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## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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**Tuesday, December 8, 2009**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Steven Blaney**



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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• (0905)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.)):** Good morning and welcome, everyone. We are now beginning the 46th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. I would like to welcome Mr. Graham Fraser, the Commissioner of Official Languages, Ms. Charlebois and Ms. Tremblay, who are assistant commissioners, as well as Ms. Pascale Giguère, who is the director and general counsel.

Since we have met now on several occasions, it feels like we are among friends. However, we are going to discuss an issue that is of great importance to the committee. Without further ado, I give you the floor, Mr. Fraser. You have 10 minutes to make your presentation.

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

[English]

Honourable members, members of the standing committee, good morning.

This is probably the last opportunity we will have to discuss the preparations for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games as they relate to the question of Canadian linguistic duality. I believe immediate attention must be devoted to the measures that still need to be taken.

I would like to take this time to underscore the impact of the committee's work in this area. I'd like to thank all the members for the work they have done. I think it's been very important and I thank you all.

The task is of paramount importance in fostering both respect for Canadians' language rights and the country's image on the international stage. There are only 66 days, a little more than two months, until the opening ceremonies, and the Olympic organization is hard at work on final preparations. The Olympic torch relay has begun, the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games has taken possession of the athlete's village, and the Vancouver 2010 official souvenir program has been printed and is now on sale.

[Translation]

I see that some of the recommendations contained in the follow-up report I presented last September have been taken into consideration by the organizations in question. VANOC, Canadian Heritage and

other federal institutions have already acted and I commend them for it.

However, it remains to be seen whether those initiatives will produce concrete results for the athletes, media and visitors who will be attending the Games. The additional \$7.7 million from the Canadian government should help resolve issues such as translation, signage at Olympic venues, permanent signage and the medal ceremonies. Mr. Jacques Gauthier, the federal government representative on the VANOC board of directors, has described this grant as "very satisfactory".

I am relieved to learn that VANOC and the Translation Bureau have just signed an agreement of understanding. For weeks now, it was said to be on the verge of being signed. In fact, it happened last night. I hope that work can begin as soon as possible.

According to information shared by Public Works and Government Services Canada yesterday, the Translation Bureau will invest significant resources in support of the Games. VANOC has informed us that the problems pertaining to the full transmission of comments by francophone athletes through the Info2010 intranet system will be resolved. Temporary signage models seem adequate for effectively directing athletes and visitors in both official languages of Canada and of the Games. Nevertheless, signage must be judiciously placed in order to effectively direct visitors, regardless of municipal or provincial jurisdictional boundaries.

One recommendation put forward in the follow-up I released last September specifically referred to the deployment of bilingual volunteers. I have been assured that the volunteer deployment plan effectively places the 3,500 individuals in bilingual positions. I have been assured as well that the plan provides for rapid access to someone who speaks English and French in emergency and unforeseen situations. Unfortunately, we have neither seen nor been able to comment on the plan. Consequently, as with so many other matters surrounding the Games, VANOC and Canadian Heritage will have to be evaluated on this aspect based on the results obtained during the Olympic celebrations themselves.

I am aware of your keen interest in the main signage for the Richmond Olympic Oval, which has come to symbolize the difficulties between VANOC and its municipal partners. I have been told that the issue is no longer whether the name will appear on the building in both languages, but rather how it will actually be done. Once again, we cannot be content until "*Anneau olympique de Richmond*" appears side by side with "Richmond Olympic Oval" on the front of the building.

[English]

Let us not forget that the bar is high, since English and French are the official languages of both our country and the Olympic movement. I am pleased to see that VANOC is fully aware of that fact. When he appeared before you a year and a half ago, on April 29, 2008, John Furlong told you that VANOC was far surpassing the obligations under the Multiparty Agreement. He mentioned VANOC's desire, and I quote, "to really seize the opportunity... to really showcase the unique linguistic duality of Canada in the most prolific way, and of course, especially while the world is watching us". Mr. Furlong said "we will have no difficulty in meeting our obligations in respect to signage. It would all be bilingual. It is now."

He went on to say that Vancouver International Airport is what he called a mission-critical facility for the games, and described the experience visitors would have:

When you land at the Vancouver International Airport, you will land in an Olympic venue. It will be like landing right in the middle of the Olympic Games. You will be met by bilingual signage, with all the proper sounds and announcements in both languages. There will be volunteers and staff who speak both languages fluently. The message will be that you're in Canada, that this duality is here.

I could not have expressed my hopes for the Olympics and for the Vancouver International Airport better myself. Mr. Furlong expressed the standard by which the games will be judged.

This fall, VANOC's campaign to promote bilingualism is a clear signal to members of the public that they can expect to receive services in both official languages throughout the celebrations. According to VANOC, the public can also expect celebrations that reflect Canada's linguistic duality. My expectation is that VANOC will fulfill its commitments and implement its obligations.

However, the shortfalls observed in the visible portion of the preparations, such as the torch's arrival in Canada, leave me skeptical as to whether the entire Olympic organization has developed a linguistic duality reflex. With the few days remaining before the games, is it safe to assume they will get there? Having failed to fully incorporate linguistic duality into every planning activity, VANOC and its partners will need to be all the more vigilant to ensure quality service for athletes, their escorts, and the general public.

• (0910)

[Translation]

The organization of the Games aside, the many visitors converging on Vancouver will receive services from a number of federal institutions. The quality of their experience will depend in large part on interactions with federal public servants, their contract workers and their partners. Many federal institutions recognize that they do not have the necessary staff on hand to provide quality service in both official languages. Some have taken measures to move bilingual staff to their points of service, as I mentioned in my report. Other institutions have not shown the same level of commitment. Members of my staff have been urging these institutions to show creativity to optimize the resources at their disposal.

It is important to note that the language obligations of airports and their commercial tenants are far from new. If airport authorities had given this problem all the attention it deserves earlier, they would

probably find themselves in a better position today to face this enhanced need for services in both official languages.

That being said, many of the coordination meetings I recommended have taken place. The Vancouver Airport Authority and the institutions that operate within the airport met in October to share their needs and best practices with one another. We have been told that some measures will be implemented, and I hope to see results from this collaboration during the Games.

[English]

The Vancouver and Toronto airport authorities have reminded their commercial tenants that travellers must be offered services in French as well as in English. Toronto's Pearson Airport invited my office to meet with the National Retail Tenants Association to underscore the importance of offering services in both languages, and I also met recently with the president and chief executive officer of the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, Lloyd McCoomb.

However, as I have already mentioned, the work of these institutions can only be evaluated through results from the field, and I am concerned about the results the institutions will obtain once the games begin.

A number of institutions have pointed out that they provide their staff with language training or they draw on the best practices of other institutions to create their own training materials. I have also noted that a good number of institutions have set up workshops or training on active offer. In this regard, Air Canada plans to use a video on active offer in January 2010 to train its employees on the importance of greeting the public in both official languages, much as Parks Canada has done.

I also see that institutions have begun collaborating with one another and that there are regular contacts among them. These exchanges must continue and their synergy must be translated into concrete results for Canadians at the games.

[Translation]

I hope the various federal institutions with a role to play in the staging of this event will pursue their efforts to provide better bilingual service long after the last athlete from the Games has left the country. Offering the Canadian public and visitors services in both official languages will continue to be equally as important after the Olympic Games.

In conclusion, I would like to clarify one last thing. The Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games belong to all Canadians, and it is essential that the Games reflect Canadian values, including linguistic duality. I am pleased to see the progress made, but I am still worried given the lack of certainty that certain key elements will be in place. Everyone involved must act now and must act quickly for the final sprint.

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

• (0915)

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Thank you, Commissioner, for your update on preparations for the Vancouver Olympics.

[Translation]

We will begin the first round of questions. I will remind you that each member of the committee has five minutes to ask their questions. That includes the answer.

