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## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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**Thursday, February 17, 2011**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Steven Blaney**



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•(0845)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order.

Good morning, everybody. Welcome to this meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. We will begin without any further delay, since we have two groups of witnesses this morning.

The orders of the day are that pursuant to Standing Order 108(3) (f), we are engaged in review and report of the 2009-2010 Annual Report (Volume II) of the Commissioner of Official Languages, referred to the committee on Tuesday, November 2, 2010.

[*Translation*]

We have the pleasure of welcoming the following representatives from the Canadian International Development Agency: Ms. Margaret Biggs, President of CIDA; Ms. Diane Jacovella, Official Languages Champion and Vice-President of the Multilateral and Global Programs Branch; M. Darren Schemmer, Vice-President of the Partnership with Canadians Branch; and Ms. Sheila Tenasco-Banerjee, Acting Director General, Human Resources Branch. We would like to welcome you all.

Without further ado, I would invite you, Madam President, to read your opening statement.

**Ms. Margaret Biggs (President, Canadian International Development Agency):** Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the results of the Canadian International Development Agency's first review on official languages.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and committee members, for the opportunity to discuss the results of the Canadian International Development Agency's first review on official languages.

[*Translation*]

As the chair said, I am joined today by Diane Jacovella, Vice-President and CIDA's Official Languages Champion, Darren Schemmer, another vice-president, and Sheila Tenasco-Banerjee, Acting Director General, Human Resources Branch.

We are here today because linguistic duality is one of the hallmarks of Canadian society, an integral part of our lives, and a fundamental value of the public service.

CIDA's global mandate means that we have a responsibility to showcase Canadian values, including our linguistic duality, to the world. CIDA also has a responsibility to ensure that we include official language minority community needs in our policies and operations.

CIDA is very disappointed in the rating received. We take the results of the Official Languages Commissioner's report card seriously and we are committed to implementing the commissioner's recommendations.

First, in terms of our oversight of official languages at CIDA, the agency has a three-year strategic action plan for 2010-2013, which integrates all parts of the Official Languages Act, including section 41 of part VII.

In January, CIDA's senior management team reviewed the plan in the context of points raised in the review and approved provisions to strengthen the action plan. The action plan is currently being implemented and the agency is taking steps to track the status of each of the actions in the plan. In addition, we have also clarified our official languages advisory committee's mandate and ensured that it includes part VII obligations, as the report card recommended.

I will now quickly review what CIDA is doing in each of the five areas covered in the report.

As committee members know, CIDA offers bilingual services to the public through our central office in Gatineau, Quebec. The report card highlighted our strong capacity to offer bilingual service by telephone and email. And the agency continues to make significant progress on improving our capacity to communicate with Canadians in the language of their choice.

The report card also noted that CIDA continues to promote Canada's linguistic duality in our missions and projects abroad. We are very proud of this. CIDA staff in the field are not only conversant in English and in French, but also in the language of the host country.

Our only low score in this section was for active offer by staff, at 62%. The agency has taken this matter seriously and is reviewing and reinforcing its active offer service. Over the next few months, we will approach all staff working with the public to reinforce their obligations.

As we do every year, CIDA is currently conducting a survey of employees' voice box messages to ensure appropriate active offer is made in both official languages. Where the information needs to be corrected, staff are informed and a follow-up takes place to ensure that correction is made.

CIDA is very proud to have a vibrant bilingual environment; 92% of all CIDA positions are bilingual. In the language of work section, the report card noted that while the majority of CIDA's francophone employees were content with the language of work regime, only 66% of those employees felt that they could use their official language of choice when using email or preparing written material.

To address this, all branch heads have been reminded of their official languages obligations and were asked to ensure that appropriate action is being taken in their respective branches and that staff are reminded of their rights.

A presentation on the results of the report card was given to the members of the official language advisory committee and a discussion took place on how and when to promote the use of both official languages within each branch.

• (0850)

To celebrate our linguistic diversity, CIDA also created an official language award, launched on September 9, 2010, on Linguistic Duality Day. To be given to an employee who has made extraordinary efforts to promote linguistic duality. The award will be presented to the first recipient during National Public Service Week in June 2011.

Regarding the participation of English-and-French-speaking Canadians, CIDA's workforce comprises 54% francophones and 46% anglophones. Notwithstanding this almost even split, our grade in this section was a D. While the total francophone population outside of Quebec and the National Capital Region is only 4.2%, the report card pointed out that CIDA had no francophones outside Quebec and the National Capital Region. As you know, the majority of our workforce is in the national capital. We have eight regional staff, of which three are part-time.

Mr. Chairman, in part, this can be explained by the fact that CIDA's mandate is international and therefore we do not have regional operations as do many other government departments. At CIDA, services to the Canadian public are performed at headquarters through our national, bilingual public inquiries unit. Nevertheless, since the release of the report card, the agency has been examining how we can increase francophone participation outside of Quebec and the National Capital Region, and we are reviewing how our six regional representatives, who primarily provide support to our stakeholders, engage potential communities of interest.

I would now like to discuss with you the last section of the review: the development of official language minority communities. The report card noted that, while we have identified and tried to consult with the official language minority communities, we failed to identify their needs.

In 2009-2010, CIDA tripled the number of OLMC associations consulted through a letter campaign. Twelve national organizations were given the opportunity to comment and provide feedback on CIDA's programming and services. But as committee members know, CIDA's work is focused abroad and the priorities of the OLMC associations are focused primarily on Quebec; therefore our policies and programs were of little interest. Despite this, CIDA has successfully developed many partnerships with Canadian organizations, including universities, colleges, labour unions, professional

associations, corporate businesses, youth groups, both anglophone and francophone, many from official language minority communities.

For example, in connection with International Development Week, between February 6 and 12, 2011, we took the lead on IDW events to ensure that they promoted linguistic duality with our partner organizations, such as universities, non-governmental organizations, and community groups. To increase our promotion of linguistic duality, CIDA organized seminars, presentations, and other activities.

Let me give you another example. CIDA's Canadian Francophone Scholarship Program, which enables students from 37 francophone countries to pursue post-secondary education in Canada, has been recognized for best practice in the Canadian Heritage Bulletin Spring-Summer 2010 Edition.

• (0855)

We also have a training agreement with provincial councils for international cooperation, to give participants from official language minority communities access to training in the language of their choice.

Where there are opportunities to interact with Canadians, we are alert to, and incorporate, official language needs.

[*English*]

Mr. Chair, as I said at the outset, the bilingual nature of Canada is a fundamental characteristic of our country and a fundamental characteristic of CIDA. We are really committed to improving our official language performance. As I outlined, we have taken very seriously the concerns raised in the Commissioner of Official Languages' report card, and we have a concrete three-year plan to address them.

I would welcome any suggestions or thoughts this committee may have on how we can strengthen our performance on official languages.

Thank you very much.

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

Is it possible to know how many employees you have at the agency, overall?

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** We have approximately 2,000 employees in Canada, and we have probably 600 or 800 overseas, made up of both Canadian and locally engaged staff.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** There are 2,800, thank you.

I simply want to remind members that on Wednesday, our clerk sent you the original version of their action plan. This morning we received a modified version, which was distributed this morning. The most recent paper version is the one to keep.

We'll begin the first round with Mr. Bélanger.

● (0900)

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

Can you tell me what the differences are between the one we received this morning and yesterday's version?

**Ms. Sheila Tenasco-Banerjee (Acting Director General, Human Resources Branch, Canadian International Development Agency):** The only difference is the date at the end. Indeed, we had some discussions and reviewed the plan at the management committee. The only difference is the date at the end of the report.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** So it is the same plan.

**Ms. Sheila Tenasco-Banerjee:** Yes.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Ms. Biggs, you chair CIDA's executive meetings, correct?

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** Yes.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Do you chair the meetings in English, in French or in both languages?

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** I prefer to speak English, but I also understand French.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I would like to know how things work during your meetings.

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** We speak in both official languages during the meetings. People, like Diane and Darren, speak in both languages.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** And you, you prefer to speak English?

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** I prefer to speak in English, but I also speak in French.

We had this idea to discuss one or two items in French only at every meeting.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** One or two items, but out of how many?

