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## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, April 13, 2010**

—  
**Chair**

**Mr. Steven Blaney**



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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• (0900)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)):** Good morning, and welcome to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. This is meeting number eight.

This morning, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3), we are studying Air Canada's compliance with the Official Languages Act.

We have the pleasure to have as a witness this morning the director of government relations, Mr. Joseph Galimberti. Welcome to the committee.

We also have with us this morning Ms. Louise McEvoy, general manager of languages and diversity, employee relations. We're glad to have you back at our committee.

As well, we have Madame Louise-Hélène Sénécal.

[Translation]

Ms. Sénécal is Assistant General Counsel for the Law Branch of Air Canada.

I would like to welcome everyone.

Without further ado, let me invite you to make your opening statement. I also take this opportunity to thank you for agreeing to appear before the committee on such short notice.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy (General Manager , Languages and Diversity, Employee Relations, Air Canada):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Honourable members of Parliament, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to appear today. My name is Louise McEvoy and I am the General Manager of Languages and Diversity at Air Canada. I am joined today by my colleagues Joseph Galimberti, Director of Government Relations, and Louise-Hélène Sénécal, Assistant General Counsel.

On a personal note, let me tell you I am always pleased to speak about my company's initiatives and successes in matters of official languages. Today will be my last appearance before this committee and I will be retiring soon, after 30 years at Air Canada, most of which were dedicated to language matters.

We received an invitation to appear today on the topic of "Compliance with the Official Languages Act". We will address that vast agenda by looking at our service delivery, at our Olympic success, and at some challenges we are faced with. We will also

address questions raised during the Commissioner of Official Languages' appearance before the committee on March 30.

As stated in our October 2009 appearance, offering our customers service in the official language of their choice is a fundamental priority for Air Canada.

[English]

An active offer of service is presented to employees on day one of training. We present them now with our new *Hello Bonjour* video, which some of you may have seen, as it was prepared last fall and sent to the committee at the beginning of this year. New front-line employees, whether or not they are qualified in the language, are also given, as part of their initial training, a French class on how to offer service in French. Year after year we continue to invest considerable financial and human resources and programs intended to enhance the bilingual capacity of our front-line staff, in spite of the challenges this represents.

Challenges start at recruiting. There are just not enough bilingual candidates interested in a career in air transportation in the Canadian market. Again, this past month we were faced with this difficulty when recruiting airport agents. For the month of March alone, when we recruited temporary summer staff in Toronto, our applicants database showed that 200 out of 800 candidates declared, on their application, being fluent in both official languages. Of those 200, only 17 successfully passed the test.

Many candidates have told us they attended French immersion for the duration of their elementary and secondary schooling but have not had any opportunity since then to use the language. Even if they have been away from school for only a couple of years, their language skills have started to decrease to the point of their being unable to hold a simple conversation.

Fortunately, when recruiting flight attendants for our Toronto base, where our needs are, we are still able to hire bilingual candidates from the province of Quebec. But the reality of airport agent positions, mostly part-time, does not allow for this type of relocation.

• (0905)

[Translation]

Air Canada is considered an attractive employer for anyone interested in a job in the aviation sector; this is why there is no need to advertise job openings other than on our corporate website to attract suitable candidates for most vacancies. By exception, however, we advertise in targeted media to attract bilingual candidates. An attachment describes the various media our recruitment agency targeted in our last campaign for airport agents' positions.

Another challenge is lack of practice. In the Canadian context, languages are very different from any other job skill—once you have hired a person with French as a second or foreign language, or have initially trained your staff to learn that language, you need to continually train them so that they can maintain that skill—which we do. The reality at Air Canada is that over 7,000 flight attendants and airport agents communicate with, on average, 1 French-speaking passenger out of 100. Hence the need to retest our staff on a regular (two-year) basis to ensure that they have managed to maintain their proficiency, and to offer maintenance of skill classes year-round.

As an illustration, our linguistic activities in 2009 included over 2,000 language tests. More than 1,000 employees attended language training from coast to coast to maintain their qualification in French. We are especially proud in 2009 to have held, on company time, 4 beginner classes of flight attendants and airport agents, improving the proficiency of 37 front-line employees.

All the non-bilingual airport agents from Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg and Toronto took the "Un moment s'il vous plaît" classes, in order to learn tips and vocabulary on properly dealing with a francophone customer.

Another important challenge we continue to face is very low bilingual capacity in some of our airports and in-flight bases. For the past 10 years, since the merger with Canadian Airlines, there has been only seasonal hiring at airports, leaving the proportion of bilingualism at exactly the same level as when bilingual seasonal staff has left.

At the end of March 2010, the following numbers reflect that challenge. At airports, 25% of the staff coast to coast is bilingual (with 668 bilingual employees for a staff of 2,667 total). Bilingual capacity is especially low out west. In our flight attendant group, 47% of the staff is bilingual (with 2,689 bilingual employees for a staff of 5,712 total). Despite that relatively low percentage, we are still able to ensure that each flight takes off with at least one bilingual flight attendant on board, regardless of whether there is significant demand or not.

We are aware that the solution resides in increasing the number of bilingual front-line employees, but our reality is that hiring permanent staff is currently (and for the last 10 years) being reduced to zero at airports.

• (0910)

[English]

Since our last appearance before this committee, an event important both for Canada and for Air Canada took place: the

Winter Olympics and the Paralympics. Air Canada was the official airline and a proud partner in the event, supporting official languages as a sponsor of the Place de la Francophonie on Granville Island. Our performance on all fronts, including the availability of service in both official languages for all passengers attending the games, is a source of pride for Air Canada.

Air Canada allocated \$1.5 million of its Olympic preparedness budget and a dedicated team of professionals to ensure that the increase in demand for French would be transparent to customers during the games. This involved 100 volunteers literally moving to Vancouver for two months. Their objective was to support their Vancouver colleagues in dealing with the increased demand for service. Red-jacketed volunteers with "Français" identification were located all over the airport and at off-site check-in locations.

Not only did we receive absolutely no complaints regarding language of service during the games, but we had many customers who praised the presence of this bilingual support staff, which enhanced the level of service. Mr. Abdou Diouf, Secretary-General of l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, was one of many who told us they were delighted with the level of service in French at the airport.

Having spent much time at the Vancouver airport since the beginning of the year, I could not help noticing that the other tenants of the airport faced the same challenges we faced day after day. I noticed that every shop and restaurant had a little English/Français sticker well in place, and I decided to test their proficiency. I finally gave up asking for service in French after a few days. The challenge in Vancouver is such that they are just unable to comply.

[Translation]

When Mr. Graham Fraser appeared before this committee on March 30, clarification was sought on the relationship between Air Canada and its former subsidiaries. My colleague, counsellor Louise-Hélène Sénécal will update the committee members on the subject.

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal (Assistant General Counsel, Law Branch, Air Canada):** Good morning.

Of course, it is the responsibility of parliamentarians to table a bill amending the Air Canada Public Participation Act. However, we are afraid that there remains some doubt with regard to Air Canada's obligations under the current legal framework.

Perhaps you remember that the amendments made in August 2000 to the Air Canada Public Participation Act effectively imposed on Air Canada the obligation of making sure that any client of any branch of the company can communicate with that branch regarding airline services, and also obtain these services from the company, in either official language, when the demand is great.

A great deal of importance was given to the issue of finding out whether Jazz, which is a limited partnership, doing business under the name of Air Canada Jazz, is an affiliate company or a branch of Air Canada.

[English]

Indeed, under section 25 of the Official Languages Act, Air Canada has the duty to ensure that where services are provided or made available by a third party on its behalf, any member of the public in Canada or elsewhere can communicate with and obtain those services from that third party in either official language, in any case when there is significant demand.

The current arrangement with Jazz Air LP is a capacity purchase agreement under which they provide services on behalf of Air Canada. The agreement clearly spells out the expected level of service, and we share with Jazz our obligations in terms of bilingual service where it is mandatory or related to the volume of passengers.

When a complaint relates to service offered on our behalf by Jazz, we immediately pass on the information to Jazz and expect corrections to the problem. Jazz has never stopped training its front-line employees since the modifications to the OLA, and even afterwards, with their obligations under section 25, which are distinct, for their service to the public provided on behalf of Air Canada. In fact, they have been able in this way to increase their bilingual workforce from less than 5% as it existed in 2000 to over 55% today.

● (0915)

[Translation]

Consequently, the public gets the benefit of adequate protection under the Official Languages Act, because the obligation stated in section 25 applies to the services offered by Jazz, whether or not it be a branch of Air Canada.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Thank you, Louise-Hélène.

