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## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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**Tuesday, December 7, 2010**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Steven Blaney**



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• (0850)

[English]

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 108, following the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages, we're going to begin right away with the Canada Border Services Agency.

I would like to welcome our witnesses this morning.

[Translation]

This morning, we are pleased to be hearing from representatives of the Canada Border Services Agency.

Its president, Mr. Luc Portelance, is with us, as are the official languages champions, Ms. Camille Therriault-Power and Mr. Pierre Sabourin. Welcome to the committee. Without further ado, I invite you to make your opening remarks.

**Mr. Luc Portelance (President, Canada Border Services Agency):** Good morning. Mr. Chairman, committee members, first I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear today on behalf of the Canada Border Services Agency.

My appointment to the position of President became effective on November 15. I'm honoured to accept this responsibility and excited to take up the challenge of shaping an organization that is still growing and developing.

Today, I would like to begin by acknowledging the findings of the 2009-2010 Official Languages Report, which highlighted areas for improvement in providing bilingual services to the public and promoting their use within the agency. I take the report seriously and am determined to move forward to address these issues.

Prior to receiving the report card, we engaged commissioner Fraser and his office to invite him to address our executive committee on November 25. Our executive committee met with Mr. Fraser and the discussion proved to be both informative and productive.

Two members of that committee are with me today: Camille Therriault-Power, vice-president, Human Resources Branch and Pierre Sabourin, vice-president, Operations Branch. These are the senior executives who will support me and the CBSA executive committee in ensuring that our official languages obligations are met.

I would like to begin my remarks by describing the role and work of the CBSA within the public safety portfolio. The CBSA is a

relatively young organization, established in 2003 in the wake of the attacks of 9-11. It was created to provide integrated border services across the functions of customs; enforcement of immigration and refugee policy; and food, plant and animal inspection. In doing so, we administer over 90 acts on behalf of the government.

The result is a unique, amalgamated structure that combines a number of functions which protect our security and facilitate the flow of legitimate travellers and trade across our border. The CBSA will be proud to celebrate its seventh anniversary on December 2.

[English]

We were set up quickly and born into the most dynamic risk environment of our generation. Naturally, we gave priority to enhancing program delivery and optimizing the balance between public safety and the facilitation of international trade and travel.

Our mandate is exceedingly complex, including front-line service in an international and multilingual environment, and inland enforcement of Canada's immigration laws. As a matter of routine business, our officers, both on the front line and inland, encounter persons who speak neither French nor English.

As a major service organization and the first face of Canada at our ports of entry, we have multiple responsibilities related to enforcement and facilitation, and we have to meet those responsibilities in both official languages. Though we operate in a multilingual global environment, bilingualism is fundamental to our overall commitment to service excellence.

Recognizing the growing complexity of our operating environment and the consequences of getting our business right, last year we took stock of our organization and initiated a multi-year change agenda. This endeavour is aimed at putting in place the right organizational and governance structure to enable us to effectively deal with the complex and evolving threat and risk environment, increased traffic across the border, and the expectations of our clients, partners, and stakeholders.

From our organizational structure to how we perform all facets of our service, we intend to improve service delivery across our organization. This includes a core commitment to official languages and will afford us the opportunity to reinforce bilingualism as a key component of our services and in our places of work. The agency's motto is "Protection, Service, Integrity". Our officers wear it on their sleeve. Our halls and offices are adorned with this message. Service is an essential part of our work, and bilingualism is central to that commitment.

While the commissioner's report shows we have work to do, the CBSA does have a significant track record to build on. I think of our experience in processing francophone evacuees and adopted children fleeing the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti. This work was undertaken at numerous ports, including Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal, and I am proud of our service to these families and individuals. It was a welcome and familiar response to people in distress.

I also think of the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games. I'm pleased to see that the official languages report acknowledges our efforts at this event, during which our performance left a positive impression on travellers. This was a high-profile international event and an exceptional opportunity for the CBSA to welcome the world to a bilingual Canada.

[Translation]

While the results of the commissioner's assessment were disappointing, I must stress that we're not here to contest a grade or argue methodology. What I believe is important today, for this committee and for the agency, is for me to assure you that we get it, we understand our responsibilities under the act, and we have a meaningful, realistic and achievable strategy to continually improve our official languages performance - incrementally, and on a sustained basis over time.

We have already taken immediate action in response to the report. I mentioned that we have engaged the commissioner and his office on several occasions. Informed by these discussions, we are developing an initial three-year action plan, which will form the cornerstone of our approach for moving forward and ensuring bilingual service on the front line, and robust use of both official languages within the CBSA.

As we work to improve our performance, we recognize that responsibility for official languages must cascade through an organization, from the deputy level to functional managers and their staff.

As president, I will do my best to ensure that my personal commitment to bilingualism is shared at every level of the organization. We are all responsible for providing leadership and ensuring that the work environment is conducive to the use of both official languages, as well as promoting linguistic duality in our daily activities.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, let me emphasize that the CBSA takes its obligations under the Official Languages Act very seriously.

We are committed to serving the public in both official languages. Likewise, we are committed to fostering a culture of bilingualism within the agency, which will create an environment where people

can confidently and comfortably work in the official language of their choice.

With that, we now welcome your questions, Mr. Chairman.

● (0855)

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

Without further ado, I give the floor to Mrs. Zarac.

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

Good morning and welcome to our committee.

Mr. Portelance, you said you took up your position November 15. You must have felt a bit stressed when you read the report and saw that there was work ahead of you.

Is your action plan complete?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Our action plan is almost complete. We had some exhaustive internal consultations. Over the next few weeks, we have to meet with the representatives of our unions. We intend to have a final meeting of our executive committee on December 23. The document should be finalized very early in 2011.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** When do you think you will forward it within the agency?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** I would say very early in 2011. We have the communications plan, which was previously developed, a much more detailed strategic communications plan based on regional needs. As you will admit, in the case of an agency such as ours, we must address issues strategically, but we must especially target sectors that are a bit more of a problem.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** It's good to have a communications plan; it's good first to have a plan; that's very important. You've previously had plans, except that what you were criticized for was for not measuring results, not having measurement tools in order to conduct follow-up. I hope this plan will contain detailed measurement instruments. Is that the case? Can we be sure there will be some?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Absolutely. I believe you're right about the criticism of our planning performance. That probably doesn't reflect the work done internally, and you're right: it doesn't reflect the rigour of the plan, especially with regard to control and supervision. We have quite a decentralized organization. The purpose of the transformation exercise I referred to is, through various services, to achieve greater standardization and better controls.

To answer your question, yes, the plan will contain quite a rigorous "oversight and follow-up" component.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** And there will be follow-up.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Perfect.

I don't think you should wait for a report from the Commissioner of Official Languages; you must ensure you have an internal complaint mechanism. Under your plan, will you facilitate receipt of complaints and subsequent action? What process have you put in place to handle complaints?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** You're right. Some of the complaints we receive are forwarded to the Commissioner of Official Languages, while others come directly to us internally. So we already have a complaint handling system. Most of the complaints are more related to more overall service.

In January and February, we will step up our efforts to address the handling of complaints, especially so we can distinguish among the various types of complaints. There was a challenge: we knew the number of complaints we were receiving, but no distinction was being drawn among the various subjects. We will identify the various subjects of complaints and clearly identify those related to official languages. We will especially do a better job of sorting and ensure better reporting so that we can try to determine where we have more problems that are more serious than others. With 1,200 service points and 120 border crossings, we don't have the same problems everywhere. Our objective is really to focus on the places presenting us with the biggest challenges.

• (0900)

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** So you intend to prepare specific reports on your complaints and to categorize them.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Absolutely, yes.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** I congratulate you on that because one of the solutions for ensuring good service is to identify current complaints and to address them. We know perfectly well that a complaint filed represents a lot of complaints that aren't.

I'd like to talk about human resources. Have you audited your bilingual positions? Have you recently audited your bilingual positions again? Are there any positions that are not designated bilingual but that should be? Have you conducted that exercise recently?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** I can make a few comments, and Ms. Therriault-Power can add to them.

The answer is yes. That's a job that's being done on a regular basis, but I must admit that, after the report was prepared, we reviewed the distribution of bilingual positions, especially at the senior executive level, management and so on, and even for our border services officers. I believe there are probably a few adjustments to make, but we're generally in good shape.

Ms. Therriault-Power, do you want to say anything?

**Ms. Camille Therriault-Power (Vice-President, Human Resources Branch, Canada Border Services Agency):** I believe that representation among our executives is good. We are complying with the acts and policies regarding linguistic profiles and incumbents of positions who meet those requirements. As regards the report card received from Mr. Fraser—

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** That's why I'm asking you the question. If the positions that should be designated bilingual are, how do you explain that so many employees have complained that they were unable to work in their language?

**Ms. Camille Therriault-Power:** In fact, we need more leadership, communication, supervision and performance management in this respect. Our senior executives' performance agreements currently state that they must discharge their official languages obligations in a proactive manner. The idea now is to review that and to make sure we're doing that from time to time.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Do you mean that's stated on their list of responsibilities?