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** Pardon me?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** How many items are usually on the agenda?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella (Vice-President and Champion of Official Languages, Multilateral and Global Programs Branch, Canadian International Development Agency):** If I may, I would like to say that we wanted to implement the Agency's slogan of "DARE! OSEZ!". As you know, we are not as comfortable in our second language. We therefore decided to discuss one or two items in French only so that everybody would feel comfortable.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I understand, but how many items are on your agenda?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** About four.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** How long have you been doing that?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** We began doing this systematically in January. People speak in the language of their choice for the two other items. This has been going very well.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Can I assume that if this review had not been made by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, you would have not changed your habits?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** I do not agree with you. I am the official languages champion and our committee had implemented a variety of ideas. In fact, this idea was put in place before the review.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** How long have you been the official languages champion?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** I have been the champion for approximately a year, a year and a half.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** It took a little wake-up call from the commissioner to get things moving.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** No, people could speak the language of their choice. That was already done. Documents at meetings are always distributed in both official languages.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Why wasn't there a plan prior to 2010?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** There was a plan prior to 2010. In fact, we had two plans. We had one plan for section 41, because there was a coordinator who dealt specifically with that section, and another plan for the language of work.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Would you be so kind as to send us a copy of your plans?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Yes, we can send you our former plans.

Following the report card, we prepared plans focused on five strategic issues. We have also adopted measures to track progress. Now, we always take that into account instead of preparing an annual report.

[English]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Madam Biggs, can you tell me if your mandate letter contains references to the official languages of Canada?

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** I believe it does. All deputy ministers are given strategic objectives and requirements from the clerk each year, particularly around public service renewal and on official languages.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Are you at liberty to tell me what those objectives might be, vis-à-vis official languages and CIDA?

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** It is across the public service, and we have in turn taken those requirements and those directions and obligations and embedded them in each executive's performance agreement. There's an obligation for all executives to be honouring their official languages obligations and promoting official languages in the workplace, so that cascades down from the clerk to the deputy—

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I understand that, but I thought that there might be a specificity in each mandate letter that deputies get. Am I wrong in thinking that?

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** We're not given specific mandate letters right now, but we are given directions on the key objectives that the clerk would like all deputy heads to carry each year, and those include official languages.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Do you report to the clerk on official languages every year as well?

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** Yes, we do.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Are you at liberty to share those reports?

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** I believe so.

• (0905)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** If we could get those, that might be very interesting.

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** Yes.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Finally,

[Translation]

I believe that senior managers at CIDA who are not unionized are entitled to bonuses.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Yes.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Did they receive bonuses last year? Is there a difference between the bonuses received following the evaluation by the Commissioner of Official Languages and last year's bonuses?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Are you talking about performance bonuses?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Yes. I am talking about performance bonuses. Did performance bonuses go down this year?

**Ms. Sheila Tenasco-Banerjee:** It is in the departmental envelope. Everything is evaluated for each sector, for each executive.

[English]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** What I'm trying to get is whether there is a link made between this kind of evaluation and the

[Translation]

English term for "performance bonus" and

[English]

bonuses that your executives get?

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** This would be taken into account in the performance review of all executives, because it is carried in their performance contract.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Okay, so this was evaluated for last year. Are you telling me that the bonuses last year were less than the year before?

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** No. I'm sorry; I'm not saying that. I'm not trying to be difficult. I'm not sure....

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I'm trying to find out, since the Official Languages Act of Canada is a quasi-constitutional law that has been in effect since 1969, and since you have a terrible report card from the official languages commissioner, whether or not that had an impact on the bonuses paid to the executives of CIDA. That's a fairly straightforward question.

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** This report came out a few months ago, and this would be taken into account in next year's report. When you go through the notes and the ratings, as I just did, you'll notice that where CIDA did not do well was in some areas that are very difficult for an agency that is focused internationally, particularly with respect to really having only six full-time employees across the country. As well, we do not have regional offices, so we have a challenge in terms of how we would improve our performance in that area.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you very much, Mr. Bélanger.

We will move on to Ms. Guay.

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

I am looking at your performance report card by the Commissioner of Official Languages. It is very disappointing. In fact, we have heard from several institutions, and some have had very good performance reports. I see three Ds, two Cs and one E. I would have preferred to see at least some Bs and perhaps an A in all of that. This is worrisome.

I also quickly familiarized myself with the action plan you will implement. I received it last evening. I see some interesting things in it. You will hand out an award, but in my view, that is not necessarily what is going to help advance both official languages within CIDA.

Ms. Biggs, in your opening statement, you said your only low score in this section was for active offer by staff, at 62%. That is nowhere near 100%. You also said that only 66% of those employees felt that they could use their official language of choice as the language of work. That is very worrisome. That means that francophones cannot feel free to speak their own language. You have 2,000 employees in Canada and between 600 and 800 abroad. That is a lot of people.

One thing is very important to me. You also stated that you ensured that phone messages, on answering machines, were in both official languages. The act has been around for 40 years, and that should have been done a long time ago, a very long time ago. I would like to hear your comments, and for you to elaborate somewhat on your action plan which I find somewhat weak. You really need to implement a more robust action plan. To the champion, I hope that we are going to see some movement, because with ratings like that, you have a lot of work to do.

• (0910)

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** I fully agree with you. When we received our ratings, we were very disappointed. I think it's like anything else. The first assessment has helped us to identify shortcomings.

However, we are happy to note that some figures are very positive. We want to maintain them. The purpose of our action plan is to enable us to keep the good ratings. We received some ratings of 90% and we want to keep them.

We noted that people didn't have the right reflexes in terms of the active offer. In that regard, people sometimes thought that doing half of their message in French and the other half in English was sufficient. We have done that for years.

This year, in addition to doing an investigation to see if the follow-up is being done, we are going to provide very intensive training. We have also added training to the initiation courses at CIDA so that it is very clear from the outset and that people do not take that for granted. We must remind people that it is the law, and remind them of their obligations and rights.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** So you provide training courses.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** CIDA provides training courses, as a way of welcoming new employees to CIDA. We talk about official languages generally at those courses, but we will reinforce the rights and obligations side.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** It is an obligation.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Yes, it is. We will talk about obligations as managers and as employees. We will talk about employees' rights, to ensure that people know what they are entitled to ask and require from their managers.

As regards the active visual offer, our percentage was good, but we have begun follow-up to ensure that it is done all the time. We have created different systems to ensure that nothing disappears. When we use little cards, they disappear. In the action plan, we are trying to do what the commissioner asked for, in other words, to go beyond obligations. We are not simply doing something because we are obliged to do so. We do it to acknowledge the importance of official languages and because we come out ahead if we promote that. That is more or less what we are trying to do.

If you have any suggestions to strengthen our action plan, I would be very interested in hearing them.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** We will surely have some once we have finished meeting with all of the groups.

I'd like to know how much money you earmark annually for official languages. Do you have a specific budget for training?

**Ms. Sheila Tenasco-Banerjee:** It is approximately \$450,000. About \$300,000 is allocated for mandatory training.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Is it \$450,000 or \$300,000?

**Ms. Sheila Tenasco-Banerjee:** The figures are \$300,000 for mandatory training and \$150,000 for training that employees can ask for as part of their learning plan.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** But it is not mandatory.

**Ms. Sheila Tenasco-Banerjee:** That's right. The employee chooses to maintain his or her language proficiency. It is more for training and professional development.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** What do you plan to do so that employees are more inclined to learn both official languages?

**Ms. Sheila Tenasco-Banerjee:** Ninety-two percent of employees are bilingual. Ninety percent of our positions are designated bilingual. There are people on language training because it is a statutory obligation.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Ms. Biggs, I will give you the floor if you want to add something.

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** About the action plan?

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Yes.

[*English*]

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** Well, as Diane has said, we had two official languages action plans, and we've integrated them. We would be interested in hearing how you think we could strengthen it.

The official languages advisory committee put a lot of work into this. We've taken it to our management board. We think it addresses all the key weaknesses that have been identified and that we identified among ourselves, but we would be very open to your advice on how to make it stronger.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I saw in your action plan that you intend to produce quarterly reports.

**The Chair:** Briefly, please. Do you want to answer?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** The quarterly reports deal with certain issues. The one you read, I believe, deals with complaints and things of that nature. We are thinking about producing a report twice a year to update the situation, but some issues will be dealt with more often.

● (0915)

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

We will now go to the representative from the New Democratic Party, Mr. Gravelle.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for joining us today.

I'd like to go back to a question asked by Ms. Guay. You said that 66% of your employees felt free to use their first language. That means that 34% of them did not feel free to do so.