We respectfully welcome the Commissioner's announcement regarding the auditing of our policies and procedures, including recruitment, training and the assignment of our front-line employees in accordance with their language skills. Almost on a daily basis, we study the Commissioner's analyses of complaints, we discuss the measures needed to remedy the situation and we organize meetings with our management to stay up-to-date on various problems. A few weeks ago, Duncan Dee, the Executive Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer, along with his team, met the Commissioner and the Commissioner's team to discuss the various challenges resulting from the provision of a more complete bilingual service.

Air Canada is not perfect and it receives its share of complaints about language. Even one complaint is one complaint too many. That being said, without evaluating the validity of the 355 complaints that were received over a 5-year period, if we consider that each of our 30 million annual clients meets face to face with our personnel at 5 or 6 service points, the rate of complaints comes to less than 1 for every 1.5 million service points.

As I mentioned, Air Canada's language services team is working together with the operational teams to make sure that every complaint is looked into, and that appropriate measures are taken

to correct the situation. All information and correspondence relative to the investigation and follow-up of complaints sent to Air Canada and to the Commissioner is also sent to the Commission. When a complaint is filed only with the Commissioner, but not with Air Canada, the identity of the complainants remains confidential. Nonetheless, every complaint receives the same attention.

A grid was distributed to the committee members as an appendix describing in detail the volume and the kind of complaints received by Air Canada from the Commissioner. We invite the members of the committee to discuss these complaints in detail.

[English]

As promised to the members of the committee at the last audience in October, we have updated our 2001-2010 linguistic action plan—it is on our website—and it will be completely revamped for 2011.

[Translation]

Once again, the solution to our challenges consists in increasing the bilingual capabilities of our front-line employees and in raising the awareness of our personnel. Each recruiting activity is aimed at adding further bilingual resources to our labour force.

With regard to training, great efforts are being made at every level to maintain or to improve language skills. Awareness-raising sessions are regularly held so that the employees can adhere to the bilingual values of Air Canada that are shared by our chief executive officer.

My colleagues and I are now ready to answer your questions.

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

We will now begin our first round with Mr. Bélanger.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If I understand correctly, you are telling us that you do not need any new legislation, because you are subject to the Official Languages Act under section 25. Is that the case? Is that Air Canada's position?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** To clarify, let us say that, with regard to the services offered by Jazz, we are subject to the Official Languages Act. Under section 25, we have an obligation to make sure that third parties providing services on our behalf do so in both official languages when there is heavy demand. Jazz is one of these third parties that offer services on our behalf; there is therefore no need to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act in order to impose other obligations on subcontractors. The Official Languages Act already provides for that.

● (0920)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** The Official Languages Act is broad; it covers more than the issue of services provided to the public. So you are telling me that you would not want Air Canada to be subject to the entire Official Languages Act, but only to section 25.

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** No, not at all. This is not what I am saying. I'm talking about the services that are provided. According to the law, Air Canada is subject to the Official Languages Act and to all its sections. Under section 25, we at Air Canada have an obligation to make sure that third parties, such as Jazz, provide services in both official languages.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Since this Air Canada Public Participation Act was passed, the structure of Air Canada has changed in many ways. What are the most recent changes?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** At the end of 2004, we created two subsidiary companies, Air Canada Cargo and Air Canada Ground Services. Last autumn, we reincorporated these companies into Air Canada; they are no longer separate.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** When? In 2009?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** Last fall, in 2009.

In addition, we recently took back a minority of the shares of Aveos Fleet Performance, the company that maintains our aircraft.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** In your opinion, do these corporate changes in the corporate structure of Air Canada change in any way the responsibilities that these entities have under the Official Languages Act?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** The only entity that has an obligation under the Official Languages Act is Air Canada. It is the only entity that the Official Languages Act applies to.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Please define Air Canada then.

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** Air Canada is the incorporated company that is called Air Canada.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** So the subsidiaries do not have this obligation?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** No. That was clear.

With the amendment to the Air Canada Public Participation Act in August 2000, Air Canada was under the obligation to ensure that its subsidiaries that provide services to the public do so in both official languages. The amendment to that act never created any direct obligations for the subsidiaries. The obligations fell to Air Canada and not to its subsidiaries.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Can you tell me what those obligations were when Air Canada was created as a corporate entity?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** Air Canada was a Crown corporation at the time.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** So what were its obligations when it ceased to be a Crown corporation?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** At the time, Air Canada was the only entity subject to this obligation. In fact, the situation created a legal vacuum, and it was not even clear that Air Canada had an obligation to its subsidiaries at the time.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Could you repeat that, Ms. Sénécal, because I am not sure that I agree with you?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** When Air Canada was partly privatized in 1988, and then wholly privatized in 1989, the obligation, as it was worded in the Air Canada Public Participation Act, stated that Air Canada was bound to respect the Official Languages Act.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I'll stop you there. What was Air Canada at that time?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** Air Canada was a company that held a minority of shares in certain regional carriers, as well as full ownership of a tour operator.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Did this apply to the tour operator in question?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** No, the tour operator was under its provincial jurisdiction.

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

**Mr. Mauril Bélanger:** I'll be coming back to that, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** We'll now continue with Mr. Nadeau.

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

Good morning, everyone.

The Paul Martin and Stephen Harper governments have tabled certain bills and we in the Bloc Québécois would like to see those bills come into force as soon as possible. We know that no new bills are being studied. We asked the Commissioner of Official Languages to suggest a bill that would be more up-to-date, with provisions to ensure that people receive services in French when they fly with Air Canada or one of its partners.

It seems a bit crazy to me to hear you say this morning that you do not need this act, given that you represent Air Canada, one of the worst offenders with regard to non-compliance in the area of official languages and complaints received by the Commissioner.

You state that the ratio is 1 complaint per 1.5 million service points. I tested the system myself on October 14 and I made a lot of people wait. I didn't win any popularity contests when I asked for service in French aboard the plane that was taking me to Vancouver to see the Olympic facilities. I asked for something very simple: a soft drink and some food. The lady raised her voice on the plane.

The upshot was a complaint filed with the Commissioner of Official Languages, which is not worth the paper it is written on because the Commissioner has no power to reprimand Air Canada and make it pay any kind of fine. It's becoming common and it's always the same thing: we ask you to do better and you say that you will.

In these circumstances, it's a real shame and even downright annoying that we have to use legislation to force you to respect our official languages, but that's the way it is and that is what we are going to do.

When you met with us the last time, Ms. McEvoy, you said that the 2001-2010 Official Languages Action Plan had not been updated since 2007. Have you reviewed this action plan to determine the quality or at least the progress made with regard to services offered specifically in French? Because we know that it is mainly French that suffers at Air Canada.

• (0925)

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** We have updated the action plan. As I said, it was an administrative problem. It had not been updated on paper. However, this action plan is really the foundation for our linguistic activities, and we do follow it.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** In your action plan as such, what are the elements that help you improve?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** There is the recruitment and training aspect. Obviously, recruitment gives full priority to airports and in-flight service, especially to bilingual, that is, English-French candidates, and the training ensures that current Air Canada employees can learn or keep up their French. Our greatest challenge, at the time we submitted this action plan, was the cost arising from language training. We had submitted that to the committee, which supported us, but we did not receive...

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** With all due respect, Ms. McEvoy, I would say that the question of cost is your obligation. At some stage, you have to get the job done. Isn't that so?

When you hire a doctor, you make sure that he is properly trained. If you want bilingual employees, then the training must be given.

There is something I would like to know. When a complaint is filed on a given employee of Air Canada, and you can identify that employee, is he or she dealt with? Is the employee asked to participate in a French course in order to learn how to say yes, or thank you, or to learn how to understand someone who asks for a soft drink, and to reply that he will go and get one?

Do you teach them the basic elements of providing service? We're not asking them to learn *Le Petit Larousse* off by heart.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Absolutely.

These people are met with or contacted individually. Their supervisor contacts them and reminds them of their linguistic obligations, very definitely.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I was reading in the Official Languages Commissioner's report that 41% of so-called bilingual positions are occupied by bilingual people. That means that 59% of your positions are occupied by what I assume to be unilingual anglophones.

How do you handle numbers like that?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** In some cases, the position is shared by many employees. We ensure that, in a branch where a single position is held by many employees, there is at least one bilingual employee at all times. We also provide training.

