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## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, March 8, 2011**

—  
**Chair**

**Mr. Steven Blaney**



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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•(0845)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.)):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Mr. Blaney apologizes for his absence. You will have to put up with me as Chair one more time.

First, I would like to welcome our witnesses this morning: Ms. Forand, Mr. Nixon, Mr. La Salle and Mrs. Rallis.

I will turn the floor over to Ms. Forand and her team for approximately ten minutes, and then we will go to questions.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand (Chief Operating Officer, Senior Associate Deputy Minister of the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, Service Canada):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

We are appearing before you today following the audit report by the Commissioner of Official Languages regarding the delivery of bilingual services at Service Canada.

This morning, I will give you a brief description of Service Canada, of its role in the delivery of federal government services, and of its commitment to official languages, which is an integral part of the organization's culture of service excellence.

I will also speak about the progress that has been made over the last three years and set forth our commitments to making further improvements, based on the Commissioner's recommendations.

As the Chair mentioned, I am accompanied by my colleagues: Mr. Charles Nixon, Assistant Deputy Minister, Citizen Services Branch; Mrs. Gina Rallis, Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources Services Branch; and Mr. Dominique La Salle, Director General, Seniors and Pensions Policy Secretariat and Official Languages Champion at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Service Canada plays a special role in the lives of Canadians. One could say that it is the face of the Government of Canada. Service Canada is 16,000 employees, 620 points of service across the country, a 1-800 O-Canada call centre, a telephone network and an Internet site. It is a single window for residents seeking access to Government of Canada programs and services, wherever they are, and in the way that best suits their needs.

Each day, Service Canada carries out approximately one million transactions, whether in person, by telephone, online or through our processing centres. We deliver programs and services that affect Canadians at key moments in their lives. I am thinking in particular

of Social Insurance Numbers, the Student Loans Program, the Employment Insurance Program, Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security benefits, to list only a few.

In light of the scope and nature of its mandate, Service Canada has been audited on the delivery of services to the public in English and French. We have welcomed the Commissioner's recommendations because they allow us to see the progress we have made since his last report in 2008, and also to identify the additional improvements we need to make.

The delivery of bilingual services is quite a challenge for an institution like ours, which must serve residents in every region of the country in various ways, but it is a challenge that we take very seriously. Excellence in service is at the heart of everything we do, and official languages are a key element of that.

In his audit report, the Commissioner of Official Languages acknowledged the considerable efforts that we have made to improve the delivery of bilingual services and ensure an equal quality of service in English and French. At the same time, the Commissioner has identified areas in which Service Canada must do better, particularly in regard to the active offer of bilingual services.

In the face of the dismal results we achieved in 2006-2007, when our performance stood at only 8%, we implemented an action plan that included a number of measures to improve our performance. Among others, we put in place a new directive on the active offer of bilingual services and the training required to support it. Our efforts have borne fruit then, since our performance has gone from 8% in 2006-2007 to 33% in 2007-2008 to 54% in 2008-2009.

But we know that we can do better and our objective is to reach 100% every time a client comes to one of our bilingual service centres. I would add that we conducted a survey in 2010 on the active offer of service and, according to the results, our performance was 85%. So we hope that the next time the Commissioner of Official Languages evaluates this aspect, our grade will be even higher. We always target 100%.

•(0850)

[English]

We are aware we still have work to do to meet all our obligations under part IV of the Official Languages Act. With that in mind, we've developed a new three-year action plan for the period 2011 to 2014. In that action plan we acknowledge that the ability of Service Canada employees to provide bilingual services is key. We set forth the measures we will take regarding training, language of work, staffing, performance, and accountability.

For reference purposes, I'd note that 3,745 employees hold bilingual positions in Service Canada and that 94% of them have the required linguistic profile for their positions. We will be implementing various projects to help these employees acquire and maintain the language skills needed for their positions, and we will continue to invest in training. For instance, we've created an independent online training program called For the Love of English/ Pour l'amour du français and an improved training module regarding all aspects of the Official Languages Act.

We've also developed a departmental language-of-work strategy, which aims to achieve several objectives: to create a work environment that will allow us to attract and retain a workforce who are competent in both official languages; to better equip managers so they can meet their official language obligations and promote linguistic duality; to offer all employees the opportunity to work in an environment that encourages the use of both official languages; and to act in such a way as to encourage our employees to see institutional bilingualism as an asset that is linked to service excellence.

We've also committed to developing a results-based management and accountability framework. That framework will set forth accountability mechanisms, and the role of managers, official language coordinators, and employees responsible for serving the public, both in the regions and at national headquarters. For instance, we're proposing the creation of an official languages coordinator position in each region.

[*Translation*]

Although Service Canada already conducts analyses and research into official language minority communities and consults with them to better understand their needs, we have also committed in our action plan to creating structured and coordinated consultation mechanisms and to seeking continuous feedback.

One challenge we face is to find ways to be creative in our approaches while nonetheless using our resources in an ever more efficient manner.

An example of innovation in this regard is the pilot project that we launched last May, offering English and French interpretation services at unilingual Service Canada centres. Through this project, clients can have access to services in their language of choice, without having to travel to a bilingual centre.

We will study the results of this pilot project at the end of the year in order to judge whether a case can be made for extending the service to other unilingual sites. A decision of this kind will also be the object of consultations with official language minority communities in the locations affected.

We are pleased to have made progress regarding official languages. Over the past year, as I mentioned, we carried out a survey on client satisfaction. In this survey, 98% of clients who were served in person—out of the 6,000 people who responded to the survey—said they were served in the language of their choice. Among clients from official language minority communities, this figure climbed to 99%.