**Ms. Camille Therriault-Power:** That's correct.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Do you have annual performance reports for those senior executives?

**Ms. Camille Therriault-Power:** That's the case.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Is that part of one of the objectives they have to achieve?

**Ms. Camille Therriault-Power:** Yes.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Is that measured? Is there follow-up, training?

**Ms. Camille Therriault-Power:** Yes, there is follow-up. However, I can tell you that we could do a much better job if we had more clearly defined measures in order to address the deficiencies that were noted in the report card in the areas of language of work and service to the public in particular.

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

I imagine my time is up, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** That's the case, with a few seconds to spare. Thank you, Mrs. Zarac.

Mr. Nadeau, it's your turn.

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

You read the report, so you know Ms. Pascale Houle. For your information, the commissioner's office has also received complaints that show it is sometimes hard for travellers returning to the country by land to be served by the Canada Border Services Agency in the language of their choice. That is indeed your agency, isn't it? One French-speaking woman had her vehicle and the horse she was importing from the United States seized at the Lansdowne border crossing in Ontario—a crossing that has been the subject of frequent complaints—because of a linguistic misunderstanding that could have been avoided if she had been served, as she was entitled to be, by a border services officer who could speak French instead of a unilingual anglophone officer. I quote Ms. Houle:

I didn't know that I could ask to be served in French at an Ontario border crossing, and none of the five or six officers that I had before me in the main building led me to understand that by saying "Bonjour" or informed me that I indeed had that right...

Ontario is in Canada, as far as I know.

The act has been in existence for 40 years. I know you've only recently become head of the agency. As you can understand, I am a sovereigntist and indépendantiste. I come from Hawkesbury, Ontario. I taught Franco-Ontarians for quite a long time. I remember crossing the border at Lacolle into New York state. We were received on the American side by a Mr. Bourque, who did not speak French, but who spelled his name, Bourque, as francophones do. And yet we had more trouble on the way home. It was at an Ontario border crossing. We asked to be served in French—I ask for that, as you can understand—and, dear lord, they just stared at us. That was in 2004; your agency were already established. You can tell me about September 11; I understand the situation, but you were already established.

I also lived in Saskatchewan, and we used to go through the United States to get to Windsor. We went through Detroit. The same thing happened in Windsor. They asked me, in English: "Who's in your car?" I answered, in French: "My two children, Myriam and Marysa." I answered in French and I continued to do that. They eventually found someone. I nevertheless waited at least 45 minutes. I was returning to the Canada, and Ontario, as I said, is part of Canada. That was before September 11. The fact nevertheless remains that, when you're returning to the country that is supposed to be your own, this raises some serious questions in your mind. That's a personal story. You may tell me it's worth what it's worth.

According to the report, there has not been much change in active offer. That is to say 46%. On average, one in two persons is able to provide active offer. "Hi! *Bonjour!* May I help you? *Est-ce que je peux vous aider?*" It starts with that.

Tell me what you're going to do to convince me that every citizen who wants services in French can get them if he or she goes crosses into Quebec, Ontario or Alberta, where Canada still has provinces. I'm listening.

● (0905)

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

That's a very legitimate question. And it's definitely central to our concerns with regard to service to the public.

CBSA has 158 designated bilingual offices in Canada. Your example is a good one in that, in certain locations, all offices are designated bilingual, such as in Quebec, for example. As you move farther west, a selection of offices are bilingual. In Saskatchewan, for example, there is one office, the one at North Portal. There is Coutts in Alberta and Emerson in Manitoba, and so on.

These are designated offices, and you're entirely right to expect bilingual services there; we moreover advertise bilingual service there.

The purpose of the work we've done to date is to draw a distinction among the problems we have: systemic problems or training or adjustment problems.

We have the largest number of complaints in five places: Ottawa airport, Windsor, Toronto airport, Peace Bridge and the Lansdowne Bridge. Lansdowne, I believe, is the place where Ms. Houle ran into trouble

Our action plan for service to the public is undoubtedly the most demanding and rigorous action plan.

Historically, filling positions, generating a critical mass of bilingual people at certain locations, has been a major challenge. That's not an excuse, but it is a major challenge for the agency.

Today, as a result of work schedules, we need a certain critical mass of people who are fully bilingual.

You're right. Active offer, which means saying, "Hello! *Bonjour!*" is easy to provide, but we expect more than that. People should be able to be served in French without having to speak to a second person, without being treated like second-class citizens because the first person was unable to respond to them.

We're identifying all border crossings where there are challenges and, for every crossing, looking at where we have problems regarding training, management and critical mass in staffing areas.

The approach we are planning for certain places is a very comprehensive approach. At certain locations, including Lansdowne, the critical mass of bilingual people must be increased. We're doing calculations to determine the necessary percentage so that we can have one or two service points where people can have access to bilingual services.

This is quite a complex issue. In certain locations, we have very few or even no complaints. Service appears to be appropriate.

The five posts that I mentioned to you receive approximately 30% of all traffic into Canada; that's a lot. At Windsor alone, for example, we receive four to five million travellers every year. We get a few complaints, but, as madam said earlier, one complaint is one complaint too many.

● (0910)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Nadeau.

We'll continue with Mr. Godin.

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

Welcome to the committee.

In your report, you say: "While the results of the commissioner's assessment were disappointing, I must stress that we're not here to contest a grade or argue methodology." Do you want to do that?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Contest?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Contest?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** I'm going to say no. We've had discussions with the commissioner—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** So why do you say that in your report?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** We discussed the report. With regard to methodology, we can wonder why we went from an average or high mark to a poor mark.

We're talking about methodology. What was taken into account this time is different from what was considered two years ago. So we've wound up with different marks.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Is that because there wasn't any improvement?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** No, I can't say it's because of that. I believe the commissioner used different data this year. Instead of focusing, for example, on the processes and policies in place, he looked at other figures.

We're not contesting methodology because the answers to the questions are there and results are results. Obviously, our mark has changed in the past two years, but ultimately what the commissioner looked at was different. I admit the marks are not very high and that we have to improve.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You say yourself that there are problems at certain locations and that you are aware of that. Perhaps the commissioner addressed those problems directly.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Look, I don't disagree—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You should go and see what's being done in the offices rather than in the field. Perhaps the commissioner went into the field this time.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** I believe that his methodology—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Did they take the lady's horse because they didn't understand her? That's quite sad. Every time you go through customs when you come back from another country, you almost wonder whether you're going to be able to get back into your own country. That has a curious effect. I was in Chile last week, but I was less afraid when I arrived there than when I came back to Canada. That's funny, isn't it? Here I'm talking about my own country. Entering France seems easy as anything to me. It's in some of those countries that the problems are normally the most serious. And yet because a person doesn't speak English in our bilingual country, she is served in that manner. As Mr. Nadeau said, you arrive at customs and, if you speak French, they stare at you and you're immediately shoved aside because you didn't speak English. Even before getting to that stage, you wonder whether you're going to get back into your country. That's the kind of service that's offered to our citizens? That's a shame! It's truly shameful!

I congratulate the Commissioner of Official Languages. Since he's given you a mark that leaves something to be desired, you've allegedly put an entire mechanism in motion. Why wasn't that mechanism established two, three or four years ago?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Mr. Chairman, I believe I understand the question as to why the mechanism is being applied today, but not previously. I would say very seriously to you that it's not as though the agency wasn't paying attention to official languages. The complaints that come from the Commissioner of Official Languages are handled seriously. They're discussed on the human resources committee. At headquarters, we have an internal team of seven persons whose sole duty is to manage the official languages program. Recruitment is done in both official languages. I would say that 5,000 of our officers assigned to border services have received training in the past two years to familiarize them with their obligations. We distribute kits to all border crossings. A serious job was being done and has always been done with regard to official languages. I wouldn't want to leave you with the impression that we've decided to focus on the issue suddenly as a result of our poor mark. As president, I can tell you that, among the 87 million

travellers every year, there are some very positive experiences and some that are unacceptable.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Of course, if the passenger speaks the same language as the staff, that's positive; there's no problem. However, when that isn't the case, and the next plane is leaving in a few minutes and you have to stay in Toronto when you have to get to Bathurst, New Brunswick, you're shaking in your boots.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** You mentioned Toronto. That's a place where we'll have to increase our capacity. We accept the mark, especially since, in some specific places, there is a combination of...

