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## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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**Chair**

**Mr. Steven Blaney**



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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• (0905)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)):** Good morning everyone. Welcome to the 44th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. This morning, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we will continue our study of the broadcasting and services in French of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games.

Today we are hearing from the heads of three Canadian airports that are major ports of entry to the country. Mr. Paul Benoit is President and Chief Executive Officer of the Ottawa International Airport Authority. Welcome.

[English]

We also have the pleasure of having with us Mr. Toby Lennox. He's Vice-President of Corporate Affairs and communication of the Greater Toronto Airports Authority.

Welcome, Mr. Lennox.

We also have from the Vancouver Airport Authority, Mr. Paul Levy, Vice-President,

[Translation]

Planning of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

[English]

We also have Ms. Danielle Moore. She's the official languages 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games Liaison Officer.

Welcome.

[Translation]

Welcome to the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Without further ado, we will go to the opening speech.

Mr. Benoit.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Benoit (President and Chief Executive Officer, Ottawa International Airport Authority):** Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

[Translation]

Allow me to introduce myself once again. My name is Paul Benoit. I am President and Chief Executive Officer of the Ottawa International Airport Authority.

[English]

I'd like to thank the committee for inviting me here today to discuss this matter that, like you, we believe is of major importance. I welcome the opportunity to update the committee on our activities as they relate to the Official Languages Act.

In just eight weeks Canada will welcome the world to Vancouver and the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Although it is highly unlikely that someone from outside Canada who is travelling to the Olympics would pass through our airport in Ottawa, serving Canadians in both official languages is still extremely important to us. We are the nation's capital, and with that comes a responsibility of setting the standard in everything we do.

[Translation]

First, I would like to say that we always strive to offer our services in French and English. The same is true of announcements and signage. It goes without saying that this invitation to appear before the committee urged us to take a closer look at our activities in this regard. First, we reviewed airport authority staff, that is to say our own employees. All our employees who are in direct contact with the public, our front-line employees, are fluently bilingual. This in fact is a condition for promotion to a front-line position.

Do front-line staff welcome customers in both official languages? Most of the time, that is the case, but they are sometimes welcomed in only one language. We continue to inform our staff of their obligation and commitment to serve our customers in both official languages. Our employees are able to welcome passengers in both official languages. We must ensure they do so systematically.

However, we have neglected one aspect of our obligations, which we are quickly correcting at this time. We discovered that messages in voice-mail boxes had not been recorded in French and English. This omission on our part is about to be corrected. However, I want to assure you that we always call back people who have left telephone messages in the requested language.

[English]

We also make it mandatory for all announcements within the terminal to be done in both French and English, and also all of our signage, with few exceptions. They're very few, I might add. We have made sure that all signage that we directly control is bilingual.

[Translation]

We have carefully reviewed the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages concerning our operations. That report clearly shows that, for all aspects that we control directly, we are doing a very good job of delivering services in the official languages chosen by our clientele.

[English]

In fact, in the first three months of this year, the time covered by the most recent report, we received just three complaints.

[Translation]

In the first quarter of 2009, which the most recent report of the Commissioner of Official Languages concerns, and during which 1.5 million persons went through our airport, there were only three complaints, one complaint for every 500,000 passengers.

[English]

We would prefer no complaints, of course, but in the context of knowing that we are audited more than any other airport in the country, we believe that we are doing well in this regard. As I said a moment ago, we are doing very well where we have direct control.

[Translation]

I repeat, we are doing well in areas where we have direct control.

When the authority was given responsibility for the airport in 1997, that responsibility was accompanied by the obligation to ensure that tenants operating franchises in the airport, such as Second Cup, Harvey's, D'Arcy McGee's, Budget, Hertz and others, complied with the Official Languages Act.

[English]

Can we ask our vendors to change a unilateral sign? Absolutely, and we do. Can we ask them to ensure that all front line employees are fluently bilingual? Absolutely, but compliance is another matter.

[Translation]

It is true that we could terminate the contracts of franchise operators that do not comply with the act. However, if we excluded all suppliers that did not comply 100%, and if I focused on that issue at greater length, the airport would be deserted. Not only would passengers not be served in the language of their choice, there would be no service in the airport at all.

● (0910)

[English]

I'm sure the committee has heard just how difficult it is for retailers to fill these low-wage positions. Please allow me to give you a brief insight into what retailers are facing every day, not just at our airport, but across the country.

[Translation]

In the past decade, the Canadian retail sector has been expanding and annual sales are about to reach \$1 billion. To operate properly, this sector depends on a very large number of employees. In a recent survey by the Retail Council of Canada, 70% of respondent merchants stated that staff recruitment was their biggest challenge.

We see that challenge in our airport. A number of franchises among our tenants offer their employees a full plan including health care, dental care, eye care, free parking, sick leave and paid vacation leave, a pension plan paid for by the employer, uniforms, shoes and meals. All these benefits are offered for them to serve coffee and hamburgers. That is not the norm.

However, their staff turnover rate is nearly 60% for 2009, and the year isn't over yet. Another fact should also be taken into consideration. We are currently witnessing a demographic change in the retail sector. Statistics Canada predicts that, in the next five years, the vast majority of new jobs in the retail industry, 75%, will be filled by immigrants, including many from countries where neither English nor French are spoken.

[English]

Companies such as Home Depot and Walmart are now offering English as a second language training courses to their employees. While we want our vendors' employees to speak French and English, as we do, it is often difficult finding employees who can speak either language.

In an ideal world, we would offer language training to all our vendors and all their staff, but this is not an ideal world. While we are held to the same standards as federal government departments, we do not have access to the same funding opportunities for language training, and we certainly can't afford it within our current budgets.

[Translation]

We applied to the Federal Innovation Fund for funding to provide language training. Our application was rejected because the Treasury Board does not consider the airport authority a federal institution, and we were politely asked to refrain from renewing our application. If we are required to meet the same standards as the federal institutions, we should be able to have access to the same resources so that we can meet them. If we admit that the airport and concession operators are in a position to offer language training, if it costs \$2,000 to hire and train an employee and the employee leaves after a few months, those costs would have disastrous impact. It is increasingly difficult to find workers who are ready to fill these positions and who have the desired skills, that is mastery of both official languages, which we greatly need.

[English]

We need to put this issue into perspective. Every single one of the airport authority's front line staff is bilingual, but they are not the only ones who serve the public. When we factor in the concessions, the rent-a-car companies, and the airlines, more than 57% of our front line workers speak both official languages. This is 20% higher than the bilingual composition of the City of Ottawa.

[Translation]

It is true that we could replace our franchise operators with other tenants, but the new tenants would be faced with the same problem and would have as much difficulty recruiting sufficient numbers of bilingual staff.

[English]

If it sounds as if I'm defending these businesses, I don't deny it. The challenge for them is huge, and nobody understands the issue better than they do. They would prefer to be able to serve the public in both official languages every single time. It would be good for their business, and they know it.

• (0915)

[Translation]

Ensuring that franchise operators at the airport comply with the Official Languages Act is a problem, and we know it. We are aware that this is our problem. We are doing our best to try to work with the franchisees to find a solution.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Benoit.

[English]

Now I would invite Mr. Levy to continue.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Levy (Vice-President, Planning 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Vancouver Airport Authority):** Mr. Chairman and honourable members, bonjour and hello.

[English]

My name is Paul Levy and I'm the Vice-President of Planning for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games for the Vancouver International Airport Authority. I'm joined here today by my colleague from the airport authority, Danielle Moore, Official Languages Liaison, who is part of my 2010 planning team. I've asked Danielle to make a few introductory remarks.

Danielle.

**Ms. Danielle Moore (Liaison, Official Languages 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Vancouver Airport Authority):** *Bonjour.*

Good morning.

[Translation]

We are very pleased to be here.

At Vancouver International Airport, we are acutely aware of the Official Languages Act and that it serves as a daily reminder for Canadians and visitors that we are a bilingual country. For this reason, we are very pleased to be working with the Commissioner of Official Languages in response to his report: *Raising Our Game for Vancouver 2010: Towards a Canadian Model of Linguistic Duality in International Sport.*

Mr. Chairman, honourable senators, my full-time job at the airport authority is to work on coordinating with our business partners and airport authority staff to ensure the active offer of services in both

official languages to the travelling public. We anticipate welcoming more than 250,000 additional travellers for the games. We want to make sure that those additional quarter of a million people from all over the world recognize that they have arrived in a Canadian city, and one that is proud to host the games on behalf of all Canadians.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Levy:** *Merci, Danielle.*

In the commissioner's report, he acknowledged that we've made a valuable contribution, but he also said that we need to increase our efforts to be fully bilingual. We agree.

As Danielle alluded to, the commissioner made three separate and specific recommendations as to how Vancouver International Airport can make progress with regard to hosting a bilingual games. I'm here to report on what I believe is substantial progress in this regard.

The commissioner provided us with a helpful road map in his report. Let me summarize what the commissioner has recommended we do, then highlight a few of the 24 action items we have identified. I'd like to point out that this is in fact a progress report. Our goal is constant improvement.

The commissioner recommended that Vancouver Airport Authority integrate official languages into its planning and activities for the 2010 games. One of the key actions taken by the airport authority is the appointment of the official languages liaison, who just spoke.