And we are determined to make the necessary improvements to strengthen our official languages program and our bilingual ability.

We have committed to implementing all of the Commissioner's recommendations, and he has expressed his satisfaction with the proposed measures and timeline.

I have to say that since my arrival at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, a year and a half ago, I have noted that a great deal of energy is invested in creating a culture that values official languages at all levels of the organization.

At Service Canada in particular, we see official languages as a fundamental value of our institution, and that is what we are trying to communicate to our entire workforce.

I can assure you that the delivery of bilingual services is a priority at Service Canada.

It is a question of equality and of law, it is true, but also a commitment on our part to offer the best service possible to all Canadians, from coast to coast to coast.

● (0855)

[*English*]

Thank you for your attention. I'll be pleased to answer your questions.

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Thank you, Ms. Forand.

Since there is no time restriction today, members will have five minutes for questions.

We will begin with Mrs. Zarac.

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

Good morning. Thank you for being here today.

You mentioned, Ms. Forand, that 3,745 employees occupy bilingual positions. What percentage of what is required do these employees represent?

To better explain myself, are all the positions that are designated bilingual staffed?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We have 3,745 bilingual positions and the employees who fill them meet 94% of the staffing requirements.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** I understand that, but I am referring more to the 130 points of service out of the 600 that were designated bilingual. Are 3,745 positions enough to meet the needs of citizens?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** No. Under our current organization, the positions that are designated bilingual are the ones that we have. In our action plan, we committed to reviewing the guidelines for the establishment of bilingual positions by 2013.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Is the action plan you mentioned ready?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** The action plan contains our response to the commissioner and the commitments we have made. We incorporated all of these components into a Service Canada action plan.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Can you send that plan to the committee?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Certainly, of course.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Very good, thank you.

In the commissioner's recommendation 5, he refers to bilingual positions. The commissioner recommends that Service Canada define the language profile required to perform the tasks in the job descriptions. Has this been done?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** It has not yet been done, but we are committed to carrying it out in several stages between now and April 1, 2013. We will review the designated bilingual positions and our method of establishing them. I could perhaps tell you more about this, and the commissioner refers to it elsewhere in his audit.

At Service Canada, we implemented what we call the structural model of service management, which means that all of our regional offices are structured in the same way as concerns the organization and the organizational chart. We have a limited number of generic positions in the country, only about 30. That is a first step. It is in fact the basis of a much more structured approach to human resources as a whole.

We will be incorporating this whole concept of the designation of bilingual positions into this approach, which is well structured and standardized across the country.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** We should be able to see that in your action plan.

You listed some of the services that you offer, which are very important for the population: Social Insurance Numbers, the Student Loans Program, and the Employment Insurance Program, just to name a few. These are very important services for our citizens. It is important that they can communicate and make themselves understood when they request services from Service Canada.

In his recommendation 6, the commissioner suggests consulting official language minority communities before making any changes that could have an impact on services, and he also recommends that you develop an ongoing feedback mechanism. Has that been done, or is it part of your action plan?

• (0900)

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** In our regional offices, there are many exchanges with official language minority communities. However, we fully agree with the commissioner's perception that the approach is not particularly structured or coordinated and that we must do better to ensure more effective monitoring of our communications.

For example, over the past year, in the Ontario region, we had 34 different contacts with these communities. However, not all the regions we serve provide us with this type of statistics. We thus committed to adopting, by September 2011, a much more structured and coordinated approach and to implementing monitoring measures so that we can check the performance of our regional offices each year.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** The closing of certain offices is scheduled for March 31, 2011. Were the communities consulted about this decision?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** At the end of this month, there will be a change in the services offered in certain community offices located in Newfoundland and Cape Breton in Nova Scotia. Until now,

services were delivered by third parties. We had contracts with certain organizations in these communities and information on the programs and services offered by the Government of Canada was provided in these offices. They are community offices, not regular Service Canada offices.

After having evaluated the services delivered by these offices, we realized that it was not the same as services offered elsewhere. Elsewhere, not only can you receive information on programs and services, but you can also, for example, apply for a Social Insurance Number and receive it immediately. In these community offices, this is not possible, because the employees are third parties working on a contract basis.

What we intend to do, therefore, is to replace the services offered in these community offices either with access to a regular Service Canada office, if it is less than 50 kilometres away—that is our performance standard—and to establish what we call a regular outreach site. This would involve having Service Canada employees go from place to place with a laptop and all the programs and equipment they need to deliver services available on site. They would travel to the communities on request. It could be once a week or once every two weeks; it all depends on existing demand. Some of these community offices in Cape Breton serve francophone communities in Nova Scotia...

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** We will certainly...

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** ...and, to answer your question, we did consult the francophone communities in Nova Scotia about this change.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Thank you, Mrs. Zarac.

Mr. Nadeau, the floor is yours.

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

Good morning to all.

You have a Service Canada call centre. Is there only one or are there several of them in Canada?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We have a 1-800 O-Canada call centre, located here in Ottawa, but we also have several telephone services for specific programs, such as Employment Insurance, the Canada Pension Plan, the...

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Fine. Are these other telephone services located in Canada?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Yes, they are all located in Canada.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Very well.

The other matter I want to address is service to the public. One someone dials the 1-800 number—you state that there are 1 million calls per day—and wants to obtain service in French, is there some waiting time or is the service offered automatically?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** The 1-800 O-Canada service is bilingual.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** So all the employees at the 1-800 call centre are bilingual?

• (0905)

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** All 1-800 O-Canada employees are bilingual.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** That centre is located on Clarence Street, in Ottawa?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** That's correct.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** They are all bilingual, so there is no waiting period. You say that when a call is made in French, the service is provided automatically.