Mr. Chairman, recruiting bilingual people in certain locations is a major challenge. In Windsor, for example, francophones represent 5% of the population. At Niagara, Fort Erie, we're talking about 3%. Recruitment is a challenge. So we have to focus on training and retention. There's work to be done. That's what I mean.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** In view of the situation, do you go to the colleges, universities and schools where students learn French to tell them that they can have a career in this field? Do you do that?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Yes, job fairs were held in 2006, 2007 and 2008 specifically to recruit bilingual people. As regards exchanges with minority communities, that's an aspect that will have to be developed. I spoke with my colleague from Canadian Heritage to see how we could address that issue. Yes, there are avenues that we can take, but I can't—

• (0915)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** When you meet with the deputy ministers in your committees, do you really talk about official languages, about the problems you're facing in that regard?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** That depends what meetings you mean.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Any meetings. You meet with the deputy ministers.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** I'm a member of the public service renewal committee. Recruitment and official languages are definitely a part of public service renewal. That's definitely quite an important topic.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Godin. We'll continue with Mr. Rickford.

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks as well to all the witnesses. Mr. Portelance, I congratulate you on your appointment as president of the Canada Border Services Agency.

My questions will be along the same lines as those of my colleague Mrs. Zarac. Earlier she asked some questions about southern Ontario. I note in the commissioner's report: "...the Office of the Commissioner notes that there have been issues at the Canada Border Services Agency's southern Ontario crossings for years, in part because the agency has not developed a formal action plan to improve the quality of its French-language services in this region."

Mr. Portelance, you said in your speech that you have an action plan. On page 15 of his report, the commissioner notes another concern. He says: "...the Agency has not set up oversight or follow-up mechanisms in order to evaluate the official languages performance at each border crossing."

I have two questions. What oversight or follow-up mechanisms are you putting in place to enable you to assess the official languages performance of each border crossing? Can you give us some details on your action plan?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** I'm going to say a few words about that. Perhaps you can ask my colleague Mr. Sabourin, who's responsible for all of Canada's border crossings, to provide you with more details.

The commissioner is right in saying that we had very few oversight and follow-up mechanisms regarding regional official languages activities. In an organization such as ours, which is highly decentralized, the regions knew they had to provide the service and knew what crossings were designated, etc. We often relied on complaints. We knew at the time that there was a problem, and people on site were in contact with the directors general, and so on.

The oversight and follow-up mechanisms consist mainly in establishing a plan for each crossing. Of the 158 crossings, fewer than 10 are really key crossings, that is to say where there are challenges.

We also have to have key objectives, such as the percentage of bilingual officers required in Windsor to ensure that service meets obligations. In each region, we try to tell the difference between challenges, which may be in the areas of training or recruitment, exchanges with local communities, schools and so on. Every director general will have to develop his or her own plan. On that point, I must say that there are no internal surveys.

We obviously rely on complaints the public files with the commissioner. We have to develop our own survey capacity not only with regard to official languages, but also for the service we offer to our clients.

With your permission, I'll ask Mr. Sabourin to say more about this.

• (0920)

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Sabourin, you have one minute to tell us more about that.

**Mr. Pierre Sabourin (Vice-President, Operations Branch, Canada Border Services Agency):** The plans Mr. Portelance referred to will be specific to regions and crossings. That's an important point; that is to say that we will be able to address specific aspects or specific challenges.

For performance measurement and follow-up, we want to establish a framework in which we measure the degree to which we are meeting our obligations. The commissioner described our obligations very well; they are very, very clear. In some locations, we're meeting our obligations better than in others, and that's why we need local plans.

First, with regard to ports, signage has to be bilingual. We're generally meeting that obligation very well. Generally speaking, signage is bilingual.

Second, the booths where bilingual service is offered must also be clearly identified. We're generally doing very well in that regard. If you go to Ottawa International Airport, all the booths now indicate that bilingual services are offered. In the case of Windsor, as well,

two of the 23 booths that we have very clearly indicate that bilingual services are offered.

Third—and this is the toughest one—there must be a bilingual officer at a bilingual booth. I must ensure that schedules are designed so that a bilingual officer is there 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A booth where bilingual services are offered needs, on average, seven to nine bilingual employees. That gives you an idea of what we have to do.

I gave you the example of Windsor. Five million travellers go through there every year, and I'm not including commercial traffic; I'm just talking about travellers. During the meeting we're holding today, the Border Services Agency will receive an average of 10,000 persons at the border. During our hour-long meeting, 10,000 people will arrive. You can imagine that—to answer Mrs. Zarac—if there isn't a bilingual officer in Windsor, the error rate can be high, and so the complaint rate could be as well. So we have to have very rigorous staffing plans to ensure we place bilingual officers in the booths that have signs indicating that bilingual services are offered so as to avoid this kind of situation that you very clearly described.

Then there is active offer. We have to say "Hello! *Bonjour!*" So we will have to measure to determine whether that's being done, and services have to be equivalent in English and in French. We want the strategy that has been used to date, which is to send people, francophones, to see a second person, to be cancelled so that service is equivalent.

What we also want to implement are short-term control measures so that we are able to know when non-bilingual people are on the job in bilingual booths. As a result, we would know about a problem before any complaints were filed. Let's suppose that, at Lansdowne, people are returning from vacation in August, when people are returning to Montreal, and a non-bilingual officer is posted at a booth where bilingual services are offered. That will cause us some problems. So we'll be able to avoid this kind of situation. The fact nevertheless remains that we absolutely have to find bilingual people.

I'm going to give you an example. In the case of Windsor, as Mr. Portelance explained to you, the francophone community is very small. We have to try to attract people from Gatineau or from French-speaking Ontario, Franco-Ontarians, or from the Quebec region, who can come and work in that region and provide us with additional capacity. The fact is that we currently don't have enough officers to provide the service. The local community will be able to help us, but we have to go beyond that if we want to meet our official languages obligations.

• (0925)

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

[*English*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Rickford.

[*Translation*]

We'll start our second round.

Mrs. Zarac, once again it's your turn.



**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Portelance, you said in your presentation that the agency has to administer 90 acts. I suppose that, when a new employee is hired, he or she has to receive training in order to be well aware of the acts he or she must administer. I would like to know what position training occupies and the importance of bilingualism in that training.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** This is an important part. First, our officers are all trained at the college in Rigaud and have the option of being trained in English or in French. We offer training in both languages. Active offer is part of the training of all officers. I would also say to you, madam, that our employees are placed in imperative staffing positions, that is to say that, when we hire them, we know where they will be going and what linguistic profile they have to meet. We don't really offer language training; people have those skills when they're hired. Hence Mr. Sabourin's comment that people who are already bilingual have to be hired for places like Windsor and so on. That's our way of proceeding—

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Pardon me for interrupting, but my time is limited.

They really have to understand this act, just as they have to understand the acts they must administer. This isn't just a matter of saying "Hello! *Bonjour!*"

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** The answer is yes, madam.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** So is the training adequate? You can confirm that for me?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Absolutely.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Perfect.

You said you were a member of the public service renewal committee. I would like to raise two points on that subject. Is the emphasis placed on bilingualism at the time of hiring? I think that's important.

In his report, the commissioner often comes back to the desire to do something. In my opinion, if you want to ensure that bilingual services are offered, you have to send the message—before hiring—that the agency wants to hire bilingual people. I can understand that that's difficult in certain cases, except that training can be given.

It seems to me that it's nevertheless an environment where the vocabulary is constantly the same. So even if the individual isn't completely bilingual, he or she could meet the requirements of the job by taking adequate training. Do your non-bilingual employees regularly receive... They shouldn't be given the choice.

I read that they will have access to training if they request it. Shouldn't that be part of a detailed plan for your employees?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** First, for the moment, there is training that I would say is adequate. However, in the context of our action plan, we're taking a look at how we can raise the level of basic training.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Mr. Portelance, isn't it true that training is currently available upon request?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** If you're talking about active offer and official languages obligations, people are trained at the initial training point. They know that this is an obligation.

There are two factors. First, we have to recruit people. I'm going to cite an example. Recruiting francophones and transferring them to a place like Windsor... Windsor isn't a bilingual region. So, to meet service obligations, francophones who go to work in Windsor don't necessarily have a right to work in the language of their choice. Sometimes it's easy to say that we're going to recruit bilingual people who will be working in Lansdowne, Windsor or Toronto, but those aren't bilingual regions. Consequently, those people aren't necessarily interested.

As to the question whether a certain base can be taught, I would say that we could say yes, but the work of a border services officer is interview work. The officer must be able to have quite a full conversation. As for administration of the Immigration Act, particularly the eligibility component, most Canadians definitely believe that boils down to a few quite simple questions to determine what individuals are bringing with them and so on. However, in the context of a fairly serious interview, there is the contact with the person. So the officer cannot be limited to a few sentences. Either people can do their job or they can't.

To answer your question, I would say that, in the action plan, we will definitely be examining the issue of training in Rigaud to determine whether we can increase not only the knowledge, but also the capacity to function.

• (0930)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mrs. Zarac. This time, you took back the time you credited to me earlier.

Mr. Portelance, you say you've been president since November. Before that, you were senior vice-president at the same agency. Had you already been there for some time?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Yes, absolutely, for two years.

**The Chair:** Excellent. Thank you.

We'll now continue with Mr. Nadeau.

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

To begin with, I'm going to give Mr. Laforest the floor.