We've also included a segment on "active offer" in a course that targets over 26,000 people who work at YVR, and we are actively recruiting French-speaking volunteers and paid staff. The commissioner also recommended that we work with Air Canada, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, Canada Border Services Agency and Toronto Pearson International Airport on a coherent official languages experience for all travellers.

We have met with all of these agencies and have worked to develop tools and reporting structures that will be used by all the players involved. We are also implementing a "mystery traveller" program to measure our performance.

Finally, the commissioner recommended that we take measures to ensure that front line personnel who will be working during the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games will make an active offer of service in both official languages. I am pleased to report that there will be either a verbal or visual active offer of French and English service at all points of contact throughout the airport where the travelling public may request services or information.

The airport authority will make available our Language Line service to all tenants and companies operating in the terminal, whether or not these business partners have an obligation to provide services in French and English. We have met with the management of all these companies to seek their commitment and we will continue to work with them and their corporate headquarters to ensure compliance.

I have provided you with a copy of our official languages initiatives that are completed, planned, and ongoing for the 2010 games. These have been developed in order to live up to our responsibility to welcome the world to Canada in both official languages. As you will see from that submission, we are implementing a number of initiatives during the games period, in addition to those that have been in place for many years.

We also welcome any other suggestions that you or other honourable members may bring to the forefront.

Clearly, the government has made the question of official languages and the games a priority, and it's a priority we share.

Is there still work to be done? Absolutely, but I have no doubt that when visitors arrive or depart from YVR—Vancouver International Airport—they will know they are in Canada and that we are a country of two official languages.

Employees of the airport are very proud of their airport and are excited and united with a common goal: to provide a positive and memorable experience to all airport users. The work that is happening now will create a lasting legacy at YVR.

Mr. Chair and honourable members, I would invite each and every one of you here today to join us in Vancouver in February and March of 2010 to see the pride in how we represent Canada to the world.

*Merci.*

● (0920)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Moore and Mr. Levy.

[*English*]

We'll now turn to the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, with Mr. Lennox.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Toby Lennox (Vice-President, Corporate Affairs and Communications, Greater Toronto Airports Authority):** Good morning, Mr. Chairman, honourable senators.

My name is Toby Lennox, Vice-President of Corporate Affairs and Communications for the Greater Toronto Airports Authority. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to provide committee members with an overview of the efforts that the GTAA has made to ensure that appropriate levels of bilingual service are available in our facilities, particularly in relation to the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games in Vancouver next year.

[*English*]

As you may know, the GTAA is the private not-for-profit corporation that manages and operates Toronto Pearson International Airport. As Canada's busiest airport, Toronto Pearson is a vital component of our national transportation infrastructure, connecting businesses, families, and visitors from all corners of the world.

We handle approximately one-third of all passenger traffic in the country, and on an average day, more than 85,000 passengers travel through our airport. For many of these travellers, Toronto Pearson is their first impression of Canada, and this is a responsibility we take very seriously.

[*Translation*]

As a major point of entry into Canada and a primary hub of domestic flights within Canada, the GTAA makes every effort to ensure that bilingual service is available to the travelling public. As such, it is our policy to ensure that the public is aware that service is available in both official languages through the use of signage, information literature and active offers of service in either English or French.

As an airport authority our responsibilities include provision of appropriate facilities and as such we ensure that all signage in the terminal buildings is bilingual. While we do not manage the individual operations of government agencies, airlines, tenants and concessionaires, we provide front-line operations staff who interact with these groups as required.

The GTAA front-line staff includes uniformed terminals specialists and information representatives in addition to management personnel and 75% of the GTAA's front-line staff in the terminals is bilingual. Non-bilingual GTAA staff are provided with tools, such as translation cards, and also have access to bilingual assistance via radio communications. When staff are not available, courtesy phones, located throughout the public areas of the terminal buildings, are available to connect to GTAA's fully bilingual call centre.

[*English*]

To ensure active offer of service is consistently provided, GTAA staff are reminded of their obligations through regular training, and we randomly monitor staff interactions with the public, both on phone calls and at information counters in the terminals. As well, we recognize the importance of health, safety, and security issues, and therefore provide standardized bilingual public announcements and signage regarding these matters within the airport terminal buildings.

● (0925)

[*Translation*]

We recognize that there is room for improvement in provision of bilingual services at Toronto Pearson. In the Commissioner of Official Languages' follow-up report on the 2010 games, it was noted that the GTAA must take further measures to improve results for active offer and for availability of service in both official languages. In particular, in recommendation 9, we were asked to take concrete measures to ensure that front-line personnel who will be working specifically during the Vancouver games. We have heard this message and have taken action to ensure that appropriate corrective measures are in place for the Olympics and beyond.

[*English*]

To highlight the importance of bilingual services during the games, the GTAA met a year ago on November 27 with the official languages personnel in the Toronto office to begin discussions on the roles of airports and other agencies on official languages and the Vancouver Olympic Games. The office sought our assistance in bringing together parties at Toronto Pearson International Airport, and we outlined opportunities to raise awareness at the airport.

We have subsequently coordinated with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages to provide information sessions for retail operators and other tenants in the terminals. We will expand this program to other groups in the terminal buildings over the next two months. The GTAA holds regular committee meetings with the airline and tenant communities, and these forums will offer opportunities to carry forward the message of our commitment to offering services in English and in French.

[Translation]

The GTAA is in the process of preparing materials for our front-line employees as well as third-party contracted services that have specific interaction with passengers. We are aiming to raise awareness of the Official Languages Act and of our obligations to provide an active offer and to offer non-bilingual employees tools to assist in an active offer. All of our information counters will be equipped with enhanced signage highlighting the availability of bilingual services, and our staff will be provided with buttons, offering service in French.

[English]

We'll be working with our tenants to ensure that training is available and translation sheets with common phrases are provided to their front line airport personnel. We have also developed a card for non-bilingual staff of our contracted services. It is affixed to the airport pass and identifies that the agent is not bilingual but that they will access a bilingual colleague to assist.

It has long been a practice to provide our contracted services with a card for those agents who do not speak French. This card states:

[Translation]

“Un instant, j'appelle un agent qui parle français pour vous aider.”

Further, we will offer our tenants and concessionaires the opportunity to connect directly with bilingual GTAA personnel by telephone or radio for assistance during the expected increased demand for bilingual services during the games.

[English]

In accordance with recommendation 8 of the commissioner's report, we have worked closely with our colleagues at the Canada Border Services Agency, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, Air Canada, and the Vancouver International Airport Authority to bolster the bilingual experience at our airports. Together, we have identified and are sharing a number of initiatives to ensure that the experience of travellers through our facilities reflects both the spirit of the Official Languages Act and the adoption of concrete measures to ensure the active offer of bilingual services.

[Translation]

We have met with these other organizations to identify best practices, including sharing monitoring mechanisms, training tools, information sessions, brochures demonstrating the Francophone community's cultural activities and various strategies that have been put in place to increase the bilingual capacity. As a result of this partnership, we are now using common tools, for example, laminated cards and computer wallpaper with key phrases to assist in the active offer of services in both official languages.

[English]

We will continue to share information and identify opportunities to prepare for the Vancouver Olympics. We will take advantage of this momentum and commit to work together to ensure a successful customer experience in both official languages beyond the 2010 games.

● (0930)

[Translation]

In conclusion, let me state clearly that we believe that Toronto Pearson has a role to play in promoting a bilingual Canada. With the world soon at our door for the Olympics, we will ensure our facilities reflect the spirit of Canadians, nationwide. We look forward to it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Lennox.

We'll begin our first round with Ms. Zarac.

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

Good morning, madam, gentlemen. Thank you for being here with us today.

I am satisfied that the objective of all of you is to provide the best service since the eyes of the world will be on us during the Olympic Games. We are a bilingual country, and it will therefore be important to show that we really are bilingual.

Apart from the Olympic Games, I think it is very important for security purposes to maintain services in both official languages at our major airports.

I have a brief question for Mr. Lennox. You referred to courtesy telephones when there are no staff in place to respond in both official languages. How do you direct the person who needs assistance, if that person does not speak or understand the language?

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** I'm going to answer in English, with your permission.

[English]

To the extent that they're not bilingual already, all of our front line staff have to be trilingual. They must have three languages. Seventy-five per cent are bilingual. So if we're talking about the 25% who do not speak French, they are all trained to deal with people who don't speak the language.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** They at least have a little knowledge.

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** Yes. They already have some.

[English]

Part of their training is to ensure that they are able to discern what the issue is. If they're not able to deal with it, they can access the courtesy phone. I will tell you that their first reaction is not to direct someone to the phone but, because we have sufficient staff, to call one of their colleagues over to deal with it.

We are already looking at deployment of staff during the Olympic Games to make sure we maximize the number of bilingual staff.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** We could conclude, regardless of the employee on duty, that that employee would be able to direct the person to the service requested.

[English]

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** Yes.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Perfect. Thank you.

My other questions are for Mr. Levy.

Mr. Levy, you apparently did a lot of work in response to the Commissioner's recommendations. You mentioned, among other things, a web page that I visited yesterday. I believe there's still a lot of work to do. We are a few weeks away from the Olympic Games, and a number of pages are still in English only. I don't know whether you are aware of that.