I worked in an English environment where using your first language—which for me was French—was intimidating. Is that the case for those 34% of your employees?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** I don't know if they feel intimidated. When we saw those percentages, we spoke to our union representatives to see what employees were thinking. That isn't what they felt. But the international community is largely English-speaking, and many documents produced by other countries, such as the United Kingdom, are in English only. In circumstances like that, employees find it difficult to perfect their second language.

In this regard, we are trying to look at how we can work with other donors to ensure that the documents are available. Things happen very quickly, and people sometimes find that communicating their interests takes longer. So we conducted a survey of the agency's committees to see how people functioned in terms of official languages, if the documents were really distributed in time in both official languages and how meetings were chaired. We established some directives for the chairs of all the committees to clearly establish that employees were entitled to speak the language of their choice and we encouraged them to do so. We also have employees who want to work in both languages. It goes without saying that that is also allowed.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** When you receive documents from unilingual countries, do you get them translated?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** No. Normally we don't translate documents coming from other countries, but we do use documents from the World Bank and the United Nations which are available in both official languages. The documents produced by CIDA that are summaries of other documents are naturally translated into the other official language.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Since there are two official languages in Canada, can you ask other countries to provide their documents in both official languages?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** For us, it is a policy and we respect it. But I don't think we have the right to require it of other countries. We could not, for example, require France to provide us with its documents in English.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** How can you explain that, in the most recent public accounts, your minister did not consider official languages at all?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Pardon? I did not understand the question.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** How do you explain that in the most recent public accounts, your minister did not consider official languages at all?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** I don't know. I cannot answer you. I apologize.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** How do you explain the fact that your departmental performance report does not consider official languages?

[English]

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** We do take official languages into account in our performance assessment. We do.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** But you did not do it.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** I believe that what you're asking is whether we included that in our departmental performance report. No, I do not believe that was done.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Why not?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** CIDA has many activities and does not account for everything. From my understanding, that is something the committee is suggesting and recommending that we take into account.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Very well. Thank you.

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

We will end the first round with Mr. Gourde.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here with us this morning.

While you say in your presentation that you are disappointed, you have nevertheless taken measures to improve the situation, in particular through your action plan. However, there is something I find concerning. On page 5 of your opening remarks, in the section entitled "Development of Official Language Minority Communities and Promotion of Linguistic Duality", you state that the report card noted that you identified and consulted with official language minority communities, but that you failed to identify their needs. How can you explain that? Were you able to identify and communicate with them?

• (0920)

[English]

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** I'll ask Darren to respond.

[Translation]

**Mr. Darren Schemmer (Vice-President, Partnerships with Canadians Branch, Canadian International Development Agency):** Last year, we did send out letters to Canada's 12 minority language minority associations. Some of them did not respond, and others told us that international development was not of interest to their association. We did follow up and try to contact some of the associations by phone or in person. We were unable to contact all the associations. That remains to be done.

Based on what we have and have not received to date, we note that the associations that represent official language minority communities are first and foremost concerned with the welfare of their communities here in Canada and do not consider international development as part of their main mandate. That said, some of the member organizations of those communities do have an interest in international development. I am referring in particular to institutions of high learning. We do engage with them more. We try to find ways for those institutions and their members to increase their involvement in international development through CIDA.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** According to the report, CIDA's eight staff members outside the National Capital area are all anglophones. Are official language minority communities in the rest of Canada served by the National Capital? How do you reach out to them?

**Mr. Darren Schemmer:** The vast majority of our communications with Canadians originate from our head office in Gatineau, whether through our 1-800 number, through our website, through phone calls or by other modes of communication. We have eight regional staff in Canada, including three who work part-time. They are all anglophones, but half of them are functionally bilingual.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** You also said that you use other languages internationally. Apart from English and French, what other languages are most used?



**Mr. Darren Schemmer:** I have not done a survey on that but, in my experience, I would say that Spanish is the most used. We also have some employees who speak Arabic and some who speak Portuguese.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Domestically, of course, you have been working with the action plan.

In your view, what would be the most urgent actions to take in order to improve your rating?

**Mr. Darren Schemmer:** Do you mean in general?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Developing a plan and ensuring management follow-up and program oversight were priorities for us. Those are things we have undertaken and will continue to do. I think they will make a big difference.

We are also very concerned by the fact that our employees do not feel free to use French; that is very important. We will make sure to share messages with our employees and managers.

We received very low ratings in two areas, including the development of official language minority communities. As my colleague mentioned, it has been somewhat difficult to reach out to them because they are not as focused on international matters. Therefore, we try and work with other internationally-minded departments to see how they do their outreach. We might be able to strike partnerships in order to engage those communities.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** You have implemented part of your action plan. Does that plan include a timeframe for getting a better score?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** To get a better what?

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** To get a better score. Is it one year, two or three years, or is it a matter of months?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Ours is a three-year plan, but I do hope we will achieve progress each and every year. I think it is very important to take concrete action and that people know that our senior management is very committed. We expect that our employees and partners will notice changes by the spring. It is a three-year plan.

• (0925)

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** I have a quick technical question. How many of your employees are bilingual francophones and how many are bilingual anglophones?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Francophone employees account for 54% of our staff, while anglophones account for 46%. Some 90% of our employees are bilingual.

I do want to point out that CIDA is a highly bilingual department. The vast majority of our employees are bilingual, and that is perhaps because of our international mandate.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Clearly, your department has one of the highest percentages of francophone employees.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Yes, indeed, 54% is quite significant.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** How much time do I have left?

**The Chair:** Less than a minute.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** That will be all.

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

Mr. Galipeau, please go ahead.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC):** Did you say that 55% were francophones or bilingual?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** I said that 54% of our employees are francophone and 90% are bilingual.

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

**The Chair:** That is undoubtedly the highest number of bilingual employees of all the agencies we have heard from.

We will now begin our second round with Mr. Murphy.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** In fact, 92.4% of your employees are bilingual.

That brings me to a question regarding the third page of your opening remarks, Ms. Biggs. That is a sufficiently high level, and it is a good thing to have such a bilingual staff. I am wondering why CIDA has problems with its active offer of services.

On page 3, you state: "Over the next few months, we will approach all staff working with the public to reinforce their obligations." And yet, almost all of your employees are bilingual. Having them ask: "*Puis-je vous aider*, can I help you?" should not be difficult.

Of the 92.4%, how many of CIDA's senior managers, the top dogs, are bilingual?

[English]

How many people in the upper level are bilingual?

**Ms. Sheila Tenasco-Banerjee:** All of our executives have a requirement to be bilingual at the CBC level. That's an obligation under the legislation, and everybody meets that.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** If it's top down, this active offer, how difficult can it be? Why is your mark so low, if 92.4% of your people are bilingual and if your top-level managers are bilingual? Why is it so poor? Is it where you work, where you provide services? Is there an explanation?

[Translation]

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Of course, we will want to meet with the Commissioner of Official Languages to better understand the ratings we received.

Now is not the time to call into question those ratings. We know that we need to improve some things, and that is why we are moving ahead on that front. That said, we also want to understand why we received such low ratings. That would help us understand what we need to change.

As I mentioned, an active service offer can include a response in both official languages. We perhaps do not provide an active offer by saying: "Hello, *bonjour*, can I help you?" We have to make sure that our employees understand that, as was previously mentioned, people can be intimidated if they are not answered in both official languages from the outset.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** I have a few questions concerning part VII of the Official Languages Act, i.e., the promotion of English and French. On page 9 and other pages of your action plan, you indicate that the primary responsibility rests with the coordinator. That can be found in section 41.

Do you have such a coordinator and how come that person is not here today?

[English]

**Mr. Darren Schemmer:** I'd say that this person does exist and that this person is in my branch, and I'm representing that person.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Okay. That will suffice.

The other question about section 41

[Translation]

—talking about CIDA's efforts to promote both languages. In the third paragraph on page 5 of your opening remarks, you state that 12 organizations were given the opportunity to comment and provide feedback on CIDA's programming and services.

Could you give us the names of those organizations? Can they be found in your opening remarks?

• (0930)

**Mr. Darren Schemmer:** No, they were not included in the presentation.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Do you have the names of those organizations?

**Mr. Darren Schemmer:** We do not have them with us today, but we can have them sent to you.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** I would ask you to send them to the clerk so that she can distribute them to all committee members.

I have another question, Mr. Chair. How much time do I have remaining?

**The Chair:** That will surely be your last question, since you have about 30 seconds remaining.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** I note that you have eight employees outside Quebec and Ottawa.

[English]

We have eight regional staff. Where do you find those?