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** I would like to ask a very brief question. Mr. Portelance and Mr. Sabourin, earlier you mentioned that there was a very small francophone population pool in the Windsor region, for example, which caused problems in recruiting bilingual officers to the Canada Border Services Agency.

Does that mean that most people who provide bilingual services are francophone and that few anglophones do it or can do it?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** I would find it hard to answer your question very specifically.

**Ms. Camille Therriault-Power:** Those officers meet the requirements of the position's linguistic profile, which is level BBB. So they have some second-language skills, which entitles them to the bilingualism bonus.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** I don't have the statistics as to whether they are francophone or anglophone. However, I do know the number of people who meet profile requirements.

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest:** You say you're having difficulty finding bilingual officers because there are few francophones in a given area. So that suggests that more bilingual officers are francophones.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Although I don't have the figures, I'm going to give you an example. Of approximately 1,700 bilingual officers, there are 1,000 in Quebec. Without knowing exactly who those people are, I would say that, among those 1,700 officers, there are more bilingual francophones than bilingual anglophones. However, I don't have the available data.

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest:** Thank you.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** You're very cautious, Mr. Portelance. I understand the situation. You try to draw more on the communities, Fort Erie, Windsor, Pointe-aux-Roches and the francophone areas of southern Ontario because the people in those communities are francophones first, and we conclude from that fact that they respect their second official language. That's why you want to recruit them.

Personally, there's an aspect that I find very important, and that's the relationship with the supervisors. Fifty-two percent of your employees feel comfortable speaking to their supervisor in their first language. Exactly what are they afraid of? Someone's going to snub them if they speak French? Have you looked into that aspect?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** The first action under our action plan is to look into things. I believe the data that were available for the commissioner's exercise are based solely on the public service employee survey. However, we have to try to demystify this: not to be comfortable doing it as opposed to the ability to do it.

We've already identified... Our executive committee's bilingualism qualifications are very high.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** You understand that he's the boss in the field.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Absolutely. In the field, it's like at our headquarters: there are two aspects. First, there is the aspect of knowing whether people meet the linguistic profile. Does the supervisor have the linguistic profile? I believe that, for the majority, we're nevertheless quite well off in that regard.

We intend to do some digging, and to conduct an internal survey, to learn more about the question you asked: why do employees not feel comfortable? That's a little harder to assess. It can be a supervisor, a sector, a—

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I'm going to give you another clue, because I must not have a lot of time left, and that's the issue of writing. That's 56%; so it's in the same range. People write in English because their supervisor won't understand if I write to him in French. You should also know what the situation is in that regard, particularly since federal employees have a right to write in their first language.

• (0935)

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Mr. Chairman, this question is a leadership issue. As to whether CBSA employees feel they can't write to the president in the language of their choice, that's false. It's the same thing for my executive committee and my directors general, and so on.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** He's not the boss in the field.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Absolutely. The answer to your question is that I realize that it's at the basic level; it's the first level; it's the second level. The action plan for using the employee's language of choice will address those first levels in order to demystify that, to deconstruct the myth relative to the reality.

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

Thank you, Mr. Nadeau.

I'll now turn it over to Mr. Lauzon.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks as well to the witnesses for being here this morning.

You definitely have some challenges to address at your agency, but I believe you're also having some success.

Do you think you have enough financial and human resources to meet your challenges?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** I believe so. I have no reason to believe the contrary. We have a training budget. We're already spending about \$2 million a year. The exercise we conducted this year consisted in examining our entire training budget. So I'll have the opportunity to reassess the matter to determine whether we have to invest more.

Mr. Sabourin will discuss a number of initiatives specific to operations which are more management matters. Recruitment is recruitment, and the costs are constant.

My answer to your question is yes. We'll see about training.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** In the past two years, I've lived near the border in Cornwall, where there are major challenges, but not necessarily with regard to official languages. Over those past 18 months, I have received no complaints from travellers concerning official languages. However, there have been complaints 100 km west of Cornwall.

Could you explain that to us? Do you have any complaints from Cornwall? I didn't hear that you had any.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** I don't personally remember receiving any complaints from Cornwall.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** In fact, I'm in close contact with them.

Can you explain to us the difference between the two borders, since they are approximately 100 km from one another.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** That's a good question. Where we have the most challenges—we could say that this is a problem—is at Lansdowne: it starts there. In fact, we don't have any problems at Prescott or Cornwall. It has to be said that Prescott, Cornwall and Lansdowne are designated bilingual crossings. Except that Prescott and Cornwall are in bilingual regions, and employees can work in the language of their choice, whereas Lansdowne is not in a bilingual region.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Would there perhaps be the option of transferring those employees, for doing exchanges? Because for six weeks, they transferred—

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Historically in our recruitment process, the agency has recruited locally. That means that Border Services Agency officers who work in Cornwall mostly come from Cornwall, Prescott and so on. We don't have a big mobility budget. People aren't usually that interested in moving.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** I'm going to ask my next question in English. [English]

On page 19 of his report, the commissioner highlighted the wonderful experience of Regan Flowers. Said Mrs. Flowers, a Canada Border Services employee, on July 9, 2010: "They gave me this job because I firmly believe that official bilingualism forms part of who we are. It was also because I'm enthusiastic and...my French is far from being perfect". Again, I would like to congratulate your agency on this great achievement.

This came from the commissioner. How come that employee was so encouraged? Do you encourage all your employees in the same way?

• (0940)

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** We certainly do. I think the challenge for these sorts of discussions is that we legitimately on areas where we have complaints, where we have problems. Mr. Sabourin talked about the volume. We will get 230,000 passengers today. I get a lot of positive feedback about the service experience, but that doesn't outweigh the fact that we have challenges and we have complaints, and we take those seriously. But overwhelmingly—

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** One complaint is too many, but out of that 230,000 today, how many complaints do you expect to get on official bilingualism?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Well, if you do the average, it will probably be zero, because we had 35 last year.

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

We will conclude this first round with our witness with Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I have three minutes left. May I ask my question?

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Godin, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Has the Clerk of the Privy Council given you any instructions regarding official languages in recent years?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** I haven't received any specific instructions, except with regard to my role as president—because we belong to the public service. As deputy head, I'm responsible for managing this file.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You don't have any specific instructions from the Privy Council!

I understand you have a responsibility, and I know you're intelligent enough to know you have one. You supposedly have to offer bilingual services.

So the Clerk of the Privy Council has never given you any specific directives in recent years?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** First, I started occupying my position on November 15. The directive comes from the deputy head. I don't

have any specific directives, except that it must be understood that we are responsible for the administration of a number of acts.

Secondly, all our senior executives have management obligations regarding official languages under their performance agreements.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I understand; I know the act. I asked you a question and you answered it; that's good.

When you advertise jobs in Windsor, for example, do you say you're looking for bilingual employees?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** If the positions are bilingual, yes, we advertise for bilingual people. We hire people on an imperative basis; their applications have to be consistent with the job profile.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** We're only talking about the nine positions you referred to earlier, those you need for a booth. You're not going to force matters so you have a position openly advertised on the Internet, for example, for Windsor so that people say to themselves that they're going to move to Windsor and apply for the job.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** There is nevertheless that flexibility, but staffing is done regionally, and the directors general fill the positions based on needs.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Are all the 1,000 jobs at the Quebec border crossings bilingual?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** That's the case.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Are they all bilingual?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Yes.

**Mr. Pierre Sabourin:** Four of them are not bilingual.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** That's correct; four of them are not.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Four employees are not bilingual.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** That's correct.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Do you mean for all of Quebec?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** Four employees cannot meet the linguistic profile. You have to consider that the vast majority of clients at the Quebec border are anglophones coming from the United States.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** So you absolutely want to serve the anglophone clientele, but not necessarily the country's act.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** No, that's not it. The designation of the border crossings is based on four or five criteria.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That's funny: you have less trouble finding bilingual people to serve clients than to comply with the act.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** We start with the designation of the position. Then we try to find people who meet the position profile. In Quebec—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Would you be embarrassed if there were only francophones at the Quebec border and if the Americans who came here understood nothing and we then took their horses away?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** I don't understand the question, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I'll try to ask it better. If there were only francophones who didn't understand English at the border crossings, that would be embarrassing for Canada, wouldn't it?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** This is part of the way in which we designate the positions. Are they bilingual or not? It's the traffic, the kind of clientele and so on. There are criteria for each position; it's not Quebec as a whole if you ask—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I want to know whether there is really a willingness to comply with the act. I don't think there is.

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** For my part and for our part, yes, there is that willingness.

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

That completes our first hour with our witnesses.

I would like to thank you for coming to testify before the Standing Committee on Official Languages on linguistic duality and your agency's offer of bilingual service. As I mentioned, I would also like to thank you for your efforts to ensure Canadians' mobility. You know, I am a member for a border constituency. So that's very much appreciated by both workers and Quebeckers, in my case, who live on the other side. Thank you for the solutions you are putting in place for our fellow citizens.