I give the floor to Mr. Rodriguez.

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

Mr. Commissioner, I would like to welcome you and thank you for being here. This is an important meeting, because it is the last time we will see each other. In fact, we break this week and return on January 25. It is therefore unlikely that we will see you before the Olympic Games. Even if we did, it would be a little late to change anything with only a few days to go before the event.

I am looking at your speaking notes. You said you found that some of the recommendations contained in the follow-up report that you presented last September have been taken into consideration. Which have not?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Some institutions have been rather slow to respond. We are receiving answers day by day. Of the 11 institutions who were to report to us by November 30, 7 responded formally, 3 informally without the head of the organization's signature on the formal letter, and the RCMP asked us for an extension. They missed the new deadline and I will be meeting with the commissioner next week.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Are you expecting them to send it to you soon?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Yes, I have a meeting with the commissioner next week and we will be discussing it at that time.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Please wish him the best of the season if you see him before then.

Of the three who answered you informally—was it just a phone call?—were you satisfied with what they told you or are you expecting something more formal? Are you expecting specific answers? What are they?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** The bodies that provided us with a formal answer are the following: Vancouver Airport, CATSA, Canada Post, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Air Canada, Toronto Airport and Service Canada. Those who responded informally are the Canada Border Services Agency, Parks Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, who answered but without quite following up on our recommendations. The RCMP's answer was that they wanted an extension.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Are you going to push for more information?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** That is right.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** You know, Mr. Commissioner, coincidences seem to follow you around, it is quite extraordinary. For example, the last time you tabled a report, the government came up

with \$7 million almost the next day. You wanted to see us this morning, and last night an agreement was finally signed between VANOC and the Translation Bureau. We all know this is pure coincidence because they did not know that you were coming this morning. Do you believe it is a coincidence?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I must repeat the compliment I gave to your committee and to all members of Parliament. The pressure that you have kept up, the invitations to appear, reminding all of those bodies of their obligations; there is nothing like being summoned to appear

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** —before the committee—

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** —to concentrate the mind.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** We must invite you back more often.

I have serious concerns about the Vancouver airport. You probably read the testimony from the airport representatives. They seem to me to be late in many regards. They do not really seem to understand. They know that they have obligations and that they will have their knuckles rapped if they do not fulfill them. But I did not sense a deep understanding or that they themselves are making bilingualism a priority.

Not only that, the very nice lady who testified had just been appointed official languages champion four weeks earlier. Vancouver got the Olympic Games six years ago. This shows a deeper problem. You seem to have confidence in them, and to be giving them the benefit of the doubt. You quoted Mr. Furlong, from VANOC, who stated before the committee a year and a half ago; “when you land at Vancouver International Airport [...] the atmosphere will send a message that you're in Canada, that this duality is here.” Personally, I do not get the impression that Vancouver Airport is going to be ready, short of a miracle over the next 66 days. You think anything is possible. Do you think that can change?

• (0920)

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** As far as Vancouver is concerned, when this process was launched, the reaction of the airport authorities was more or less one of indifference. They felt that it was not necessary to have anything in place other than what already existed. We heard: “hey, don't worry about it” a lot. Some of the authorities even resisted some of our observations. Since then, we have seen that there is a recognition of the importance of the issue. I accept that this is a rather sudden and recent change in perspective.

Moreover, we are talking about an institution that has had obligations for a long time. Throughout this exercise, it seems significant to me that we were able to use the Olympics to focus these institutions on their existing obligations.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Thank you, Mr. Commissioner.

I am sorry, Mr. Rodriguez's time is up.

I give the floor to Mr. Nadeau.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, Mr. Commissioner, ladies.

I will begin by reading you a passage from an article that appeared in *Le Figaro* last November 9<sup>th</sup>, entitled “*Le français boudé aux JO de Vancouver*” [French snubbed at Vancouver Olympic Games]:

With 100 days to go before the opening ceremonies of the Vancouver Olympic Games, the organizing committee's performance in bilingualism leaves a lot to be desired. Fewer than 15% of the 25,000 volunteers will speak French. It is small consolation that they will be deployed in strategic locations and will wear a pin saying "Bonjour".

I will now read you a letter from Albert Salon, a former ambassador, president of Avenir de la langue française and president of the Front francophone international, sent to Minister Alain Joyandet, Secretary of State for Cooperation and la Francophonie.

The letter reads as follows:

Mr. Minister,

If what was said in *Le Figaro* is true, what can the Government of France do to attempt to raise the bar?

In Canada, a country that boasts that it is officially bilingual from sea to sea [*d'un océan à l'autre*], what a dubious distinction! Worse than the Olympic Games in Beijing?!...

Perhaps we could impress upon the federal and British Columbia organizers that to allow this to happen would once more send a clear signal to the francophones of Quebec and the rest of Canada, as well to the people of France, to other francophones and to the OIF of which Canada, including Quebec and New Brunswick, is an important member, that it really looks like the "Anglos" are attempting to stifle the French fact over there...

Looking to you for help and still devoted to our cause, I remain, yours sincerely,  
Alain Salon, Former Ambassador, President of "Avenir de la langue française" and of FFI-France.

Mr. Chairman, do we have to postpone the Winter Olympic Games until June 2010 in order to ensure respect for the francophonie? Should we use that ski hill in Dubai that is having the financial problems? If we did, we could hold the skiing events of the Winter Olympic Games in June.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Madam Chair, the letter that the member has just read emphasizes the importance of this linguistic issue for the Francophonie internationale. Just to be clear, you should be aware that a few years ago, France, which was the first country to send a *témoin* to the Olympic Games, gave that responsibility to the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie which, for several Olympics now, has sent a *Grand Témoin*. I have met Mr. Pascal Couchepin, who is the Grand Témoin de la Francophonie for these Games. So this letter emphasizes the importance of the issue.

• (0925)

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

Mr. Fraser, I have asked a lot of questions during the motions to adjourn the House. I recall that Mr. Petit and Ms. Boucher came and cheered me on wildly one Thursday night, towards the end of this session. I would like to ask you some of those questions. You did not deal with them earlier, although we understand that this is a very large project.

What is the status of the Cultural Olympiad? Have you actually heard that 25% of its shows will be in French?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** All of the organizations, including the organizing committee of the Cultural Olympiad, are being quite guarded about the artists that will participate. Nevertheless, I have been assured that there will be a good representation of francophone artists. There will be several events that will emphasize the French fact, including the International Day of la Francophonie, the

Canadian Day of la Francophonie and la Journée du Québec. So there will be a series of days that will celebrate the French fact. Canada will participate, as will France, to bring francophone artists from Africa to Granville Island during the Journée de la francophonie. There will be a big show there on February 14. This will follow the Canadian Day of la Francophonie, which will be celebrated in the Vancouver region and the International Day of la Francophonie, which will be celebrated in Whistler on February 13.

I have some idea of the schedule, but they did not want to share the exact number of artists with me. From what I have been told, there will be a very strong presence of francophone artists throughout the games.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

I will now give the floor to Mr. Godin.

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

Good morning, Mr. Fraser, and welcome to your team.

Let us hope that it will not just be about Quebec and Africa. Let us not forget that the Acadians were the first to arrive in Canada. I constantly remind people that we celebrated our 400th anniversary four years before the others did.

It is disappointing to hear what you said about the RCMP, but I am not surprised. In New Brunswick, we had to go to court when we wanted bilingual services from the RCMP. And it took many years of fighting to force them to comply with the Official Languages Act. So I am not at all surprised that the RCMP would be the last to comply. I would even add that it has passed the deadlines you set. I will not ask you any questions about it, because you have already addressed the issue. Nonetheless, I will share my comments and opinion. I am not at all surprised. It is regrettable that a federal institution that has a duty to uphold justice and the law should be the worst offender when it comes to the Official Languages Act. It is very regrettable.