• (0930)

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Is the training provided by unilingual or bilingual people? It is astounding to see that complaints carry through from one report to the next. Each time you are breaking the law, and each time we find ourselves in a similar situation. It gets to the point where we even wonder about all the training, because we always end up in the same situation. There is a lack of commitment somewhere along the line.

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

We will continue with Mr. Godin.

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

Welcome, everyone.

Ms. McEvoy, I would like to congratulate you on your 30 years with Air Canada. At some point in their lives, people start thinking about retirement, but once they have taken it, they find something else to do.

You provided staff with a document entitled "Airport Hiring—Summer 2010". Is this for airports in those regions?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Yes, it is for airports, that is correct.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Above the word "Posting", we see the words "Le Franco", "Le Chinook", etc. Are these airports?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Yes. This is the same advertisement that we have reproduced on the other side. It is for openings in airports. With regard to the *Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse*, for example, we have reproduced the ad itself. On the other page, we have indicated the dates when those ads were published.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Would it be possible to hire, for example, people from another province during the summer, or is it just for residents of the province in question?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Based on our experience, people do not apply for jobs somewhere other than where they live, because these are entry-level, casual and sometimes part-time jobs. This does not allow them to relocate and rent an apartment somewhere else.

As I explained, in the case of flight attendants, we often hire them where we find them, and then they move...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I am curious to see that the Moncton airport is not mentioned when it is located in the only bilingual province in Canada.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** That is because we did not need to hire anyone at the Moncton airport.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** There are none at the Moncton airport.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** There is no need at Moncton airport. Also, I think that it is Air Canada Jazz in Moncton, and here, we are talking about positions with Air Canada.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Oh, we're only talking about Air Canada and not its affiliates.

If the law does not present a problem, it should not be a problem to clarify it further, correct?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** I don't know what needs to be clarified, as you seem to believe.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I have often taken part in negotiations. In negotiations, we often use the expression "the company will" but here, it says "the company shall". However, we say that we will do it anyway. I see a difference between the words "will" and "shall".

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** In a number of jurisdictions, the meaning is the same.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** If a jurisdiction indicates that the meaning is the same, why do we need to go fight about it in court? If we write the word "will", they will do it.

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** The exact wording is *the company has the duty to ensure*. Therefore, the word "shall"...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** So it is an attempt to make the wording confusing so that lawyers can go to court and have fun in front of the judge.

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** I invite you to read section 25 of the Official Languages Act carefully. It provides the solution, in my opinion.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** If we rely on section 25, the subsidiaries...

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** I apologize for interrupting you, but section 25 does not deal with subsidiaries. Section 25 deals with what happens when services are provided in our name.

To come back to the question that Mr. Bélanger asked me initially, I will say that, in 1989, when the Air Canada Public Participation Act was created, there was no Air Canada Jazz, but various companies such as Air Alliance and Air Ontario. These companies did not provide services on behalf of Air Canada. They operated their own flights with their own codes. Today, these are all Air Canada flights.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Are Air Canada baggage handlers bilingual, for example?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** Yes, when there is significant demand. They are baggage claim attendants. The people who put the bags in the plane don't need to be bilingual.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** At Air Canada?

• (0935)

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** They don't need to be bilingual.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** At Air Canada?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** They don't need to be bilingual at Air Canada.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** At Air Canada, okay.

The act needs to be clear. Once again, I am not alone in saying this and we are not alone in saying this, even the Official Languages Commissioner says so. If there are concerns, it will not bother you at Air Canada if we clarify the legislation to make sure that it is properly understood.

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** We would like to know what you find vague in the act.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** In good time. There will be other meetings.

If the government has taken the trouble to introduce three bills in the House of Commons, it is because something is not working. This bill is not coming back any more and we are asking the government to bring it back.

Could you tell me who violated the act in the plane I took between Bathurst and Montreal? It was a Jazz flight. Who violated the act and who will resolve the problem?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** Jazz is an independent company that provides services for Air Canada. Under section 25, you were on an Air Canada flight. So, if the law was broken on that occasion, Air Canada was responsible for the violation.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Twice in one month.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Godin. In order not to "violate" the time we have remaining, I will turn the floor over to Ms. O'Neill-Gordon.

[English]

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome, guests. It's great to have you here this morning.

I know you mentioned that one of your top priorities is to make sure that all of your customers are served in both official languages. I have to say that any time I travel I'm always greeted by an Air Canada agent in both languages. I feel they're doing their job any time I see them.

You also have to be congratulated on the success you have been achieving when you say that one out of 1.5 million... I know you have just said that one is too many, but sometimes those things happen. We should think of the positive part of the job you are doing, because that's a pretty good rate. We should be blowing about it, be very happy with it, and be working hard to get rid of that one. I think you're doing a good job so far. It's an achievement you can be very proud of.

There are no doubt other Canadian airline transporters that do not comply with the Official Languages Act. Do you believe you are disadvantaged compared to other Canadian airline transporters because of your compliance with this act?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** Airline operations are very expensive for us to run. We have a thin profit margin. We can't help but look at so many differences or inequities in the resources we have to deploy. It doesn't mean we're not proud and do not consider this as a service point. It's important to provide service to our customers in both official languages. As Ms. McEvoy indicated, it is one of our priorities. Be that as it may, the current framework does not provide for a level playing field with other carriers.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** I'd like you to elaborate on the various challenges your organization faces with such things as hiring people and providing these services in both official languages.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Our first challenge is recruitment. Over the years we find fewer and fewer truly bilingual candidates in the different regions of Canada. That makes hiring extremely difficult. We don't want to hire non-bilingual employees, but when we have to hire people, we feel that as soon as they come into the company we need to train them. We're not a school; we're an airline. We have many training activities and we train beginners, but ideally we would prefer to train for maintenance of skills to ensure that the people we hire, even if they're not fluent but bilingual qualified, can maintain their skills. That would be the ideal world.

When we feel that the number of employees we have in certain airports is sufficient and we cannot even hire in those stations, it makes it even more difficult for us, because it remains at a very low capacity bilingually.



• (0940)

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** With today's education system—I know that in the province of New Brunswick parents are striving to make sure their children are more bilingual and attend French immersion schools—perhaps we will be exposed to more bilingual students in the years to come.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Yes. I must say we don't have that much of a problem in Quebec, New Brunswick, or Ontario. Toronto is a little different because we have problems finding bilingual candidates in Toronto. The problem is much bigger out west.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** How are you working towards that? Are you giving any extra benefits if they are already bilingual? Is there anything to encourage them to become bilingual?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** When people are bilingual, as flight attendants or as airport agents, they can usually bid on better positions. For us, and for anybody with languages, it makes it a better situation whether they are airport employees or flight attendants.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** Yes, I guess it's pretty much the same for all jobs.

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

[Translation]

We will now move on to Mr. D'Amours.

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

Hearing my Conservative colleague, who is from the same province as I am, ask such questions perplexes me. It makes me wonder whether the government intends to exempt Air Canada from certain restrictions or obligations. Time will tell.

Ms. McEvoy, you said that you have very little room to manoeuvre. The last time you appeared before the committee, both Mr. Godin and myself brought up the following point: in New Brunswick, one-third of the population is francophone. Within that group, many people are bilingual, and many anglophones are bilingual as well. So there is an excellent pool for potential bilingual staffing.

As for airport hiring for the summer of 2010, if you need staff in Calgary, you advertise the position only in Calgary because in New Brunswick or the Atlantic region, the service is provided by Jazz. But students may well be willing to move in order to take a summer job. Many of them apply for summer positions and obtain them. They do it to gain experience, for example, by coming to Ottawa to work on Parliament Hill every summer. They come from all across the country. They do not just come from Ottawa and neither do they necessarily study here. We are raising this possibility again, but, really, you keep trying to show us that you are unable to hire bilingual students. You are limiting yourselves by claiming that you are unable to hire students who come from other regions where there is potential in terms of bilingual candidates.

We're talking about bilingualism, but look at the example of your job ad published in *Le Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse* on Friday, March 26, 2010. Yes, the ad is in French, but the fact remains that there is nothing to say that bilingualism is a requirement. The ad will

be read by francophones, fine, but if they are from Nova Scotia, there is a good chance that they will be able to express themselves in English. So, given that we are talking about bilingualism, why is it that there are no bilingual requirements in the documents you have shown us this morning? We are not talking about Jazz here, but about Air Canada. There are zero requirements in terms of bilingualism.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** But when you visit the Air Canada website, you can see the more specific requirements for the position. That is where candidates are referred, to [www.AirCanada.com](http://www.AirCanada.com).