**Mr. Darren Schemmer:** There is an officer with an administrative assistant in Vancouver, in Calgary, and in Halifax, and a part-time representative in Saskatchewan and in Manitoba.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** There's one person, then, in Atlantic Canada, just to put it on record.

**Mr. Darren Schemmer:** There's a person in Atlantic Canada with a part-time administrative assistant in Halifax and a part-time administrative assistant in Moncton.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** There's someone in Moncton. Okay, that's a good answer. Thank you very much.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Nadeau, you have the floor.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning to you all.

I would like to make a few comments. Earlier, one of you pointed out that an active offer of bilingual services amounted to answering half in English and half in French. I would simply suggest that, if a

person asks you for services, you please answer that person in their own language.

Bilingualism does not mean starting a sentence in one language and ending it in another. If a person speaks to you in English, respond in English, and if a person speaks to you in French, respond in French. Sometimes, these kinds of approaches become embedded.

One of my colleagues asked a question about whether people felt intimidated about speaking or working in French. You said you did not know. That is an honest answer. One thing is certain: page 27 of the commissioner's report deals with writing documents in one's preferred official language. All institutions, including yours, that were assessed by the commissioner received a zero out of 16 rating.

That refers to people writing documents in French that are intended for use by anglophones. Do francophones feel obliged to write in English in order to avoid a loss of meaning that might arise from a translation? Once a document is translated, it is sent back to the person who wrote it. That represents lost time, and a person who does that is frowned upon. Ultimately, the person will give up and no longer write in his or her language, thinking that: "Anyway, Canada is English."

I would also like to underscore the fact that 54% of your employees are francophones. I presume that you are referring to people who use French as their everyday language. As well, 92.4% of your employees are bilingual. You said that you will be meeting with the commissioner in order to better understand the rating he gave you. In my view, it is totally absurd that you should receive such low ratings when your employees are capable of expressing themselves in both English and French.

I will come back to my question and give you time to explain. Are people encouraged to write in French or do you prefer they write in English because that is a faster and more effective way of doing things?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** People are entitled to write in their preferred official language. We are concerned by the fact that people are saying that they will write in the other language because they want to be understood. Having been made aware of that, we decided to let everyone know that all of the agency's employees, including the president, could very well read and understand documents in French without having to have them translated. No document, whether intended for the most junior employee or the president, needs to be translated, because employees at all levels are clearly able to read in both languages. We will make certain that employees understand that to be the case. It is much easier to write in your first language because you can express yourself more clearly. Doing so benefits employees because they can better share their ideas, concepts and recommendations.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Employees can therefore better communicate their recommendations to Minister Oda, preventing her from crossing things out.

Yes, I understand. Please continue.

• (0935)

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** We will make sure that people can write in their preferred language. We started doing so when we saw the commissioner's report and noted the very low rating.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** CIDA was established under Pierre Elliott Trudeau, which is quite some time ago. The organization acquired an international reputation. Today, it is losing its luster for reasons that are well known. I will not get into that because, in any case, you are not to blame.

We are talking about being vigilant to ensure that your agency's employees feel at ease to express themselves in their first language.

Let us talk about the environment within your organization and the reason why you obtained such a low rating. Personally, I have concluded that—people were interviewed, and the statistics clearly point to the agency obtaining a very good report—people are unhappy because they do not feel at home and must work in the other language. How will you change that situation?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** That is why we have an advisory committee made up of employees from all levels, from the administrative staff to management. The committee represents all branches, this allowing us to gauge employees' perceptions and identify issues.

I think that the committee was recommending a linguistic duality award to the president as a way to recognize the extent to which the agency values the promotion of the official languages, and that the issue deserved an annual award. That is a way to encourage people to develop best practices and get senior management to recognize the importance of official languages. I think that those things already convey a positive message.

As I mentioned, we also met with our union representatives in order to see what we can do together to ensure that people have a very clear understanding of their official language rights and obligations.

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

We will continue with Ms. Boucher.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Good morning. I have several questions.

A little earlier on, you said that you were unable to identify the needs of official languages communities, and that you had sent out letters. You have an action plan, and I see that you have consultations with certain partners. You are offering awards and organizing celebrations.

Have you thought to invite people or representatives from official language minority communities to come and meet with you? You also said that they had little or no interest in international affairs. If you were to explain how it all works and what you do for duality, that might be a step in the right direction for you. We always have the impression that when the communities don't come, they can't be reached, but it might be different if you were to invite them. When we invite representatives from official language minority communities, they often come to tell us what they are experiencing.

Despite the fact that CIDA is very bilingual, your ratings do not necessarily reflect that.

I have another question about the active offer of service. What are you putting in place so that this accurately reflects what is expected of all departments in terms of Canada's linguistic duality? You have

the active offer. You have sites that talk about the equality of service delivery to the public. What will you do to ensure that exactly the same thing is received in both official languages and to improve your performance?

**Mr. Darren Schemmer:** I like your suggestion to invite associations to the briefing meetings and consultations we hold. That is a very good suggestion.

Personally, during International Development Week, I went to Vancouver and Edmonton to make bilingual presentations on CIDA's new partnership programming. I even participated in a breakfast conference at the francophone campus of the University of Alberta. We do that kind of event, but I find your suggestion to specifically invite the associations to meet with us a very good one. We will adopt it.

• (0940)

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Normally, when ratings are poor, people try to be proactive. What is the situation with service delivery to the public?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** I can add that CIDA's Internet site is perfectly bilingual. As regards our service delivery, it's the same thing with our toll free number, and it is centralized. As we mentioned, we do not really have regional offices. We have some representatives, but all service to the public is provided through our Gatineau office.

As mentioned, a memo was sent out regarding telephone messages to remind people again how they should be done. An investigation is underway to ensure that it is done. We also have training for new employees and a package of information. In the action plan, by way of a reminder, we propose developing a small package with key messages to help people so that they understand exactly what to do.

In addition, the champions of official languages from various departments are sharing our best practices. We are trying to learn from what other departments have done. For example, Natural Resources Canada made a short video for parks employees. We are trying to see what we can do to help our employees fully understand the message and the importance of the active offer.

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

**The Chair:** You have a mere 30 seconds.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** In that case, I will stop here.

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

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** My colleague would like the floor.

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

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** There are 15 seconds left.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** I would like to ask Ms. Biggs a question.

[*English*]

Ms. Biggs, I'm intrigued by this employee award, the official languages award. I think this is unique. I haven't heard of it before.

Can you very briefly tell me how this came about? You've presented one, I believe.

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** We're going to present the first one in June.

The award was an idea that came out of the official languages advisory committee, which, as Diane said, is made up of active individuals from across the organization at all kinds of different levels. As Diane said, they have an active campaign called DARE/OSEZ, meaning take the chance to try it. Do it. Don't be afraid.

The idea of the award came from there, and I announced it in September. We will award it to an individual who is nominated for showing extraordinary efforts in the promotion of official languages in the workplace. We're looking forward to it. We're hoping it will help to create an incentive and that the motivation to be even better.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** You have a wonderful human resources department if you have 50% francophones. You have to hang on to that department.

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** Yes.

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

[Translation]

We will conclude with Mr. Gravelle.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Thank you.

Should you follow any specific instructions in preparing your action plan for official languages?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** I didn't understand your question. Are you asking if we have to follow any specific steps?

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Yes.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** In light of the recommendations in the commissioner's report, which stated that the plan wasn't integrated and that we did not have follow-up measures, we decided to organize our plan around five strategic objectives and to ensure that we were responsible for the timeline and progress. That is what we are going to do. As a project progresses, we are going to take note of that so that we can prepare a report once or twice a year on progress accomplished.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** On the last page of the performance bulletin, there is a section entitled "Development of Official Language Minority Communities and Promotion of Linguistic Duality". I have two questions on that.

In the last sentence of the first paragraph, it says that the department "did not identify nor consult official language communities". Why is that the case?

The second sentence continues on saying that the department "is considering implementing a strategy to identify these communities". What strategy is that? How long will it take to put it in place?

**Mr. Darren Schemmer:** I don't know if I am on the same page as you, Mr. Gravelle. Regardless, our approach was to contact associations representing linguistic minority communities. As I said, we are not very satisfied with the response, which was in fact of no interest.

Consequently, we have to be more proactive this year with these associations. We will need to go through other institutions that represent these linguistic minority communities. We think that institutions like universities and colleges, which are more directly

interested in international development, would be good contacts that could serve as the link between us and official associations representing these communities. That is something we plan to do over the course of this year.