A number of questions have been asked about the Vancouver airport. There has been a lot of talk about the volunteers. I have already said that the Olympic Games are the Olympic Games and that, before we can show off our bilingualism to other countries, we have to show respect for the language here in Canada. Are you not afraid that, despite all of those volunteers, once the Games have come and gone, it will evaporate, there will be no more bilingualism and we will back to square one?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** That is always a concern. I would like to share with the committee a conversation I had with Lloyd McCoomb, CEO of the Greater Toronto Airports Authority. He told me that, as a result of all of these discussions, it had been decided to transfer the responsibility for official languages from the office responsible for government operations to the office responsible for customer experience. I believe that is a step forward. Airport officials understand that the active offer, the service in both languages, is an essential aspect of the customer's experience. It is not only about reporting to government: they must also improve the experience for travellers.

It is a step forward, and I hope that, given the pressure we have all brought to bear on these institutions, they will finally understand that they have an obligation to Canadians and that they cannot simply check off a box and hand in a report, to you, to us or to Canadian Heritage, pursuant to sections 41 and 42.

In the end, the public is the key priority. We are not only committed because of the importance of the events that will be held between February 12 and 28, 2010, but also because we want to improve the level of service within the system.

• (0930)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Fraser, you heard the testimony from the director of the Toronto airport. He believes that these weeks will be like any others. He does not believe he needs more staff; he thinks it will be business as usual.

Personally, I have seen no change. The Toronto airport does not have the best record on bilingualism. We are focusing on the Vancouver airport, but Toronto will be an important entry point for visitors. What can you tell us about the Toronto airport?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** As I mentioned, I feel that the importance of active offer and services in both languages is recognized as an integral part of the customer's experience and not only as a legal obligation. I think it is also recognized that the biggest partner city for the Toronto airport is Montreal. Each day, 5,000 passengers arrive in Toronto from Montreal. To get to the Olympic Games, 50% of visitors will be going through Toronto.

Of course, I was concerned when I heard the claim that it would be business as usual, as they say. That is not the case at all. I feel that the fact that 50% of visitors are going to be transiting through Toronto to get to the Olympic Games is an indication that we need exemplary performance there.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Ms. Boucher, you now have the floor.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Good morning, Mr. Fraser. It is a always a pleasure to have you here before our committee. We want the francophonie to be everywhere. We say the official languages, but, in actual fact, it is mainly French that we want to see everywhere, so that our communities get the impression that they have actively participated in these Olympic Games.

We all heard the testimony from the Vancouver airport officials. We were all surprised to find that, for six years, or under two different governments, the Vancouver airport turned a deaf ear to our requests, whether from the Liberals or from ourselves.

Ms. Guay referred again to the fact that there needed to be bilingual staff, that tourists were going to arrive at various airports all over the place, that CATSA staff would have to be called in and that visitors would be searched.

Can we expect this to happen in both languages? That is what we all want, but I would like to know, given how little time we have before the Games, whether you sincerely believe that the Vancouver airport can perform miracles by then.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I do not have a crystal ball. So I do not want to stick my neck out and make predictions. I personally began to monitor this issue ever since I started this job three years ago. We discussed the matter the second time I appeared before your committee, in 2007. We have consistently worked on this issue since then. We have seen the understanding of the institutions evolve. We have reached a point where I do not want to make any predictions.

I raised my concerns; I mentioned that I was still somewhat skeptical vis-à-vis VANOC and its lack of reflex. Even when I am being told that all procedures are in place, that adjustments have been made, and that volunteers have been identified, if the reflex is not there, it is difficult to make the system operational. The reflex and the leadership are what matters.

• (0935)

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** There has been a lot of talk about the Place de la francophonie in Vancouver, those who will be representing us, francophone artists from all over the country. Do you know where things stand today? Do you think that the reputation of the francophonie will be enhanced by our artists at the Place de la francophonie? The federal government and Quebec government have put a little money into it. The federal government invested \$1.7 million to ensure that the francophonie is felt everywhere. Have you held discussions about that?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Yes, I have had both formal and informal discussions with representatives of the Foundation for Cross-Cultural Dialogue, which is responsible for organizing the Place de la francophonie. They faced difficulties during the funding negotiations. There were times when the organizers were unsure of whether they would receive sufficient funding.

Most of those problems have been resolved, and I have been assured that there will be successive performances by artists who are not only francophones, but also from the Canadian francophonie.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Not only from Quebec, but from across Canada.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Not only from Quebec.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Thank you. There are francophones outside Quebec, including Acadians.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

We will begin a second round of questions with Mr. D'Amours.

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

I would like to thank you for being here with us.

Earlier, Commissioner, you said that you were still worried. I will admit that I do hope that is the case, because I am more than worried.

You have told us today that the Canada Border Services Agency and the Public Health Agency of Canada, for example, have not even made the effort to provide you with a direct, formal response. That raises serious questions. There are real things we have to consider; and I am not only talking about the francophonie.

There are a number of real life considerations with regard to health care. The agency is not even able to provide a formal response to the question of whether services will be offered in French. And yet, people may experience all kinds of health problems wherever they are travelling. This, today, points to a potentially dangerous situation; the danger being that some people might not be attended to in their own language.

The RCMP has asked for an extension. I wonder what it actually means. Truth be told, we have seen that the RCMP reacts after the fact. It seems that they are having difficulties being proactive. We saw some examples of that yesterday in Parliament. Today, you are telling us that the RCMP has asked for an extension to provide you with a response on how it will ensure its bilingual responsibilities as part of its work.

If you recall, I had told you not so long ago that I foresaw many complaints being filed after the Olympic Games, because some people will not have taken seriously the work we asked them to accomplish. Take for example Ottawa. People will be coming through Ottawa before heading to Vancouver. The director of the Ottawa airport seemed to say that few people would pass through Ottawa on their way to Vancouver, but I am convinced that people will be passing through Ottawa.

I am sure you have read the documents. As for retail merchants, things are so complicated. In today's retail industry, staff turnover and bilingual requirements make a complicated mix. For all intents and purposes, it is difficult to set any objectives. There are obligations, but reasons are given from the outset as to why they cannot be fulfilled. Ultimately, justifications are given for why others cannot do their work. A true leader should tell people to do their work.

As my colleague Rodriguez pointed out earlier, there has been talk about bilingualism at the Vancouver airport for some decades, but official results have to be shown. There are 11 or 12 weeks to go before the games. I cannot imagine that a decades-old problem will be resolved within a few weeks and that everything will be fine and dandy at the Vancouver airport.

Commissioner, it is a pleasure to invite you here. We should perhaps have had you come on a daily basis. That might have gotten the organizers to produce daily results. We shall see. If we called you to appear tomorrow, perhaps the RCMP would provide you with an official response. That is deplorable. As I have said, I really feel that complaints will have to be filed, but then the games will already have come and gone.

It is a fact that having people appear before us has produced results. However, is it our job to have people appear in order to obtain results? Things would be so much better if witnesses told us how much things are improving. We always have people appear before the Standing Committee on Official Languages for them to talk about such things as the Olympic Games, but it is to remind them of the work they should be doing in terms of official languages. The official languages are just as much for Quebec anglophones as they are for francophones outside Quebec.

I do not know whether you want to add anything to what I just said. My concerns are even greater when I think about future results

for the Vancouver airport. We will have to sit down around the table in March and point out that things did not go as they should have. I would prefer hearing the opposite, but I am more concerned about that today than ever before.

●(0940)

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Madam Chair, I think that the results are what count. I have expressed my worries and skepticism, and I will not repeat what I said.