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Ms. McEvoy, in rural areas, many people do not have access to the Internet. We mentioned this during your previous appearance before the committee. You expect everyone to visit the website to look for jobs, but if you put it on paper, there must be a reason why. You know that you have to try to reach a new clientele, but you do not even include bilingualism in the job requirements.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Two minutes, actually.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Each time you appear here, you tell us that it's difficult. As I mentioned earlier, you say how little manoeuvring room you have in an attempt to justify the hiring problems. I would like to come back to something that has already been mentioned, the situation at VIA Rail. I am sure you will tell me that this company has fewer employees than yours, but you should maybe sit down with these people and ask them how they manage to ensure that 100% of their employees who have contact with the public are bilingual. Even if you had to hire 100 times more people, you should perhaps ask them how they go about it. I am sure they could give you tips that you could use. I hope we won't still be discussing this issue the next time we meet.

Lastly, you state that in the call centres, 59% of the employees are bilingual. So I assume that the 41% who are not, are unilingual. Would you say that the majority of them are anglophones?

• (0945)

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** I would just like to answer that question about the hiring at VIA Rail.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** My question, Ms. McEvoy, because time is running out is: would you say that the majority of this 41% are anglophones?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Yes, most of the 41% are undoubtedly anglophones.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** I am sure that call centres are not the only things that belong to Air Canada. Perhaps you should consider hiring subcontractors. Or have you ever considered...

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Not for plane reservations.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Have you ever thought of having call centres in my region, Madawaska, in New Brunswick, for example? You would have no trouble hiring francophones to provide services. When customers press two or one for service in French, the call would be transferred directly. It's all done by telephone today. People don't even need to knock on a door. The phone rings directly at the call centre in our region.

Have you ever thought of that so that you can guarantee that 100% of your services are bilingual and that francophones can receive service in French? I'm not talking about eliminating current jobs. Neither am I suggesting you fire the unilingual anglophones. That is not at all my intention. Have you ever thought of this?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** We have a call centre in Saint John, New Brunswick. The vast majority of the employees at that centre are bilingual.

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

Thank you, Mr. D'Amours.

We will now continue with Ms. Guay.

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

Good morning, ladies; good morning, sir.

I have a few questions. We don't have much time in the second round, only five minutes, so I would appreciate brief answers because I have a number of questions. Ms. McEvoy, I would like to wish you a happy retirement, since you told us that you were leaving.

When Canadian was bought by Air Canada, we know that there were major problems in terms of bilingualism. What is the situation now?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Our figures have not improved, especially at the airports, because no permanent employees have been hired at the airports since we merged with Canadian.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** You are telling us that the situation is at a standstill, that things are not improving and that they are getting worse.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** The percentage is exactly the same.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I have serious concerns about the fact that bilingual services are not offered on board your aircraft. My concerns are around safety. I would not wish this on anybody, but imagine that something goes wrong, that there is a problem on board a plane and it must make an emergency landing. Imagine that one of the passengers on board speaks no English because his first language is French, but no one is able to give him instructions in his language. That is a completely unacceptable situation in this day and age.

What are you going to do resolve that? Do you have any plans? You have not suggested anything new to us today. You have presented a status report about where you were, but does it contain anything new?

I also see that you received 355 complaints over a five-year period. How many people did not file a complaint because they did not know who to address it to, how to file it or because it did not go to the right place? I am sure that those complaints were not necessarily settled properly.

Please answer my question. I want to hear something concrete. We have been talking about this for years, and each time, we are told that the situation is at a standstill, that you are waiting, and that you do not really have any obligations. You do have obligations. You have a bilingual population. You have people to serve here in Canada, in Quebec in particular and also in New Brunswick, where people are

often francophone. What are you going to do to improve the situation?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** There is always a bilingual flight attendant on board our airplanes. On board the Jazz airplanes, where there is significant demand and the service is mandatory, that is also the case. They have trained quite a few because 57% of their flight attendants are bilingual. Safety is certainly the most important part of the training, both at Jazz and at Air Canada.

● (0950)

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** If you don't mind, I would like to add something in this respect. The regulations on aviation oblige all Canadian carriers to provide safety instructions in both official languages. You will notice that all information folders and the announcement at the beginning—in certain planes, it's recorded—are in both languages.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** It's all recorded. I am sorry, but it's all recorded now.

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** Yes, but some announcements are also made by a flight attendant.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Ms. Sénécal, I take the plane often enough to be able to tell you that it is recorded.

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** Yes.

In case of emergency, the instructions are given concisely and in a way that is easy to understand. It is not always possible for passengers to hear, so it is often done visually.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Mr. Chair, with your permission, I will speak to you. On today's agenda, it says that Minister John Baird was supposed to be here. Will we be meeting with him or has this been postponed?

**The Chair:** In fact, your question is about the agenda. The minister is scheduled to come next Thursday.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Next Thursday, fine. I just wanted to be sure.

**The Chair:** It's really the people from Air Canada who were [*Inaudible—Editor*].

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I knew that my time was up in any case. Thank you.

**The Chair:** In fact, you do have time left. You have one minute.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** All right then, I will continue, given that I still have some time.

Ms. McEvoy, you told us that you went to Vancouver during the Olympic Games. You even observed that it was impossible to obtain bilingual service in shops and restaurants. So you can see that the delivery of services in both official languages was not a total success, even during our Olympic Games, which should have been a proud moment for us.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** On the other hand, I must say that for the Olympic Games, we had bilingual volunteers. There were many of them at the airport. I don't want to speak on behalf of the Vancouver airport authorities, but I must say that they also had many volunteers.

I personally did not ask for an interpreter when I went to buy myself some juice.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** And you would not ask for an interpreter to help you buy a pack of chewing gum in a smoke shop.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** No.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** But the fact remains that some people have to because they don't speak any English at all.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** That's very true.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I only hope that Air Canada is not at that level.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** No, in the case of Air Canada, it is not.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I just hope that we will continue to see improvements. As for us, we will have to study this in committee in order to crack down and make it a legal obligation for you to have fluently bilingual employees.

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

Speaking of the act, I had a copy distributed, in both official languages, of section 25 that we are referring to in these conversations.

We will now go to Mr. Généreux.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ladies, gentlemen.

As concerns the complaints filed with Air Canada and the commissioner, we have seen in past years that there has been, I would say, an improvement, to the extent that the number of complaints is decreasing. Three months of 2010 have already elapsed. So if we look at an annual ratio, it's about 50 complaints. That number could be decreased further.

What exactly do you do to follow up on each of these complaints? We understand that they are confidential. What exact procedure is followed with regard to the complainant and the commissioner? What exactly are the steps followed?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** When we receive a complaint from the Commissioner of Official Languages, the complainant remains anonymous. Sometimes we manage to obtain the complainant's authorization, which helps us pursue the investigation.

However, we often have enough information, such as the date, flight number or destination, for which flight and so on, to determine who the complaint is targeting, that is which employee or which branch. Then, as I said earlier, the person is contacted individually by his branch director. Of course, the investigation is completed first.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Are you referring to the employee?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** I am referring to the employee.

Then, we submit our response to the commissioner in accordance with the inquiry that has been completed.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Do the complaints specifically concern the quality of the French spoken or the quality of the service provided in French? Because I see a difference between the two.

• (0955)

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** So do I. No, we never receive complaints about the quality of the French spoken. Even if someone is not

fluently bilingual, the effort that is made is always greatly appreciated by our customers.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** I see that you have a new training session that helps anglophones who do not speak French to at least tell the customer to wait one moment while they find someone who can speak French. So the usual procedure is to go and find someone.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Yes, exactly.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Do you give promotions to employees who are not bilingual?

For example, we know that VIA Rail has a system whereby bilingual employees can receive promotions. It was mentioned briefly earlier. There was a sub-question on it. Have you done the same thing?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** It depends on the position. If the position has no language requirements, then it's open to everybody. If not, then no.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** I would like to come back to the number of complaints, which intrigues me somewhat. Unfortunately, we do not have the figures for the years leading up to 2007. There were major corporate changes at Air Canada around the year 2000.

I would like to know the total number of complaints that have been filed since 2000.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** We can certainly get that for you, yes.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Even though you don't necessarily have that information this morning, can you tell me whether things have improved, that is, whether the number of complaints has declined, or whether it varies from one year to another?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** There was an increase at a certain time, coinciding with the advent of email and the many electronic and computer devices we have today. However, there has indeed been a drop over the past few years.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** I took the plane last week, and I was extremely well served, in both languages, in fact.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** That's great. Thank you.