I went through the site yesterday, and in certain parts that are supposed to be in French, reference is made, among other things, to "Schedule", for "Planificateur de vol". It also states: "This section is designed", etc. There are a number of places on your site where information is supposed to be in French, but is still in English.

I would also like to know what measures you have taken with regard to franchisees. Again on your website, some rental car dealers offer service in English only.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Levy:** That's one of our challenges. You've heard from both of my colleagues that the vendors and the concessionaires who operate in airports are one of the biggest challenges. It's no different from Vancouver, where they need to have bilingual staff who can provide service in both official languages.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** I'm not talking about employees; I'm talking about your web site.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Levy:** Our website is new and we have much more work to do on it. We will continue to work on it to make sure that different parts of the website are available in both official languages.

For our concessionaires, we focus more on what's happening in the terminal to provide active service in both official languages, but we can certainly follow up to see what they're doing.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** But can we have your confirmation?

[Translation]

Before people come, they will go to your web site. That's why it should already be in place. It's one of the first initiatives that will be taken. I hope that is resolved as soon as possible.

Are you currently working on your site? When do you expect it to be completely bilingual?

● (0935)

[English]

**Mr. Paul Levy:** We will continue to work on our website right up to the Olympic Games, and will continue to update it afterwards. As you said in your opening remarks, the website was just updated in the last month. We've just launched a new site and we recognize that parts of it are not bilingual yet.

We wanted to make sure that the main parts the public was interacting with—the flight information pages—were bilingual, and I believe they are. We will continue to do other pages on it as well.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Those are exactly the pages I'm talking about and that require changes. Sections such as "Planificateur de vol" and "Enregistrement" are in English only.

As for departures and arrivals, it's virtually all in French, but some information is still in English only. So there is still a lot of work to do. Furthermore, there are only a few weeks left, and people are already beginning to make inquiries.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Zarac.

Mr. Nadeau.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Levy, for how long have we known that Vancouver would be hosting the Winter Games?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Levy:** It's been six years, since 2003.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** And today, you're telling me you read the September 2009 report of the Commissioner of Official Languages and that you started to take action in the matter of respect for the official languages at Vancouver Airport.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Levy:** That's correct. We have been working throughout the six years.

In fact, once Vancouver was announced as the official host city for the Olympic Games, our planning and preparations got under way. We've been upgrading and adding new facilities. One of our main objectives has been to make sure that all our facilities are upgraded and have the capacity to deal with the Olympic Games.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Mr. Levy, you'll understand that we only have five minutes for my questions and your answers.



I am very disappointed. I went to Vancouver. I was well served by the CATSA people when I requested service in French. They sent me someone and I got the necessary service. Since your web site, which is built in a professional manner and is a global reference point, is not yet up to date, you wouldn't pass the test. I've said what I had to say on that and I'm very disappointed about it.

Ms. Moore, you have to know that, with respect to the people you will be welcoming at the airport, 34 francophone countries will be taking part in the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, but there are also approximately 10 million Canadians and Quebecers whose first or second language is French. These people are also entitled to service in their language. The Official Languages Act has been around for 40 years. The fact that you tell me today that you are in the process of putting something in place for the games disappoints me enormously. Under the Official Languages Act, you are a major airport that receives more than one million visitors a year. You should always be able to provide service in French. You mustn't hide behind the cover of the Olympic Games and say that you're starting to take action. This has to be in perspective. I don't know whether I'm speaking for no purpose, but one thing is certain: for a francophone living in Quebec or Canada right now, I'm being told that it is fortunate that the 2010 Winter Olympic Games are being held in Vancouver so that the Vancouver Airport can start taking action.

Mr. Benoit, I want to talk about the issue of third parties, whom you call tenants and concessionnaires. They have obligations under the act. If I get caught speeding, I get a ticket and I deserve it. Under the Official Languages Act, the federal government is responsible for airports. You manage the airport and you are required to comply with the Official Languages Act. The same is true for the people who lease services at that airport, whether it be Tim Hortons, the book store or the duty free stores. So this is an obligation. Where there's an obligation, you must not complain and say that you are in a bad way because you have to manage the act.

I regularly go to Ottawa Airport. I don't go there as often as others who live farther away because I live in Gatineau. Some go there more often than I do because they live farther away. I had a quite unfortunate adventure with CATSA in October. I agree that's not you, but you'll notice that, at Ottawa Airport, some public announcements are still made in English only. If we can't develop a bilingual character for an institution directly related to the federal government to comply with the Official Languages Act, you can be sure that third parties, whether it be CATSA, Tim Hortons or other franchisees or partners or the absolute delinquent Air Canada and others, won't consider you a model. You must understand that situation.

There's one other thing. In the same vein as what I mentioned to Ms. Moore, you should not just respect the French language for foreign countries, you must also do it for people from here, who pay their taxes and who make it so this airport exists.

• (0940)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to all the witnesses.

Mr. Benoit, you said you had received a few complaints. How many complaints have you received?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** According to the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages, we have received three complaints in the last evaluation period, that is in the first quarter of 2009. The complaints mainly concerned a car rental dealer, a Tim Hortons counter and CATSA.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Did the three complaints concern French or English?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** In all three cases, it was French.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Do you have any complaint forms available at the airport? Where are they?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** Yes, when you say forms available—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Are there places that are easy to locate where complaint forms can be found?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** From our web site, people can contact me directly. I normally answer them within 24 to 36 hours. There are also comment cards throughout the airport.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Where are they?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** They are on the airline counters and the counters of certain franchisees. There are large tables in front of the counters. They are inside the airport, in the common areas. We keep a record of all complaints, whether they concern languages—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Earlier you were talking about training. In your opinion, the situation in this regard is not just attributable to the fact that the federal government subjects you to the same act that it must comply with but does not pay for the same type of training. The following question concerns a number of you.

The language issue is a concern of mine. I would like to talk about Part II of the Employment Insurance Act. If a welder needs to learn to make an assembly, he gets training to improve his skills so that he can keep his job. Would you be prepared to say that languages should fall into the same category?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** Probably. At first glance, I would say yes.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** For 40 years, the act has provided that, to keep one's job, a person must be bilingual. Shouldn't that be part of training? People could apply for financial assistance under Part II of the Employment Insurance Act to learn the language. It's as important for a person who communicates with the public as for someone who is learning to weld metal. Some people work manually and others communicate.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** What you're saying seems very logical and intelligent to me, but I'm not familiar enough with that part of the act to answer you. I would like to have a look at it before stating an official position.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Part II talks about the fact that the government grants financial assistance for training.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** If it's just that, that's not a problem for me.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You mentioned money earlier, and this part covers the granting of funding.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** We don't limit ourselves to that. We're offering our employees programs that we're trying to carry out ourselves. In English, it's called "Lunch and Learn". It's offered to franchisees at noon.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You teach them to say, "I don't speak French"?  
• (0945)

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** I wish it was that easy. I have some examples—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The Olympic Games will last only two weeks. On the other hand, I've been taking the plane at that airport for two years.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** Exactly, and every time you come—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I ordered coffee at Tim Hortons, and the server answered me: "I don't speak French."

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** Every time you go, you're probably served by a different employee. The turnover rate in that kind of place is 60%. This is a reality, not an excuse. During the Lunch and Learn sessions, we teach employees how good morning is said in French and what the phonetic version is. These are basic notions, but we're working with employees who, in a number of cases, speak neither English nor French.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I don't want to attack all Tim Hortons franchisees, but you have to admit that the words "café" and "coffee" are similar. "Sucre" and "sugar", "crème" and "cream" are quite similar as well.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** However, it's another matter in the case of a one-week car rental reservation. We're trying to work with what we have. As I told you, our staff is 100% bilingual. Earlier we talked about announcements. When we catch someone at fault, they get a reminder. Announcements are not controlled by the airport, but perhaps it would be a good idea to consider the possibility that they are all our responsibility, as is the case at other airports. That might be a good idea.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Godin.

We'll now go to Ms. Boucher.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to our committee.

As you know, the Olympic Games are very important for our government and for all committee members. It is a priority that these games are a reflection of what Canada is, a country where there are two official languages. The Minister of Heritage, the Honourable James Moore, is categorical on this subject. He wants these games to reflect the two faces of Canada, English and French.

Mr. Benoit, you said earlier that you realize some of your services, particularly voice messages, were offered in English only. You told us you were about to rectify the situation. I would like to know how you are going to do that.

Don't you do this kind of checking systematically, twice a year, for example, or every three months? When you make those changes, will they be permanent or will they apply only during the Olympic Games?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** First of all, as I told you at the outset, I doubt that there will be 50 people going through the Ottawa airport to go to the Olympic Games; it's not a transfer point. The long-term situation

for us is very important. It's not just about two weeks in the spring or winter of 2010; it's permanent.

We found an error because we did some checks. If we did checks and the success rate was always 100%, we would know that something is wrong.

