one to do that. In my opinion, the Standing Committee on Official Languages shouldn't even exist since there is an act and it should be complied with. We have to address this subject week after week, even twice a week, appoint a Commissioner of Official Languages and have him intervene in the context of this committee, when an act has been in existence for 40 years.

Do you have any hope that the program you are implementing will work? You're talking about installing stop signs. Those signs were in existence for 40 years, but people didn't obey the law.

Mr. Graham Fraser: Mr. Chairman, if I had no confidence, we wouldn't be proceeding with the change of approach that we are making. However, our goal is to change the outcomes. Over a certain period, proceeding on a case-by-case basis has not had the necessary impact on the institutions. We're trying by other means to change the behaviour of the institutions that have clearly defined obligations under the act.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

Thank you, Mr. Godin.

We'll now begin our third round with Ms. Zarac.

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Mr. Fraser. Good morning, Mesdames.

Mr. Fraser, I think it's very important for us to recall that this is not just a matter of national pride. The international francophone community as a whole is watching us. The Olympic flame was lit yesterday. The countdown has started, and I think we have to pick up the pace.

Earlier you were asked whether you were satisfied with the \$7.7 million that had just been allocated. I'm sure you're very proud of that. In your last report, that of September 15, you spoke again about under-funding. You addressed the issue of the Olympic Games even in your first report. You are no doubt at the origin of that allocation of \$7.7 million.

Is that amount enough? Has it come too late?

Mr. Graham Fraser: Mr. Chairman, I hope not. What is important in this entire process is not my moods, whether I'm happy or unhappy, whether I have or lack confidence.

Ms. Lise Zarac: These are the facts.

Mr. Graham Graham: What is important are the results.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: I agree with you, except that we mustn't wait until we're out of money; we have to plan ahead. That's the sense of my question.

Mr. Graham Fraser: That figure wasn't established at random. It was established following a long discussion to very clearly determine needs. In a tough financial context, there was some fear that funding freely allocated here and there might be used for other purposes. This necessarily called for very frank and intense discussion between the government and the organizers of the Vancouver Olympic Games.

Ms. Lise Zarac: So that should resolve the situation.

Mr. Graham Graham: As we speak, I have no indication that any errors were made in the calculation, but today isn't an important date for those discussions. We'll continue to monitor the file, then we'll see the results.

•(1005)

Mrs. Lise Zarac: So we can rely on you to follow this up.

You talked about a spirit of cooperation with the municipal level. The budgets allocated to the cities have already been stopped for the year-end. Consequently, the municipalities won't be receiving any additional funding before the Olympic Games. It's all well and good to talk about a spirit of cooperation, but there have to be incentives to achieve results.

Could there be any financial incentives for the municipalities?

Mr. Graham Fraser: I don't know. We don't yet have any details on the funding for signage at the municipal level.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: We're crossing our fingers and we hope they'll take part.

Mr. Graham Fraser: The envelope set aside for signage is not used just for signage at the Richmond Oval, I assume. However, I don't have any more details on the allocation of that envelope.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: I had the same experience as Mr. Nadeau. This summer, I went to Vancouver. At the airport, there was no problem,

but when I sat down, I heard passengers on a flight from Vancouver to Montreal put a question to the Air Canada agent, who answered: "I don't speak French."

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: We can recommend that its representatives read the official commissioner's book. We know they'll be appearing next week.

We'll continue with Ms. Glover.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, once again, to the three witnesses. I liked it when you said that what is important are the results. So let's talk about the results.

We had a meeting on Tuesday with the Canada Border Services Agency. I was completely bowled over by the comments of certain opposition members about your work, its quality and your results, as well as the allegations made about the government and the relations we've had with you and with your office.

I would like you to give me your comments briefly so as to clarify and respond to those allegations. I'll start with some quotations so that you know what allegations have been made.

Here's the comment made by Mr. D'Amours, of the Liberal Party:

This morning, I'm probably going to attack the only complaint that you say you've received. Then we'll be able to see whether it's the only one that emerges in future.

This is a citizen from my riding who, among other things, had problems at the Rigaud training centre. I'd like to address these questions and see how you react to them. The Commissioner may have done some work, and I say "some work" because the people were not the same from the start to the end and we'll see in future how that's handled.

The next comment was by Mr. Godin, from the NDP: "The Commissioner said that the complaint was unfounded. That's not the first time I've heard that."

Then Mr. D'Amours said: "I believe the Commissioner of Official Languages checked to see whether there had been an active offer. However, [...]"