Mrs. Zarac, go ahead, please.

● (0945)

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Mr. Chairman, may we ask Mr. Portelance to send us his work plan once it is finished?

**The Chair:** Is it possible to do that? Do you know when it will be ready?

**Mr. Luc Portelance:** As I told you, we're meeting with the executive committee on December 23. It should be ready in January. I would be pleased to send it to you.

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

We'll suspend for a few minutes to prepare for the next witnesses.

● (0945)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

● (0945)

**The Chair:** We will now resume the meeting.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f), 2009-2010 Annual Report (Volume II) of the Commissioner of Official Languages referred to the committee on Tuesday, November 2, it is now our pleasure to hear from the representatives of the Department of Public Safety.

With us today is Mr. William Victor Baker, Deputy Minister. Welcome, Mr. Baker.

He is accompanied by Mr. Denis Desharnais, Director General of Human Resources, and Mr. Daniel Sansfaçon, Director of the Policy Division.

Welcome to the committee.

Without further ado, I invite Mr. Baker to make his opening statement.

[English]

**Mr. William Victor Baker (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety):** *Merci, monsieur le président.*

I want to thank you for the opportunity to address you today on the findings of the annual report of the Commissioner of Official Languages for 2009-10.

Thank you for introducing my colleagues.

I understand that this is the first time Public Safety Canada has been assessed through the annual report exercise.

● (0950)

[Translation]

It is very useful for me to have this process and the report to essentially establish a base line in order to measure our future progress.

The report of the commissioner as well as the committee's comments will be useful and will be taken into account while implementing our action plan.

I welcome your interest and will be happy to take your questions.

[English]

I would like to take a brief moment to provide you with background information on Public Safety Canada and its mandate.

Our department was created seven years ago and has a clear mandate to help keep all Canadians safe and secure. To do so, the department provides strategic policy advice and support to the Minister of Public Safety on a range of issues, such as national security, emergency management, law enforcement, border management, corrections, and crime prevention.

Public Safety Canada also has a significant role in the delivery of programs. In fact, 65% of the department's budget is devoted to delivering grants and contributions related mostly to emergency preparedness and response through the disaster financial assistance arrangements program, with which I'm sure many of you are familiar. A smaller proportion goes to community safety.

[Translation]

To carry out our mandate, we have approximately 1,000 employees, of which 90% are located in the National Capital Region. Our regional employees are spread across the country in over 20 locations, with the majority of these offices designated bilingual for service to the public. Some offices have a staff that can vary from a couple of individuals to a dozen. However, the majority have less than five people; these are small offices.

[English]

The commissioner's report identifies four key conditions to make Public Safety and the public service as a whole a true bilingual workforce. The first is to ensure a clear understanding of the act on the part of the employees and the managers, and I think we still have a ways to go in this area. The second is strong leadership. The third is good planning. The fourth is adequate follow-up.

My management team and I will focus our efforts on these conditions with a view to improving our performance and ensuring better compliance with the Official Languages Act. More specifically, we will work to improve our level of service to the Canadian public by reminding employees of their obligations under the act and providing them with training and tools for providing service to the public.

We will encourage the use of official languages in our workplaces by continuing something that I'm not sure you've heard of before, our candygram activities. I'll give a brief explanation. For 50¢, you get a card with a candy, and you send it to someone with a note in your other official language.

[*Translation*]

All the money goes directly to our Government of Canada workplace charitable campaign.

[*English*]

We encourage the use of official languages in our workplaces by continuing to implement the next phase of the DARE/OSEZ campaign that we launched last year, the objective of which is to encourage employees to use their second official language, and by having continuous communications with our employees.

We support the vitality of official languages minority communities through our participation in the

[*Translation*]

Forum on Vulnerable Young Francophones in Minority Communities

[*English*]

and through putting additional efforts into the identification of, and consultation with, those communities.

The department will hold training sessions and provide tools to its employees to ensure that individuals who contact offices with bilingual service delivery obligations receive an active offer of service—and I appreciate that it's a continuing challenge, but we have to do better—in both official languages, and that they are informed unequivocally that they have the right to use English or French.

Public Safety Canada will ensure its internal procedures for communications with the public are applied systematically so that we can improve the speed of our e-mail responses to individuals and ensure that both linguistic communities receive an equal quality of service in their official language.

[*Translation*]

With respect to Part V of the act, we will do more to create an environment in which employees feel comfortable using their official language of choice in meetings, in e-mails and particularly when communicating with their supervisors. To that end, online tools are available to employees, information sessions will be offered to bring some clarity around the requirements of Part V of the act.

[*English*]

Perhaps more importantly, we must ensure that our policies and programs take into consideration the perspectives and needs of

minority language communities. Consequently, training will be offered to our managers and employees, and an official languages component will be integrated into the evaluation of programs.

We're already moving ahead with strategies to improve and strengthen the use of both official languages, internally and externally. I am pleased that Commissioner Fraser noted in his report that these efforts are under way.

[*Translation*]

As the commissioner was publishing volume II of his annual report, the department was putting the final touches on its comprehensive three-year action plan to strengthen and improve our linguistic duality. That action plan is before you now.

● (0955)

[*English*]

We've since revised the plan to account for the commissioner's comments, and a new version of the plan, which I've shared with you, will be communicated to our employees in the coming days. This will clarify that we as a department strive in the area of official languages, and at the same time will engage employees in the process.

The action plan sets measurable goals and performance indicators that address all areas for improvement indicated in the commissioner's report. This should allow us to track our progress and help ensure that we are meeting our objectives.

Of note, the action plan addresses part VII of the act. It includes a review of our existing policies and programs for compliance with part VII to help ensure that we can better integrate the views of minority communities. I appreciate that this is an area that needs some considerable attention.

[*Translation*]

As well, Public Safety Canada is moving ahead to ensure that, in regions designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes, the language profiles of all EX minus 1 positions with supervisory responsibilities are designated bilingual CBC/CBC.

I received a letter from the commissioner just two weeks ago in which he mentions his satisfaction with our institution's new initiative with respect to the language designation of EX minus 1 positions. I agree with him that it is a step in the right direction to ensure better compliance with the act.

[*English*]

In order to make the department a vibrant and bilingual workplace, senior management and I are taking every opportunity to promote the linguistic duality and the use of both official languages throughout the department.

[*Translation*]

Incidentally, this afternoon, I'm going to hold a general meeting with all our Public Safety employees and, on the agenda, we have a session on official languages to discuss our new action plan. I am very pleased that we have this opportunity to do so.

[English]

I'm proud to say that we have a very active official languages committee chaired by two dedicated co-champions, including one here today, Monsieur Sansfaçon. The committee is highly involved and works on many projects, such as the regular offering of informal group discussions, and it encourages employees to maintain and improve their skills in their second official language.

We offer in-house language maintenance courses to our employees, as do most departments and agencies, and we make continuous efforts to communicate the importance of official languages to our employees. This is something that I often do myself.

In conclusion, the commissioner's report has brought to light several issues that our department must correct. The latest correspondence from the commissioner congratulated our official languages team for the efforts under way, and I'm very pleased that Mr. Fraser is providing support to our efforts to make Public Safety Canada an organization of choice with regard to official languages and bilingualism.

[Translation]

I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that our official languages team has my full support and that we will take the necessary actions to address the issues raised. We have already begun this process by re-prioritizing the objectives included in our action plan.

[English]

We're looking for ways to enhance and fast-track our efforts, particularly as they relate to part VII of the act. We are working to ensure that our employees across the country are actively serving Canadians in English and French, and we're reaching out to minority-language communities across Canada to provide them with equal access to the information and services they need.

We are committed to providing an environment in which all employees in regions designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes can feel comfortable working in the official language of their choice.

Ultimately, I fully agree with the commissioner's view that leadership is at the centre of achieving success. I assure you that my management team and I are making every effort to make Public Safety Canada a truly vibrant bilingual institution of government.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to take your questions.

[English]

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

Without any further delay, I will invite Mr. Murphy to open up the first round.

[Translation]

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, deputy minister, and thanks to all the witnesses.

I have two questions of concern to me. First, with regard to your obligations under Part VII of the act, I want to make sure you are

familiar with them. Could you tell me when you started developing the action plan and when it was completed?

Also, on page 2 of the action plan, with regard to Part VII, the last two entries are: "Consult official languages minority communities," and "Continue to identify our official language minority communities." I wonder what that means. How do you continue consulting those communities?

As you know, you have an obligation as a department under the act. First, could you tell me when you began developing this action plan and, even more important, how you consult the official language minority communities and how you are continuing discussions with them?

• (1000)

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** We began our effort to build our action plan in early 2010 and we finalized it in June. We discussed it around our management table. We also began implementing certain actions under the plan. With regard to your second question, one of our champions, Mr. Daniel Sansfaçon, has priority responsibility for Part VII. So I would like to ask him to say how we're going to go about acting with the communities.