The Commissioner did some checks with us and concluded that there was a deficiency in the offer of service. For example, in my telephone introduction, I should say: "Bonjour, vous êtes au bureau de Paul Benoit. Good morning. Puis-je vous aider?" We did a check when I learned that I was invited here. I checked everything. It would be naive not to evaluate what we've done. We realized at that time that, in most cases, the voice-mail messages of a number of my employees were in English. I'm not talking about the general telephone number of the airport or reception, where the message is completely bilingual. If you call our offices today, I hope the situation has been at least 90% corrected and that there is a bilingual welcome message. Some employees are resistant to that. They tell us that they are not bilingual—these are not front-line employees, but rather office employees—and they would be giving a false impression. So, first of all, we have made arrangements so that, if they are unable to record the message, an employee generally does it for them. Second, people who telephone will receive the message in the language of their choice, English or French.

Yes, we do checks. As is the case everywhere, we find mistakes, we admit them, we correct them, and this is not a two-week initiative; it's for the long term.

• (0950)

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Do I have any time left, Mr. Chairman?

**The Chair:** You have a minute and a half left.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Earlier you said that some employees were not bilingual and that they might be resistant to French or embarrassed to speak French. That happens as well. In that case, do you provide training?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** We do it as much as possible internally, but not necessarily... I won't hide the fact, and I'll give you an example: we don't give employees a year to take language courses. We try to help them internally. There are francophone employees who have been denied a promotion at the airport and unilingual anglophone employees who have been denied promotions at the airport. That happens in both cases.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** You nevertheless have good management. When you make changes, it's not just for the short term, but for the long term.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** It's for the long term. There is a requirement for our delegated directors, among others, who are our representatives when we aren't there, to speak both languages. When a passenger has a problem and asks to see the service manager, that manager must be bilingual or else he or she cannot be promoted. Our fire chiefs, our fire captains, our emergency services employees, our paramedics are all bilingual. Our volunteers are mostly bilingual and that is a long-term situation.

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

We'll now begin our second round with Mr. D'Amours.

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

Thanks to the witnesses for being here with us this morning.

I would like to get a figure from each of you. In the case of each airport, what is the percentage of bilingual front-line employees? Mr. Lennox, you mentioned that it is 75% in Toronto?

[English]

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** That's right. It's 75%.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** What is the situation in Ottawa, Mr. Benoit?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** With regard to the airport as a whole?

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** I want to know the percentage of front-line employees who are bilingual.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** One hundred per cent of port authority employees are bilingual.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** When you say 100%, that doesn't refer just to active offer, that is to say being able to say "Hello, bonjour."

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** No, it means being able to say "Bonjour, hello, comment ça va?" The port authority's front-line employees are 100% bilingual.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Mr. Levy.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Levy:** Most of the airport authority staff aren't front line staff. They're actually in administrative roles, so it's a very small number. But we do it under contract and 20% to 25% of the front line staff are bilingual.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Earlier Mr. Levy mentioned that you, Ms. Moore, were the Official Languages Champion or the person responsible for liaison with the Vancouver port authority. I don't know whether you were already employed at the airport, but how long have you held that liaison position?

**Ms. Danielle Moore:** I started in the liaison position four weeks ago.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** That means, Mr. Levy, that this makes no sense. In addition to the commissioner's report, which was made public early in the year and the reminder that was made in September or thereabouts, we now have this situation. I'm very pleased to see Ms. Moore here.

The Olympic Games will be held in how many weeks?

[English]

In how many weeks will we have the Olympics in Vancouver?

**Mr. Paul Levy:** They're about two months away.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** So we'll have them in about 10 weeks.

[Translation]

You just hired someone four weeks ago to solve the official languages problem, whereas the games were to be held 14 weeks after your decision to hire someone. You mentioned that you have been aware you will have to meet certain obligations since 2003. However, 14 weeks before the Olympic Games, you're ultimately trying to hoodwink us into believing that the official languages problems will be solved. That's roughly what you're telling us today. We don't call that being proactive; we call that being reactive to the pressures of, among others, the commissioner or of the parliamentarians on the official languages committee.

Those are precisely the fears that I have previously mentioned. We will have to criticize more, once the games are over, because someone, somewhere won't have done his job. That's what we're seeing today, and we're talking about Vancouver, where the Olympic Games are going to be held.

I think this is a matter of responsibility at some point. You have to be proactive and stop being reactive all the time. In this case, I must admit to you that it is very disappointing to hear that this hiring took place four weeks ago, 14 weeks before the start of the Olympic Games.

I'm now going to go back to what is going on in Ottawa. Mr. Benoit, you were the first person to speak. You tried to justify the retail industry's problems and this general problem in Canada of finding francophones or bilingual persons. Regardless of the reasons, I'm disappointed about that as well because, while you were telling us that, people from Toronto, among others, were saying they were communicating actively to make it understood that concrete efforts had to be made to achieve real bilingualism among franchisees. I even think that, for Vancouver, you mentioned that you were approaching franchisees.

It would be nice not to hear excuses for not being able to push too hard so that they don't all close down, while others seem to want to make an effort to get involved with franchisees and their parent companies.

Earlier I was listening to you try to explain why this can't be done, while others were trying to say that they were there and were at least trying.

● (0955)

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** I wasn't trying to say that we couldn't do it; I was trying to give you an accurate picture of the situation in our industry. We are very proactive with our tenants.

It's difficult; that's obvious. As for hiring employees, 55% of them are bilingual. I'm talking about the franchisees in general. In Ottawa, 27% are francophones, the majority of whom live in the east, in Vanier or Orleans. It's very hard to find someone bilingual who will come to the airport at 4:30 in the morning to work at a small restaurant.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Mr. Benoit, it isn't up to you to justify these things. It is up to you to ensure the act is complied with.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** I agree, and I won't conceal the fact.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** The logistical problem of franchisees shouldn't be your problem.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** Unfortunately, it is our problem and we accept it.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll continue with Ms. Guay.

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

I'm really disappointed. The Official Languages Act has been around for 40 years now, and yet none of the organizations has managed to implement it appropriately at the airports. This is all the more disturbing since there are only nine weeks left before the Olympic Games.

Mr. Benoit, I don't agree with you when you say that people won't go through Ottawa. A lot of people will leave from Vancouver and will visit the National Capital. While they are in Canada, they'll take the opportunity to see what is going on here. I don't agree with you at all, and I think you underestimate the number of passengers who may deplane in Ottawa.

I'm also disappointed that you don't know the Official Languages Act by heart, since it's extremely important for it to be very well enforced. At the last minute, we realized that the web site of one of the airports, Vancouver's perhaps, wasn't complete. At the last minute, nine weeks before the Olympic Games, we're dealing with all kinds of problems. This is troubling because people won't have the necessary services in their language.

You talked about other services, such as franchises and franchisees, in your airports. I'd like to hear what you have to say on that subject. Can you give them penalties? Can you react and ensure that these people offer service in both official languages? I don't know how you operate. When you drive too fast, you get a fine. What do you do in the airports to punish people who don't offer service in both official languages?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** In the leases we've signed with franchisees and tenants, there is an article that concerns official languages. Fines can be imposed, although they are not big fines. We do that from time to time.

Unless all the employees of a franchisee are bilingual, we would impose fine after fine, and that would produce no result. These organizations must comply with the act and with our leases. I'm going to read to you what's stated in those leases.

[English]

It states that during each and every shift of operations in all areas of the leased premises used for serving the public, we need "to have sufficient staff on duty to provide an [immediate] oral response capability in both official languages...; to clearly demonstrate—

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I only have five minutes, Mr. Benoit.

• (1000)

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** I'm trying to answer you.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Is your lease drafted in both official languages?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** Are you talking about the lease?

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Yes, I'm talking about the leases and about your franchisees.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** That's not necessarily the case for the franchisees: most of them are companies in the United States or Canada.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** How many fines have you imposed?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** I might be a bit rash in saying this, but I believe it's less than 15 or so in the past year.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** It changes nothing.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** It doesn't change much because, ultimately, the people get a \$100 fine, but they still can't find any bilingual employees.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Oh!

Mr. Lennox, what do you say about that?

[English]

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** I must say that I understand the frustration and I can appreciate it. Having grown up

[Translation]

in Quebec, I am an anglophone from Quebec, and that already means problems.

[English]

The issue for the airport authority in Toronto is to try to get to training first, as opposed to discipline. We've found that discipline is not as effective.

The other thing we're trying to deal with is our staff turnover, which is fairly quick. We're working with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages to do regular training programs for them in Toronto.

One of the problems—

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I don't have a lot of time. I want to know whether you impose fines and how many you have imposed.

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** I don't impose any fines because that doesn't work. It's more effective to—

**Ms. Monique Guay:** So you let things go.

How does that work in Vancouver, Mr. Levy?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Levy:** It's the same thing. We don't give any fines. Ultimately we can cancel the lease, but we're not aware that we've given any fines.

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Guay:** You've never imposed any fines. However, they have been imposed in Ottawa.

So that means that no one enforces the act because you're afraid of losing your clientele or your franchisees. That makes no sense. The act has been around for 40 years. You are running and trying to plug the holes so you can be sure bilingual services are offered virtually everywhere. It won't work; it will be a failure, and that's what's troubling. That's what scares us here in the committee.

We are concerned about all the groups that we've met to date: VANOC, CATSA and so on. They are unable to provide service in both official languages. You're proving the same thing to us. I hope you make an effort. You don't have a lot of time; you have nine more weeks.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** The image we want to project of Canada should represent what it is, that is to say a bilingual country.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Guay.