• (0945)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** But why wait so long to consult these communities?

**Mr. Darren Schemmer:** We are going to do it this year.

I am sorry, are you talking about the past?

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Yes.

**Mr. Darren Schemmer:** I think that because our mandate is more international, we focused more on that side and on the offer to all Canadians throughout the country.

As the commissioner's report indicated, we need to make a more concerted effort to contact these minority communities. We intend to do that through our action plan.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** As you recall, what were the most recent topics relating to official languages that you discussed at the deputy ministerial committees you sit on?

[English]

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** We had a very interesting meeting with Graham Fraser at the clerk's deputy ministers' weekly meeting. The issue of official languages was also discussed at the public service advisory committee and the Public Service Commission advisory committee. It is something that's also taken up in the public service renewal deputy ministers committee. The issue of official languages is discussed around a number of deputy ministers' tables.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Can you send the committee the minutes of the deputy ministerial committees that you sit on where you discussed official languages?

[English]

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** Do you mean their minutes?

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Yes.

[English]

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** I'm not sure, actually; I don't know that there are minutes. There are certainly not minutes taken at deputy ministers' breakfasts. Are you asking whether they are reported out in both official languages?

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** I'm asking you whether you can supply us with the minutes from the meetings.

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** I'm not sure, sir. I will check into that. There often aren't minutes taken for these meetings. The documents that are presented, if they are open documents, can be supplied.

We don't actually have those minutes circulated in either language, I don't think, but I can check.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** How is the issue of official languages coordinated at the deputy ministers' meetings?

[English]

**Ms. Margaret Biggs:** The issue of official languages would be taken up at the deputy ministers committee, particularly in the public service management advisory committee, and it would be discussed on an ongoing basis there. The discussion would include the report from the Commissioner of Official Languages. That is the primary place in which it would be discussed.

[Translation]

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

That completes the second round and the first part of our meeting.

I want to thank our witnesses for coming today.

We are going to suspend the meeting for a few moments to enable the next group to appear.

• (0945) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (0950)

**The Chair:** We will resume our work. We have another group of witnesses.

Beforehand, while our witnesses are taking their seats, we could perhaps deal with a motion from Mr. Bélanger who wants to add additional witnesses from Service Canada. You all recall that people from Passport Canada appeared as witnesses. Mr. Bélanger, do you want to say a few words?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Chairman, we learned from the clerk that there were perhaps some openings in March. Service Canada would fit in very nicely with the type of exercise we are currently completing as a result of the report by the Commissioner of Official Languages. The commissioner prepared a specific report on Service Canada. We could easily integrate them into what we are currently doing by calling in the deputy minister and the champion.

**The Chair:** Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** My colleague's request is a reasonable one. I will be supporting is motion.

**The Chair:** Good.

Do I have the unanimous consent of committee members? That being the case, our clerk will take the necessary steps. Thank you very much.

I want to remind you that after the break, we will have a meeting planned to discuss committee business.

But before that, we have the pleasure this morning of hearing from the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources, Mr. Serge Dupont. He is accompanied by his Champion of Official Languages, Mr. Anil Arora, who is also Assistant Deputy Minister, Minerals and Metals Sector, and, from the Corporate Management and Services Sector, Monique Paquin, Director General.

Mr. Dupont, welcome to the committee. I invite you to make your opening remarks.

**Mr. Serge Dupont (Deputy Minister, Department of Natural Resources):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning everyone. I am, of course, here today to discuss Natural Resources Canada's commitment to official languages, more

specifically in the context of the Commissioner of Official Languages' recent annual report. As you know, the commissioner's report identified areas for significant improvement on Natural Resources Canada's performance and gave the department a weak overall grade. You have already introduced my colleagues, so I will not do so again.

This is the first time the department has been part of the commissioner's review. And I believe the commissioner himself noted that the first time the exercise is done it could be quite painful. We take this assessment very seriously and recognize that, along with efforts already underway, we need to take swift and concrete action to better fulfil our obligations under the Official Languages Act.

Mr. Chairman, I have made this a management priority since assuming the position of deputy minister last October. Immediately following the release of Mr. Fraser's report, I sent a message to all staff to inform them about the results and to make it clear that improving our performance on official languages would be a priority for management within the department, including in the National Capital Region and in our regional offices across this country.

As well, we accelerated a process to develop our three-year department-wide action plan on official languages. I should add that our Minister, the Honourable Christian Paradis, is engaged with this issue. He has corresponded with me to demand that the department take the steps necessary to honour its official language obligations.

The action plan, entitled "Beyond Obligations: Revitalizing Official Languages at NRC" which is before you now, was shared with employees across the department this week. As the title suggests, we intend to follow a course of action that will allow us to go beyond strict compliance with the act. We want to foster a departmental culture that, to echo the words of the commissioner, will fully, instinctively and proactively fulfil both the letter and spirit of our responsibilities under the act.

[English]

The commissioner recommended developing concrete activities for implementation in order for departments to achieve success. Our action plan does this. It identifies practical initiatives and results that Natural Resources Canada intends to achieve over the next three years.

Our approach vests accountability for official languages with all levels of the organization—sectors and branches from the line perspective, regional offices, managers, and employees—driven by the most senior levels within the organization: me, the associate deputy minister, and the assistant deputy ministers.

While we have significant work to do, Natural Resources Canada has already undertaken a number of positive steps. One example is our departmental language school, which facilitates the use of both official languages through classes and non-classroom activities and has received praise from the Commissioner of Official Languages in addition to an award from the Conference Board of Canada.

However, clearly we need to do more. While I know that NRCan received an overall "C" rating from the commissioner regarding part IV, the category of "service to the public", there's no doubt that we need to improve our active offer of these services.

With this in mind, among other measures, the list of Natural Resources Canada offices offering bilingual services will be updated to ensure that they are properly equipped and have appropriate capacity. We will also conduct awareness sessions for managers and employees in service points and reception areas. Again, this is in keeping with the commissioner's virtuous circle model.

Concerning part V of the act, we want our employees to feel comfortable in working in either official language and we want them to have the abilities, tools, and support to do so. I realize from experience that this is a challenge in the public service.

The action plan includes some practical tools for accomplishing this objective. For example, we will continue to conduct workshops to facilitate the holding of bilingual meetings. Proactive steps have also been taken to ensure that employees have set up their computers, BlackBerrys, and other work tools in the official language of their choice.

These are obviously available. What we're doing is ensuring proactively that employees are aware that these tools are indeed available in both official languages, and at different intervals we go back to them and remind them of that availability. Indeed, we did so in January, and 382 employees came forward to convert their computers or BlackBerrys to a French interface, having basically been working with the English interface before that.

In terms of evaluation, we incorporated language-of-work questions in our 2010 Natural Resources Canada employee survey. There was not a public service-wide survey this year; we did our own, adding specific questions on official languages so as to be able to track our progress there. We asked basically the same five questions that had been asked in the public service employee survey of 2008.

We have taken note of our initial findings, which show no significant improvement in the area of language of work; nonetheless, these results provide us with a useful benchmark as we move forward.

• (0955)

[Translation]

With regard to part VII of the act, while we have made some limited strides in this area, we acknowledge that there needs to be proactive engagement in building relationships with Official Languages communities. Part VII represents a unique challenge, as this is an area of the law where obligations for departments, as the commissioner himself has pointed out, have yet to be clearly defined.

Nevertheless, two of the immediate priorities identified in the action plan are to gain a better understanding of the department's obligations under part VII and to put concrete measures in place to meet them. We are earnestly working on a methodology to assess the particular contribution Natural Resources Canada can make to the development of official language minority communities. To further guide our work in this area, we have hired Donald Savoie from the University of Moncton, a recognized expert in the area of official language minority communities. Moreover, I have asked that steps be taken immediately to move in this direction.

I have asked that our offices in Canada invite, among others, school boards and official language minority community groups to visit our labs and see our research work. This is a proactive offer and enables us at the same time to promote science and technology among young people, which beyond the question of official languages, is also a priority for Natural Resources Canada.

In addition, I personally met with Mr. Fraser on December 16 to discuss his report and part VII specifically to obtain his advice on the steps to take. Our action plan calls for a monitoring plan that will enable the department to regularly and comprehensively measure the results of the initiatives that we will be bringing forward.