In Nova Scotia, in Petit-de-Grat and Chéticamp, there were specific requests made further to the closing of certain service points. I would like to know about the situation in Trois-Rivières. According to what I have heard, certain services have been scaled back in Trois-Rivières and transferred elsewhere. Could you tell us about that situation?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** I am not aware of any change in the front-line service offered at the Service Canada centre Trois-Rivières. Situations may arise, not as concerns the service itself, but perhaps with regard to the processing of some of our programs, such as Employment-Insurance or the Canada Pension Plan. Sometimes, tasks carried out in one place may be carried out in a different place at another time. However, I am unaware of any specific situation in Trois-Rivières.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Fine. Could I ask you to check that and submit a short one-page report to us? According to what I have heard, certain public servants working for Service Canada are being transferred to Montreal and are having to choose between staying in Trois-Rivières or relocating. This has been reported to us on a number of occasions.

As concerns Part V of the Official Languages Act, which deals with the language of work in the various departments, agencies and Crown corporations, I would like to know whether, as a whole, the staff members, the 16,000 employees of Service Canada, feel comfortable writing documents or reports intended for their supervisors in French, if they so choose.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Unfortunately, the most recent quantitative data we have is from 2008. That was the last time we conducted a survey of the Public Service.

Since then, we have made considerable efforts to increase the comfort level, if I may use that term, of employees working in their own language. That is something we are studying very actively. We have just approved a strategy for the use of second language in the work place that includes similar elements in order to make managers at all levels more accountable and increase awareness throughout the department of the rights and obligations concerning language of work.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the second volume of the 2010 report of the Official Languages Commissioner raises the fact that people who wish to and are entitled to work in French often feel uncomfortable doing so. Often, if the work is done in French, it must be translated so that it can be presented in both languages.

Sometimes people finds translation difficult and this delays the process. If French is something that delays the process in

departments and agencies, people do not want to give it its rightful place within the machinery of government. An editorial in today's newspaper *Le Droit* shows the emphasis the Commissioner of Official Languages places on this matter. He would like French to be present across the federal government, but he observes that it is not. The proof is that the Commissioner is obliged to submit things to the departments so that they will consent to allow French to be used in the work place. Moreover, I know that Service Canada offers service in accordance with Part IV of the Official Languages Act regarding services to the public. If French is perceived negatively, then I think you will agree that the work is not being done in this regard.

You said earlier that 94% of bilingual position are staffed by bilingual employees. Let's do some quick math. Since there are some 3,000 people who occupy these positions, that means that close to 200 people are in bilingual positions without actually being bilingual. What is the problem? I do not understand. If a unilingual francophone occupied a bilingual position and an anglophone called him, I am sure that a complaint would be filed. What are you doing to staff these 200 positions?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** I will answer the first part of your question and then I will ask Ms. Rallis to answer the second part.

This is indeed a matter of human resources staffing, qualifications, etc. Often, employees are in certain positions and their skill level changes further to an evaluation. Evaluations must be conducted every five years.

• (0910)

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Could someone who was bilingual yesterday no longer be bilingual today?

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** I would ask you to answer in a few seconds, please.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Every five years, employees must demonstrate that they are still bilingual. Some employees may no longer make the grade after a while. Other people may have just been appointed or just be staffing the position on an acting basis because the position was vacant. We have to take into account all of these staffing and employee fluctuations. No one can be offered a designated bilingual position on a permanent basis without meeting the linguistic requirements of that position.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Thank you, we will come back to this topic if necessary.

Mr. Godin, the floor is yours.

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

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** By the way, dear colleagues, I just want you to know that, given the circumstances, we are now at seven minutes for questions. I did not want to interrupt you. So I would just like to correct what I said. We will respect the time limit for everyone, that is, seven minutes for the first round.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Welcome to all of you.

Earlier, you said that a study or a consultation had been done with people in Nova Scotia concerning the closing of offices. Whom did you consult?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** The two organizations consulted were the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité of Nova Scotia and another economic development organization, also in Nova Scotia. They are both provincial organizations.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** So you did not consult with francophone associations in the region.

**Mr. Charles Nixon (Assistant Deputy Minister, Citizen Service Branch, Service Canada):** I believe we consulted the regional organization representing Acadians.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** An article was published on February 8, 2011 at 9:12 p.m. by Paul Gaboury in the newspaper *Le Droit*. I will quote the beginning of this article:

Service Canada did not conduct an impact study on French-language services as part of the revamping of its 50 community offices across the country because the federal institution has pledged that the clientele will be able to continue having access to bilingual services.

Senator Maria Chapat had asked Government Leader Marjorie LeBreton if a study had been done on the impact of revamping Service Canada community offices. Her aim was to ensure that this project complied with the Official Languages Act, because the government must take positive measures for the development and vitality of linguistic minority communities.

The journalist then made the same request directly to Service Canada. Here is the answer given by a Service Canada representative:

The community offices of Service Canada that are designated bilingual and offer services in both official languages will continue to have access to bilingual services. That is why no impact study was required.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** That is the response we gave. We did not conduct an impact study because in the case of the community offices in Cape Breton, the people who had access to bilingual service through these community centres would continue to have access to bilingual services through a regular outreach site that will go to Chéticamp, for example...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The outreach employees will go if they are needed.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** They will go regularly. No matter what, these visits will be made regularly. The frequency of these visits will be based on demand, but they will occur regularly. They will be announced in advance. They will be reliable in that sense.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Have the problems been solved in the Service Canada offices? If an employee is a francophone, can he speak to francophones? I know there was a problem in Nova Scotia.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We called the employees in the Kemptville office, where the incident you referred to took place. There was indeed a misunderstanding, when an employee, a man or a woman, believed that they did not have permission to speak French in a unilingual centre.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Do you really believe that's what the person thought, and not what they were told? Please!