Mr. Yvon Godin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Pardon me, Ms. Glover.

Ms. Guay, you have a point of order.

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Chairman, this is irregular. We're questioning the Commissioner of Official Languages. We aren't here to cite whatever colleagues have said. This is a waste of time. We have to stick to the subject, and I believe that's not the case at present. We're talking about the Vancouver Games, not about quotations from our colleagues.

The Chair: Ms. Guay, committee members are entitled to quote from public statements, and the subject is precisely services at airports. Your point of order is dismissed.

Mr. Graham Fraser: Mr. Chairman, if I can save some time, I can talk a little about what we've done about that complaint.

•(1010)

The Chair: One moment, Mr. Fraser; we're going to finish with Ms. Guay's point of order.

Thank you, Ms. Guay.

I'll now hand back to Ms. Glover.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I'll go back to the quotation of Mr. D'Amours, of the Liberal Party: "However, the rest as to how things went in Rigaud, on training, and before that on pre-training in Fredericton, that wasn't evaluated." But Pierre Paquet told us that the investigation by the commissioner's Office was nevertheless quite exhaustive and added, in speaking to Mr. D'Amours: "I would say we spent perhaps 10 hours in interviews answering the investigator's questions, questions that you've raised."

Lastly, I come to the quotation from Mr. Yvon Godin: "Mr. Chairman, it's starting to trouble me that the official government is beginning to give credit to the Commissioner of Official Languages. The official languages watchdog—I'm not saying the commissioner isn't doing a good job—but it looks like all the reports are good and nice and everyone arrives at the airport and they're even able to be served in their language. The other one goes away and takes his time to go and offer congratulations for the work done... in any case. People can judge any way they want, but when you start talking that way, I think..."

I now come to my question, commissioner. You determined that this complaint was unfounded. I found those comments unjustifiable and I would like to afford you the opportunity to say whether Mr. Paquet was right. I would like to add that I have always had great respect for your work. I've said so on numerous occasions, and I thank you. I have much more respect for your work than the opposition shows us, and I continue to say so. I think your partnership with us is essential and well appreciated.

I would like to have your comments on those quotations. I would also like to know how your relations are with the government.

Mr. Graham Fraser: Mr. Chairman, do I have any time left to answer?

The Chair: You have about two minutes left.

Mr. Graham Fraser: With regard to this case, we conducted a fairly detailed investigation into what happened with the complainant's request. It was quite complicated. Following the investigation, we found no evidence that the agency had not used the language chosen by the complainant. Ms. Charlebois can explain that to you in greater detail.

We suspended the investigation, but we did not determine whether the complaint was founded or not. We can't say that it was unfounded, but we suspended the investigation. However, in the course of that investigation, we had discussions with agency representatives, and we realized that there was a lack of information transmitted by the central agency to people in the regions. We informed the agency that employees in the regions should be able to provide people with better information on course schedules.

As a result of that investigation, the agency now informs candidates of the language choices possible at each stage of the candidate selection and training process. The agency also empha-

sizes the possibility of failure if a candidate chooses training in the second language. As we've seen in other institutions as well, when, for one reason or another, a citizen chooses the second language, that person subsequently discovers, in some instances, that he or she should perhaps not have chosen the second language.

The Chair: Perfect.

Mr. Graham Fraser: That was done without really knowing the implications of that choice. The agency therefore changed its behaviour. That's one example of an intervention that had the result of changing the institution's behaviour.

The Chair: Thank you very much, commissioner.

Thank you, Ms. Glover.

We'll now go to Mr. Nadeau.

•(1015)

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Fraser, I asked a series of questions during my first turn. I just want to remind you of the subjects, and you can then go ahead.

In your report, you say that, at first, VANOC had five or six translator-revisors and that it would be necessary to have 65 to 70 to ensure that signage or information—brochures or written information—could be actually made available. Where do things stand in that regard? That's one of the questions.

The other situation that I find quite peculiar—you noted it in your report—is the entire matter of obtaining information simultaneously in both languages. Earlier it was said that, for certain types of information, it would take 12 hours to obtain the French version. If it's a little more urgent, every effort will be made to get it six hours later. We agree that, in a communications society, such as the one in which we live, waiting six to 12 hours for information in one of the country's two official languages is extremely disturbing.

So there's the question of translation and simultaneous information. The translation question is one thing that, among other things, troubles the federation which would like services to be ready on time because we're talking about several thousands of words that have to be translated.