I would like to come back to one issue raised by the member, i.e., the retail industry.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zaraq):** Mr. Fraser, I would ask you to be brief because the time has almost run out.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** In the past 100 years, Chinese restaurant owners have been able to hire unilingual Chinese waiters who are able to serve clients in Chinese restaurants across the country. How can they serve their clients? By numbering the menu. New waiters, even though they had recently arrived from China and spoke neither English nor French, were able to count up to 100. And as the menus were produced in order to help people who could speak almost no English or French, those new waiters could serve their clients.

I think that if we had the same approach to client services, it would be possible for people who are unable to hold a conversation in French to offer services all the same.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zaraq):** Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

Ms. Guay, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Fraser, despite all my admiration for you, I think that you are getting a little carried away. In fact, if I were to be searched by CATSA officials, I still would not understand anything if they used a menu numbered from 1 to 100.

**Some voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Monique Guay:** We have met with officials from CATSA, the RCMP and the airports, and they all left us with the same concern: they will not be ready and they are not really taking this seriously. That worries me.

I am also very concerned because Ottawa airport officials have only one person who can offer services in French. And yet I know that people will be visiting the national capital, and will want to visit Parliament during their stay in Canada because it will probably be their only visit here. There will be a lot of people everywhere. We have to be prepared for that eventuality. We should not make people wait. If only a single person is qualified to conduct searches, then imagine if an Air France plane arrives with 300 passengers: she will have a nervous breakdown before she finishes the job. That does not make sense. Those services should be available, and I repeat that they will not be because that is what we were told, and that is of concern.



As for the City of Richmond, that is also worrisome. We see that there is no true will, even if it is only to affix three letters in French outside the oval. That has yet to be done, 12 weeks before the Olympic Games. We are being made fun of. How will they welcome francophones to their city? That is very concerning, Mr. Fraser, especially since they are not even willing to affix three letters in French to the oval and refuse to pay the extra cost. That raises significant concerns.

I have one more question for you. There is not much time left. You stated the following:

Other institutions have not shown the same level of commitment. Members of my staff have been urging these institutions to show creativity to optimize the resources at their disposal.

Which institutions are you referring to? I would like you to name each one of those institutions so that we can apply some pressure on them. We are coming to the end, there is not much time left.

What concerns me is that Canada become the laughing stock of the Olympic Games. That is exactly what might happen, and that would not be a nice position to be in.

• (0945)

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I think that I have already given an answer with regard to institutions.

Do I have any time left?

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Your time has run out.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I will let Ms. Charlebois speak in greater detail about our conversations with the institutions.

**Ms. Ghislaine Charlebois (Assistant Commissioner, Compliance Assurance Branch, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages):** I would like to point out that the deadline we gave institutions to report back to the commissioner was November 30th, last Monday.

When the commissioner says that he did not receive an official response, that means he did not receive any through official channels, ie, from officials at those organizations. However, our analysts have had a number of conversations with representatives of those institutions. We do know that the institutions acted on our recommendations.

Of course, like you, we are expecting results and we know that those results will be measured on the ground. I think that our staff has done its utmost to exert the greatest amount of influence on the institutions in order for them to assume their responsibilities and meet their obligations. It should be noted that they are expected to meet their obligations at all times, not only during the Olympic Games.

We have reminded them of that during each of our conversations with them. Our staff has met with the various representatives on a number of occasions so that they give this file all the attention it requires.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Even in Vancouver, we felt that things would not run smoothly. That is really worrisome. I would like to tell my colleagues that I am not defending Canada, but I am defending the francophonie and the French language. Canada is supposed to be a bilingual country, so the French language should be visible

everywhere and those services should be provided. The people who will be flying into Canada expect that, and they will be in for a surprise that they might not have been expecting.

Mr. Fraser, if I were in your shoes, I would continue until the last minute, with the help of your staff, to put the requisite pressure on the RCMP, CATSA, the airports, including airports services, and the City of Richmond, on which you really need to exert pressure, in order to ensure that people will be properly welcomed here in both official languages, including of course my mother tongue, French.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Madam Chair, that is the purpose of our office. We are continuing to play our part to the best of our abilities.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Chong, the floor is yours.

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

[English]

I think the fundamental problem we're facing here is quite simply the fact that the games are taking place in a province where only 7.3% of the population is francophone or has knowledge of French. This is something that obviously contributes hugely, if not entirely, to the problem that VANOC is facing.

In the Vancouver Airport Authorities submission to you, as you've summarized it, they note that:

As a locally-based organization in a province where only 7.3% of the population has knowledge of French and English, the pool of Francophones and French-speakers for Vancouver Airport Authority to draw on is limited.

Clearly this is the root cause, and I think it speaks to the fact that our education system once again is not producing the graduates or the personnel we need to staff not only federal institutions but events such as VANOC 2010.

I know from past research that the number two language group in British Columbia is Chinese. It's also important to point out, before we blame newcomers to Canada for a lack of knowledge of the second language, that a recent article noted that in the Vancouver Lower Mainland it's Canadians of Chinese descent, Chinese immigrants, who are sustaining the French language. There was an interview with Erica Tao, the president of Alliance française in Vancouver. She noted that 80% of all the students who enrol in Alliance française courses are Canadians of Chinese descent, which far exceeds their proportion of the population.

Obviously Canada is changing quickly. It's interesting to note that newcomers to this country are picking up French as a second language more quickly than those who have been here for some time. Once again, I think it points to the fact that our education system is not producing the kinds of graduates we need. Indeed, if students are being forced to go to Alliance française to learn French, it's indicative that the public school system is not filling that need.

I want to ask you one broad question. What can our government do in the short time that remains before the commencement of the games? We are facing a situation where we have to treat the symptoms rather than the underlying problem, which is a lack of francophones and bilingual persons in British Columbia. In the short time that remains, perhaps we can better address some of the symptoms you've identified in your report to our committee. What can we do?

The Senate committee recommended that the Privy Council Office intervene to ensure that the games are fully bilingual. What can we do as a government, beyond what we've already done, to ensure that these games are fully bilingual?

• (0950)

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I think one of the important things for the federal government and for federal institutions to do is to fill the gaps. There is a whole series of federal spaces—whether they are at airports, whether they are at post offices, whether they are at borders—where information can be offered in both languages. Whether that information is offered through interactive screens, through posters, through banners, through folders, it has to be offered in ways in which information can be made available. It's a stop-gap measure, it is a band-aid for a symptom, as opposed to a fundamental solution to the problems that you've identified, which I think speak to the education system.

There are a number of federal institutions that have responded in that kind of way. Canada Post is distributing bilingual leaflets to hotel lobbies to inform people at hotels where they can get bilingual service in nearby post offices. That is an approach that I hope other government institutions would use, not only to go to where their spaces are but also to go to where the people are, which would be in their hotel lobbies.

• (0955)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** The floor is yours Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Guay said that she would not want to be searched according to a menu numbered from 1 to 100. Air Canada has even tried putting photos in its menu. In late October, I pointed to the food I wanted to order, but the flight attendant still told me that “I don't speak French”. Numbers are all well and good, but a picture should be enough, what with it being worth 1,000 words. There was a picture of my sandwich, and I pointed to it saying that that was the one I wanted, and she still did not understand. I say it is a lack of will. People can come up with all the excuses in the world.

Marie-France Kenny, who is the president of the FCFA, said that her organization recognized that the act was created 40 years ago, but people were still not very comfortable with it. We have still not made it to where we should be. There is a lack of respect toward our official languages. Nevertheless, people can come up with all the excuses in the world. For example, an organization might claim that it has no bilingual staff. But there are no excuses for the Vancouver airport officials when they come and tell us that their website is not translated. The same applies to Toronto, but their excuse is that things are just as bad in English as they are in French. That was an

even more farfetched excuse in their defence. People who will be coming to Canada and want to consult the website, which they are now doing, will notice that there are no services in French at the Toronto airport.