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We checked on whether or not any such instructions had been given to employees recently. It is possible that someone did that at some point in time, but it in no way reflects Service Canada policy.

Employees who are able to speak a second language obviously have the right to do so, out of courtesy to the employees. However, we also require that in a unilingual Service Canada centre, that they

immediately indicate to people who arrive and speak the other official language that if they wish to have access to bilingual service, it is available by telephone or in another centre.

• (0915)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** If a person is francophone, you give them the choice to go somewhere else. Is that what you are saying?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Allow me to explain the difference between a unilingual service centre and a bilingual service centre.

In a unilingual service centre, management and oversight are carried out in one language. It could be French in Quebec or English elsewhere. The entire monitoring and management structure is in English. The employee is obliged to speak English.

The materials we would need to be able to offer quality service concerning a program that is as complex as employment insurance, or the pension system, is not available in the French offices, or in the English offices if that is the case.

In order to ensure the monitoring and quality and adequate service, there has to be management. The team leader and the manager must be able to see if the information officer is providing precise information.

In a bilingual service centre, obviously all of these structures and corrective measures are in place.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Is the Atlantic Region bilingual?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** The Atlantic Region is unilingual. It includes one bilingual province: New Brunswick.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You are telling me that the Atlantic Region is designated unilingual?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Our offices and service centres are designated unilingual or bilingual, according to local presence and demand.

The administrative region of the Atlantic extends to Newfoundland and all of the Maritime Provinces and is designated unilingual...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That means that in New Brunswick, we have lost something and not more or less. The Bathurst office had a francophone and anglophone director, and was therefore bilingual. He is gone. He was let go. He retired and he was not replaced. After that, New Brunswick was served by the Moncton office where the director, Bill Ferguson, was bilingual. So we had bilingual service.

Now, with the restructuring of Service Canada—great service, thank you very much!—it has become the Atlantic Region, and now you are telling me that we have lost our French services on the monitoring front. In fact, Ms. Bruvels, who is learning French, is the director of the Atlantic Region. We have therefore lost our bilingual services in New Brunswick. Now we talk about the Atlantic Region.

We're also thinking about Mr. Carlson Littlejohn, the Director of Processing and Payment Services for Employment Insurance in Atlantic Canada. He is the Atlantic Region supervisor. In the past, we had this in New Brunswick; now, it is the Atlantic Region. You are telling us that it is a unilingual anglophone region.

I will continue. Service Canada subsequently appointed Mr. Doug Johnson to the position of Senior Director for Processing and Payment Services for the Atlantic Region. We have just lost our bilingual services in New Brunswick. This a reality and you are telling us that it is a designated unilingual anglophone region

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Your time is up. I will allow you to answer, even though we may have to come back to this later on. But I do not want to go much beyond the allotted time. Go ahead.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** As I was saying, it is true that the administrative structure in the Atlantic Region is unilingual. However, New Brunswick is a bilingual province. We have many employees in New Brunswick, whether in Bathurst or in Fredericton, who are in bilingual positions. As soon as we have employees in bilingual positions, supervision of these positions must also be provided in both official languages. This is required under the Official Languages Act.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Thank you. I am certain we will come back to this.

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

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

I would like to welcome our witnesses.

I would like to start with the active offer of service. It is obvious that you have problems with the active offer of service, as do other departments. Your last survey tells us that service is actively offered in 54% of cases to people who ask for it. Is that correct?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** The 58% figure for active offer performance comes from the Commissioner of Official Languages when this area was last audited. I believe that was in 2008. As he mentioned in his audit, that is in the report you have before you today, we have made considerable efforts since that time using a strategy that was carried out by Mr. Nixon. The commissioner specifically congratulated him in his audit for the leadership he has shown throughout the organization.

If I may, I would like to ask Mr. Nixon to describe the strategy that he implemented.

• (0920)

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Charles Nixon:** Thank you very much.

In the beginning, we encountered a rather difficult situation. We needed a directive to clarify what an active offer of service is for our employee, because there was a lot of confusion. We have done so. We provided a lot of training to our people across the country regarding service and official languages. We put coordinators in place across the country in order to improve our service in this regard.

Also, from time to time, we carried out small surveys in our offices to follow up and to see if service was improving or not. We asked for feedback from our employees in order to become aware of best practices, and when that was not the case, to improve them. This is work that was carried out over a number of years in order to effect change within a group of 750 people. I think we have now reached a

point where things are improving. Now, we are putting the finishing touches on a short film to demonstrate what a good active offer of service is. This is another way to reinforce the changes that will have to be made to reach the 100% satisfaction level that Ms. Forand mentioned at the outset.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** I must say this is not unique to your department. I think that all departments have the same problem.

I don't understand why it is so difficult. My riding is bilingual. Therefore, in my office, when my assistants answer the telephone or welcome people, they always say either "Bureau de Guy Lauzon, hello" or "Guy Lauzon's office, bonjour". They automatically speak in both languages. I do not know why it is so difficult for people in the department to get into this habit.

Do you know...

**Mr. Charles Nixon:** We have two explanations. First, people are perhaps shy.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** They are shy?

**Mr. Charles Nixon:** Yes, they are a bit shy when the time comes to use French or English if that is not their mother tongue.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Yet they are all bilingual.