I'm listening.

Mr. Graham Fraser: With regard to translation, I know that the Translation Bureau is now engaged in a process. However, I couldn't tell you at this stage exactly how many translators, how many hours, how many resources will be assigned to the work at that bureau.

As for the simultaneous transmission of information, we're trying to determine how to prevent the unheard-of phenomenon, which we identified in our report, in which a comment made in French by an athlete might be translated into English then translated back into French. I find that phenomenon implausible, and we're still monitoring that.

However, I don't have any additional information to give you, but that's one of the issues that is very important to resolve, in my view.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Will medical services, emergency services, be available in French? This may concern a francophone, Quebec or Acadian athlete, all francophones, or one from Switzerland, Luxemburg or another country. We know that performance is important in the world of sport. Injuries are unfortunately part of the picture, and there are even accidents.

Do we have any guarantee that physicians, people from the health field will be able to take care of athletes or spectators? For one reason or another, people on site, who speak French, may have an accident. We know how that happens when it comes to health: you want to speak your language, which is entirely natural and normal.

Will we have a country—Canada—where it will be normal and natural to respond to those people in French?

Mr. Graham Fraser: I was told that an additional effort was being made to ensure that there is a certain level of bilingualism in the security field.

As for medical teams, I'll take note of that. We're going to raise that question with a degree of emphasis because I entirely agree with you. We can be completely capable of getting along in normal situations with all kinds of institutions or in all kinds of exchanges, but, from the moment we suffer an injury, we would like to speak in our mother tongue.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Another aspect is bilingualism as such. How high is the bar being set to determine whether a person is bilingual? Of the 25,000 volunteers, 3,500 are considered bilingual. Are their comprehension and oral communication good enough to say that there are indeed bilingual? A situation in which they know only a few words, a few phrases should not arise.

• (1020)

Mr. Graham Fraser: Interviews are being conducted to determine the level of bilingualism of the people designated bilingual. We're going to monitor the training closely. I know there are people who aren't in designated bilingual positions but who have some knowledge of French. They would be able to have a basic conversation and to redirect a person seeking information, but they would not necessarily be able to provide a very detailed explanation. Not all meetings with volunteers or employees require—

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Have you been asked to be part of the team responsible for determining the level of bilingualism?

Mr. Graham Fraser: It's not my role to take part in that kind of team; it's that of the institutions that have signed agreements or that have obligations and responsibilities. It would be difficult for me to play a monitoring role if I was also part of that kind of evaluation system.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nadeau.

Commissioner, if you want to elaborate further on certain subjects but don't have the time to do so in the time allotted to you, you can transmit that information to committee members by sending it to me or to the clerk. We'll then distribute it to members during discussions and questions.

Mr. Graham Fraser: Mr. Chairman, if anyone wants more information on the complaint concerning the Rigaud centre, Ms. Charlebois could give you more details.

The Chair: That was more a general comment, but that subject could indeed interest committee members. We'll be able to talk to you about that again.

We'll now begin our fourth round.

[English]

We'll begin with Mr. Albrecht.

Welcome to the committee, Mr. Albrecht.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank Mr. Fraser and his team for being here today.

I certainly found the discussion very encouraging today. It's very informative to see the initiatives your team has taken to ensure that service is provided in both official languages at the 2010 Olympics. Also, I was pleased to see that you commented favourably in relation to the \$7.7 million investment on the part of our government after negotiations with VANOC.

I want to just turn for a few minutes to the 11 recommendations you made in your follow-up report. I want to ask a few questions regarding your involvement with the official languages advisory committee. What progress has been made so far in your dealings with the official languages advisory committee as it relates to the 11 recommendations?

Also, do you know if the Grand Témoin of the Vancouver games, Pascal Couchepin, will be closely involved in the advisory committee's work?

Mr. Graham Fraser: Those are two separate roles. First of all, my knowledge of the workings of the advisory committee is only partial and indirect. I've had a few conversations, but as an example, one of the things the advisory committee has been considering is the question of the opening and closing ceremonies, which they are keeping an absolute secret.

Mr. Chair, I'm assured that I will be pleased by the result, but as is totally their right, this is something they are keeping to themselves and they don't want anybody outside a very tight circle to know. The whole purpose is to have something that is going to be a surprise.

I have had conversations in the past with Judith LaRocque, the deputy minister who is a member of the advisory committee, and with Jacques Gauthier, who is a member of the advisory committee. I wasn't able, because of a conflict in schedule, to have a meeting with Mr. Raffarin yesterday. But I'm not a part of their discussions.