Lastly, I simply want to add that I am very sensitive to the issue of leadership, a point underscored by the Commissioner of Official Languages. I believe that these are in fact areas where leadership counts. I intend to make this issue a specific priority and, of course, to set the example. My new associate deputy minister, who was appointed last week and who was also champion at the Canada Revenue Agency, will be able to support me in this endeavour. I also have a team as well as a champion, and they will be able to help me improve Natural Resources Canada's profile and performance on official languages.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I would be pleased to answer any questions committee members may have.

• (1000)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Dupont. On our side, we apologize for the delay in starting this meeting.

We will now go to Mr. Murphy.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

This action plan is dated 2011, but when, more specifically?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** You want to know the date it was published? It was distributed to employees this week.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** What was the date it was made public?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** It was distributed yesterday to all employees at the department.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** I would like to ask you some questions on your efforts under part VII of the act.

When, exactly, did you hire Donald Savoie, the man who is so well known in my neck of the woods, Moncton?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** We have had discussions with Mr. Savoie over the past few weeks. If I'm not mistaken, the initial conversations about hiring him date back to last December. Essentially, we have reached an agreement with him over the past few days. All we need now is to finalize the contract. We have already agreed with him on the conditions of the contract.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** You are right that he is a renowned expert on official language minority communities. That is clear. We know that. However, I would like to know if you consulted him and if he provided you with any advice prior to the publishing of this report.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** No. Mr. Chairman, we want Mr. Savoie to guide us in the application of part VII of the act. It is part of our plan to call upon an expert to help us implement part VII of the act, in addition to taking the necessary steps outlined in the plan.

As for the plan itself, some aspects are relatively easy to implement. For example, as regards service to the public, the obligations are very clear and we know what must be done. The same is true for the language of work. Part VII is not as clear, as the commissioner himself has admitted, and we wanted to obtain Mr. Savoie's advice in this area.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** I appreciate that, while you have only been in your position since last October, we received this report yesterday and you hired Mr. Savoie recently. This is not intended as criticism, but is it accurate to say that your action plan released yesterday doesn't provide any direction on your obligations under part VII of the act?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** I mentioned that we already had some concrete initiatives underway, like the open house for our labs throughout the country. Nevertheless, to go a step farther—and we specified this in the plan—we will draw on the advice provided by Mr. Savoie. In any case, we will clearly do our utmost to honour our obligations, but we will do so with the advice of an expert.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** If we compare your department to CIDA, for example, we see that CIDA is involved globally, whereas your department is involved in the regions of Canada. In eastern Canada, for example, many people speak French and work in French. You must therefore be aware of your obligations under part VII of the act. Am I right about that?

•(1005)

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** I think you are absolutely right. I think that in some ways, what has perhaps become clear for some institutions is that part VII is not strictly linked to the organization's mandate. Initially, there was perhaps a false impression among management. For example, on the national resources side, do we need to hold this specific dialogue with minority language communities on oil and gas in our western offices? For a department like Canadian Heritage, the need to consult official language minority groups is probably clear. What the commissioner has invited us to do is go beyond that. That comes from a conversation I had with him. It is about looking at how, within our mandate and beyond that, we can help promote the vitality of both official languages throughout Canada. That is a new dimension for us and one we will now try to meet. So there is a certain obligation, and we will have to do a better job of meeting it than we have done to date.

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

We will move on to Ms. Guay.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to remind you that the Official Languages Act has existed for 40 years.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Yes, but not part VII.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Not part VII, but the Official Languages Act has existed for 40 years.

That is very disappointing. Among the departments we have met with to date, yours is the one with the worst ratings. So we have a great deal of work to do. I would like to know how many employees there are at the Department of Natural Resources.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** We have approximately 4,500 employees.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Have you ever had to do a report on official languages within your department?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** I mentioned that this was the first time we were subject to an assessment by the commissioner.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Did you ever try to prepare an action plan for the application of official languages in your department?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** I must refer to my colleague who was there before I arrived.

**Ms. Monique Paquin (Director General, Corporate Management and Services Sector, Department of Natural Resources):** The department had initiatives in place. A working group on official languages had been very active for several years. The initiatives were in place and were moving forward. We identified best practices throughout the government. However, there was no integrated action plan. However initiatives already existed at the department, whether they dealt with the school or language training program that thus existed since 2005, if I am not mistaken—that was before me as well—and other things. Having said that, there was no integrated way of considering official languages within the organization. The commissioner's report specifically enabled us to bring that together, to integrate the initiatives, and to look forward.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Do you provide official languages training?

**Ms. Monique Paquin:** Yes, absolutely.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Can you tell us what your annual budget is?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** The departmental budget?

**Ms. Monique Guay:** The budget for the school.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Essentially, this school is made up of 12 full-time teachers. They represent an expenditure of approximately \$1 million per year—\$950,000 to be more precise. They provide training to approximately 400 to 425 of our employees at all times. There are always between 400 and 425 people registered in full- or part-time training.

•(1010)

**Ms. Monique Guay:** How many of those people are truly bilingual?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** As regards all employees at the department, 46% currently hold positions that are designated bilingual. Of the people in those positions designated bilingual, 98% meet the requirements of the position.

The other 2% are made up of people who have been appointed under bilingual non-imperative procedures and who subsequently have two years to reach the level. These people are on training or are following another plan to ensure that they meet the requirements.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Do you also provide training to the other 54%? Is it mandatory?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** No, people who ultimately want access to training can have it, namely for scientific positions where there is not necessarily an interaction with the public. These people may well want access to training, be it for their work environment or their career opportunities. It is certainly open to everyone.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** This will be my final intervention, Mr. Chairman.

Earlier, you referred to Canadian Heritage which, in your view, does not have the same requirements. I think all departments have the same requirements. All departments must respect both official languages and the act. You must do so too. You have a great deal of work ahead of you.

Do you intend to report your progress to the commissioner on a quarterly, biannual or annual basis? It is a wonderful action plan, but implementing it is not necessarily easy.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** I would agree with that. I would simply say that our obligations under the act are exactly the same as those of Canadian Heritage. I was referring to a previous impression, namely that we did not necessarily have the same responsibilities under part VII. I do believe, nevertheless, that we have the same responsibilities.

For instance, the annual employee survey will enable us to determine whether or not there has been any progress. So this will be an important tool. We will, of course, be having a conversation with the departmental management committee, at least on an annual basis, to see where we are with respect to the plan. However, I also believe that we will be able to provide ongoing follow-up through the various committees and champions in our sectors.

In addition, we need to strengthen leadership at every opportunity. I did so last week during the first meeting held for all of the departmental managers. I raised this issue then. I clearly emphasized the importance of the role that each and everyone of us plays in promoting official languages in the department.

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

We will continue with Mr. Gravelle.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

How do you explain the fact that, according to the most recent public accounts, your department does not do any reporting on official languages?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** When you say public accounts, do you mean the departmental financial statements?

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Yes.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** That would depend on the way that the \$950,000 expenditure that I referred to earlier is accounted for. Obviously, this expenditure must be accounted for in the financial statements. I cannot tell you point-blank under which heading this figure would go. However, I can check on that information.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** So you will check on that and get back to us with the information.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** But how do you explain the fact that, in your departmental performance report, you do not account for official languages?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** That is a good question for which I do not have a good answer. Please allow me to deal with the matter in the future.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Do you have to follow specific instructions when you prepare your official languages action plan?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** I will answer that question the way Ms. Biggs did. The commissioner has already provided a framework outlining the main objectives. The act itself is, of course, the main framework. We then adapt the plan based on our requirements, our own circumstances and our performance review.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Mr. Deputy Minister, can you recall which official languages topics were discussed at the committee on which you sit?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** As Ms. Biggs stated, Mr. Fraser met with us during a deputy ministers' breakfast. I believe that was shortly before his report was tabled. We also attended a meeting organized by the Treasury Board secretary, Ms. d'Auray. She had also invited the commissioner to attend. We discussed, in particular, part VII of the Official Languages Act. That was in January. It was very recent. I myself met with the commissioner on December 16.