**Mr. Charles Nixon:** That implies the ability to speak in either official language.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Excuse me, Mr. Nixon. All of these people are bilingual. They occupy bilingual positions and they are bilingual.

**Mr. Charles Nixon:** No. All of the people in our offices are not bilingual. Those in our bilingual offices are.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Yes. When someone has to answer in one of the two languages, we need someone bilingual.

**Mr. Charles Nixon:** Yes. The other point...

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Excuse me. That is a bad habit they are getting into.

**Mr. Charles Nixon:** Yes, I know. I absolutely agree.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** That is the only point I wanted to raise. Enough said on that issue. I am having trouble understanding why it is like that.

Now, let's move on. You look after one million people per day. You provide this service to one million individuals.

**Mr. Charles Nixon:** That is the number of transactions.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We handle one million transactions per day. That includes telephone calls, people who come in, cases relating to employment insurance that are dealt with, and so on.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Congratulations, you said that 98% of clients were satisfied with the service.



**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** The 98% figure that I mentioned comes from a client survey. Every two years, we conduct a client satisfaction survey. We have just wrapped up the most recent survey, which was conducted in 2010. We have not yet fully analyzed the results, but we have an overall picture of them. We surveyed 6,000 people. That is only 6,000 out of millions of people, but it is nevertheless a good survey. We surveyed 6,000 people who came into our offices, and we asked them if they were satisfied with the service and if they had been served in the language of their choice. Overall, 98% of respondents replied in the affirmative.

• (0925)

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Excellent. Those are good results.

You also mentioned a new position. I believe it was Mr. La Salle, or someone else, who mentioned the new official languages coordinator position. Can you explain what this position involves?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Yes, thank you.

At the department, we have an organizational and accountability structure to oversee the implementation of the various parts of the Official Languages Act, that is part IV, V and VII and so on. We have coordinators in each region for each part. So there is a coordinator for Part IV, one for Part V, and one for Part VII. Despite an increased number of coordinators, we do sometimes find that coordination is not as good as it should be.

So we want a lead coordinator for each region, someone who is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Official Languages Act, and not just a small part of it. These coordinators meet on a monthly basis over the phone to consult and discuss issues, and so on. They also meet face-to-face once a year as part of an annual forum that we organize for them.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Murphy, you start the second round.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** I have a short question. The commissioner's audit dates back to December 2010. At that time, there were Service Canada centres, mobile service sites, and Service Canada call centres. In all, there were 600 points of service. Changes have been made since then. How many points of service do you have now?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Thank you.

As you say, we use the expression “points of service”. We do not talk about “offices”, because they are not all offices...

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Please be brief, as I don't have much time.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We have 633 points of service.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Pardon me?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We currently have 633 points of service.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** How many of them are designated bilingual?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We have 194 bilingual points of service.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** You have 194.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** That includes 136 Service Canada centres, 50 regular mobile service sites, and 8 community offices. As of April 1, there will be two fewer, in other words 192, because two community offices will be closed.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** I imagine that the Service Canada centres in Inverness and Port Hawkesbury are both designated unilingual.

[English]

**Mr. Charles Nixon:** No, Port Hawkesbury *est bilingue*.

[Translation]

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** The Service Canada centre in Port Hawkesbury is designated bilingual.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** What about the one in Inverness?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** It is designated unilingual English. We will check though.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** The member of Parliament representing Chéticamp told me that Service Canada used to have a front-line employee there who was bilingual, permanent and well known in the community. That has changed. Now, the people of Chéticamp must travel to Inverness to a unilingual Service Canada site or they have to call or wait for the mobile service. Is that correct?

• (0930)

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** I would simply like to clarify that the Inverness Service Canada centre is also bilingual. Both are bilingual, the centre in Inverness and the one in Port Hawkesbury.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Both are bilingual. People have to drive over 50 kilometres...

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** As regards...

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** In the past, the people of Chéticamp had access to a person who was designated bilingual, always there, on a permanent basis, who was well known and who provided excellent service. Now, they have to drive to Inverness to see a bilingual employee, of course, or wait for the mobile site or place a call. Is that true?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Yes, a regular mobile site goes to Chéticamp as required. It may be once a week or once every two weeks.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Apparently, 400 people from Chéticamp have signed a petition expressing their dissatisfaction with your solution to this problem. They signed a petition to express their concern over the reduction in services in Chéticamp.

Chéticamp is not in my riding, but I am a member of the House of Commons and I work for all bilingual minority communities in Canada. I think that Chéticamp is losing bilingual services, and the people of Chéticamp agree with me.

Lastly, you said that you consulted the community and you mentioned the economic development and employability network. I don't know the exact name, but is that a provincial group that looks after economic issues?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Yes, that is correct. I was referring to the Nova Scotia Economic Development and Employability Network.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Why not consult the people?

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Thank you. We will come back to that.

The next person on the second round is Ms. Guay.

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

Welcome everyone.

I understand my colleague's frustration when he talks about Chéticamp. Chéticamp is not alone; Petit-de-Grat is experiencing the same problem.

Last week, we learned that a francophone employee in Kemptville could not respond to a francophone because she was not allowed to speak her language. That is rather surprising. I don't know if it is a mistake, but I can tell you that for those of us who are fighting for official languages, it was rather surprising to see a situation like that. I hope that will not happen again.

I would like to know specifically what points of service are? Where exactly do you send employees? Are there offices as such?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** First I would like to speak once again about the employee who was instructed not to speak French. It was a total misunderstanding, and as soon as the management of the office realized it, an email was immediately sent to clarify the situation with employees. This happened last October. I entirely agree that telling employees that they cannot speak one of the official languages, no matter where, would be absolutely unacceptable.