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

We will finish the second round with Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Let's come back to the business of complaints.

On March 11, I was on a flight between Montreal and Bathurst. Was it even possible to find a bilingual person, on that particular flight, AC 8742—I believe that "AC" means "Air Canada"—operated by Jazz—I don't need you to explain that you are with Jazz—who could just say: "Excuse me, one moment please"? Where would you find someone like that? Would you need to stop in Quebec City?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** No. On Jazz flights which have a crew based in Montreal, employees should be bilingual.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** They are not all based in Montreal. Some are from Halifax. Are we talking about Jazz, yes or no?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Generally, flights which leave Montreal—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** In Bathurst, in Acadie-Bathurst, 80% of people are francophone. In Montreal, there are 6 million francophones out of a population of 7 million.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** It's a flight which must be bilingual.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** If you stop in Quebec to pick up a French-speaking crew member, that's nearly 90%.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Yes, indeed, there have to be bilingual crew members.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Again, on March 29—I filed a complaint with Air Canada and sent a copy to the Commissioner of Official Languages, because it doesn't really matter who I am—it was the same complaint. I asked for a glass of orange juice, and I received a glass of water. “Jus d'orange” and *orange*, it basically sounds the same. It's as if you went to Tim Hortons and asked for a coffee, and you were told: “I don't speak French”, because no one understood the word “coffee”. You say: “It is foggy outside”, and the person replies: “Yes, there's still a lot of snow.” I'm sorry, but this is not serious. It's a circus.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Unless I'm mistaken, the two complaints involved the same employee, which we found out afterwards.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Exactly.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Jazz discovered this in the course of its inquiry, and disciplinary measures were imposed, but I think that was a matter of discipline.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The employee was disciplined?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Yes, it is more than a language matter.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** No. Here, you are doing the same thing as what happened when Mr. Thibodeau complained about a can of 7UP. He had to take his case to court.

Jazz had to know that the employee was not bilingual, because I can assure you that I spoke with her, and you couldn't speak French with her, because she could not understand. It embarrassed her, and she said that she couldn't speak French.

There is a problem. I would like to know what kind of tests are given by Air Canada. What do the French and English bilingualism tests look like? Is it possible for us to get a copy of them?

•(1000)

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** We cannot give you the tests themselves.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I'm not talking about her test results, but rather the test criteria.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Sure. That's not a problem.

In fact, this employee had passed her Jazz bilingualism test.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I'd really like to see that test!

I swear, this is a joke. Jazz is blaming her. They didn't do the test. I think it is really regrettable that she was subjected to disciplinary measures, because Jazz knew she was not bilingual. I can assure you, for having spoken with her—I did so on purpose—that she was unable to express herself in both languages. Perhaps the test should have assessed whether she could say: “Hello, I will find someone for you.”

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** No, I believe that the test was a bit more complete than that.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I would like Air Canada to investigate this employee. I disagree with the fact that she was the subject of disciplinary measures. The people who run Jazz should be disciplined, because, as we say in English, they just passed the buck.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Perhaps the person needs—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I filed a complaint with the official languages commissioner. Perhaps he could meet with this employee to see whether she is bilingual or not, because as far as Jazz is concerned, they just passed the buck.

Further, I recommend that you, the representatives of Air Canada, meet with this employee. If you want, we can talk about it afterwards, before you retire.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** That's fine, sir.

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

We will now begin our third round with Ms. Zarac.

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

Good morning and thank you for being here today.

You provided us with some numbers with regard to complaints, which is something that really interests me. In a previous life, I worked in the senior management complaints department in a big company. You said that one complaint is one too many. That's right. But I would like to advise you of something. If you receive 355 complaints within a five-year period, but you know that only 1 person out of 17 will file a complaint, those 17 unsatisfied customers will tell another 20 people about their experience. Consequently, 25,000 people will have a bad opinion of your service. I am tempted to ask you a question. For Air Canada, what exactly does it mean when an employee is designated as bilingual? Is it a matter of respecting the law, providing better service to customers, or making sure that security is second to none?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** It's all of that. When we hire someone, we test the employee. Therefore, we know what this employee's language skills are from the very beginning. The person either meets language requirements or not, and then moves on to the next stage. Throughout an employee's career, they are regularly tested on their second official language. If those skills have become weaker, the employee will take a course. Often, employees will take courses on a regular basis. Many of them do this simply to maintain their language skills.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Is language training based on the types of services you provide? The official languages commissioner told us a slightly funny story. The story involved Chinese menus for Chinese visitors. The employees only had to remember a number, which was much easier to translate.

However, the services you provide to your customers are specific and concise. That type of language is easy to learn, because often the same words come up. Is your training based on this type of approach?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Training is based on that approach at every level, except for real beginners. In that case, we provide general language training. As soon as someone has reached the intermediate level, they take a language of work course. As the employer, we want our employees to learn how to deal with the requests of the public and passengers.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** The official languages commissioner gave us a report following concerns he had relating to the Olympic Games. It concerned follow-up of various institutions. The information we received with regard to Air Canada is that you intended to prepare a video on active offer, which would then be given to all of Air Canada's employees in January 2010. I'm sorry, but I don't think that's very serious. It's all very well and good to look at a video, but you're not going to learn very much.

• (1005)

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** The purpose of the video was to increase employee awareness. It was the last activity we organized just before the Olympic Games.

In the course of the previous year, we gave a workshop entitled "Un moment s'il vous plaît" to people who were not fluent enough in both official languages. Then, we gave courses to all the other employees to help them retain the language skills they had acquired, and we also gave all airport employees a copy of a document entitled "Aérovocab". In fact, it is a small English-French lexicon which contains words and expressions used in our sector and at the Olympic Games.

This last activity really helped us raise employee awareness, and it was broadcast in every employee communications centre, that is, the place each employee went to before his or her flight, or before they began working at their airport job.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** As a business, are you legally obliged to provide a certain amount of training to your employees?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** I don't know if there is such an obligation under the law, but there certainly are training obligations. Air Canada's language training is very popular, and we increase the number of courses we offer every year. We offer many courses, especially those to help employees maintain their language skills.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Given that it is difficult for you to hire bilingual personnel, and based on what you said, what is the percentage of language training you give compared to all other types of training?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** An employee working at an airport takes four or five weeks of general training. As for flight personnel, they take eight weeks of training which are basically focused on safety. The training is also focused on service, but it is mostly on safety. Afterwards, an employee can organize his or her time to take up to eight days of classes per month in Toronto or in Vancouver, for instance, to maintain his or her language skills.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** It's up to the employee; it is not recommended by the employer.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** As long as the employee passes the test—

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Does the employee's director or supervisor keep track of the employee's skills?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** The courses an employee takes are included in the employee's file. The employee's supervisor can, at any time, see which courses the employee has taken.

Some employees have a French-speaking spouse and so they can practise their French at home or with friends, whereas others need to take a course. They take a test every two years and this is how we measure their skill level.

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

I will now give the floor to Mr. Weston.

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Good morning and welcome to Ms. McEvoy, Ms. Sénécal and Mr. Galimberti.

As is the case of many Canadians, I think, I am proud to live in a country which has a world-class airline. I am also proud to see that the French language is not only thriving in Quebec, but also in my own province, British Columbia.

I heard three statistics this morning: 55% of your employees are bilingual; you receive 1.5 million complaints, and 1 passenger out of 100 asks for service in both languages.

I am stunned by the level of bilingualism you provide. I am very impressed by the efforts that you are making. I think that we must salute these efforts and not criticize the 1.5 million complaints. We know, thanks to the testimony we have heard this morning, that 15% of the complaints made this year come from here. If you can promise to serve Mr. Godin his orange juice, I think that will bring down the number of complaints.

Can you tell us what can be done to improve the level of service, for example, to encourage more bilingual people to become part of your team?

• (1010)

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** I suggest that passengers continue to demand service in both languages. This is already a way to make all of our employees aware of the matter. I don't know if I should talk about financial support, but there is no doubt that training 37 people during working hours costs Air Canada a lot of money because these people need to be replaced when they are in class full-time during four weeks. In my opinion, if this type of class could be offered once a month, and employees trained throughout the entire year, that would be perfect, it would be ideal.

**Mr. John Weston:** Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Of course, recruitment is also one of our greatest challenges.

Within the education system, immersion programs help many young people learn French, but then they lose it because they do not practise. Frankly, I can't really see how it is possible to help them. In our business, with our courses, we manage to do so, but in society as a whole—

**Mr. John Weston:** Do you need to attract clients who speak Chinese, Korean, Japanese or other languages?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Spanish, German... yes.