**Mr. Daniel Sansfaçon (Director, Policy, Research and Evaluation Division, National Crime Prevention Centre and Official Languages Co-champion, Department of Public Safety):** First, we're very much aware at Public Safety Canada of the importance, and even the obligation, first to get to know better, and second to consult the official language minority communities.

To date, for example, at the National Crime Prevention Centre, we held an initial forum in 2009 in the context of a network that we formed with Justice Canada. It is called the Justice and Security Network, and its objective is to share best practices for improving knowledge of the francophone communities' needs. The deputy minister referred to the forum in his introduction. It is a forum that aimed to bring together approximately 25 organizations that work in Canada with young francophones in minority communities to try to better understand the nature of the needs that may currently arise there.

Following that first forum, we intend to conduct a slightly more in-depth field survey, with our partners, in particular with Justice Canada, in early 2011, in an attempt to more clearly ascertain the nature of the needs of young francophones in minority communities with regard, quite obviously, to public safety. For example, what are the risk factors that may arise in these populations to which we could respond more effectively.

So this is one of the tools with which we are trying to get to know better and consult the francophone communities, in particular. In addition, more broadly, we are also trying through our regional offices, our directors general at the National Crime Prevention Centre, to maintain constant relations with francophone organizations outside Quebec and anglophone organizations in Quebec in order to have working relations that enable them to get to know our programs better, particularly our funding programs, and eventually to be able to apply for funding as necessary.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Thank you.

I believe I have a few minutes left.

**The Chair:** You have two minutes left, if you wish to use them.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** The second part of my questions concerns emergency situations. I suppose your department must get involved in flood cases, for example.

I suppose bilingual personnel are necessary in order to communicate with people from other provinces, that is from northern New Brunswick or Quebec, in emergency situations. Are you sure that you have enough people on the front line to respond to victims of emergencies and that those people can communicate in the language of the victims during those incidents? We have to be sure of that. Can you reassure us on that point, please?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Mr. Chairman, I'm convinced we have sufficient capacity in that respect. However, with regard to the way we respond to emergencies, responsibility does not fall to Public Safety Canada alone; that's a role that the provinces, territories and even the municipalities and small towns across the country must bear. It's also up to them to ensure that we are able to respond adequately from a linguistic standpoint. To my knowledge, having spent 14 months at Public Safety Canada, I can say that there are no problems in that regard.

•(1005)

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Thank you.

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

Now we'll continue with Mr. Nadeau.

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

Mr. Desharnais, when you write to your superiors, do you do it in French or in English?

**Mr. Denis Desharnais (Director General, Human Resources, Department of Public Safety):** I use both languages.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** And you, Mr. Sansfaçon?

**Mr. Daniel Sansfaçon:** Same thing.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** So you write the same letter in English and French and you send it to your supervisors, do you? I just want to understand.

**Mr. Daniel Sansfaçon:** To be more specific, I use the language more appropriate to the case. It will be English or French, but rarely both at the same time.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I'm asking you the question quite honestly: why don't you use just French? Knowing that you're francophones, I assume French is your first language?

**Mr. Daniel Sansfaçon:** I don't systematically use French all the time because there are circumstances that simply lend themselves more to the direct use of English, given the nature of the subject that addressed, for example.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** To a supervisor? Because I'm talking about mail sent to a supervisor. You know you have a right to write to a supervisor in French only.

I don't know your department very well. However, I do know another department where an individual I know as well stopped writing to her supervisors in French because people "looked at her strange". The text was sent for translation and came back translated but didn't exactly express the meaning she had wanted to convey. Do you have that difficulty?

**Mr. Daniel Sansfaçon:** Do I have that difficulty?

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Yes.

**Mr. Daniel Sansfaçon:** No, I don't have that difficulty.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** And you, Mr. Desharnais?

**Mr. Denis Desharnais:** Occasionally, when we have a text translated, the thematic line of the text may get lost. But we nevertheless revise it to ensure that the message is conveyed so that... so the theme is maintained.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** If I understand correctly, you have supervisors who are unable to read your text as one should be able to do if one is really bilingual, as a result of which they have to have it translated.

**Mr. Denis Desharnais:** I wouldn't say that's the case. As a senior executive, I have employees who sometimes write me texts in the language of their choice. Sometimes it's necessary for them to do it in the other language as well. That's one way of doing things. We nevertheless encourage people to communicate in the language of their choice. Sometimes it may get lost in the translation.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** The fact remains that 35% of your employees don't feel comfortable writing in the language of their choice.

Although I haven't done any scientific studies on this, I'll give you my opinion: I would have expected a candid answer to the effect that you feel comfortable writing in French because you know the message will be sent and there will be no problems at the end of the line.

However, that's not the case because sometimes you feel an obligation—from what I understand—to write in English to be sure it's understood at the other end of the tunnel.

**Mr. Denis Desharnais:** I wouldn't say it's at that point. I communicate in a certain language depending on the circumstances, as does my colleague, Mr. Sansfaçon. Sometimes I feel more comfortable writing in English; sometimes I feel more comfortable writing in French. I have no doubt that my supervisors understand, whether I write one way or another. They even encourage me to do so.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Let's talk about the relationship with supervisors. In the case of speaking, communicating, when an instruction or a direction is given or a correction must be made to certain aspects—that's part of everyday life, regardless of your occupation—28% of employees in your department nevertheless don't feel entirely comfortable speaking the language of their choice with their supervisors.

Can you explain to me what you are going to do so that, one day at your department, 100% of francophones will feel comfortable speaking French, even to the most senior authorities, or 100% of anglophones feel comfortable speaking English to the most senior authorities? Everyone must feel comfortable using the language of his or her choice. It should not be forgotten that the act has been around for 40 years. I'm listening.

**Mr. Denis Desharnais:** Mr. Chairman, first of all, that's their right. As deputy minister, I regularly encourage the use of both official languages. We are quite capable of working in both languages. We recently did something in particular: we changed the profile of our EX minus 1 supervisors because most people report to a supervisor of that level. They previously had a BBB profile and we changed that to a CBC profile because, based on my experience in the Government of Canada, a BBB profile is not at all enough to manage human resources.

• (1010)

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

Do I have any time left, Mr. Chairman?

**The Chair:** Yes, thanks to our new procedure, you have two minutes left, Mr. Nadeau.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Then I'm going to ask you a question about active offer. Let's say a citizen has to do business with your department at one level or another. Only 48% of your employees are able to provide active offer, that is one employee in two. I find that mark poor. One employee in two is not high.

You can tell me that's their right, but it's also their obligation to be able to respond in the citizen's language. If they can't do so personally, they have to refer them—not three months later or with the RCMP's handcuffs on their wrists, as we have seen—to services offering the language of their choice.

What are you doing to enable citizens doing business with the Department of Public Security to do so safely?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** I'd like to make a few comments, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, once again, we encourage that in the action plan. That's frankly a challenge. We encourage people to respond to the public's needs in the language of—

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Do you understand that it's a duty to respond to the public?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Yes.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Not with supervisors, but with the public.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** With the public, absolutely.

It must be understood that most of our employees work at headquarters and do not deal directly with the public. Ours is

essentially a department that operates in the policy field. We provide advice to ministers; we work with the agencies associated with the portfolios of the Department of Public Safety. A minority of employees interact directly with the public. That's obviously essential for them. The action plan provides for certain measures to strengthen our competencies in this regard.

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

We'll continue with Mr. Godin.

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

Welcome to all our witnesses.

You said you had 1,000 employees at your department.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Roughly.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** How many of them are bilingual?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Approximately one-third. I have the figure before me: 34%.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Thirty-four percent are bilingual?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** No, not bilingual. That's the representation of francophones at the Department of Public Safety.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I'm talking about bilingual people who are able to speak both languages.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** I have the language-of-work figures. There are 331 bilingual supervisory positions.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Three hundred and thirty-one?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Yes. In addition, 4.8% are currently vacant and 90% meet the linguistic profiles. There is still some work to be done to reach 100%.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** How many of the 331 bilingual persons are francophones, unilingual francophones? Do you have those figures?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** I don't think so, no. However, I imagine the figure is available and we can—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** How many of those 1,000 persons are unilingual francophones?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Unilingual francophones?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Yes.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Very few. There are two offices in Quebec.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Unilingual?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Some people are unilingual francophones, but there are not very many of them.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Even out of 7 million people?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** One million people.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** There are 7 million people in Quebec.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** We have a very small regional presence in Quebec. That's the nature of Public Safety Canada. We aren't an operating agency. We just have two small offices that... They essentially have a liaison function, to communicate with the province and the people who work in the emergency management field.



•(1015)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You began preparing your plan in January 2010.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Yes, we started work and we approved it in June.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Has the Clerk of the Privy Council given you any instructions in recent years?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Not on—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** —official languages.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** The topic of official languages comes up in the committees of deputy ministers from time to time.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You're talking to me about deputy ministers. However, has the Clerk of the Privy Council sent your department any directives on official languages?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Perhaps, but I don't have them in front of me. We occasionally receive—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Could you send that to the committee?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** If there is something, yes.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** If there is something, can you send it to the committee, please?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Yes.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Earlier reference was made to 331 bilingual positions. We hope that, here in Ottawa, you don't have the same problem as the representatives of the other border agency that testified before you. They said it was only 5% in Windsor.