As your colleague said, a service point is actually a Service Canada centre which means that there is a building, a counter and the rest. These places are generally organized in a similar way. The commissioner mentioned this in his audit. Most of the service outlets are service centres. As we have standards of service whereby we must be capable of serving 90% of the people within 50 kilometres of their residence, in this vast country of ours, we have established outreach sites staffed by one, two or three full-time employees of Service Canada. They are well trained. They go to communities, always setting up at the same location and at the same time, for example in the office of some organization or in a city hall on Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Are the people advised of their coming?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** They certainly are. We communicate through weeklies, radio, etc. These employees bring with them a wireless computer and they can handle transactions, they can attend to business and they can serve the Canadian public.

• (0935)

**Ms. Monique Guay:** You mentioned community services. What does this mean exactly?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Community offices were created mainly between 2001 and 2005. This was before Service Canada was established. Third parties were involved, for example, an NGO in a village or in a rural environment. This organization provided people with information on the programs and services offered by the

Canadian government. The government contracted with these organizations to provide services. For example, if someone wanted to obtain a Social Insurance Number, they would provide them with all the information needed such as where to call, where to go, and so forth.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Therefore it is possible to offer the same services there as the services that are offered in a regular outlet.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Not at all. If you come to a regular office or even to a regular outreach site to get a social insurance card, they will give it to you right away. They will process your data in the computer and give you a number. In a community office, they could only give you general instructions and tell you what information had to be provided. You had to go somewhere to apply. In order to obtain a social insurance card, you have to go in person to the office to get the service. However, people who receive employment insurance and who want to change their address or change their application for direct deposit can do this at a regular outreach site. This cannot be done through a community office.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Is it working well?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Our surveys show that the outreach sites are working very well. The same people are present there every week or every two weeks. People are getting to know each other and they are getting organized. As far as we are concerned, we are well organized and we offer a good service.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Thank you.

Your time is up, Ms. Guay.

We will now go to Mrs. Boucher.

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

As a Quebec francophone, I was startled to hear that Service Canada is still providing unilingual services although we have two official languages in Canada. This is a fact, and it matters little if there are 10, 20, 1,000 or 60,000 francophones in a province that is supposed to be unilingual.

On what basis do you provide unilingual service in Nova Scotia, for example? Right next to Nova Scotia, in New Brunswick, an officially bilingual province, there are plenty of francophones.

Explain to me how you determined that such and such an office would be unilingual when, close by, there are plenty of francophones whose first official language is French. Help me to understand that.

We always hear that both official languages are very important, but this situation might lead us to think otherwise. I am a francophone from the Quebec City region, where there are very few anglophones. However, when they want to be served in their language, I dare to hope that they can be. If I go to Nova Scotia and I need directions, I hope that I will never get "I don't speak French" for an answer.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** For us, the priority is to provide the best possible service to the Canadian public. This is why our priority will be to make sure that a person will be able to get service in the language of their choice, whether the service centre be unilingual or bilingual. If a francophone person comes to a unilingual anglophone office...

● (0940)

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** What I want to know is on what basis you determine that an office is unilingual. I do not want to know if I will get an answer in French when I come to one of your offices. I want to know what you base your reasoning on when there are plenty of francophones in the neighbouring province. This is what I want to know.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Our basis is the Official Languages Act; the provisions and regulations we need are set out in section 32. A regulation under section 32 of the act describes the situations and the circumstances in which the service must be provided in one language or both.

The regulation states that there must be a bilingual service at places where the demand is substantial. There are actually some quite accurate ways to determine the places where the demand is substantial. This is what we base ourselves on when we decide whether a local office is unilingual or bilingual. This is why we have 136 offices in Canada and five outreach sites that are bilingual. The Official Languages Act defines the extent of the demand there must be.

Earlier, I was going to say that, even in a unilingual site, the first thing that the person at the counter will say to someone who arrives to get service in the other language, will be where the nearest bilingual office is to be found. Otherwise, a telephone service will be provided so that the client can be served in their own language.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** So where is the closest place in Nova Scotia where you can be served in French otherwise than over the telephone?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** It depends on where the person is in Nova Scotia. Earlier, we mentioned the fact that, on Cape Breton Island, for example, we have an office in Inverness and another in Port Hawkesbury, both bilingual. Cape Breton is a region of Nova Scotia. It depends where you are in Nova Scotia. They will tell the person where the nearest bilingual office is located.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** There is a problem with service in French, but it seems that there is also a problem with service in English in Quebec, for which your mark was a D.

My question is for all the representatives of the departments testifying before us. In Quebec, there are anglophones in Montreal, there are a few in Quebec City, there are also some in Gaspé and Sherbrooke. There are also some in other places like...

**An hon. member:** The Pontiac.

**Ms. Sylvie Boucher:** ... the Pontiac. When you offer a unilingual English position, are you limited in your recruiting? Do you have to post it in a region where there are a number of anglophones or do you do it everywhere, such as in the universities? Our young people are increasingly bilingual; they are more bilingual than we are. Can you ensure that anglophones in Quebec receive the same service as they would receive elsewhere?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We are making great efforts to try to attract and recruit anglophone employees in Quebec. You are right to point out the fact that we did not get a good mark there.

We have made some small progress. We have increased our numbers of bilingual employees by 20%. This is not very significant because it was 4% and now it is 5%. This is not enough.

To answer your question, let me say that our positions are advertised nationally. When a position is offered, we go to the universities. We have participated in career fairs in anglophone universities such as McGill University in Montreal where...