• (1015)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Could you tell us what topics were discussed?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Yes, I can certainly provide you with a summary of the discussion. I had asked Ms. Paquin, who is accompanying me today, to draft a summary. I can certainly provide you with the summary of the discussion with Mr. Fraser. I can check with Ms. d'Auray as to whether or not she has the minutes for that meeting with the commissioner. As Ms. Biggs said, generally speaking, no minutes are prepared for deputy ministers' breakfasts. But I could perhaps, at the very least, obtain the exact date and the agenda. I will ascertain what I can share with you in that regard.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Will you send the minutes to the committee?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** As I told you, I will do so providing that the minutes do in fact exist and that I can share them with you. These are not necessarily meetings that I personally called.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** How do you coordinate official languages within the deputy minister committees?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** There are some generally informal meetings between the champions of the various departments. The Treasury Board secretary organizes a discussion to guide our activities and response to the official languages commissioner's report, particularly with respect to part VII of the Official Languages Act. There are not necessarily any deputy minister committees that meet at regular intervals, but the champions do hold meetings that can take place at the deputy minister level, as I already mentioned.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** How often do you discuss official languages with the deputy ministers?



**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Since I have been in this position, these are the meetings to which I was alluding. However, I have no statistics to give you for the past few years.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** You have three minutes remaining, Mr. Gravelle.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Last year, approximately how many times did your assistant deputy minister send someone else in his stead to attend the meeting of the Assistant Deputy Minister Committee on Official Languages?

**Mr. Anil Arora (Assistant Deputy Minister and Champion of Official Languages, Minerals and Metals Sector, Department of Natural Resources):** I have no figures, but I could send them to you later.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** You can provide that information to us.

**Mr. Anil Arora:** Yes, if the figures exist.

I have just been appointed to the champion position. I am therefore not certain about how many times the previous champion attended the meetings.

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

We will continue with Mr. G n reux.

**Mr. Bernard G n reux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivi re-du-Loup, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you all for being here this morning.

Mr. Dupont, you stated earlier that you have just been appointed to your position. Was Ms. Paquin there before you? Were you a deputy minister before?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Ms. Paquin used to work in the Human Resources Branch.

**Mr. Bernard G n reux:** You were already at the department, Ms. Paquin.

Mr. Arora, you said that you have not been the champion very long.

**Mr. Anil Arora:** I have just been appointed champion. I have been at Natural Resources Canada since March of last year.

**Mr. Bernard G n reux:** So you have been there for nearly a year.

**Mr. Anil Arora:** That is right.

**Mr. Bernard G n reux:** Mr. Dupont, earlier you referred to Mr. Paradis, your minister. How did the conversation go when you were asked to give priority to this issue?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** In the days that followed the commissioner's report, he wrote me a letter stressing the importance that he was giving to this file. We then had a brief conversation. I assured him that I would be following up on the matter.

**Mr. Bernard G n reux:** I would like to mention that the document that you submitted is very well done, very detailed. It contains a great deal of relevant information including the list of offices that you consider as being bilingual, as well as their locations.

You use an expression that I will try to find. Last week, we were in Yellowknife, and I see that there is an office there. You talk about the

type of office, and you refer to identifiable restricted clientele. What do you mean by "identifiable"?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** I will defer to the expert who is accompanying me.

**Ms. Monique Paquin:** This pertains to the regulation definition designating bilingual offices. It determines whether or not an office is on the list of bilingual offices. The report identifies 16 offices.

**Mr. Bernard G n reux:** When we were in Yellowknife last week, representatives from the francophone community told us that, generally speaking, it was not always easy to obtain services in French in their community and sector. Although the Natural Resources Canada office that is located there is not necessarily significant in terms of size, its relationship with people is important since this region of Canada has many natural resources. Francophones are in a minority situation there. This is a very unique location in Canada. Do you pay particular attention to it?

• (1020)

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** I would like to be able to say yes. We have 20 offices or locations in Canada where we must provide services in both languages, including Yellowknife.

**Mr. Bernard G n reux:** Twenty offices out of how many?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Twenty out of 50. Services are provided in all of these offices, with the exception of Yellowknife and Corner Brook. We need to remedy the situation in Yellowknife. You have put your finger on one of the offices where we have a problem—

**Mr. Bernard G n reux:** It was by chance.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** —that needs to be resolved.

**Mr. Bernard G n reux:** We could have been in Newfoundland. I would not have talked about that, this was by chance.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** It is important, we need to resolve the problem.

**Mr. Bernard G n reux:** Indeed, one of the objectives of the committee is to advance the use of both official languages throughout Canada, particularly in places where there are communities in minority situations. We want to do this through Mr. Fraser and his analyses and through our committee work. Last week we saw people who told us that we should be striving to better coordinate and structure services in French in this part of Canada. We listened to those people.

Mr. Arora, you have been in your position for one year. Are you in contact with all of the other departments? Do you have regular or occasional meetings with the other departments?

**Mr. Anil Arora:** As Mr. Dupont already mentioned, a group of champions meets on a regular basis. The meetings are rather informal, but I do see that the structure is starting to become formally established. I intend to play a very active role in the group. We are in the process of organizing a seminar. I plan to attend the seminar and to share best practices with my colleagues. That is what I intend to do.

**Mr. Bernard G n reux:** Out of curiosity, what nationality are you?

**Mr. Anil Arora:** I come from India.

**Mr. Bernard G n reux:** You are Indian, right?

**Mr. Anil Arora:** Yes.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Have you been in Canada long?

**Mr. Anil Arora:** Yes, for a long time.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** You are in the national capital region. Have you always been here? Did you learn your French here?

**Mr. Anil Arora:** I learned my French here, but I spent a great deal of time in Edmonton.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** I find that interesting. I did not have an opportunity to ask the CIDA people any questions, but I admired Ms. Biggs' efforts to make her statement entirely in French. We are seeing more and more people on Parliament Hill who are making an effort. I have been here for only a short while, but I feel that public officials and even elected officials are making a significant effort, taking intensive French courses and so forth.

In your department, do you feel that considerable efforts are being made to ensure that the use of official languages really becomes intrinsic? Mr. Nadeau often refers to people in certain departments who feel somewhat oppressed and unable to use their language, particularly French.

Do you feel that there has been an improvement in your department in that respect?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** I believe that there has been an improvement in the public service. Basically, we need to work on this issue every day. However, a strong message was sent a few years ago when it became clear that executives in all departments, in other words, all managers at the EX level, had to meet language requirements in French. This measure was very robust, and it had an impact that we still feel today. As a result of this, all executive and management meetings can be held in both languages. This is occurring more and more often. This was a very strong message.

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

We will begin the second round with Ms. Zarac.

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

Mr. Dupont, I would like to go back to the question raised by my colleague.

Your plan was circulated yesterday. When was your plan drafted?

• (1025)

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** First of all, when I arrived, we already had a draft of the plan under way before the commissioner published his report. We had, I believe, an initial executive committee meeting in November or following the tabling of the commissioner's report. At that time, we had asked that the plan be modified so that it would be more tangible and specific in certain areas. It was completed in January. We then finalized it and made it available.

The process was completed over the past few months.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** So you had an opportunity to meet with the commissioner before the final version came out.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Yes.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** I wanted to be clear about that.

So this is a first report. Your marks are not very high, particularly in the area of services to the public. In the work plan that you submitted, much emphasis has been given to reviewing the lists.

Could you explain what you mean by "Burolis"?

**Ms. Monique Paquin:** It is the list published by Public Works and Government Services Canada that identifies the offices of all federal departments and agencies throughout Canada. It also includes a note indicating whether or not the office must provide bilingual services.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** So it identifies whether something is bilingual or not.

**Ms. Monique Paquin:** Not only does the list identify whether an office is bilingual or not, but it also identifies the offices across Canada, stating whether or not they are bilingual, in accordance with the act.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** I find that your report focuses more on a review of lists rather than on the provision of services. Most of the time, measures can be summarized as follows: "Managers and employees are informed and aware of their responsibilities in bilingual regions".

Could you explain what that means exactly?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** I will explain why the plan may look like a list. One of the first things that I requested was something that resulted from our initial conversation. We had talked, in particular, about promotion and encouragement. I said that there were some things that we absolutely had to do from A to Z. I needed an up-to-date list of designated bilingual offices. In addition, we needed to know where the public access points were in those offices. We also needed to know whether the people in those positions had the linguistic competency necessary. Finally, we needed to find out whether the people in those positions were providing an active offer of services. We said that we had to nail that. That is an obligation.

So I wanted to have clarity for those aspects where we needed to have a mark of 100%. In addition, we have encouragement measures, which is more in keeping with the spirit of the act. So we first have to ensure that we respect service to the public. That is fundamental. We need to know where we must provide such service.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** That is exactly what I wanted to hear, Mr. Dupont. Thank you.