I would like to know your thoughts about that and what you intend to do. This is not just for the short term, for the Olympic Games, it is also for the long term. If they are violating the law, it is because the government has tolerated their actions for all these years. It is not only up to the Commissioner of Official Languages to do his work, the government also has responsibilities. Parliament has passed legislation that should be upheld.

When you look at the posters in British Columbia and consult Tourism B.C., which has six websites, you find an absence of French. Our work is not done, we are not out of the woods yet.

Madam Chair, I would suggest that we call the RCMP to the Standing Committee on Official Languages in January, at the earliest possible date. The RCMP is one of the organizations that has yet to appear. That is disappointing; I find that regrettable.

I would like to hear your views, Commissioner, on the comments I have just made.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** First, Madam Chair, I fully understand the member's frustration with regard to an order that should have been easily understandable, even for someone who did not study at the University of Moncton, the University of Montreal or at the Sorbonne. I know a Franco-Ontarian who, when on his way through Ottawa, ordered a meal at a restaurant's drive-through window and said: “*J'aimerais avoir un Big Mac et un Coke*”. He was told: “I'm sorry, I don't speak French”.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That reminds me of the 7 Up can.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** That, to me, appears to be resistance. As for the other shortcomings mentioned by the member, they have been corrected. To my knowledge, changes were made to the Tourism BC website in response to the member's intervention. I fully agree that it is unacceptable that the institutions with the legal obligations do not offer services in both official languages on their website, especially since the technology allows them to call on someone from outside their area to organize their website. Francophone associations in western Canada often do business with translators in Quebec. That is all done by electronic means. The original version is sent to the translator, who does the work and sends it back to the organization. The translator does not have to be on site, within the organization's offices.

I think that technology frees us from such problems as those mentioned by Mr. Chong. The institutions should have the know-how to use the technology in order to overcome some of those problems.

• (1000)

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

Thank you, Mr. Godin.

We will begin our third round with Mr. Rodriguez.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

You have twice succeeded in talking about your book *Sorry, I Don't Speak French*. You will be selling more copies. That said, it is an excellent book.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Madam Chair, I was quoting someone else.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Yes, but at the same time, it is the title of your book, which is excellent.

One of the challenges is finding bilingual volunteers. Are organizers calling on the francophone associations in New Brunswick? Have they struck a partnership in that regard?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** There have been discussions with the Government of New Brunswick from the outset. I think that a number of volunteers hail from New Brunswick. However, the problem is that volunteers must cover their own transportation and accommodation costs.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Are the organizers working with the local francophone groups, including the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Yes.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Very well.

Where are things at with the websites? There was a problem with Tourism BC's website. Has it been resolved? And what about the problems found with other sites?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I did not check recently, but I have been told that the problems were corrected.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** We have seen that corrective measures have been taken by some official bodies. However, when we tried clicking on links that are directly associated to the Olympic Games, we found that things were not operational.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** The challenge with regard to websites is that, even though many portals give access to information in French, you very quickly land on the sites of other institutions that do not have any language obligations and do not think in terms of linguistic duality. It is in the nature of the World Wide Web that you can pass very quickly from one website to another, without necessarily checking on whose page you are and who is responsible for the site.

Yes, Tourism BC has made corrections, but you can move from its website to that of a hotel, municipality or regional, municipal or provincial park that does not have linguistic obligations.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Approximately one week to 10 days ago, I heard the mayor of Whistler say that his municipality had not received the necessary funds to pay for all the bilingual Olympic signage. Do you think that can be resolved in the short term?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I thought that discussions had been held between VANOC and the municipalities of Whistler and Vancouver. Indeed, Whistler has made considerable progress. The mayor of Whistler himself speaks fluent French so—

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** The city did not have the funds to do it, but you are confident that Whistler and the other cities will have the funds needed for signage.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** They will, yes. Thanks to the funding announced by the government last September, I have been assured that there will be no problem with respect to signage in Whistler.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** We have not mentioned the issue of bilingual broadcasting of the games throughout the country; where do things stand on that?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** The consortium has worked very hard in the negotiations with cable distributors. I have been made aware recently of an impediment for Shaw, the cable distributor. I have the impression that the current conflict between broadcasters, networks and cable distributors is not advancing the discussion on the broadcasting of the games.

• (1005)

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** So, there are some concerns.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** The most recent news I've heard had to do with the fact that Shaw was resisting every—

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** That would mean that subscribers to Shaw would not have access—

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** From what I understand.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** This is happening right now. It is serious.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** I will now hand over the floor to Mr. Petit for five minutes.

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, Mr. Fraser and welcome to your team.

On page 5 of your presentation, you state "I am still worried given the lack of certainty that certain key elements will be in place". This is the most important line in your presentation, I believe, as it summarizes your thoughts on the matter.

The word "key" is what you've chosen. In French it is used to refer to very important things. You are being alarmist and pessimistic, and I understand.

You also say, on page 2 "Once again, we cannot be content until 'Anneau olympique de Richmond' appears side-by-side with 'Richmond Olympic Oval' on the front of the building."

I am quite surprised and I will tell you why. If we look to the events that took place here yesterday, all you have to do is call representatives from Greenpeace and they will set up a French sign for you in less than an hour. So, I still cannot understand why after three months there would be such resistance. All you have to do is call Greenpeace and you will have all the signage you need. I am being facetious, but you see that I am upset because I do not understand. Fundamentally, as a francophone and a member of the governing party, I do not understand. In fact, I am very disappointed, quite disappointed.

There is another issue you raised which does not appear in your document but seems to be a concern to you. The RCMP is not responding. I am even more concerned about that. Yesterday, we saw that the RCMP police force was not responding, neither in French nor in English, they are nowhere to be seen, period. I believe that where the issue of French and English is concerned, this shows that there is a problem within this police force. I can assure you, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, who is following this issue closely, that funds have been allocated, a large amount.

Today, I do not understand. I understand your concern and I share it. It is important. That said, there are only 66 days remaining before the opening of the games. You've heard the type of questions we've been asking as parliamentarians. I know what's going to happen in March. I'm going to take vacation time so as to not have to hear questions on how horrible the situation is. The act is 40 years old, the Conservatives have been in power for 4 years, so for 36 years the act was never enforced. It is difficult to enforce. Thanks to people like yourself and Mr. Goldbloom, we manage to enforce it somewhat.

With respect to Minister Moore, it is not because he is Conservative, he was in French immersion, he speaks French well. Further, he went to visit the Toronto Airport to exert pressure on officials so that French services would be offered.

The games will start in 66 days, you've heard the questions we've asked, you're going to see how we will be given a rough time. What I'm concerned about is the lack of will. The act exists, we have the instruments to apply it, we have invested funding, and we've added more funding. There seems to be a lack of will somewhere along the line. This act has been in existence for 40 years and it does not work. There is a lack of will. Can you do something about this?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Madam Chair, the member has put his finger on the source of my concern, the lack of reflexes and will. I will give you two examples.

Last summer, I was in Dublin to attend the Canadian Legal Conference. During the opening session, politicians and members of the Irish Bar Association made their speeches in English and Irish. When the President of the Canadian Bar Association spoke, he spoke in English and French and read a long paragraph in Irish. However, he is not of Irish origin.

Afterwards, I went to speak to him to commend him for it. He said he thought it was important because Ireland, like Canada, is a bilingual country. He went to the trouble of finding a Celtic studies professor to help him translate the paragraph and pronounce it correctly. He believed it was important and a sign of respect.

Yet, when the Olympic flame arrived in Victoria I heard three consecutive speeches from senior representatives who had just come back from Athens, but not a word was uttered in French. Linguistic duality was left up to the Prime Minister. I was shocked. It is a lack of leadership, of respect and of reflexes. There are 66 days remaining before the beginning of the games, and I hope that the leaders who are responsible for these matters will understand the issues and get to work to make sure what is needed will be done.