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Thank you. I am sorry, but we have already gone way over the allocated time.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Let me come back to the topic of your activities in the Atlantic region.

Is the region designated as unilingual francophone?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** The Atlantic administrative region is designated anglophone.

Within that administrative region, the province of New Brunswick is bilingual.

● (0945)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I know, I come from there. I do not need to be reminded.

In New Brunswick, there are 235,000 francophones. In the rest of the Atlantic region, there are 215,000 francophones. With a population of 450,000 francophones, you are telling me that the Atlantic... You are saying that you use section 32 of the Official Languages Act to decide that, administratively, the region is not bilingual but anglophone.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** The designation of the Atlantic region is compliant with the requirements of the Official Languages Act.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** What are these requirements? Could you remind me of what they are, except section 32?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** It depends on the size of the demand and the presence of francophones.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** But does a population of 450,000 people mean nothing for the Government of Canada—oh, excuse me, for the Harper government?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Proportionally, taking into account the overall population of the entire region...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** All right.

There is a province in the Atlantic region that is officially bilingual under the Constitution. It's in section 88. When the province of New Brunswick has to deal with the Atlantic administrative region, you are telling me that it has to deal with an anglophone administration.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** This is more or less what I was saying earlier.

First, there is the issue of serving the public. Because New Brunswick is a bilingual province, they are set up to provide bilingual services wherever there is demand.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Tell me about the administrative aspect.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** In terms of the administrative aspect, the Atlantic region is a unilingual region but, once again, under the provisions of the act dealing with languages of work, there is an obligation to be capable of supervising bilingual positions in the language of choice.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** How can that be done if all the supervisors are unilingual anglophones?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Perhaps they have anglophone names...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** No, I have spoken with them and they do not speak a word of French.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** ... but they have been trained and we have positions...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chair, I would like her to answer my question.

I personally addressed Mr. Carson Littlejohn in French and he answered me in English. The Director General of Strategic Services in Newfoundland, Ms. Carole Therrien, telephoned me to tell me to stop calling her offices, to say that they have my messages on the answering machine and that they know what I want. She asked me to call the minister directly or to go and meet with her. She also said that she did not like me calling their offices in the Atlantic region.

How do you respond to that? I am an MP and a Canadian citizen from the Atlantic region.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Now let's let her answer.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Thank you. I would like to begin by saying, sir, in answer to your first question, that we are going ahead with training managers in the Atlantic region, which was recently amalgamated.

The two top positions, the assistant deputy minister and the director general, are both occupied by people who meet the requirements of a bilingual position. In EX-1 and EX-2 positions, as we call them, we have reached a bilingual capacity of about 64%. The people are being trained. So we want to make sure that people who fill these positions can supervise and provide all necessary support in both languages, 100%. We have also made great efforts in training; for example, we have even implemented special training programs for the Atlantic region specifically with regard to the language of work.

With regard to the comments or the answers that you receive from our communications representative, as far as I understand, she did her best to answer your questions. She answered you the first time and subsequently she was asked simply to direct the questions that were less operational in nature and that she could not have answered, to the central administration. This is what she was asked to do.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Is that what you asked her to do?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Not personally, but this is what they had asked her to do.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You mean that I, as an MP...

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Mr. Godin, your time is up.

Now let's move to Mr. Murphy.

[English]

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** On Mr. Godin's point, it would seem that the Atlantic region of Service Canada is designated administratively as unilingual English, which when translated will make interesting headlines in the French-language newspapers of Atlantic Canada tomorrow.

I think it is a warning to the government. It had better react on behalf of the 20% to 25% of the population of Atlantic Canada who are francophone as well as the 50% or so of the population, like me, who have learned French and consider themselves bilingual. That's a little shot across the bow to the government to get on this. Presumably, Service Canada is doing this with some direction.

Your plan of reorganization, did it save money? Will it save money?

• (0950)

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** The purpose of the reorganization plan was not to save money. The purpose of the—

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Will it save money?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** The purpose of the reorganization plan was to deliver more effective service and to do it in a more efficient way.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** For the third time, will it save money?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We've reduced the number of executive positions across the region, but the purpose of the reorganization was not to save money.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** For the fourth time now, will it save money?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** I can't tell you if there will be savings attributed to the reorganization. We've been undergoing a significant business transformation in Service Canada in how we deliver the services, like employment insurance, across a number of things to which we would not attribute any savings. The purpose was not to save money. The purpose was to improve the service delivery in Atlantic Canada.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Does the plan have in writing the projected costs before and after implementation? Is there a written document to that effect?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** I'm not aware of a written document that would have established the costs.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Really?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We would have prepared documents on the administrative and service benefits, particularly on consolidating administrative functions.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** There's nothing in writing in your department that shows the cost of things now and after this reorganization. There's nothing in writing in your department.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We could look at the public accounts.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** I can do that myself

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** You can look at the departmental report.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** All right. I want to move on.

You terminated some contracts with what you called “private service providers”. They're in fact community organizations that provide services on your behalf because they best know the community. I'm looking at the Cheticamp example, but there are many others. How much money did that save? If you don't know, perhaps you could provide documentation or answers to the chairman.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We can provide information on the costs of the community service offices as well as the replacement services that will be provided. But the change we effected from this March to next March had to do with contracts with service providers. The objective was not to save money; the objective was to improve service, to provide people in those communities with the same level of service that Canadians in other communities receive.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** I'll take your answer at its best blush and say you didn't intend to save money, but I'm guessing that is one of the objectives when you use the word “efficient”.