You don't have that problem here. Do you have a recruitment problem?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** No, not at all.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You don't have one.

**Mr. Denis Desharnais:** If I may clarify the matter, Mr. Godin, the 331 positions are supervisory positions. They are bilingual. Those supervisors have bilingual teams.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Are all the supervisors bilingual?

**Mr. Denis Desharnais:** The majority meet the requirements of their position.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** We're talking about BBB profiles.

**Mr. Denis Desharnais:** No, our new standards are CBC for EX minus 1-level positions.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** When did you put that in place?

**Mr. Denis Desharnais:** That's part of our action plan.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That's since January 2010. You've changed the profile from BBB to—

**Mr. Denis Desharnais:** —to CBC, yes.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** In 12 months, has everyone managed to achieve those levels?

**Mr. Denis Desharnais:** No, because we just started. We're identifying the positions where people—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** How many of them are there? Are there any?

**Mr. Denis Desharnais:** For the moment, there are...

I'm looking for the figure.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** I have that figure.

In fact, 66.5% of the positions have a level higher than BBB.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** So more than 33% of positions don't.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Yes.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Employees must not feel comfortable communicating in their department in the language of their choice.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Perhaps, that depends on the person.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The Commissioner of Official Languages didn't give you an A.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** We changed the profile to CBC, but that's not enough. Some now only have the BBB profile. So we have to offer training.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Why do you say you encourage people to do it rather than tell them they have to do it?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Yes.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Will the vocabulary change?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** In my view, that's a requirement.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** It's a requirement! It's the law!

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** That's correct.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** We represent the government and we represent the country. There is an act.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Absolutely, it's the law, but there is always room to encourage—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I can encourage my wife to stop going to the bingo hall, but she won't stop.

Incidentally, she doesn't go to the bingo hall. That's just an example.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** When I use the word "encourage", I mean do everything necessary to be able to meet the requirements of the act.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** In your action plan, is there any reference to obligations or encouragements?

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Is there any reference to obeying the Official Languages Act?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** That's well understood.

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

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Furthermore, we have to have tools to encourage people to do their best.

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

We'll continue and complete our first round with Mr. Rickford.

[English]

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses today.

I have two questions I hope to get to.

I'll start with this one, Mr. Baker. In my foundational briefings and the subsequent meetings I've participated in within the department itself as the parliamentary secretary for official languages, I've come to understand that there's more than a little concern around technical information being predominantly in English. I suspect that technical information deals with IT infrastructure communications as such, that there may be a need to update technical IT infrastructure in this regard, and that this was a problem that was looming for official languages in the public service.

I was wondering, Mr. Baker, if you can just expound on that: first of all, if you can identify within Public Safety if those are key concerns, and then perhaps shed some light on what steps are being taken to address that.

• (1020)

[Translation]

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Thank you.

[English]

I had a discussion with the Commissioner of Official Languages on this very subject recently, in October. It is indeed a challenge that is facing not only Public Safety but all institutions today.

Of course, it comes from a number of sources. There's a heavy reliance on the use of the Internet for research. It isn't just in a technical and an IT capacity. The sources of the information are no longer domestic. We're increasingly able to instantly access information from all over the world and, at the end of the day, there aren't too many countries in the world that are producing it in French—of course, they have no obligation to provide the material to us in the two languages. So that is a challenge.

What we do is make sure that what we produce as an organization—I can't take care of everybody else—is in both languages, and we try to do it as quickly as possible to support this goal. We're always looking for tools—and this is the challenge for the IT community—that are available to make technological information available in both languages, because again, much of the source of this material is not coming domestically.

So it is a challenge, we're aware of it, and we make sure that we are as good as we can be as an organization. But I think we have to recognize that it's going to be a continuing challenge for all of us.

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Correct.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Sometimes you can afford the opportunity to translate material; sometimes you can't. In the world of national security, we are responding to information we get on a daily basis and we have to take the information in the form it arrives.

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

My question concerns the administration of the act, specifically section 41 of the Official Languages Act.

I would like to know whether Public Safety Canada has submitted a voluntary report to Canadian Heritage on the implementation of section 41 of the Official Languages Act. If so, is it possible for us to get a copy of it? If you don't submit a report, can you explain to us

what makes you accountable, what your responsibilities are under Part VII of the act?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Public Safety Canada is not one of the designated departments. In spite of that, we are members of the committee. We were the ones who suggested that. Mr. Sansfaçon is involved in that. We are obviously interested in it.

As for accountability, as deputy minister, I'm responsible for ensuring that we are able to deal with all aspects of the Official Languages Act. In the context of our action plan, I intend to include something in the performance agreements. That would concern all managers at Public Safety Canada for next year. This is one way of exercising my responsibilities and of ensuring that everyone is on board.

[English]

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Okay. So the answer is that you don't have a voluntary assessment per se, a summary, an aggregate, if you will, of your managers for us to look at, at this point?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Their abilities or...?

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Yes.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** We have a profile of everybody. Certainly, if somebody is not meeting their competencies or not fulfilling them, we have measures to correct that. We monitor that.

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Okay.

[Translation]

I have about two minutes left. So I'm going to make a brief comment. I know this is a bit complicated, but my colleague is going to ask more questions about it.

In *DesRochers v. Canada* in 2009, the Supreme Court of Canada identified some public safety issues. Does the Department of Public Safety intend to take the linguistic minority into account in providing services in the context of projects? In other words, does it draw a distinction between a natural application of the act and a symbolic application? I imagine that nevertheless makes a difference in the area of public safety.

• (1025)

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** This is important. It's a challenge. We have previously put forward certain initiatives in this area. With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask my colleague to tell us about them.

**Mr. Daniel Sansfaçon:** I'm going to give you an example. Once again, it concerns the transfer payments program as it concerns the National Crime Prevention Strategy. We ensure, in particular, that for every project developed by a community organization in the field, an analysis is conducted to determine whether that service is already being made available to the francophone minority, for example, in the neighbourhood, town or area where the service will be offered, and whether, if it is not, that constitutes a need. An organization that submits a proposal must prove that within the proposal. If there is indeed a need, the organization must take the necessary steps for the service also to be offered in the minority language. That's one of the ways we ensure that our programs—at least this one—are sensitive to the needs of the minority language communities.

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

We'll now begin our second round.

Mrs. Zarac.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to talk about your action plan for 2010-2013, which you distributed to us this morning. Was there an action plan before 2010?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** This is a three-year action plan.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Yes, but you're talking about this one. I would like to know whether you previously had one.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** No.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** So it's entirely new.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** I believe this is the first—

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** At what stage is it? Is it being developed, implemented?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** This action plan includes the current year. So we've already made some progress.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** In short, it is in effect.

I didn't have time to examine it completely, but I looked at language of work. For the first year, 2010-2011, the verb "remind" constantly comes up. I get the impression you're going to hold a lot of meetings with your employees. It's only in the second year that you establish a process for handling complaints. For the second year, you talk about analyzing those responses.

Do you believe this way of doing things will be productive? Shouldn't you implement your complaint process at the outset so you have figures that enable you to react? Looking at that, I realize that you will be doing nothing between now and the end of your plan.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** I would like to do everything immediately, but we have to follow the steps that will enable us to implement a fair process.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** I understand that you have to operate in stages because it's impossible to do everything at the same time, but I see that, from the way you're proceeding, no measures will be taken by the end of this plan. So we won't see any improvements on specific points before 2013-2014 or even 2014-2015.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** No, Mr. Chairman. We can see on page 3 that, for the second year of our plan, 2011-2012, we plan to

set up a complaint process. However, 2011-2012 starts in three weeks. So we're going to try to make some progress.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** I encourage you to bring that forward. That will help you take the necessary measures to bring in corrective action.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** That's good advice.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** You said you have no problems on the hiring side, but the fact remains that 10% of your workforce isn't perfectly bilingual whereas their positions are classified bilingual.

What are you going to do about that 10%?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** First of all, we have to offer the necessary training so that we can—

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** You told us that some of those employees could make use of the tools. That kind of support can be offered, but if there is no willingness, no leadership...

A lot of information can be offered as support, but if people aren't urged on, if they aren't compelled, in a way, they won't make use of those tools. How do you ensure those tools are used?

• (1030)

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** We aren't permissive to the point of offering people tools and letting them do what they want with them. We have established requirements and we are measuring their progress against those requirements. That's taken into consideration in the performance appraisal.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** That's part of their performance? It's assessed in that perspective?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Yes. That's still part of it, in order for them to receive the bilingualism bonus and all that, for example.

Starting in 2011—next year—under our action plan, I'm going to have something concerning official languages in all the performance agreements for all our managers and employees.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** We're now about to be able to do that.