• (1010)

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Nadeau, you have the floor.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Commissioner, according to my calculations, 2,042 years ago, on December 8, Immaculate Conception occurred. I hope that based on this we can have faith that the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver will be up to the standards of all stakeholders, and that there will be respect for both French and English. That was my biblical side, this morning.

Commissioner, there is also the issue of unforeseen communications in French and in English. Do you recall that for non-urgent cases we were told that information in the other language would be provided in under 12 hours and that in an emergency it would take less than 6 hours from the time the initial communication took place? Do you have any new information in that regard? We know that that does not in any way comply with the spirit of official languages, especially in emergency cases.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I was told that the problem had been rectified, but I would ask Ms. Tremblay to expand.

**Mrs. Johane Tremblay (Acting Assistant Commissioner, Policy and Communications Branch, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages):** I would simply confirm that. VANOC assured us that given the additional funding they will be able to communicate messages in both languages simultaneously.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Very well. That is one issue for which there has been a positive resolution. We will see what happens, but still!

What about medical and emergency services being provided right away in French or in English depending on the situation? Have we been assured that such health care services provided by medical personnel, in emergencies and when people are hurt will be available for both athletes and spectators?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I have been told that arrangements are being made to make sure that is the case.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** That's good.

What about front-line personnel at the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games? They will be the first point of contact with spectators, tourists, Quebecers, Canadians and Acadians who will be attending. Is there some assurance that French services will be offered as quickly as possible when they are required?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I believe there are two issues. There is contact with the volunteers, they are trying to develop a protocol for referral to a bilingual volunteer if the first point of contact is not bilingual. The first point of contact could also be representatives from other institutions, security personnel. We've already received a complaint regarding the hiring of security staff. We're investigating the matter therefore I cannot comment, but I can tell you that we've already received a complaint regarding the hiring of security staff.

There are people from CATSA and the CBSA with whom we have already discussed existing problems at the airport. So, it all depends on the strengths and weaknesses of the institutions who may be acting as first point of contact.

It is based on that that we decided to embark on our own awareness-raising campaign with federal institutions, telling them almost a year ago that they have specific obligations in terms of welcoming people to the Olympic Games. Some institutions have come forward. Parks Canada organized an impressive video on active offer. Other institutions were inspired by it to create their own.

One might ask why, 40 years after the passage of the Official Languages Act, this training method would not have been a natural reflex for these institutions, but if the legacy of the Olympic Games is in part that federal institutions now take measures so that the act may be understood by all employees, that would be considerable progress.

• (1015)

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I simply have one small comment to make, Madam Chair. It would be wise to send this video to Air Canada. I believe it would be a good idea. I am of course saying this so they may improve their active offer of services.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** We have completed our third round, but we will do a fourth, because committee members have mentioned they would like to continue asking questions, if you will, Mr. Fraser.

I now give the floor to Ms. O'Neill-Gordon.

[English]

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

And welcome, witnesses. We're glad to have you and we appreciate the work you have been doing.

I'm also glad to hear you say that the bar is high, and we know that is what Canadians want. Our government wants that. As a result of that, we realized there was a need there, and as you know, on September 15 we announced \$17.7 million for such things as translation and interpretation services for the 2010 games.

It was intensively negotiated with VANOC, as you know. It was not just a spontaneous decision.

My question would be whether you are happy with this amount that was announced and whether you can give us some idea as to where this money is going.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Yes, Madam Chair. I was very pleased by the announcement, and \$5.3 million has been put aside specifically for translation. As recently as last night the agreement was signed between VANOC and the Translation Bureau. I haven't seen the details of the agreement, but my understanding is that it's an agreement that will ensure the quality of translation and work out the communication procedure by which the documents would be transmitted to the Translation Bureau. Because of electronic transmission, it's possible for that work to be done here in Ottawa rather than having the whole Translation Bureau move out to Vancouver. I think that's an important step, and I hope that can be a model for future international events where a large amount of translation is required.

Of the remaining amount, an amount has been designated for signage that will remain permanent. Just to pick up on the comment that Mr. Petit made, one of the reasons it has taken a while to have the final plans worked out for the permanent signage on the Richmond oval is that this is a very important architectural piece of work, and the last thing anybody wanted was to have a slapdash addition of French signage in a way that would look like it was a slapdash add-on. We're not talking here about a banner or a sign

that's suddenly nailed to the building, but something that will fit in architecturally as effectively as the existing English signage does.

The rest of the money will go to ensuring that there is bilingual presentation at the medal ceremonies.

• (1020)

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** The money is going to good use, and I'm glad to hear that.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** That's certainly my understanding.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** Are you satisfied that French will have equal dimension in status, then, for all the signage?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** The challenge, Madam Chair, is to ensure that the signage goes beyond the simple jurisdictions of the games themselves. A visitor to Vancouver, someone who is going up to Whistler, is going through several jurisdictions. It has required some considerable discussion between Canadian Heritage and the municipalities and VANOC and the municipalities to ensure that there is, if you like, a bilingual passageway. There have been ongoing discussions, and I think there is agreement in principle, but I haven't seen the final results yet.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** I have one final question. Do you think the government took a wise decision by dealing directly with the Translation Bureau?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Yes. The Translation Bureau has an international reputation for the quality of its work.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

I'm sorry, your time is up, Ms. O'Neill-Gordon.

[Translation]

I will now give the floor to Mr. D'Amours.

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

Commissioner, our goal is for this to work. I would seriously hope Mr. Petit does not feel any need to take vacation time in March, as he was saying, and that we will be able to say, after the fact, that it was a success. That is always our goal.

But even on the government side, we see there are some concerns. So, without being able to say that concerns are generalized, because I may not have heard from everyone, I can say almost everyone agrees.

Mr. Fraser, I'm wondering if you could tell us what is going very well, currently, when it comes to the 2010 Olympic Games. What are you 100% satisfied with?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I am confident that the translation problem has been resolved. I am confident that the signage problem has been resolved. There were a number of infrastructure-related problems: billboards, translation, signage. These are real problems. And I am quite satisfied with the progress that has been made on these infrastructure-related issues.

It is on the issue of leadership and of organizing the bilingual staff to provide an active offer of services in person that I have some fears. I do not need to go into any detail to explain why, but we will have to wait to see the results.

I would simply like to add one point. There is one thing in particular that I have appreciated in doing this work: the feeling of cooperation I got from this committee. Your committee has played an extremely important role. If there is consensus or even unanimity, I believe it is a sign that everyone is indeed working in the same direction. All political parties want this to work.

• (1025)

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Commissioner, I am 100% in agreement with you on that. At the end of the day, you see that the Standing Committee on Official Languages has been doing good work when it comes to Vancouver 2010. That the committee operates at 100% is one thing. But as for the rest, if you are unable to say that you are 100% satisfied, there is still a problem.

You said two things, and you expressed a major reservation. First off, you said you had “hope”. Then, you said you were “relatively satisfied”.

I understand that perfection probably does not exist in this world, but there is a difference between that and having hope or being satisfied. That is rather general. You are referring to posters, signage, translation. You have hope, you are satisfied, but it is not quite perfect. And as for the other issues, you are far from even being able to say that you have some hope.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Madam Chair, perhaps I am so conditioned by my job and my responsibilities that I remain skeptical, I remain cautious. What is important is not my feelings on things, but rather results. What is important is for no one to be complacent. Today, we need to rise up to meet the challenge, and I would not want my comments... What is important is not for the commissioner to be pleased, to have hope or to be disappointed, what is important are the results.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Commissioner, if there are no results, would you be disappointed? At the end of the day, that remains one reality.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zaraq):** Your time is up, Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, I would agree that what matters are the results. That said, and I don't mean to offend anyone, we've been waiting for results for 40 years. We're talking about the Olympic Games. It's as though we were expecting results for the Olympic Games when the Vancouver Airport website is not even bilingual yet. You want to wait for the results to come in, but we've been waiting for 40 years, and it should be noted, it is the law.