With respect to the measure, as I was saying, does that mean that training must be given? Does it mean that the managers are responsible?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Yes and no, considering that the individuals in these positions must have the linguistic proficiency. This is more about enabling others to eventually have access to these positions. For example, in Yellowknife, if an individual were able to meet a requirement with a little bit of training, that would be encouraged, of course.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** I would like to commend you for having already added official languages questions to your survey. That was not a recommendation made by the commissioner, but he did mention it in his report. So I would like to commend you for having already done it.

However, you just told us that it did not result in any significant improvements in terms of official languages but that it did give you useful benchmarks as you moved forward.

Could you elaborate?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** The survey showed us where we need to improve. It provided us with a benchmark that indicates where we are coming from. Currently, the percentage of individuals who are comfortable writing memos in their language, particularly among francophones, is at a certain level. I forget what the figure is, but it is not very high. We need to ensure that, the next time, we score higher and that, in two years' time, the mark will be even higher. That provides us with a yardstick for measuring our performance.

As a deputy minister, I can then see a breakdown of the scores for the various sectors of the department. The situation is not the same everywhere. Some sectors are stronger than others. I can then go and see these managers and tell them that they have to pay attention because there is a problem. Their performance agreement includes the objective to promote official languages in their sector of activity.

• (1030)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Zarac. We will continue with Mr. Nadeau.

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

The commissioner's report gives you a mark that is very difficult to accept. However, you now know what work needs to be done and where you need to start. It is unfortunate, but you should find some consolation in knowing that your department is not alone. There are several departments in the same boat.

I have an extremely important question that I ask most, if not all, individuals, from the various departments and agencies who appear before us, following the commissioner's report. Your work involves providing service to the public and dealing with employees who occupy positions at various levels.

I would like to talk to you about how your employees draft documents. Obviously, the area of natural resources is very connected to the scientific realm, and that is understandable. Your department uses a vocabulary, a jargon, that is not necessarily familiar to the general public. What type of encouragement are your employees given in order to use their official language of choice when drafting documents?

I am referring to the drafting, in French, of memos, comments and important documents that help managers make choices from the options or analyses that have been presented. We know that we are able to be much more accurate when writing in our own language. Some people will no doubt tell me that francophones nevertheless use a lot of English scientific vocabulary because Americans dominate in this sector and therefore English is used more than any other language. The fact remains that, according to the latest information we have—and I checked this morning—there are still two official languages in Canada, French and English.

What is done to encourage your employees to draft documents in French?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** That encouragement is something I reaffirmed in messages forwarded to departmental employees as

soon as I arrived, after the commissioner had tabled his report. Currently, we are in a unique and quite favourable situation at Natural Resources Canada because both the minister and the deputy minister are francophones. Moreover, briefs sent to the minister are drafted in French, unless they are urgent.

Earlier, I listened to Ms. Biggs' presentation, and in actual fact, the anglophones are now having their documents translated and not the reverse. At the end of the day, we are in a favourable situation. I believe that I provide direct encouragement, especially given the fact that now the information is being sent to a minister and a deputy minister who are both francophone.

That being said, it is true that some French-speaking professionals are in the habit of working in English and instinctively write in English, because they are part of international or other types of networks. We naturally encourage them to write in French, particularly since, in many cases, the final reader is currently a francophone.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** You are referring here to memos and scientific documents that are written during the course of work.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Yes.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** But, in addition to work, there are staff relations. Sometimes you have to move staff around and deal with situations that can be difficult and require discussions at various levels, which also has an impact on the employees in your department. All of the departments scored very poorly on that aspect, and we agree that the situation needs to be improved.

Let's talk about communication with executives and the minister, the Hon. Christian Paradis. Some people who work in your department, people I have known for quite some time, have told me that the minister's requests for information in French have led to a small internal revolution within the department. A few woke up to the reality of this new way of doing business. That does not change the quality of the work, but it does change the way that it is done.

• (1035)

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

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I would like to conclude so that he can answer, Mr. Chair.

Are there any incentives when it comes to communicating with managers?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** First of all, here are some figures about francophones taken from the survey.

In response to the question “When I communicate with my manager, I feel free to use the official language of my choice”, 65% of francophones said that they strongly agreed with the statement and that they felt free to do so, and 15% mostly agreed with the statement. Overall, approximately 80% of the individuals felt comfortable enough to do so, and only 8% said the opposite. Overall, that is not bad, but we must continue working on this area, in particular, ensuring that executives have the necessary competency level to communicate with their staff in both languages. There are some non EX-level management positions for which linguistic requirements may still need to be established. That may be the case in certain regions. We would have to look into that, but generally speaking, the figures are not too bad. They could be better, but we will continue working to improve the situation.

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

Thank you, Mr. Nadeau

We will continue with Ms. Boucher.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Good morning, Mr. Dupont, Ms. Paquin and Mr. Arora.

I am happy to see that, since the minister, Mr. Paradis, is a francophone and since he gave you specific direction, it is helping us to communicate more in French in certain departments. When he was Minister of Public Works and Government Services, that department received very high scores. So that bodes well for the future and for the improvement of your scores.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** There was no francophone deputy minister.

**Ms. Sylvie Boucher:** That is true as well.

Your rating is not very high, everyone agrees on that. According to observations of in-person service made by the Commissioner of Official Languages between January and April 2010, an active visual offer was present in 79% of cases, an active offer by staff was made in 35% of cases—which is low, in my opinion—while service in the language of the linguistic minority was available in 76% of cases. How do you explain the problem of active offer?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** There are two possibilities: either people who are in contact with the public are not sufficiently aware of their obligations under the act, or there is a sort of carelessness or negligence. Neither of these are acceptable. That's what I said earlier to the member. There are certain problems that must be solved, and that is one of them. In certain positions, an active offer of service must be made in both languages. So we need to target 100% in that area.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Do you have measures to solve that type of problem? Because 35% is low.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** As I explained, we must first clearly pinpoint the obligations themselves, that is, in which offices and for which positions we must ensure that people understand exactly what their responsibilities are, and ascertain that they have the qualifications to carry them out. We must also ensure that monitoring is done. We cannot be vague, otherwise things will be overlooked. We must be very targeted and focus all of our efforts on achieving total success. That is one of the first measures that we are seeking to implement. The first measures of the plan are intended to establish an inventory of the offices where the active offer must be 100% available. After

that, we can improve the mindset and go beyond what is necessary from a strictly legal viewpoint, but we have to start with these first measures.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** In your opinion, are some employees still shy about using the other language?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** No.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Or is it the culture that creates this type of situation?

• (1040)

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** I cannot imagine that shyness or intimidation still exists. Sometimes we can assess the linguistic ability of the person we are speaking with and decide to speak in their language, which may not always be our choice, to facilitate the conversation or be better understood. Once again, that brings us back to linguistic ability, especially among senior department officials. Language training must be offered as widely as possible throughout the department to ensure that, besides simply having the right to use French, employees are able to do so and carry on a conversation at the same level as if they were speaking in English because it is supposedly easier.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Thank you.

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

That is the end of our two rounds.

Mr. Bélanger, you have the floor.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** May I use one of the New Democratic Party's minutes?

**The Chair:** In fact, there are three or four minutes before the meeting wraps up. You have a question to put. Do I have the consent of the members to give the floor to Mr. Bélanger? Very well.

Mr. Bélanger, go ahead.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Dupont, would you be prepared to share with the committee the results of the survey that you conducted of department staff?

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Absolutely, but you know that the results leave much to be desired.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I would be curious to see the entire survey.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Yes, absolutely, we have the detailed results. We can send them to you.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** As much as I—

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Do you mean official languages, or the entire survey?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I mean the whole survey, if possible.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Yes, but I do not believe that it was distributed within the department.

**Ms. Monique Paquin:** It has not yet been distributed.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Would it be possible to distribute it within the department first? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Absolutely.

I have been hard on other departments that may have had better results than you did. However, I am encouraged by the plan that you have shown us. I find it well written and easy to read, easier than others. I hope that the annual reports you intend to table will be sent to us and that we can see the results of your leadership. I wish you well. Thank you.

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

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

**Mr. Serge Dupont:** Mr. Chair, I would like to add something. At the beginning of the meeting, the member referred to the dates of the tabling of the report in relation to our appearance here. That is

actually true. The report of the commissioner and the fact that we know we will be appearing here are things that help us, as deputy ministers, to get the message across and have the influence that we wish to have.

It is no coincidence; perhaps it is simply the system functioning as it should.

**The Chair:** I will take your comments as a compliment with respect to the members who make up this committee. Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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