**Mr. John Weston:** You have just said that there are bilingual employees on basically every flight, correct?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** At least one.

**Mr. John Weston:** If a passenger asks for service in French, and the employee speaks only French or English, that employee can get someone else.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** That's exactly what employees are supposed to do. We ask them to find a bilingual colleague and to politely ask the passenger to wait a moment. Exactly.

**Mr. John Weston:** As far as training is concerned, you have just said that you offer many classes.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** There are many classes and a great deal of interest for these classes at every level.

If we offered new classes for beginners every month, I am sure that many people would sign up. We offer as many classes as we can afford, and there is a lot of interest for them across the country.

**Mr. John Weston:** Can one say that what you are doing raises awareness—

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** —of bilingualism within the company?

Yes. It certainly increases awareness. In our daily bulletins, and in the company's publications, there is always something about languages. We remind employees of their obligations, and we offer them courses. Indeed, this does increase the level of awareness of bilingualism.

**Mr. John Weston:** I think that bilingualism is truly a flagship in Canada.

Thank you very much.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Thank you.

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

We will now continue with Mr. Nadeau.

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

Tell me, who gives these training courses?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** We have French as a second language teachers and English as a second language teachers, because there also is a need for that type of teaching.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Are these people employed by Air Canada or do they work for other private sector companies?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** They work for Air Canada.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** So, they are teachers.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Absolutely. They are teachers.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** They are teachers, people who have a teaching degree.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Absolutely. They all have a teaching degree.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Air Canada hires teachers. That's good.

As regards levels required to pass the course, are the criteria the same as those in the federal government, the CBC policy, where C is the highest grade? You are familiar with the skill levels: comprehension, writing, oral. So that means someone who passes

the course is able to speak coherently and understand anyone in English or French, depending on the language of the course.

• (1015)

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Our levels are not quite the same.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** What levels do you have?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** We have levels one to four, where four is the level of a native speaker, which is like an exemption in the government, if I am not mistaken.

In addition, our courses focus on comprehension and oral expression. Writing clearly supports oral expression and there are written exercises. However, as writing is not part of the work our employees do, we do not ask that of them.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** When a complaint is made against one of our employees because he doesn't understand... Over the past year, it has happened to me twice. I do not fly often, because I live in Gatineau. So when I do take the plane it is to participate in parliamentary missions elsewhere. It is very frustrating to be told: "Don't you speak English?" or "What did you say; can you repeat?"

On neither occasion did anyone ask me to wait a moment. That is not how it happened.

You said earlier that there was always a francophone employee on board the aircraft. That is not true, Ms. McEvoy. I am not saying that everything you say is untrue, but that is untrue because there is not always a francophone employee on board and it is not true that the employee will go and get the pilot to know whether or not I want a glass of water or a soft drink. You will have to change your remarks.

When a person is the subject of a complaint—we agree that a complaint serves to improve a person's work—do you meet with that person to tell him he must take a course, given by a specific teacher, to teach him to express himself so that he can serve people?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** The service director contacts the person and a host of courses is offered to him.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Do some people fall back on their old ways? Are there new complaints, or, once the person who was the subject of a complaint has taken a course, can he simply do as he sees fit without there being any consequences?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** That is something we analyze on a regular basis. Complaints at Air Canada never target the same employee. This is the first time that we have a complaint, Mr. Godin's, which deals with the same employee on two flights. The employee works for Jazz and not Air Canada.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** There are still some problems. Do you admit that Air Canada still has some problems?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** That is one of our challenges.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** It is fine to flatter someone, but we have to tell it like it is.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** We are successful in reaching out to many employees. As regards those who work in the airports I listed and who are not qualified, the issue is whether they have received the "Un moment s'il vous plaît" training, which gives them not only some strategies and tricks, but also vocabulary. There are also flight attendants—

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Fine.

I have another question. The report by the Commissioner of Official Languages says that 61% of Air Canada's francophone employees in Ottawa, New Brunswick, and designated bilingual areas of Ontario are dissatisfied with their opportunities to work in their language. Are you aware of that? Have you read the commissioner's report?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Yes, I have read the commissioner's report.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** We are talking about 61%. That means 39% are satisfied, and 61% are dissatisfied. And you are telling me that things are going well and that progress is being made.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Communication at Air Canada is difficult at all levels. There are many employees, and to make our employees' rights known, we wonder if we have reached everyone and all of the team leaders.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** If I understand correctly, you have people who are not walking the talk. Sixty-one per cent of employees are not happy in highly bilingual zones, or areas recognized as bilingual due to the Canadian situation. There are people who say that bilingualism is good for the Standing Committee on Official Languages: three people are sent to the slaughterhouse, and then you don't hear anything more about it.

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** No one has been sent to the slaughterhouse.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** No, and as I was saying, bilingualism at Air Canada is the subject of regular communication with employees.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Madam, how long has the Official Languages Act existed?

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Nadeau, your time is up. We will now go to Mrs. Glover.

• (1020)

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Welcome once again. You met with us as recently as October 2009.

[English]

I'm going to choose to speak English today because I'm proud to be able to speak both languages. I am a product of immersion.

What has surprised me here today is the lack of understanding by our members and their lack of acknowledgment that we have a significant societal problem with the lack of bilingual Canadians.

We have studied this in our committee. We have recognized, from a number of witnesses, that this is not an Air Canada problem solely. This is a societal problem within our country, in that we are not producing enough bilingual people. Every university that has appeared before this committee has indicated very clearly that we do not have enough bilingual Canadians.

This is not your fault. I am going to apologize to all of you, because I am absolutely appalled at the treatment you received here this morning. You did not come here to be attacked, and I am sorry that is all you seem to be getting from some of these people.

Monsieur Godin, it is my turn.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Ms. Glover, but Mr. Godin has a point of order.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chairman, let's clarify that right away. Ms. Glover is not the chair of the committee even if she would like to run the show. She is not the one to decide if it is a point of order or not; that's your job, Mr. Chair. I do not need Ms. Glover apologizing on my behalf.

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin, please respect the time allocated to your colleagues, as they did for you. This kind of interruption delays our work. It is clearly not a point of order.

I will restart the clock and go back to Ms. Glover.

[English]

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Merci.

I'm particularly disturbed because I've been on this committee since I was elected. I'm sorry that I'm making comments here and I will get around to asking a question, but every single time we have witnesses, for whatever reason, it seems there is partisanship targeting the witness to get at the government or others. This has to stop.

I want to acknowledge very clearly that this lack of bilingual Canadians is not your fault only. All members of this committee have learned very clearly that even in the public service, we cannot find bilingual people to hire. We have 5,000 posts that we cannot fill.

But there have been some suggestions here today that I would like you to consider very seriously. I'm not going to agree with everything that Monsieur D'Amours said, because it was very partisan, but I am going to agree with him on this point.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, I did not make any accusations or complaints while others were speaking. I have the floor, so please let me speak.

[English]

Mr. D'Amours made a very good point, and I'm hoping we can get a commitment from you here today to improve. The ad he mentioned does not mention that bilingualism is an asset; I think you've missed the boat there. I think that's a very good point. If we can offer suggestions to improve, I think that is something we can obviously move forward on.

Another point that was brought up by other people was that the ads were placed in only five locations. I come from Manitoba. We have one of the largest francophone communities in this country west of Ontario, and I agree that there are a number of students who might be willing to move for employment during the summer.

We have a bilingual employment centre. I noticed that your

[Translation]

posters are usually put up in places like the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface and Pluri-elles. In terms of immersion programs, many students go to the University of Manitoba, to the University of Winnipeg, and so on. I encourage you to make these minor changes in order to increase your chances of finding bilingual staff.

[English]

I am not going to blame you for everything that happens here in Canada; I am going to congratulate you, because you come here every time, and I listen to the way you present, and you point out very clearly the challenges you have, and then we disregard them.

I acknowledge your challenges. I encourage you to do better. We've obviously given you a couple of points that you can improve on, but we cannot hold you to account for everything that goes on in this world, and I won't do it. I don't think that's realistic.

Promotions are another area that I think you need to look at. Via Rail, I believe, has a very good system through which they recognize the abilities of their bilingual employees and progress them into management. I think you ought to consider this approach very seriously, because I think that's where your managers set an example. They really set an example.

I'm critical that you haven't put those initiatives in place yet, because they have been mentioned before, but I'm also encouraging you to please look at them. I would like to know how you feel about those suggestions and whether you're willing today to commit to them.