Second, regarding active offer, I heard the story of the sound recordings on Air Canada flights. When you take a flight, you get a recording telling you what to do, but in an emergency, what language will be used? You know, Commissioner, when you're sitting in your seat, and you ask for something—earlier on, I was referring to the picture of a sandwich—and the person doesn't understand what you want, and they have to disturb everyone and go and get someone who understands what is on the photo, it is humiliating for a francophone.

You are waiting for results. I am too, and I have been waiting for a long time. Unless I'm mistaken, you are the only commissioner mandated by law, not by the Prime Minister, to do your duties, in the same way that the Standing Committee on Official Languages is the only parliamentary committee mandated by law under the Official Languages Act. This is not just a committee that decided to establish itself spontaneously one fine morning. That is not what happened. You do not need the authority of all political parties because this committee is mandated by law. And you are too.

I will conclude by sharing what I saw on television. I went to Prince George a few weeks ago, when the Olympic flame arrived. On French television we saw images of the plane aboard which the flame had been carried, with the door closed, whereas in English the flame was already in a canoe en route to Nanaimo. That is the difference between the two. I am very disappointed and those are the results. As far as I'm concerned, the Olympic Games have already started in Canada. The flame is travelling throughout the country.

• (1030)

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Madam Chair, I appreciate the member's observations. I am fully conscious of my responsibilities as Commissioner of Official Languages. I've been given the honour of having the responsibility to ensure that the Official Languages Act be upheld. This act has a quasi-constitutional status. It is one of the rare acts in Canada to have that and I am fully aware of this fact.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zaraq):** Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Godin, you still have some time.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Madam Chair, that changes nothing to the fact that as far as I'm concerned the Olympic Games have already begun and that in Prince George, Canada, we were unable to see the flame exit the aircraft in French at the same time as others saw it in English. On Radio-Canada, the aircraft door was still closed, yet at the same time on CBC, the same corporation was broadcasting the events live but not for francophones. There is a problem somewhere. In my opinion there's resistance on both sides.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Madam Chair, one of the paradoxes of linguistic duality in Canada when it comes to the Olympics is first of all that the contract for official coverage of the Olympic Games was not granted by a Canadian institution but by the International Olympic Committee.

With respect to news coverage by news networks like CBC and Radio-Canada, that falls under journalistic decisions that are made by the networks. Radio-Canada and CBC are, rightly so, very possessive of their responsibilities, their power to make journalistic decisions and they insist—and as a former journalist I respect their position—on the Official Languages Act not superceding their right to decide what they want to cover or not cover.

There's considerable disagreement on the limits to programming and their obligations towards official language minority communities, but some decisions are taken by journalists regarding event coverage which I respect. We have disagreements on obligations and these disagreements have not yet been settled.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zaraq):** Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

We are finishing the fourth round with Mr. Nadeau.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Fraser, this will be the last time we get to speak—you, as commissioner, and we, as members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages—before the Games are held, barring unforeseen circumstances.

If there were three things that I would consider important to note, this is what I would say.

First of all, I hope these games will not be politicized. For instance, there have been events like those that took place in Trois-Rivières, where the government introduced everyone who was on stage except the local MP. The same thing happened in B.C. to an NDP member. That is what I call “politicizing the Olympic Games”. I thought the cold war was over, but it is inside our own borders. It is deplorable, and I hope that that is the end of it.

There is another point that needs to be made. We will have to keep our eyes and ears wide open during the games to make sure that when there is a breach, people can lodge complaints. That way we will know exactly who fell short of having the Olympic spirit.

Further, the whole issue of leadership you were referring to earlier on raises some concerns. In my opinion, that is extremely deplorable. Leadership is what allows for any number of things to be put in place, and mountains can be moved, if need be, to ensure the success of an activity or of an event. This time around, the event is international in scope. For six years now, we have known that this event was going to take place, yet some basic elements are still being discussed in a country that considers itself to be bilingual.

Is there anything you would like to tell us? Should we raise some red flags? Earlier on, you referred to organizing staff to ensure active offer and you spoke of leadership. Should some red flags be raised on this front, so that we can make sure that the games are respectful of the French language, the minority language in B.C., and so that we may take certain steps before the beginning of the games?

• (1035)

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** To respond to the member's first point, I would like to reiterate the importance of acknowledging that these games belong to all Canadians. They do not belong to one single person. These are not just Vancouver's Olympics, B.C.'s Olympics; they are Canada's Olympic Games, the world's games.

I have a general message to deliver which I think is very important. I hope that all individuals who speak publicly, who make presentations, who play a leadership role recognize they are speaking for Canada, that they are not just representatives of their municipality, their province, their institution, that they are participating in a world-class event, as are Canadians.

It is extremely important that linguistic duality be reflected in all official statements surrounding the events. To date, that has not been the case.

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

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Mr. Nadeau, you still have some time.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Point of order, Madam Chair. I would simply like to correct a point made by Mr. Nadeau. Our member, in Nanaimo, was introduced when she was on stage. But she had been

told she would have an opportunity to speak and was not given this opportunity. I simply wanted to correct that for the record.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Thank you.

Mr. Nadeau, you may go on.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** That is all, Madam Chair, thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** You are done.

Would any other member of the committee like to ask another question?

Do we now move to committee business, or do I have agreement from committee members?

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** There are no further rounds.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** I know, but I need the committee's unanimous consent. I know that we have this motion, but there are 20 minutes remaining.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC):** May I proceed?

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Do we have the committee's unanimous consent so that Mrs. Glover can ask her question?

**Mr. Daniel Petit:** One member of our committee has not yet spoken.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** That is all right.

**Some Hon. Members:** Go ahead, Mrs. Glover.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Mr. Commissioner, I simply wanted to welcome you and your team, and wish you and your families a Merry Christmas.

I would like to make a slight correction. Earlier Mr. Nadeau raised an issue about the torch relay and the festivities. As was stated in previous discussions, VANOC is the entity organizing these events. Government members had concerns as soon as they found out that VANOC had requested that members of Parliament not show up. We reacted immediately.

The games can be politicized. Mr. Nadeau, for example, let it be known that it was the government itself that did this. However, this is not true, and this is exactly the situation we are trying to avoid when we say that we must not politicize the games. I simply wanted to make this clarification. I want us to stick to the facts and not introduce any falsehoods. We want to be proud of our games, but when members of Parliament are bent on politicizing them, that does not help us to do this.

I know that you are still receiving documents and reports, and I would really like to know what they're saying. Will you submit a report once these documents have been analyzed?

• (1040)

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** We plan to submit a report on our observations once the games are over. We have drawn up a list of institution activities and plans for active offer. We have included the plans for the Vancouver Airport, Canada Post, Air Canada, Parks Canada and Services Canada. We will be discussing the training that has been organized by certain institutions, for example, Air Canada has apparently provided an intensive one-month course that will be given to their Vancouver employees who have basic French.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** I apologize for interrupting you, Commissioner, but I don't have a lot of time.

Could you simply send us the documents so that we can see what has been done?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Yes, certainly. Right now, we're at the preliminary stage. We're going to have to submit the documents in both languages, therefore...

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** I wanted to continue...

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Your time is up.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** My five minutes are already over?

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** For the final round the speaking time is three minutes.

Mr. Fraser, on behalf of the committee, I would like to pay you a compliment. You mentioned the impact that the committee has had on the positive measures taken with respect to official languages and the Olympic Games. However I do believe that, in addition, your recommendations have been followed. The committee relied heavily on you. Moreover, that is why we have invited you to appear so often this year. We would like to thank you for the work that you and your team do. We hope that everything will go well.

Before concluding, I would like to ask you a question.