Similarly, on his way to his first visit to Vancouver, Monsieur Couchepin stopped off in Ottawa. I had a meeting with him. We had a very useful discussion, but he's not part of the advisory committee either. He reports to the International Organisation of the Francophonie. I made sure, as I did with Mr. Raffarin, that he had our reports, that he was aware of what we were doing. So he's aware of our activities.

Although we are all working in the same direction, we're all doing our work separately.

•(1025)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: But dialogue is occurring between your different groups. You mentioned that one example with Mr. Couchepin in your dialogue.

Mr. Graham Fraser: Yes, I did.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I would be concerned to find that there were three different silos all doing their different work with no intercommunication in the interim.

Mr. Graham Fraser: Mr. Chairman, candidly, one of the things I wanted to make sure, in ensuring that our reports were being shared and that all of those organizations were aware of what we were doing, was that we weren't being played off against one another. I didn't want a situation in which VANOC would say to me, for example, that Mr. Couchepin doesn't have a problem with such-and-such and ask me why am I giving them a hard time, or alternately say that to the International Organisation of the Francophonie.

It would be important that we not be played off against one another and contradict one another, and that there be some communication between us. We are approaching it from different angles with different criteria, but we are going in the same direction.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Do I have another minute, Mr. Chair? Oh, I have 30 seconds.

We focused today on the games themselves and on the travel to the games. I'm wondering if you could also comment in terms of the ability for francophone communities to participate in the Olympiads and also the torch relay. Will francophone communities be represented well in those aspects too?

Mr. Graham Fraser: I was struck by the explicit effort that the organizers of the torch relay made to ensure that this very complicated route included francophone minority communities. In terms of the cultural Olympiad and various other cultural events around it, the Fondation canadienne pour le dialogue des cultures has been very involved in the cultural discussions around the Olympics. I think they have had some positive news recently about support for La place de la francophonie 2010, where there will be a whole series of French-language performances on Granville Island during the games.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Albrecht. The torch will be in my riding in Lévis as well.

Okay, Monsieur Rodriguez.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I don't want to dwell too much on Ms. Glover's comment, but I nevertheless want to say that it isn't because Mr. D'Amours asks questions about a case that concerns the commissioner that he has less respect for him. I would say that it doesn't take a lot of courage to attack someone who isn't here to defend himself. You're on television and you're offering a pathetic spectacle that doesn't reinforce the good perception that people may have of politicians. You should have reservations in this regard. Furthermore, he doesn't work for you, and you don't have to defend him every time someone questions something.

As regards the websites, you said that you move from one jurisdiction to another. When you're in a place that is under the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada, it's obviously bilingual. At VANOC, it's bilingual. However, are there lesser restrictions elsewhere? For example, are there any partners where everything is done in English only?

•(1030)

Mr. Graham Fraser: I think the Internet is a considerable challenge for linguistic duality. Following a question that was raised here and a complaint that we received concerning Tourism BC, even though the complaint was not admissible because the Official Languages Act does not apply to provincial institutions, I had a conversation with the Vice-President of Tourism BC, and, since then, that agency has made efforts to ensure that there is information in French on its website.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Essentially what we're saying is that partners that play an important role in the organization and that are linked to the main site don't have any bilingual obligation. If, for example, I'm going to see VANOC's partners and I realize that everything is offered in only one language, we can do nothing about it because they aren't subject—

Mr. Graham Fraser: We can't impose obligations, but we can nevertheless encourage. That's what we did. There have also been partnership experiences between Parks Canada and parks in British Columbia in which a relay relationship was established as a result of which, when a British Columbia parks employee received a service request in French, the requester could be referred to a Parks Canada employee.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Is there a budget or an amount available somewhere to make it possible to offer the service or to go see one of those organizations or jurisdictions to say that there is a budget that it can access to do translation. Otherwise, would that budget not be useful?

Mr. Graham Fraser: It would be very useful, but is there that kind of budget?

Mrs. Johane Tremblay (Acting Assistant Commissioner, Policy and Communications Branch, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages): In fact, I'm not aware that there is that kind of budget, but, under Part VII of the act, Heritage Canada can take measures to encourage the provincial and municipal governments to offer services in both languages. Consequently, Canadian Heritage may have funding programs that can support translation requests.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Thank you.