• (1025)

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** We take very good note of Mr. D'Amours' observation and your comment about the ad. We will talk with our recruitment department.

When we saw the list of papers—because this is the decision of the recruitment group—we also asked why Winnipeg didn't put an ad in. We were told that a sufficient quantity of candidates who had declared and had been tested as bilingual were already in our database. That is the reason, but we take very good note of your observations.

As for promotions, priority is given to bilingual candidates in all promotions, even when a position does not have the bilingual competence requirement. That is how we put it up. We never put up a promotion for unilingual persons only. There is always a note saying that priority will be given to bilingual candidates in all our promotions.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** I want to bring that one step further. You can't get promoted unless you're bilingual.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Glover.

We will now go to Mr. Bélanger.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a short comment to make.

If Mrs. Glover feels the need to apologize for remarks made by other members of the committee, I challenge her to identify how my questions and the thrust of them require such an apology. If she is successful, I will apologize willingly, but it is not up to her to do that for me.

I will go back to my questions. When Air Canada was privatized, did anyone at Air Canada have any kind of reservations regarding Air Canada's obligations under the Official Languages Act?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** I was not there at the time. I cannot speak on behalf of people who were, but it does not seem to have been—

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** What year did that occur?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** The privatization?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** It was partially completed in 1988, and completed fully in July 1989.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** But you were there, Ms. McEvoy.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Yes, but I did not participate in the decision.

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** And I arrived in June 1989.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Were you in legal services?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Yes.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** So given your 30 years of experience, you should have seen whether at the time, anyone at Air Canada had expressed any kind of reservation.

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** I did not identify any.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Then why is the company now asking for fair rules, or a level playing field?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** It is not a request. We have not asked for anything specific. We have been asked if there is unfairness or an additional obligation for Air Canada. Yes, there is an additional obligation, and in our industry, that leads to iniquity. We are not here to make any requests.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** But the facts were public in 1989, and no one expressed any reservation. In this case that would imply that Air Canada accepted these obligations.

Can you give me a ballpark figure for Air Canada's revenues?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** I do not have the figure, but it is public.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** We will find it. Having said that, you will see where I am going with this. I would be curious to know how much revenues and payroll expenses for senior management amount to. I don't know if the CEO's salary is public. I assume it should be, since the company is on the stock exchange in the United States as well.

• (1030)

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** I don't, however, have this information at my fingertips.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** It's available; it is published every year.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I don't know if any bonuses were paid to senior management in recent years, but I would like to compare the figures that I have asked you for to the \$1.5 million that you spend on training. We will talk about this again at that point.

At the start of your presentation, you said this regarding Air Canada: "...we continue to invest considerable financial and human resources...". Things should be put in perspective. In my view, with revenues probably in the billions, some might say that \$1.5 million is not all that much.

Is a value attached to Air Canada's corporate name?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** I don't know if, under the accounting rules, it is considered a non-liquid asset.



**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I would assume so. It would be interesting to know what that value is. If there is one indeed associated with that. In other words, when Air Canada goes abroad, it implicitly represents a bilingual country, where there are two official languages. I would like to know if any value is attributed to that and if that was determined when the company was privatized.

Finally, Ms. McEvoy, I wish you a happy retirement.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** That's nice of you.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** If the Commissioner of Official Languages wanted to hire you, on a contract, to find a way to improve the situation at Air Canada, I wonder if you would be bound by professional secrecy, and if that were the case, for how long. You do not have to answer that.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** That is kind of you. Thank you.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Let me conclude with a brief comment directed to my colleague Mr. Godin and to others as well.

Mr. Godin spoke of the orange juice he asked for, but fortunately, it wasn't grapefruit juice because, in that case, they would certainly not have understood him.

**The Chair:** Your calculations were right, Mr. Bélanger. They were within a second.

Now, shall we continue with Mr. Godin?

Have you any comments?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** I would like to intervene.

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** They just passed out some announcements to me. I think that the recruiting service noticed the error that was in the other one. In fact, bilingualism is required in all the other cities. We could distribute it.

**The Chair:** Just one moment. With your permission, I will have to get the assent of the members of the committee.

Do the committee members allow me to distribute the job offers that were published in the newspapers? Do I have the unanimous consent of the committee members regarding this?

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Is the document in both official languages?

**The Chair:** This is why I want unanimous consent. I imagine that these things were posted—

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** If they are not in both official languages, then it is no.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** It is only in French.

**The Chair:** I am sorry madam, I would just like to conclude. I do not have unanimous consent, therefore I cannot allow the documents to be distributed, but you can refer to them and you can describe them *ad nauseam*.

Now, Mrs. Glover has a point of order.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** The documents to which we referred this morning were not in both languages because these were advertisements. We distributed all of that this morning, and I do not understand the difference between this morning's notices and those that we're looking at now. These notices are—

**The Chair:** Primarily, we distributed the two speeches. This document might have slipped in inadvertently. Normally, we thought that we had distributed the kit and that there were two official speeches. This document was included by happenstance. Theoretically, I should not have distributed this document because it is not in both official languages. This is the way we work in this committee.

Let us set back the clock to the beginning for Mr. Godin.

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

A little earlier, we did not intervene in the conversation, but we were not involved in partisan politics as was the case during this past minute. You can say whatever you want, when we have questions, we will put those questions. We expect to get answers. If the government wants to give a bouquet to Air Canada when the official languages commissioner says that the legislation is violated at a rate of 61%..., I am not ready to do that. If things were going all that well, we would not have invited you to come here. With all due respect, that is how things are.

My questions were quite good. When you say that you take the plane from Bathurst to go to Montreal and no one can speak to you in your own language, is that partisan politics? I have never seen anything like that. I hope that you will not be chair.

Who is responsible for tests at Jazz? You say that they have services to offer you. If I understand correctly, you buy services from them, and they have obligations toward Air Canada. Air Canada tells them that, because we are purchasing your services, here's what we need. In the case of a third party, who is responsible for ensuring that these people are bilingual in the same way as Air Canada is bilingual? The same skills must be required.

• (1035)

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Jazz is now responsible for administering its own language tests, but given Jazz and Air Canada's past, the companies have done quite a lot of work together and share the same test. They also have the same criteria. A bilingual person at Jazz is considered as such at Air Canada.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Now if I understand correctly, Air Canada does not really check whether a person has passed the test or not.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** No, Jazz will inform us—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** There are four levels. People at the fourth level have to be perfectly bilingual; they can speak the language as if it were their mother tongue. That is what you said, isn't that so?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** It is equivalent to their mother tongue.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Take the case of a flight attendant who can say "*bonjour*" and that he will find a colleague—in passing, I disagree with this way of doing things and will give you my reasons—at what level would he be?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** We are talking about level 3. That is a level for which we conduct regular tests.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Okay, but it has to be more than simply being able to say that you do not understand, especially when the client has asked for a glass of orange juice.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** No, that person is able to understand—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** One is talking about fog and the other about snow.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** —the questions and answer them, perhaps in a simple, not necessarily complex way, but he can understand.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I swear that she did not understand a thing. She did not feel good about that.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** We will follow up on that case.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Frankly, I want you to do an investigation.

You said that there have been 355 complaints over the past 5 years. It is often said that 1 complaint filed represents 50 unhappy people. Have you heard about those numbers?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Yes.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That is nothing new. Of those 355 complaints, how many were for services in English and services in French?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** There are complaints regarding services in English, but very few.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** What type of complaint do you receive with regard to the English language? Is it concerning people who do not like to hear French? I heard that once from people at Air Canada.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** There have been such complaints, but there are also complaints from people who could not be served in English.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** To summarize, here is the problem—anglophones do not have the same problem because they do not file complaints. Put yourself in a francophone's shoes: someone who is in economy class and wants to be served, but who is told to wait a moment in order to be served by the bilingual employee in business class; the passenger has to wait for the other flight attendant before he can receive his glass of orange juice. Can you imagine the situation in which that person finds himself?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** It isn't an ideal situation, but the official languages commissioner deemed that administrative measure to be acceptable.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The official languages commissioner should have to sit in the plane while the flight attendant serves everyone else before him, making him the last person to be served. It is enough to feel embarrassed in front of everyone else. That is the reality of the situation.

That is why only 1 person out of 100 will file a complaint or ask for the service. If only 1 person out of 100 asks for the service, it is simply because it is not worth the trouble.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** That is why in the “Un moment s'il vous plaît” course for all non-bilingual staff, there are vocabulary lists for service-related terms such as “*jus d'orange*”, etc.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** What is the government trying to defend this morning? I would say that with respect to the 61% figure as to Air Canada's violation of the Official Languages Act, it is the government's responsibility to enforce the act. Well, the government is not doing that and today, it is attempting to make excuses by saying you have been good and we are the bad guys because we want the act upheld.