We recently met with a representative of the FCFA who provided us with a report recommending that you be given greater power, including, among other things, a power of order as well as the power to require that corrective measures be taken and to impose sanctions.

If you had these powers, do you feel that we would have fewer concerns about Vancouver's Olympic Games?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I have been very impressed by the work done by the FCFA. I watched the presentation that Ms. Kenny made before your committee. I noted that this proposal was a recommendation to explore the idea. We are taking a look at the implications. However, with all due respect, I do not think it would be appropriate for me to go into the details of such a recommendation.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Good. Thank you very much, Mr. Fraser.

Thank you Ms. Tremblay, Ms. Giguère and Ms. Charlebois.

We will suspend the sitting for a few minutes so that we can say goodbye to our guests. We will then proceed with committee business.

•(1040) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

•(1045)

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** We can now proceed with committee business. Let's begin with Mr. D'Amours' motion. Do I have to read it?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Could you please read it?

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** I will read the motion:

That the Standing Committee on Official Languages recommend that the government:

- maintain the funding provided by the Canada Post Corporation for the Publication Assistance Program for publications serving official language communities living in minority areas;

- immediately replace the program ending on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010 with the new Canada Periodical Fund on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010; and

- that these recommendations be reported to the House as soon as possible.

[English]

That the Standing Committee on Official Languages recommend that the government maintain the funding provided by the Canada Post Corporation for the Publication Assistance Program for publications serving official language communities living in minority areas; immediately replace the program ending on March 31st 2010 with the new Canada Periodical Fund on April 1st 2010; and that these recommendations be reported to the House as soon as possible.

[Translation]

Mr. D'amours, do you wish to make any comments?

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

I would like to provide you with a little background for my motion. It was drafted as a result of some letters we received from various organizations that were very concerned that the new program was not going to be implemented immediately after the expiry of the current program, the Publication Assistance Program. The comments I received last week indicated that everybody agreed on that issue.

However, I believe it is important to continue the promotion. We know that, in small communities, the newspaper that is distributed is in fact the community newspaper. So we have to ensure that this program does not lapse at all because that could put the brakes to many periodicals and newspapers in our regions. This is a concern.

In 2006, when I presented an almost identical motion, my purpose was to ensure that the program not be eliminated. I'm referring to the Publication Assistance Program. The government assessed the matter and today, as a result of the concern expressed by the organizations, I am again tabling this amended motion to ensure that, as of April 1, 2010...

•(1050)

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** It is an excellent motion.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Thank you, Mr. Rodriguez, I knew that it was an excellent motion. I am hoping that this motion will eliminate the stress that these communities and organizations are living under, and will enable people to continue receiving their periodicals and newspapers in a timely fashion.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Thank you, Mr. D'Amours.

Mrs. Glover, the floor is yours.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I simply wanted to state that it is truly impressive to see the Liberals supporting our government's efforts and to repeat what we are doing in order to ensure that the Periodical Fund is maintained.

As was announced on February 17, 2009, this program will be launched shortly, namely, on April 1. With respect to this motion, I appreciate Mr. D'Amours' support of our government and efforts. I am therefore in favour of this motion, but I would suggest an amendment.



I would like to make a slight amendment since the motion is really repeating what has already been decided. There is no reason to submit these recommendations to the House. In so doing, we may delay the work of the House and interfere with issues that are very important.

I would be prepared to accept this motion which reiterates what has already been decided and warmly endorses our government, but I would like the last part of the motion to be removed. I move an amendment to accept the motion as drafted, eliminating the words: “[...] that these recommendations be reported to the House as soon as possible”, because they are not needed and would result in delays.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Mr. Godin has the floor.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Madam Chair, I completely disagree with Mrs. Glover. It takes approximately 30 seconds to read a report in the House of Commons and that does not hamper the government. This is a recommendation to the government. The government can respond. All that it says is that the recommendations should be reported to the House. Reading the paragraph—thanks to translation we do not have to read the motion in both languages—that would take perhaps fewer than 30 seconds. So I am not in favour of Mrs. Glover's amendment.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Mr. D'Amours, you have the floor.

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

Mrs. Glover needs to understand that my motion is not about supporting her government. That was not my intention whatsoever. My intention is to ensure that the program will continue after April 1.

Mrs. Glover, this sentence could be removed from the motion on April 1. I feel that there is some doubt in the minds of certain community groups. Given that there is some doubt in their minds, we have to believe that they have good reasons for writing us and asking that we exert some pressure. I want to ensure that the program will be in place on April 1. This is not in any way support for the Conservative government. Had we always relied on the comments and promises made by the government, many things would not have happened and we would still be waiting for many things today.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Mr. D'Amours, I believe that the recommendation comes from the letter that we all received regarding the concerns of certain organizations. I will now turn the floor over to Mrs. Glover.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** I would simply like to say that the promise was made. Eligibility criteria will be announced shortly. As I already said, this is something that has already been done. It is not only a matter of time, Mr. Godin, the fact is the decision has already been made. I would like to amend the motion so that it be presented as I suggested.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Mr. Nadeau, you have the floor.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I would like to point out that indeed, the Association de la presse francophone spoke to us because, in fact, there is a concern.

I would like to tell Mrs. Glover and the members of the Conservative Party, who are currently listening attentively, that there is a concern. This concern is being felt by the organizations that

work in the sector and they need this type of support. This is therefore support for organizations and communities who want to get information via their written media about activities that are taking place in their regions. The question is not about whether or not we are for or against the government; this is about helping communities who need help in this area.

Secondly, in a spirit of transparency—I repeat: in a spirit of transparency—it is very appropriate that we submit this recommendation to the House of Commons so that there is transparency, Mrs. Glover and members of the Conservative Party, so that everyone will be aware of the concern expressed and so that they understand that people have fears about the current situation.

• (1055)

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Thank you, Mr. Nadeau.

We will hear a final intervention from Mr. Rodriguez. We will then vote on the amendment and on the motion.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** That is the subject of my intervention. I think that everything has been said about this excellent motion. It speaks for itself.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** All right, we can proceed. We will vote on the amendment to withdraw the last sentence of the motion in both French and English.

[English]

Ms. O'Neill-Gordon, we are going to proceed to vote on the amendment.

[Translation]

Who is in favour of the amendment? Who is against the amendment?

**An Hon. Member:** [Editor's Note: Inaudible]

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Yes, I am entitled to vote. I received the letter, there are some organizations who are worried about this issue and I believe it is important. I will therefore vote against the amendment.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Madam Chair, I raised my hand on a point of order.

I apologize, Madam Chair, but I am told that the whips of each party currently have a rule in place stating that the chair no longer votes. That is what I am being told. That is why I am calling a point of order.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Point of order, Madam Chair.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** That is the whip's rule; not the committee's rule.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** That is what I was told.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarac):** Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Point of order, Madam Chair. What Ms. Glover is saying is extremely important. The agreement indicates that when the chair is a member of the opposition, one of the government members must withdraw. That is the agreement.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** So, as I said, the chair does not vote.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You have to pull one of your members.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Okay, but I was right.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarc):** We will now vote on the motion.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Once again, Madam Chair, I apologize.  
[*English*]

You didn't acknowledge that I actually was correct in my indication, contrary to what you had said previously, so I'd like that put on the record.

The other thing is that I am informed the rule is that the government will not substitute a sixth person—it is not that they should remove a fifth but that they should not substitute in a sixth—and that the chair from the opposition doesn't vote. So it sounds as

though we have some conflict here. That is what I'm being told, and that's what I'd like to share.

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Lise Zarc):** The vote on the amendment is 5 yeas, 5 nays, and the chair may vote.

(Amendment negatived)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Lise Zarc):** We will now vote on the motion as such, because we are running out of time.

(Motion agreed to)

(The meeting is adjourned)

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