[*English*]

We'll continue with Ms. O'Neill-Gordon.

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

Thank you to all the witnesses for joining us today.

Coming from the bilingual province of Canada, I certainly realize that the retail sector has a problem all the time in trying to obtain bilingual workers. I'm happy to hear about the work you have put in place to try to make things more bilingual and more available for all of us travelling across Canada. I also appreciate hearing Mr. Benoit say that these changes are not just for now, but are planned to be in place permanently.

My question is for Mr. Lennox. I wonder whether you could describe precisely what your airport is doing to serve well the francophones who are travelling through the airport, and I'd like to know whether these measures came into place just because of the 2010 Olympics.

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** Thank you.

Let me mention a couple of things about what will be happening at Pearson airport, first of all.

We do 85,000 passengers a day. We anticipate that during the Olympics the level of traffic might go up to about 100,000 a day, which really is not that much for us; it's not that busy a day. In fact, what we are doing is building on our existing programs. As I said, our front line staff are 75% bilingual, so we are making sure that we are redeploying them.

We are taking the opportunity of the Olympic Games to use them as a vehicle to remind people of their French-language obligations under the Official Languages Act. As I said, we are working with the official languages office to tailor the training appropriately.

In fact, in November of last year, they came to us and asked, "What is the best way to approach the government agencies?". One of the things that is difficult for airport authorities is to go to the government agencies, CATSA and CBSA, to explain to them their obligations, because they already have so many responsibilities to the federal government.

One of the things that I think is important for us—and, please, I don't offer this by way of excuse—is that the issue of official languages shifts, so we need to use every opportunity we can to remind people. In previous years, for example, we had a very virulent complaint from a passenger that we used as the example for

our retailers to say, "This is exactly how somebody should not be treated". Then the staff turns over and we have to do it again.

We would anticipate a staff turnover of between 20% and 30% between now and the time the Olympics happen, so we're tailoring our training. We're also trying to use this as a lever for longer-term sustainable French-language and official-languages programming at Pearson. Will it be difficult? Absolutely. Will it be a challenge? Absolutely.

Will we be 100% perfect and compliant? That's going to be a challenge. All I can give you now is our absolute commitment that we will make the best effort we can and that we'll continue with those efforts.

•(1005)

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** I can see that you're doing it. I feel that you are putting forth your best effort in all areas. I'm wondering whether any of these initiatives that you are putting forth are just for the Olympic Games or whether they will be there afterwards.

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** As I say, no, because we are not going to be experiencing an increase in staff, we're trying to use this as a means of... It's slightly different, in that I don't have to train staff just for the Olympics. What I have to do is take the staff I have, and the staff that the concessionaires and the front line staff have, and remind them. The one thing we would probably be doing is focusing our attention a little more.

For example, because most people will just be transiting Pearson airport, we're not going to be focusing as much on working with the car rental companies. What we know is that most people will be connecting. We're working with the official languages commissioner's office in Toronto to provide focus training, but then we want to use it to build on, to continue. You're not going to see signs come down afterwards. You're going to see continued diligence to try to ensure that we can fulfill our obligations.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** On the training that's done and made available for the staff, is it convenient for them to take?

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** Yes. An airport is a 24-hour place and one of the things we had to work on with the official languages commissioner was where it was most effective to use the training and when you do it. Shifts, as my colleagues will attest, I start at four o'clock or five o'clock in the morning. We try to tailor it to shifts, when we can do it.

As Mr. Benoit has suggested, we're not really in a position to require our front line tenants to go off and do language training for quite a while. They can't do that, so we try to do it in ways such that it can work.

Again, it is a struggle, because we're finding, with the change in population in Toronto, that in the case of most of the people we need or are hiring, their mother tongue isn't English or French. In fact, their secondary tongue may not even be English or French. The first step is to have people trained to recognize French when they hear it.

That is part of the training we're doing to try to tailor it. As I say, the objective here is to make sure that the character of Canada comes out, and we hope we'll be able to do that.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. O'Neill-Gordon.

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

Monsieur Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Levy was talking about the Internet after a question was raised about it. The information was in one language and they're doing the translation now.

Do you have the same problem in Toronto?

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** I'm going to admit something. Our Internet website is pathetic. We are in the process of completely redesigning our website. I make every apology I can, but our website, in many respects—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Is the problem all in the French? Nothing in the English?

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** No, our website isn't... To be quite honest with you, I'm in charge of it, and our website isn't good from the moment you click on to the moment you leave. We are doing a complete rebuild of our website, from the ground up. Unfortunately, that is going to take some time. Quite frankly, I recognize that our website is not good.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Is yours the same problem? Is it all in the French and nothing in the English, Mr. Levy?

**Mr. Paul Levy:** It's in English and parts of it are in French. We'll continue to work on it to put more of it in French.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** And you, Mr. Benoit?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** When you go to our site, there are the words "Welcome" and "Bienvenue". It's 100% English and French.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Honestly, with regard to your web site, you have problems and that concerns you. You can come and tell us things about Tim Hortons, but, with regard to the web site, there are no more excuses. Really, we may look like a group of nasty people here this morning, but consider that we are in a bilingual country. We're saying we want to show the entire world that we live in a bilingual country, but we aren't bilingual at all. The act has been violated for 40 years. The FCFA report isn't positive. The Commissioner of Official Languages has been forced to get involved and now we're panicking because of the Olympic Games. I apologize and I don't want to say this in a nasty way, but I really don't care about the Olympic Games. The Official Languages Act has been around for 40 years. You can hire professionals for the web site. You aren't forced to hire newly arrived immigrants who don't speak French. I believe there must be Canadians, among the 33 million people who are able to look at the web site and to ensure that everything is written in both languages. That's where we realize that

there is no will. This is insulting. You are subject to the Official Languages Act.

• (1010)

[*English*]

The law of our country is the Official Languages Act, and that problem is as simple as hiring somebody. If somebody goes onto the website, it has to be in both languages. On that one, I'm sorry, there's no excuse.

I was in Vancouver a couple of weeks ago. I went to the information centre and heard, "I'm sorry, but I don't speak French". That was at the information centre, not Tim Hortons. If there's one place where people learn both languages, it's Vancouver. The Chinese community comes there and wants to learn both languages, and they know more than just saying, "*Je m'excuse, je ne parle pas français*".

I want your reaction. Where is the failure here? Because, gentlemen, using something that is not accessible, like the website, so that you cannot do it, what else can you do? I mean, this one here, it just means money: you hire somebody to get it done.

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** Maybe I can just clarify this for you. Our website is bilingual. The problem is that our website doesn't actually respond in other ways that we wish it would, so at the present time we're tearing our website down and rebuilding it. Quite frankly, it actually has nothing to do with the Olympic Games. It's something we're rebuilding because we recognize the opportunity to make it right.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** No, but my question is, even if the website you have right now is so bad, is it bad in both languages?

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** It's bad in both languages. But—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** But the translation is there for everything. It's just bad.

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** Our website, unfortunately, is bad in both languages; that's what I'm telling you. So right now we are taking the opportunity to rebuild the website to work it further. I make no apologies that it's going to take some time.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** But is it going to be built in one language and then translated two years from now?

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** No. What we would be doing is building it as we do with all of our publications. We use it as a publication tool and we do it in both languages.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** What is your excuse, really, in Vancouver?

**Mr. Paul Levy:** The Olympic Games are offering us a great opportunity, as Mr. Lennox pointed out—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** To wake up after 40 years?

**Mr. Paul Levy:** —to raise awareness. We're using the games as an opportunity to raise the bar for us at Vancouver International in all the things we do, including our website, and we'll continue to work on that. We recognize that there are some challenges and things we need to work on.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The information centre?

**Mr. Paul Levy:** We're working on that and we're going to continue to make sure that the people there can provide an active offer of service in both official languages.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll continue with Mr. Rodriguez.

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

Good morning and welcome. Each of your airports plays an important role in the country and, in particular, with respect to the Olympic Games.

In your case, Mr. Benoit, you represent the airport of the national capital. The official and formal face of Canada is Parliament, where we are right now, and that's your airport.

In your case, Mr. Lennox, you said that, roughly one-third of passengers transited through Toronto, the economic capital, which is of major importance.

In Vancouver, there's the airport that is welcoming the Olympic Games. We obviously realize that a lot of work remains to be done in each case. In the case of Vancouver, there's quite a bit. I read the memo that you submitted, where it states:

Ever since Vancouver won the bid to host the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, the Vancouver Airport Authority has been working hard to ensure that every passenger who comes through our airport has a great experience, whether they are part of the Olympic family or a member of the regular travelling public.

When you say that Vancouver won the bid to host the Olympics, you're referring to the decision that was made six years ago. That's not entirely true in the case of the official languages. I get the impression you're skating a bit in order to catch up, particularly as regards the somewhat late appointment of Ms. Moore.

Was the official languages issue addressed right at the outset, or did someone say, at some point, that you had to do something about it?

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Levy:** As I was saying earlier, we've been working at it for six years. You're correct in that we've known for six years that the games were coming, and we've been working on making sure our facilities are up to what we need to have for the games and beyond.

That includes making sure that those new facilities meet all the bilingual requirements. The signage in there is not coming down after the games. Signage has gone in there, whether it be static signage or dynamic signage; they're the signs that you can change to multiple languages. The bilingual signage will be there and that will continue after the games.