What is the obligation of third parties or private businesses, such as the hotels that will welcome people. I think that 50% of the Canadian Olympic team, or thereabouts, consists of people from Quebec. So there'll be a lot of people coming here and accompanying their families.

What are the obligations of restaurant owners, hotels and so on? In particular, inside hotels, what is the obligation to provide channels that broadcast in both languages?

Mr. Graham Fraser: I recently spoke to a member of the consortium. That person told me, concerning Vancouver's hotels, that they were still at the discussion stage with them. Most of those hotels have agreed to make the Games accessible in French, but that's not yet resolved in the case of some of them.

With respect to private sector bilingualism obligations, it's simple: there aren't any. There are nevertheless some hotels where it's possible to be served in French. I myself had that experience at a Vancouver hotel. It's often said that there are two accents in Whistler: the Quebec accent and the Australian accent. I've been surprised to hear people speaking French quite often in Vancouver streets. In British Columbia, with the support of Industry Canada, RDÉE has intervened to increase francophone tourism and to ensure that a welcome is provided in French. This is the only tourism sector in British Columbia that has experienced an increase. Yes, an effort is being made, but there isn't any obligation.

• (1035)

The Chair: The approach is more commercial than regulatory.

Mr. Godin.

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

Commissioner, I don't have to apologize for remarks I make at meetings of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. It must be kept in mind that you are an officer of Parliament, that you report to us and work for us. Your mandate is to ensure the official languages are respected; you are the watchdog in that area. When the time comes to comment on your reports, in no case will I have to apologize. I have no lessons to learn from my colleague Ms. Glover. She can indulge in spectacles such as the one she gave earlier as much as she wants; that will not prevent me from continuing to discharge my responsibilities as a member of Parliament. If ever I trouble you, if you think I've gone too far at a committee meeting, I don't think you'll hesitate to phone me. We can talk it out at that time. If I don't approve of the content of one of your reports, it's in my interest, and it's also my responsibility, to make comments publicly.

In Recommendation 10, you state the following: The Commissioner recommends that the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police demonstrate, by November 30, 2009, that they have discussed the implications of their official languages obligations with counterparts at the provincial and local levels of government, in view of ensuring that Canada's linguistic duality is adequately taken into consideration in the coordination of health and security responses at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

Even if panels and everything else are installed, you have to wonder what kind of services will be offered to people in the streets of Vancouver. You say that these organizations have to report by November 30. I see you're also talking about Air Canada, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority and the Canada Border Services Agency.

Do you intend to come back to the committee to tell us about the reports of those organizations once you've received them so that we can know how they responded to your recommendation?

Mr. Graham Fraser: I'm entirely prepared to appear before the committee any time, but I don't control your agenda.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I understand, but I may have worded my request poorly.

In view of the fact that you're requesting a report for November 30, are you prepared to come back to tell us about the information you've received? You do have to get answers before the Olympic Games.

Mr. Graham Fraser: I'm entirely prepared to do so.

Furthermore, I would like to point out that at no time have I sensed a lack of respect on the part of anyone on this committee. I've never felt that members had to apologize for their remarks. I even think that it is the duty of a member who receives a complaint from someone on his or her committee to come and ask questions here. We explain what we have done and why, and I am always prepared to provide those explanations, before you or in private. I am entirely pleased with the work of our staff. I believe there has been some lack of understanding of how this complaint was handled, but I think that the member was entirely warranted in raising that question.

Mr. Chairman, the members all receive complaints from citizens in their communities. I think it utterly appropriate to talk about those complaints before the committee. It is my role to do business with all members, not just with those on the committee, but also with all members of Parliament, and from all parties. I believe that the expertise of the Office has indeed been useful to all parties when technical questions have arisen on the act or on bills introduced by various parties. That's my understanding of the situation.

• (1040)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Fraser, thank you for that answer. I wasn't expecting it, but I sincerely thank you. We parliamentarians have certain responsibilities and you have others. On the day we are unable to talk about our differences, we'll have a serious problem.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

We'll conclude with Ms. Guay.

Ms. Monique Guay: I'm going to close the circle. Mr. Godin, I hope you haven't used part of my time period. I know that Mr. Godin talks a lot, but I like him all the same.

Mr. Fraser, I have a question about translation. While the House is sitting, couldn't we use the translation services from here to lend a hand during the Vancouver Games? Is that possible?

Mr. Graham Fraser: Do you mean the translation or interpretation service?

Ms. Monique Guay: I'm talking about written translation because we have a lot of problems in that regard and we can see it.