•(1040)

**The Chair:** Well, I am the bad guy, Mr. Godin; your time is up. Did you want to add an answer?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** What is the 61% that has been referred to?

**The Chair:** Is that not the number of employees...

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** That statistic has to do with employees that

**The Chair:** I think that would be unilingual employees.

**Mr. Joseph Galimberti (Director, Government Relations, Air Canada):** Mr. Godin was referring to the percentage of unilingual employees—

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** — in bilingual regions. All right. Those are administrative positions.

**The Chair:** Very well. Fifty-three per cent of staff are bilingual. Very well. Thank you very much.

Mr. Nadeau, did you want to take part in the fourth round?

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Mr. Chairman, I do not want to belabour the following point, but it is not the first time this has happened in committee. Neither the Bloc Québécois nor any other colleagues be they Conservative, Liberal or New Democrat, should have to make excuses for the work they do. The tenor of our questions is up to us. Witnesses come here to be accountable to the government and to the people on situations and we are entitled to our questions. When we are skeptical about something, it is up to us to ask those questions. If we do not, we will be complimenting left, right, and centre, and we would not be reflecting reality. That was my remark.

I would like to know from Air Canada and its partners how many courses are offered. I would like to have a figure, I am not asking you to provide it straightaway if you do not have it. Courses, according to me, last for a period and include lessons. How many courses are there? I know there are three categories, I read the documents you provided and I thank you for them. Just to get an idea, can you tell me how many Air Canada staff members have taken these courses on a yearly basis over the last five years? Let's compare that with the number of staff members within the entire Air Canada machine.

As was said earlier on, 41% of bilingual positions held by bilingual people—we have seen that 59% of these positions are held by unilingual people. I would certainly hope people would rush to take lessons to become bilingual. If positions are given by the administration in good conscience to individuals who do not meet the linguistic requirements of the position, I hope those people work hard and do everything they can to succeed. If they do not, I hope they are told that they were given a chance and that they will be transferred elsewhere. If it is a bilingual position... there must be some degree of pride in holding that position, better wages, I do not know, I do not know all the criteria.

So, tell me how many courses, how many people are taking them—according to the three categories you referred to earlier on—and, finally, compare that figure to the total number of staff at Air Canada.

Another aspect of things is the number of people taking these courses and working directly with the public or with clients. That is a major point! Not necessarily the baggage handler so much as the person inside the plane and all workers that the travelling public will encounter on a trip. Also, can you tell me how many people are taking this course compared to the number of people working in front-line positions, as we say in other professions as well, or in other words, directly with clients.

That would give us an idea. And over the years, if we see an improvement, we may say that perhaps things are not perfect but at least efforts have been made.

At this point, we are relying on everyone's good faith, whereas we have a report from the Commissioner of Official Languages which put you—and when I say “you” I am referring to Air Canada of course—among the offenders. It has gotten to such a point that we are considering legislation because of this legal vacuum, to make sure that your partners have the same responsibilities.

You know as well as I do that people travelling on planes do not have the upper hand as clients: we can even be arrested in some cases. Well, if we ask for services in French, are not given them and that creates a disturbance, we could end up in jail or be prevented from travelling.

If we can have these figures, it would be much appreciated.

Yes, Mr. Chair?

• (1045)

**The Chair:** Just to say that your time is running out. You have about 30 seconds left.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Oh! How wonderful!

Go ahead, madam.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** For the year 2009, the figure is in the appendix to the document, but you would like these figures for the last five years?

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** As I said, I would like to know the total number of people and how many people are taking courses. We need points of comparison.

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Very well. As you can see there are 1,792 employees and the majority of them are front-line workers. Those who hold administrative positions take courses, but the majority are front-line workers. One thousand seven hundred and ninety-two of our 7,000 employees are front-line workers. We exclude those who are already bilingual, who therefore have level 4, and do not need to take courses. We can certainly provide you these figures.

As I've always said, my dream is to have everyone take refresher courses. That would mean everyone would speak French. At the very least, the majority are taking these refresher courses.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I'm convinced the commissioner will be quite pleased to have these figures, thank you.

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

We have just completed our four rounds and are nearing the end of our meeting. Ms. Boucher had said she wished to question the witnesses and I believe Mr. Bélanger had a request.

Ms. Boucher, you have the floor.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** I have two questions. The first has to do with French tests you referred to. Do you have a written test?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** There is a written test for some categories of staff, but we use an oral test for our front-line workers.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Can the committee have access to the written test so that we may assess it?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** That is a sensitive issue. This test is an extremely confidential tool for a company. However, we can certainly provide you with the criteria, yes, certainly.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Could we have a blank test, so we can see where the difficulties would arise?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Yes, we can provide you with an assessment criteria template and the general process for testing.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** If I'm writing a 20-minute test what do I need? What am I allowed? Am I allowed to use a dictionary or not? That's all I'm interested in because I want to know. I think it's important that the committee be aware of the level of difficulty.

Under the Air Canada Public Participation Act, can the government, whichever government, impose financial penalties on Air Canada if the company does not meet its official languages obligations?

**Ms. Louise-Hélène Sénécal:** Not currently. There are no penalties under the Air Canada Public Participation Act. There is no section or chapter on penalties.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** I would also like to come back to what Mr. D'Amours said. It's rare that I agree with him but I do in the case of bilingualism outside Quebec. We know that everyone speaks French in Quebec. Many people speak French. There is a huge number of francophones outside Quebec. Many of our young people, the new generations, who are interested in the world, would love to go and help out in Vancouver or on Prince Edward Island.

Why not open doors to them? There aren't just students. We need to recruit bilingual francophones who could assist not only Air Canada, but also put out the message that Air Canada is completely bilingual. VIA Rail does this, but we need to do it even more because the generation after us is much more open to the world, especially because of the Internet. Young people speak many more languages than we do. I think this would be a positive way to promote the francophonie everywhere.

• (1050)

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** I think our recruitment group has already considered the relocation of candidates in other areas. This exists in the flight service obviously and it works. However, with respect to summer positions in airports I believe this has been considered.

If I am not mistaken—and perhaps I could give you more details later—all candidates must apply to Air Canada through our data base, our website in the “Careers” section. They must state whether or not they are willing to be relocated. I think that we already have statistics on this.

With respect to whether or not we should advertise that possibility, we need to examine that issue seriously.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** I know that the government wants to make sure that Air Canada is in full compliance in order to protect official language rights. This is important because it is about our own identity. We have two official languages in Canada which have to be given equal respect. I think that we have to move ahead and work together, not against each other.

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

Mr. Bélanger, I believe you have a request you would like to put to the committee members.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

This concerns a request for documents on the part of our researchers. Yesterday, in the *La Presse* newspaper, there was an article on expenditures for language training in the public service, and this article was also printed in the *Le Droit* paper.

Mr. Chair, I think that the article does not compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges. Perhaps we should get some more information. It was implied that from 2001 to 2009 there was a huge increase in training expenditures. The article stated that at one point in time, the School of Public Service stopped offering free courses. The courses the school was providing were not free. Someone was paying for them.

Could we ask our researchers to pull up the annual budgets for language training by the School of Public Service for the years preceding the moment when departments were no longer obliged to use the school for training? We might get a fairer, more balanced picture of the situation.

**The Chair:** So Mr. Bélanger, you want us to check that in reference to the article on the cost of language training for employees of the public service.

Are you making this request as an individual, or on behalf of all members?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** If I had wanted to make this request as an individual, I would have done so more discreetly. I did it in front of everybody because I think this is some information that we all should have.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I agree.

**The Chair:** Do I have the consent of all the members for this request? Yes. Is that all right with you, madam?

**A voice:** I have no problem with that.

**The Chair:** That's fine then.

Mrs. Zarac.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** With your permission, Mr. Chair, could we ask the people from Air Canada to provide us with information on total bilingual capacity, but in relation to each province?

**Ms. Louise McEvoy:** Certainly.

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

**The Chair:** Is that all right with you?

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Absolutely.

**The Chair:** I would like to thank our witnesses. Once again, I would like to specify that they appeared within the timetable that we had suggested to them, and it is greatly appreciated as concerns the unfolding of the agenda.

Thank you very much.

Thank you also to the members.

The meeting is adjourned.

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