We're making sure as we go through to put Language Line at all of our information counters. So on the earlier question, if you go up to any of our information counters and the people there are not able to provide service in French, they actually have Language Line, whereby they can connect to someone there who can provide translation services. That's something we put in place in 2007 in preparation for the games.

•(1015)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Is signage normally in both official languages?

**An hon. member:** It's always bilingual.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** It's always bilingual.

As for recruitment, you mentioned 25% of front-line staff. That's extremely low. It's even troubling because the games are about to begin.

First, do you have a plan to get there? And you don't have eight weeks to get there; it's now. Second, if there is one, does that plan involve you talking, for example, with francophone associations? Are you speaking with them? Are you meeting with them? Are you cooperating with them? Because those networks have access to a large labour pool.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Levy:** We've been engaging and working with the francophone community in British Columbia over the past year. We're working with them to recruit additional volunteers and paid staff. We have reached out to the school board for the francophone community and they are keen to have students or teachers, or other family and friends, assisting us. We will bring them in either as volunteers or as paid staff as part of the Olympic Games.

We also have our green coat program, which is our volunteer program. We're recruiting to that group. Specifically, we have gone out to the francophone community and we've put advertisements in local papers in French to make sure we're reaching out and are able to draw into that program. That's a legacy opportunity. These aren't just people who we're going to hire for the games—

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Well, what's your objective for the beginning of the Olympics? Do you want 100% of the people being able to speak both official languages?

**Mr. Paul Levy:** My objective is that we want to get an additional hundred people out on the floor who can actually provide completely bilingual service—

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** That would bring you up to what percentage of people being bilingual?

**Mr. Paul Levy:** That's a hard question to answer, because when you look at the airport, there are 26,000 people who work at Vancouver International Airport—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Those who are on the front line, those who are in direct contact with—

[*English*]

How do you say that in English? The *première ligne*, the first line? What about those who are in contact with the people coming to the airport?

**Mr. Paul Levy:** Again, for the people directly under the control of the airport authority, we are getting as many as we can out on the floor to provide those translation services.

But there are many others, including the agencies, the car rentals, and the airlines. All of them have a responsibility because they ultimately—

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Okay.

**Mr. Paul Levy:** But there are many others, including the agencies, the car rentals, and the airlines. All of them have a responsibility because they ultimately touch the passenger—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** You have no control over those people; by that I mean in no way are you requiring them to meet certain official languages commitments. There is a considerable deficiency. There's a risk we'll have a serious problem in that regard in particular.

We can meet in this committee after the games and tell each other everything that didn't work. However, we would like to meet before the games, to work with you so that it works, even though there's little time left. That's our choice. Afterwards, we'll bawl out the government, it will bawl us out, everyone will bawl each other out, but that will result in absolutely nothing. Changes must be made immediately.

Do you need more money or services from the government for training? Can we do something to change this?

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Levy:** I'm confident. We will continue to work with all of the business partners. We have to reach out to the francophone community and the school board to bring in additional resources.

We have a plan in place to assist those organizations around the airport that may not have the language capability. We'll continue to remind them of their obligation, but we will assist them and provide staff who can go there to provide translation services.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** I'm not very reassured, Mr. Levy.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Petit, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Good morning, madam and gentlemen.

Vancouver Airport is the second largest airport in Canada, after that of Toronto. So it's really a big airport at all times, not just during the Olympic or Paralympic Games. I understand that you're trying to make efforts. We realize that. We're not saying that you aren't making any efforts; we're trying to understand those you are making. Don't forget that, after the Olympic and Paralympic Games, they will attack us and tell us that you didn't do your job. I don't want to be following behind you. Today it's important that we understand each other clearly. We want this to be done. I want that. I'm a francophone, and I want this to be done. Money was handed over so that you could work toward success. However, the answers you're giving us scare me. I don't find this amusing at all.

Ms. Moore, we haven't heard a lot from you. It's true that you were hired only four weeks ago. I would like to know whether you believe in this or whether this is just a snow job. Do you really believe we'll be able to provide suitable service in French? Do you

see the coming criticisms, before we've even started? What can you do?

● (1020)

**Ms. Danielle Moore:** Mr. Chairman, honourable members, I answered the question that was put to me. The fact is that I've been doing this job for a month. I've been an employee of the Vancouver Airport for 32 years. I moreover started when we were under the federal government's responsibility. I was responsible for official languages programs for a number of years.

The reason I've been doing this job for a month, as Mr. Levy mentioned, is that we have a number of employees who have been working on it for a number of years. Official languages are part of our day-to-day work. I became a full-time but supplementary employee, and I must ensure that all the work that has been done is well coordinated. I admit that I spend part of my time working with my colleagues from Toronto, Ottawa and the Canada Border Services Agency. That has been my main job in recent months. I ensure that all the efforts that have been made are coordinated. I've had a lot of meetings with the airport's employees and companies. I hope that, if you went to our airport today, you definitely wouldn't hear "I don't speak French" at the information counter.

People have started to say "Hello, bonjour." In case people forget, as the Ottawa airport people mentioned, the identification panels will be at all counters. We're working with the airlines and the franchisees, so that they also have at least one visual offer. I don't want to waste your time by explaining the percentages to you again, but if the person on site doesn't speak French, we also have an immediate telephone interpreter system. People who say bonjour will have direct assistance in French. We adopted the Lunch and Learn idea. I have a number of colleagues who, as you mentioned, are embarrassed because they think their French isn't good enough. However, it is good. I simply want to try to help them brush it up a bit and encourage them to speak French, to say bonjour. Many are simply embarrassed. So we're going to try to improve that aspect as well.

**Mr. Daniel Petit:** Ms. Moore, I repeat to you that your airport is the second largest in the country, after that of Toronto. You seem to be saying, and I'm relying on you because you are before the committee, that what you see seems to make sense. We'll see whether it does afterwards, but I'm relying on you. You've been there for 32 years, so you're able to see the difference.

What will remain afterwards? Will everything you're saying stay in place after the Olympic Games?

**Ms. Danielle Moore:** As regards the work we're doing now, you're right; there have been difficulties. Some companies are not doing what we would like them to do.

I'm a francophone like you. When I talk to them, I talk to them from the heart. I can explain to them why French is important in Canada. I hope the work we're doing today for the Olympic Games, which, as you say, will only last two weeks, will continue after the Olympic Games. With some of my colleagues, I see people who realize that it's going to continue after the Olympic Games. That's a large part of what I do. I'm working solely based on the Olympic Games; I want those people to continue, to realize their responsibility and the fact that this makes a lot of sense.



•(1025)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Nadeau.

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

Mr. Lennox, you let it slip that English-speaking Quebecers are having problems in Quebec. There is an excellent document that you should read: the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages. On page 93, it states that one in two employees at Montreal airport actually offers bilingual service actively, or 47%. In Toronto, the percentage is 2.7%: one employee out of 33, or out of 50, offer bilingual service actively. So don't compare the situation of Franco-Ontarians with that of English-speaking Quebecers because you aren't really in your field. You should stick to making Toronto a place where every francophone, Canadian or Quebecer, can feel comfortable going and receiving service in French.

In Vancouver, Ms. Moore, I would like you to know that the percentage, according to the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages, is 0.0%. You don't need a doctorate to actively offer bilingual service; it's "Hello, bonjour." You're telling me that people have been doing that for some time, that they have learned. It's about time. So much the better; it's improving. However, I hope that you refer them to people who speak French.

At Ottawa Airport in October, I was asked, "Don't you speak any English?" That was CATSA, I admit, but nevertheless there was the old triangle stating "English/Français". There were young people there, a man and a woman, and another, and they called the security officers. And yet it wasn't complicated. It isn't true that I was taking an extra step if I didn't get service in French: it's a right. So we still have to fight, with boxing gloves on. You experienced the situation as a Franco-Columbian, so you know. I've lived in Saskatchewan. I'm originally Franco-Ontarian, and, as a Quebecer, I still have the same job to do. There's nothing official. Institutions like yours should be allies. It's too bad, but I don't sense that.

Ladies and gentlemen from the airports, you have the long end of the stick. When a passenger arrives at your airport, you can deny him access to his flight, you can search him, and rightly so. The law is on your side and, in view of all the paranoia that there can be internationally, as though we were all bad guys, from the outset, before boarding an aircraft, you can do a lot of things. If you also put pressure on francophones, if we don't even feel at home in an airport and get the impression that the trip is starting there, you see all the difficulty involved in the situation. And that comes as much from the security people as from franchisees, once you're in the aircraft, or when announcements are made in French, or not, depending on the approach.

Telling us that a lot of new Canadians who were born elsewhere are working in Canada and don't understand French isn't a good answer. Active offer is simple. You just have to be able to say, "Hello, bonjour" and, if passengers want to be served in French, to refer them to a person who speaks French. This has to be an automatic reflex.

Going back to what Mr. Petit said, it's not true that we're going to single people out. However, we are going to criticize the situation, as we're doing now. Ms. Moore, you've occupied this specific position

for four weeks. Although you've given the airport excellent service for 32 years, the fact nevertheless remains that this entire situation should have been resolved 300 weeks ago, as soon as the Olympic Games were awarded.