Mr. Graham Fraser: That's an idea that I raised at one point in my discussions. I don't know exactly how the Translation Bureau will react because the House translators, as far as I know, work for Parliament and not for the Translation Bureau.

Ms. Monique Guay: Yes, I know, but on an exceptional basis, they could lend a hand for the 2010 Olympic Games, if possible. If we use translation services in August, it's for a very brief period. I'm sure they could translate a curriculum vitae. I'm not talking about long documents. They could even work overtime to lend a hand and ensure that everything is done in both official languages. Can you verify that possibility?

Mr. Graham Fraser: I'll take note of that, but I can't provide any details at this time.

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Fraser, there will be a period of time when the House doesn't sit. Quite simply, that will create work for these people. We finish in mid-December perhaps, and we don't start before the end of January. We could very well use the existing translation services and that will provide employment during that time.

Mr. Graham Fraser: We'll pass on that suggestion.

Ms. Monique Guay: I would like you to give us an answer later because I believe this is an essential service. It's here and it's therefore less costly than trying to create a base elsewhere.

My second question doesn't concern Vancouver, but rather the neighbouring cities because not everyone will be living in Vancouver. The athletes will have buildings, of course, but I'm talking about visitors, and so on. We talked about Whistler. It's not a surprise that Whistler is completely bilingual. A lot of Quebeckers will be working there. Some of my nephews and nieces have worked in Whistler. That's not surprising, but I'm talking about surrounding municipalities that have a lot more anglophones.

Will there really be French-language services in those municipalities, in the restaurant business, the hotel sector, the tourism sector and signage, for all the people living in those municipalities? It's that way because there isn't enough room in Vancouver.

Where do things stand?

Mr. Graham Fraser: As I said, the restaurants and hotels don't have any obligation. So that becomes a commercial greeting matter for them.

In the neighbouring municipalities, I hope that, in the context of the discussions that have started at the municipal level—

Ms. Monique Guay: They should already be completed. They shouldn't be started. Go ahead.

Mr. Graham Fraser: Indeed, that's an aspect I'm going to emphasize during my conversation with the organizers.

Ms. Monique Guay: At the municipal level, is there an obligation with regard to signage and the rest?

Mr. Graham Fraser: Mr. Chairman, the signage obligations apply to the federal institutions and as soon as you leave the grounds, or the Olympics, or federal institutions, you're more in an area where this has to be negotiated, where it cannot be imposed.

• (1045)

Ms. Monique Guay: All right. That means that it's only in Vancouver that you can ensure that there will actually be negotiations for things to be done completely in both languages. Outside the city, the small municipalities are not part of those discussions?

Mr. Graham Fraser: Nothing is guaranteed with regard to the municipal level or linguistic obligations.

Ms. Monique Guay: I need to know because there are people who will be living around Vancouver. The city will of course never

be able to receive all of that population. Those people will have to go outside, to other small municipalities. I know they don't have an obligation to offer bilingual services, but you can nevertheless bring pressure to bear for that to happen.

Mr. Graham Fraser: Absolutely. That's an aspect I'm going to emphasize. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the members—

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Fraser, I hope that, if ever we need you to come back before the end of November, if we have questions and have to call on you, you'll be available to come and meet with us because time is of the essence.

Mr. Graham Fraser: I'm always available to appear before the committee. However, as I told you, I await the committee's request. It will take some time before we can get other information. Coming back next week won't provide much additional information.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Guay. As the saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

You have a point of order, Ms. Glover?

[*English*]

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a point of order, but I didn't want to take away from the member's time, so I decided to wait until the end.

I want to say very clearly, Mr. Chair, that when the member from the opposition, the Liberal Party, addressed me directly, it was inappropriate, it was against the rules, and it was unnecessary, and I feel that we must follow the rules.

The rules say that I can cite public statements and they can defend them. I don't choose whether Mr. D'Amours is here or not; they do. But I felt it was totally inappropriate and it should not have been done.

I would ask the chair to remind members that they speak to the chair, and not to chastise one another directly.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Glover.

I think you're right. We have to address our comments through the chair, so I would invite all members to do so.

I want to thank our witness, the commissioner.

Thank you for being our watchdog, especially for the Olympics. We appreciate your work and we'll work to have a success as a result.

[*Translation*]

We're going to suspend for two minutes because in camera business is on the agenda. I need some intelligent advice from members concerning future business. So we'll be back in two minutes after the microphones have been adjusted. Thank you.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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