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

We'll continue with Mr. Nadeau.

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

Mr. Baker, you'll understand my scepticism. It's not just aimed at you. But as you have the immense honour and joy of being with us this morning, I'm going to ask you the following questions.

You say this takes time and that a process has to be put in place. Good lord, the act has been around for 40 years. I don't know how long you've been deputy minister there. I know you've been deputy minister in other departments. It is very frustrating for me to hear these things, but I'm not surprised by them.

In the text you read to us this morning, you say, on page 9:

With respect to Part V of the act [language of work in the federal government; in other words, the employees of the Canadian government], we will do more to create an environment in which employees feel comfortable using their official language in meetings, in e-mails and particularly when communicating with their supervisors.

That means that not everyone currently feels comfortable. And you're going to do more, why? To create an environment where these people can finally feel comfortable. If employees at your department don't currently feel comfortable, that means they're working under duress; they're afraid they can't communicate in their language. I assume it's French, knowing that the majority of people there are anglophones based on what you've told us. There are 331 bilingual positions, some 30 of which are not filled by bilingual individuals. And you add:

To that end, online tools are available to employees...

We're going to be hearing from representatives of the armed forces next Thursday. I invite you to read the verbatim report of that meeting. If, by December 31, 2010, all the senior executives of the armed forces who wear stars—from one to four stars—don't meet bilingualism requirements and don't have a certificate attesting to their bilingualism, they will no longer be promoted. This is clearly not that important for a colonel, because I don't know what promotion comes after that. For the others, there will be no more promotions. You are bilingual or you will no longer be promoted.

Would you agree to adopt that approach at your department? Senior executives who aren't bilingual would no longer be able to be promoted. There would mean no more promotions. They would stay where they are or be demoted.

It seems to me that would ensure that your staff who are bilingual, but who don't have senior responsibilities could feel comfortable working at your department.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Mr. Chairman, I believe that, to be a senior executive or manager anywhere in government, in the bilingual regions, you have to meet linguistic requirements.

If I have an EX-01-level director, for example, who is not bilingual, we first have to commit funding for that individual to become bilingual.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Yes, but it's a BBB profile.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** No, not for EX-level positions. We have changed the profile for EX minus 1 positions. These are people who report to EXs—supervisors. They are, let's say, middle managers at Public Safety Canada. It was a BBB profile, but we changed that profile because it was not enough. We made that decision this year.

•(1035)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** All right, that was in 2010, but did those people suddenly obtain the CBC profile?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** No.

Some already have the skills to function in a CBC profile, but they have to take the exam.

For the others, it's training. If a person is unable to meet CBC profile requirements, some way must obviously be found to eliminate that person's supervisory responsibilities. That will take time. We have to be human, at the same time, when it comes to change.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Forty years! I'm human too. There are bilingual people who don't feel comfortable in your department.

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

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I'm human. You have to understand that, Mr. Baker.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** I know some people aren't comfortable, yes.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. We'll continue with Mr. Galipeau.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Baker, you're often told that we're pleased you have come. I'm going to tell you how pleased that has made me today. Here we often hear from witnesses, even francophone witnesses, whose French is shot through with anglicisms.

[English]

The quality of your French is such that even I, the harsh critic that I am, didn't find any anglicisms when you were speaking French.

[Translation]

You passed. Congratulations.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Thank you. With time, that will happen.

[English]

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** I suppose that I've set up a level of expectation now.

I particularly was attentive to your presentation. My ears perked up when you said on page 8 that your department will work to “support the vitality of official languages minority communities” through your “participation in the *Forum pour jeunes francophones vulnérables en situation minoritaire*”, and that your department will put “additional efforts in the identification and consultation of those communities”.

[Translation]

Mr. Sansfaçon spoke a little about that. What I'm interested in knowing is how you're going to go about getting to know the minority clientele better and identifying its needs.

Then I'll have another question to ask you.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** That particularly concerns our programs in the area of crime prevention. Public Safety Canada has only three programs in the regions: crime prevention, native police and emergency management—I don't think there's any problem in that area.

In the area of crime prevention, we have projects across Canada, in the francophone, anglophone and bilingual communities. These are projects that typically last three to five years.

One of the things we did at first was to establish the needs and requirements related to that program. We're going to add something when we plan those programs to ensure we get feedback on language from the bilingual minority communities before we begin our efforts.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** How will you go about harmonizing your programs, particularly at the National Crime Prevention Centre?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Daniel comes from that centre, so I believe he is in a better position to answer you, sir.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** He also does it with a smile.

**Mr. Daniel Sansfaçon:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Incidentally, earlier I cited an example of what we've done with minority francophone youths. But we're doing the same kind of work with anglophone youths in Quebec, in the greater Montreal area. As I said earlier, first we try to analyze the needs and to ensure that, if there's a need, the service will be made available to that minority.

That said, we do have to go a little further—we're aware of that. That's why I said we also have regular contact at our regional offices with francophone or anglophone minority organizations in the various provinces and territories. Little by little, we're trying... This is a process that has not been completed, but we're nevertheless trying to get a better grasp of the nature of the needs so that we can be in a better position to take action that will meet those needs.

• (1040)

[English]

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Mr. Chairman, I just wanted some information, further to some questions that Mr. Godin asked.

Mr. Godin asked how many of your staff are bilingual. You fiddled for information and unfortunately you fiddled on TV. Your response was that 34% of your staff is francophone. Well, let's assume that most of them are bilingual, but you've just demonstrated that not only francophones are bilingual. There are some anglophones who are bilingual, including the head.

I presume that most of your staff is in the national capital region. Would you mind reviewing the questions that Mr. Godin has asked in this area and getting some answers back to the clerk?

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

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** I'm interested to know how many of your staff are bilingual—defined as “CBC”. I think we'll demonstrate there that many of your anglophone staff, like the boss, are bilingual, though maybe not as perfectly as the bosses.

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

[Translation]

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** We'll send you the information. I sincerely apologize for not having the expertise in this field.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Please feel free to provide any more detailed information to the committee and we'll make sure to forward it to every member.

[Translation]

Mr. Godin, it is now up to you to conclude the second and final round.

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

On page 3 of your action plan, you note, in particular, in the second column: "Monitor complaints." Does that mean monitoring public complaints?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Yes, that's in Part IV.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** In the third column, it states: "Set up internal complaint process for language of work." Is that it?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Yes.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** These are employees?

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** That's correct.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** As Mrs. Zarac said, you don't have any complaint system. You're going to establish a complaint process, but you haven't yet received any complaints because you don't have a complaint system.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** We don't have a formal complaint system. There is always a way to handle complaints, but what we've written here is that we're going to have a more formal system.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I agree with Mrs. Zarac, and I encourage you to do so from the outset, because it makes no sense for you to do it afterwards if you want to get an idea of what is going on.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** I think that's a good idea. We're going to revise the action plan. This is our first action plan, and I welcome your advice in this regard. Perhaps we can step up our efforts in this area.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Why are 10% of people not bilingual in accordance with the Official Languages Act? Why were those people hired without being bilingual. You're in the National Capital Region, and earlier you said that having people who work at the department was not a problem. When did that happen? Two years ago, seven years ago or under the previous government? Some people were given bilingual positions, but those 10% aren't bilingual.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Pardon me, but I'm going to ask Mr. Desharnais to give you a specific answer.

**Mr. Denis Desharnais:** Mr. Godin, the 10% are indeed employees who do not meet requirements. However, that includes employees with non-imperative appointments. So they will receive training in order to meet those requirements. Some positions are vacant or are being filled on an acting basis for short periods of time, but most of those people... Or simply, positions have been identified and people have incumbent rights to their position. So we can't compel them to meet the new standard, but we have to put measures in place.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The new standard? The standard has changed along the way.

**Mr. Denis Desharnais:** The standard changed with the implementation of the CBC profile.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Is that where the 10% figure comes from?

**Mr. Denis Desharnais:** Part of the 10% comes from that.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Not completely, for the reasons that Mr. Desharnais—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Earlier you mentioned tools. Are you short of work instruments? Do you have the government's support? Earlier, when I asked my question, you ended your answer by saying that, if you had the tools... And you gave us no further explanation about the tools; could you do so now? What tools are you referring to?

• (1045)

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** These are essentially tools specific to the Department of Public Safety. These are tools in our e-mail system. We now offer programs to enable people to learn how to manage a bilingual meeting. These are these kinds of things. It's not that sophisticated, but it nevertheless necessary.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Godin.

That completes our meeting. I would like to thank the witnesses on behalf of committee members. We of course encourage you to continue on the road to improvement. You provided some anecdotes on the CBC profile and the initiative for vulnerable francophone and anglophone youths, which is definitely very much appreciated. Thank you very much.

**Mr. William Victor Baker:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, everyone.

Members will be back next Thursday, when we'll be hearing from one witness. We'll also have committee business concerning the results of the committee's liaison meeting and mission. Thank you.

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