These are not good answers, when you tell us that English-speaking Quebecers are suffering, that everything is being done and that you have been thinking about this for four weeks, or that it isn't your fault that new Canadians have arrived at Ottawa Airport. There is an act; there are rights. Make your recommendations to the federal government to get more money to train your staff. Do it. Come and see us; we'll work with you. The Official Languages Act has been around for 40 years. Assimilation has been going on in Canada since perhaps 1763, if you want to specify a date. So you have to come here with proactive measures and not tell us that you're in a bad way, stuck. It is your responsibility to be highly critical with us parliamentarians, and to tell us that what you need for the act to be complied with.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

•(1030)

**The Chair:** You were just nine seconds under the limit, Mr. Nadeau.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I'm happy about that, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** We are going to begin the fourth and final round, but first I would like to point out that, if short-term measures are planned to improve service in French in the airports, committee members will definitely be interested in learning about them.

Ms. Glover.

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

I would like to welcome all the witnesses here today.

It was Mr. Benoit, I believe, who talked about the reality we're dealing with here in Canada. I have been a member of this committee for one year. We looked at postsecondary education and determined that it was hard to find bilingual employees in Canada. There are 5,000 positions to be filled even in the federal public service. All committee members have understood, through listening to the witnesses, that the reality in Canada is as follows: there aren't enough people who speak both official languages.

Thank you, Mr. Benoit. I want to focus on the reality of the situation. You have 26,000 employees and you have to find bilingual staff. That's really a tough job. Imagine: we can't even find enough to fill 5,000 positions in the public service.

As I like statistics, I would like to know what you have done, in concrete terms, over the past year. I would like you all to tell me how many employees and volunteers you have found in the past year, how many you have now and how many you'll have once the Olympic and Paralympic Games have begun.

[English]

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** As I explained earlier, Pearson International Airport is slightly different from Vancouver. Because we staff to handle 100,000 to 110,000 passengers a day, the increased traffic we're going to experience during the Olympics will not require us to staff up. In fact, we're not adding any staff. We don't have any volunteers, nor do we have any requirement for them. Our staffing levels are such that, as I say, 75% of our front line staff is bilingual.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** If you're just going to repeat the stats—

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** I'm sorry.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** I only have five minutes.

The problem I have with that, sir, is that we have had VANOC here several times saying that Toronto is going to have more volunteers.

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** That's right. We will. No, well—

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** That's what we've been told: that you will have more in both areas.

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** No, I'm sorry to correct that, but on a busiest day during March break we will have 110,000 passengers, and we don't add any staff for that. We anticipate, based on the traffic that's coming through Pearson airport, that we could be up to 100,000. All of those are connecting passengers, so we won't be... It's a very different situation for us.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Okay. I'm going to go to the next ones, but I'm disappointed to hear that because I think we got some conflicting messages from VANOC. Because Toronto will be a major player—

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** Oh, there's no question about it. Fifty per cent of the traffic... But just understand that relatively speaking it actually won't be that much different from what we handle on a busy day. We're staffed up to do it.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** So there's no change within the last year?

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** No. We don't have to.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** What about Ottawa?

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** As I told you, we don't focus on traffic related to the Olympic Games. This is a project we've been working on for a number of years. It's not recent. I didn't come here with last year's statistics in hand, but I can give you the following figures. Today, out of the 347 front-line employees of the airlines, 220 are bilingual, 63%. Among the franchises, 112 of the 217 employees are bilingual, that is to say 52%. In the rental car sector, 23 of 53 employees are bilingual, 43%. On the airport authority's front-line staff, 100% of employees are bilingual. Among the airport authority's second-line employees—here we're talking about office employees—70 out of 129, 54%, are bilingual.

We aren't stopping at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games: we're focusing on the National Capital for the long term. These figures are much higher than in 1997, when we took over the airport.

•(1035)

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Will those figures change by the time the games are held?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** I doubt that.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Mr. Levy.

**The Chair:** Please be brief.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Levy:** Right now among our own airport authority staff, our volunteers, our front line people who work the customer counters, and students, we have about 71 people who are fully bilingual. Our intent, which we will have in place for the Olympic Games period, is to have in excess of 100.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** A year ago, how many did you have?

**Mr. Paul Levy:** We had 71.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** So there's been no change within the last year.

[Translation]

Mr. Chairman, could we ask the witness to submit those figures later?

**The Chair:** Would it be possible to send us those statistics, please?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** I'll do that this morning, but later.

**The Chair:** Send them to our clerk.

Mr. Rodriguez.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** I'm going to share my time with Mr. D'Amours. I simply have a few brief questions to ask.

Ms. Moore, you are what is called your official languages champion. Do you spend all your time on that subject, or do you have other duties? What percentage of your time do you spend working on official languages?

**Ms. Danielle Moore:** I do that on a full-time basis.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Only that, now?

**Ms. Danielle Moore:** Yes, on a full-time basis.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Mr. Benoit, is there an official languages champion at the authority?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** Yes, me!

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** It's going not badly, although sometimes it can go badly. As I told you, it's not Vancouver. My colleagues have different problems because they are in different communities. As I am in the national capital, it gets my attention. It's my responsibility.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** What percentage of your time does that occupy?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** Honestly, I devote perhaps 10% of my time to that aspect. My assistant, my director and the vice-president for communications work on it as well. It's possible to be the champion without necessarily doing all the work.

[English]

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Mr. Lennox, do you have an official languages champion in Toronto?

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** A member of our customer experience staff is charged with the responsibility for carrying out official languages duties, and that is overseen by a vice-president. We also have responsibilities that involve dealing with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, and that comes out of my office. So we deal with it at several levels.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** When you cite percentages, are any tests sometimes done, simply...

**An hon. member:** Blind tests.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Do you understand what I mean? Do you conduct tests from time to time? You take a walk around? You have people who walk around? Yes?

**An hon. member:** Yes.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Mr. D'Amours.

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

First, I'll make a comment. You, in Toronto and Vancouver, seem to be having trouble with your web sites.

That's not your case in Ottawa because you clearly said how your web site works.

So your web sites are posing problems? You admit that and you want to improve them. I've told others and I'm telling you: back home we have an organization called the CIDIF, whose work is to translate and localize web sites.

If you're interested in having someone move these kinds of files forward, let me know or contact my office. We'll be pleased to give you the contact information of these people. It is an organization funded by the federal and provincial governments. Their main duties, among many others, are the translation and localization of web sites.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** I'm interested in that as well.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** So all three of you will contact my office.

Ms. Moore, earlier you raised one point in particular. You said you had been in this position for four weeks. However, you mentioned that, in your 32 years of service at Vancouver Airport, you were in charge of official languages at one point. Did I get that right?

**Ms. Danielle Moore:** Yes, you got it right, sir.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** I was surprised to hear you say that because there seemed to be so many problems in Vancouver moving things forward in this file. Perhaps you had the good will to promote the official languages, but there was no doubt someone who set up barriers somewhere because you're not that far advanced in that regard today.

I don't know for how many years you managed official languages. Unless I'm mistaken, it appears that you wanted to move things forward. And yet, at some point, someone had to obstruct matters for

things to be where they are in 2009, given such poor results a few weeks away from the Olympic Games—based solely on this example of the Olympic Games—as though it were an objective to be achieved. Ultimately, Vancouver airport should have been like the other airports, that is to say a model of bilingualism. We're panicking because of Vancouver. Someone didn't react. You may have worked very hard on the official languages plan, but some person or persons held back matters so that things are not advancing.

I'm not asking you to answer or to say that such and such a person put a crimp in your plans or such and such a thing worked poorly. Pardon me, but I have to make that observation this morning.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

● (1040)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Godin, go ahead please.

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

There is an official languages champion in Toronto, isn't there? There is one?

[English]

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** No. We have a number of people who have responsibility, and sharing occurs. It is at a number of different levels. There are 1,200 employees.

There are 42,000 people who work at the airport so we elect to divide the responsibility between interfacing with the concessionaires, etc., and dealing with the Official Languages Act and the office of the commissioner. That is how we divide it. It's a large enough portfolio to divide in two.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** At the end of the day, what if somebody comes up and says, "Look, we're not doing too good this week"? Because you don't always need to have complaints from people; you could notice it yourselves.

[Translation]

It's very humiliating to always have to file a complaint.

I'm going to come to you, Mr. Benoit. As I told you, I have been travelling for a long time. I mentioned 12 years, but I started travelling before that, as part of my previous jobs. Filing complaints isn't always pleasant. People are trying to do the best they can.

A few weeks ago, I went to Vancouver on Air Canada. I said I would like a sandwich and showed the person the picture, and she answered: "I don't speak French." I used the word "sandwich", and the picture was there. It tiring tiring; it's not fun at all. You tell me you are the champion; you're pleased with that.

I don't want to push you, but at the start of the meeting, you mentioned that, just before coming here you went to see what was going on because you wanted to know. Shouldn't you already have known what was going on, without waiting to appear before the committee? If we put the two comments together... I don't want to put words in your mouth, but put yourself in my place.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** No.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You're the champion at Ottawa Airport, but before coming here, you went to see how things were going in the store because you wanted to get informed.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** We conduct constant checks. Every person summoned before this committee will look at what is going on, will do a brief review. That's perfectly normal. That's how we found that there was a deficiency.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** When you bring in immigrants because there's a shortage of workers, you are entitled to have requirements. To work on oil wells in Alberta, when you want a mechanic, you don't ask for an electrician. The same thing can be done. If someone comes because there's a shortage of labour, you can request bilingual people. That can be done.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** You're right.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** When you bring in immigrants, you can request that. The act tells us that they have to be bilingual. We need people and we don't have people who want to leave Vanier or elsewhere to go to the airport. I don't know whether these are the requests that the franchisees make for—

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** I don't know that.

• (1045)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** In Vancouver, you're subject to the Official Language Act, and we can't say that it's going very well, based on the points. When Tourism British Columbia promoted the Olympic Games, it was done in six languages, but not in French. That's a complete insult. It could have been done in six different languages, but the French language was not on the web site. Is it that difficult? Then, after we filed a complaint with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, they answered that they weren't subject to the Official Languages Act because it was the City of Vancouver. I'll leave you with that. A lot of improvements have to be made, but I think you have to want to make them. They should follow the example of VIA Rail. Thank you.

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

We'll conclude with Mr. Nadeau.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** You know the situation, and you see the frustration it causes. In our opinion, this has been botched from the start, and what's being done now is all catch-up. It won't be ready for the Games, and once they're over, there will still be work to do.

As airport authorities, you report to the federal government to the extent that this is a federal jurisdiction. This is not something that I can compel, but I would like to know whether it's possible for you to give us your action plan for improving French-language services over the next five or 10 years. I'm convinced that you're planning; that would at least give us a road map.

Until your next appearance, or in the meantime, contact us parliamentarians and the Official Languages Committee. You know who we are. If you don't have the tools to ensure the act is complied with, let us know. Mr. Benoit or the other witnesses should not tell us again that there have only been three complaints. Three complaints conceal a lot of things. Being part of a minority in an anglophone country which is located on an anglophone continent very often means that citizens know how to get by in English. You have the power to decide whether or not people can board an aircraft and fear

that they will be denied service. This means that the rights aspect is often set aside. In this case, we're talking about a single service.

We don't want to play at being the police, but we would at least like to know where you are and whether you need any tools. We should be able to be allies. If you have any comments, express them.

[English]

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** We'd be quite happy to provide our plans both for the Olympic Games and for the long term.

In terms of tools we could use, we could always use additional funding, but that's really not the solution. One of the things that we have found to be particularly helpful is working with the local office of the official languages commissioner, in Toronto. They're no longer doing audits to try to catch us. What they're trying to do is work with us in order to continue to try to refresh the program they have. I have always thought that the resources of the official languages commissioner could in fact be expanded.

One of the challenges you've heard about is that we have turnover and a first languages problem. One thing that could be very helpful would be to strengthen the role of the official languages commissioner by way of providing resources to airport authorities, by way of providing standardized training so that they understand what they're dealing with, and by creating within the official languages commissioner's office an expertise in doing the type of training that would be appropriate at all airports and therefore consistent across the country.

Frankly, if we are going to be dedicating funds to assist with this problem, we will continue to do what we want, but it seems to me that there's a very strong role for the very good work that the official languages commissioner's office is doing in providing assistance and guidance and in standardizing this across the country. So in fact, in what they term a change from being a type of police officer or a check, as you indicated, they can actually be a full resource. We've been working with them in that style now.

We recognize that it's a new style for them, but it really is paying off, because they're actually assisting with our training. If I could ask for a tool, that would be, over the long term—forget the Olympics, but over the long term—a really excellent opportunity for us. Then I would know that the training being used in Toronto is the same as the training being used in Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Calgary.

• (1050)

**The Chair:** You still have one minute.

[Translation]

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

[English]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Levy.

**Mr. Paul Levy:** At Vancouver International Airport, we certainly understand the important role we play in welcoming the world to Canada. We're up to that challenge. We recognize that we have still more work to do over the coming eight weeks. We'll continue to work forward and even through the Olympic Games. If there are opportunities and things we need to do, we'll adjust to that.

The document I have shared with you presents the 24 initiatives we are putting in place. Some of those are already done. Some will be done in the coming weeks and right up to the Olympic Games. That is our plan moving forward. Our plan is to make sure that each and every one of these initiatives is in place. We will monitor that and measure the performance.

Again, I welcome you, and I hope to see you out there in 2010 at the games so that you can see the pride of the airport authority and the employees of Vancouver International Airport.

**The Chair:** Yes, to see the progress for ourselves.

We are now concluding, but there's one member who has not spoken yet, a new member, I think.

Welcome to the committee, Mr. Miller. If you want to, go ahead and ask questions.

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here.

I can tell you that I'm not going to read from the same song sheet that all the opposition members obviously passed down the table and dramatically tell you how disappointed I am, because I'm not.

I'm very proud, as I think most Canadians are, that the Olympics are coming to Canada, but I also recognize the work it takes to prepare for that. I congratulate all of you in working towards that.

Mr. Benoit, I was very interested in hearing your comments and your presentation. One comment was about how you had trouble finding employees who could speak either one of our official languages. I presume the reason for that is immigrants coming in and what have you and the fact that they can't...

I see that you're nodding, so I take it you're in agreement with that. I hope that some of the changes that Minister Kenney has made in the immigration act will help to deal with that, whereby it's mandatory for somebody... That should be beneficial when you're looking for employees. Would that be a correct assessment?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** Yes. I've tried to put a position of reality and I think an important... I've also read a lot of the testimony from people who've come before the commission, and there's a problem with bilingualism across the whole country in all areas. The law is the law and the law is to be respected, but maybe the law needs help.

To that point, I would echo the point made by my colleague from Toronto. It's fine to say that is the law, but if the reality says it's almost impossible to do it... I'm not looking for excuses. We try constantly. But you've heard every witness who has come before this committee over the last little while basically say that there are issues and problems out there. I think we need your help to make this what we all want.

I'm very proud of the national capital. I'm very proud of our airport. I'm very proud of the national capital region. But I think we need help going forward on this.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Thank you.

My five minutes are running out.

Just moving over to Mr. Levy and Ms. Moore, are you basically satisfied overall with your readiness for the Olympics? I realize there's still a lot of work to do in a short period of time, but overall are you satisfied?

**Mr. Paul Levy:** We're satisfied with where we are right now. As you said, there is a lot more work to do. We'll continue to work 24 hours a day over the next 10 weeks to get ready for the games and we will continue through the Olympic period.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** That's good. I see some nodding.

Again, I've heard Mr. Benoit speak to this, but what do you think is the main reason that you've found it so difficult to recruit bilingual staff?

Also, I guess you or anybody from the three airports could answer this one. Since September, have you received directives from central agencies like Canadian Heritage, Treasury Board, or the Privy Council Office about guaranteeing the availability of services in both official languages to the travelling public during the games? If so, what were those directives?

**Mr. Toby Lennox:** We have not received any directives, but what we're doing is working very closely with the official languages commissioner's office in Toronto. In fact, Graham Fraser was in our terminal yesterday. We are working with them on training programs. Our relationship is primarily with the official languages commissioner's office to try to make sure we have in place what we need to have in place, both now and subsequently.

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** I am not aware of any directives that might have been sent to me, nor am I looking for any.

• (1055)

**Mr. Paul Levy:** I don't believe we've received any in Vancouver. We're certainly in dialogue with the commissioner's office and we'll continue to be as we get ready for the games.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** As you insinuated there, Mr. Lennox, in working with official languages, it's always basically working towards that goal. One of you, probably Mr. Levy or Ms. Moore, mentioned that the changes you're putting in are going to be permanent. Could I assume that any changes that even Toronto and Ottawa airports are making to handle the influx of people would also be permanent?

**Mr. Paul Benoit:** Our system is not based on the Vancouver Olympics and it has never been. It is based on our role and our mandate.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** I understand that.

Thank you.

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

I would like to thank you for coming to our committee this morning. If you have recommendations to the committee such as the ones you've made, or other specific measures regarding official languages, the committee is interested in hearing them. I would invite you to get in touch with our clerk.

Do you have a point of order, Mr. Godin?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Yes, well, it's something around that. I'm sure that if the airports in Toronto, Ottawa, or Vancouver were to hire people who spoke only French and not English, Mr. Miller would have more of a problem.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Now we will adjourn the meeting. Next week, we will hold a meeting on the 40th—

[*English*]

On a point of order, Mr. Miller.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Mr. Chairman, in no way did I insinuate what Mr. Godin was saying.

But I did have a point of order I wanted to bring up anyway. I've been on this Hill for five and a half years, Mr. Chairman. I've worked on a number of committees and I have filled in on a number of committees, like today. I enjoyed listening to the content.

But never in my five and half years have I seen such an inequity in the order of questioning. If I did my math right today, I think there

were 18 questions asked around the table, and 12 of them came from over there. I don't know how to say “shanghaied” in French, but I'll tell you that this committee has been shanghaied. It's not democracy at all when you—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

**Le président:** This is a routine motion.

[*English*]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** It's your party that proposed that way of—

**An hon. member:** That's not a point of order.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** The meeting's over, you said, Yvon.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Miller, this is a routine motion rule and this concerns a decision made by committee members.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Et voilà!

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.









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