I will say this. In the communities, there is great push-back to the idea of these local service providers being terminated, because they knew the community best. It's probably why, unless you can re-answer the question with more meat on the bone, you didn't communicate and consult with any of the cultural or societal organizations in Atlantic Canada. You did not consult with the SNA or the SANB in New Brunswick or their counterparts in Nova Scotia. I've been interrupting you, and I apologize, but so far you've only dealt with some of the regional economic development agency groups in, for instance, Nova Scotia. But across Atlantic Canada, what you're doing to rural areas, and particularly to francophone areas, is not going over well. You're not enhancing your image with respect to providing bilingual services or rural services.

What would you say to that? I think the government should be aware of this.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We're confident that the people in these communities will get to know the outreach service that we provide and will appreciate the enhanced service they will receive. I can understand that they're familiar with the service providers that they have in their community, and that they're familiar with what they've experienced in the past, but we are confident that we will be able to demonstrate that the services they receive through the new approach will in fact be greater than the services they received before.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Thank you, Mr. Murphy, Madame.

[Translation]

Your turn, Mr. Gourde.

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

Thanks to the witnesses for being here today.

Earlier we were discussing the unilingual Service Canada outlets in the Atlantic region. I am a francophone. If I come to a service outlet, would the front-line employees, the ones I speak to, be able to answer me in French without any problems because they are bilingual?

● (0955)

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** If you come to a unilingual Service Canada outlet and you speak to the person behind the counter in French, let's call her Ms. Gaudreault, she will be ready, willing and able to speak to you in French. However, she will also make sure to tell you that you are in a unilingual service centre and to show you the place or the telephone number where you can access bilingual service.

She will tell you that simply because she does not have all the support that she needs to provide you with French language service equal in quality to the service that would be provided by someone who has been trained to provide service to the public in French. Your questions might have to do with employment insurance or with the Canada Pension Plan. The reason is simply that she does not have all the necessary support, she is not set up in the same way as an employee at a bilingual service centre.

However, clearly, as a matter of courtesy, she will speak to you in French, she will help you in French, she will provide you with the French language documents that she has available. In addition, she will also be expected to tell you where the nearest bilingual Service Canada outlet is located, or the telephone number you need to reach it.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** You mention support. However, if I go there to get a form to apply for a social insurance number for one of my children, it does not take a great deal of support. Does she really have to tell me all that anyway?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** The person has to tell you that to make sure that you are informed. If you simply go there to get a form or to ask a simple question, she will answer you in French. However, because you must be informed, she will also have to tell you that, as a person who wants to be served in the other official language, you can also have fully bilingual service. She will also tell you where this service is available to you.

For example, if you come to the office because you want to know whether you are eligible for employment insurance, it might get a bit more complicated. In that case, the person will not have any supervision in French, she will not have the organizational support she will need to give you the best possible service, equal in quality to the service you are entitled to receive, in the language of your choice.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** So your policy is to serve francophones to the best of your ability. However, even if you can serve them, you tell them that you cannot, and you send them somewhere else.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** As a matter of courtesy, the policy is to serve francophone clients in French, they should be helped in that language, but they should also be given information on the availability of completely bilingual services, equal in quality to all the bilingual services offered anywhere in Canada.

So they will tell you where the nearest bilingual office of Service Canada is located, or you will be offered the option of speaking to an agent over the telephone. For instance, if you have a complicated question regarding the Canada Pension Plan, they will give you the telephone number that you can call to get information in French on the Canada Pension Plan.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Have the unions that represent the front-line workers taken any position on the matter?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We are continuously consulting the unions regarding the designation of bilingual and unilingual positions, the staffing of these positions and every other employment-related question. Also, whenever there is a change, we consult them in advance.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** They have not taken a position. You tell me that you consult them, but do they...

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We consult them, they have a position, but it often depends on the situation and the circumstances of the moment. Sometimes, the union can take a position, it might want to see some kind of change. But it depends on the circumstances. We deal with it on a case by case basis.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Do you think that anything can be improved in the system of unilingual positions and services?

• (1000)

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We are trying to find ways to offer the best possible service. We are working in compliance with the Official Languages Act whose provisions and regulations require us to do things like being properly equipped.

However, in that context, we still want to organize our policies and our approaches so as to serve the people as well as we can, be they anglophones in Quebec or francophones in other regions. This is why we have implemented this approach in those places where the legislation does not require us to have a bilingual office. So we have unilingual offices to serve the people in those specific places. However, we want to make sure that all our front-line agents are trained to give the best possible service, in an equal and fair way, to people who want to speak in either of the official languages.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** To conclude, I will be waiting for your suggestions regarding policies. We would like to receive them, please.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Please send the documents to the committee clerk so that everyone can have a copy, Madam.

Mr. Nadeau, you have the floor.

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

After what you just said, Ms. Forand...

**The Vice-Chair (The Honourable Mauril Bélanger):** By the way, the signal that you hear indicates that the House is beginning to sit.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** No need to panic.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** No, no.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** After what you just said, Ms. Forand, let me make a suggestion to Ms. Finley, the minister in charge of Service Canada and to whom you are accountable, and also to all my colleagues, the members of this committee.

For the federal election in 1993, I registered at an Elections Canada office in Saskatoon. Believe me, I went there and I registered in French. I was probably the only one to do that. I had just arrived in the province. No one who had greeted me spoke French. Then they

sat me down at a desk with a telephone. The person in charge sat at another desk and called somewhere on her phone. Then my phone rang and I was able to register by telephone.

Just now, Mr. Gourde asked a question and Mr. Godin, Mr. Murphy and Ms. Boucher followed up on it. I know that you are not the one who drafted the policy that we are discussing, but I find it entirely unacceptable that someone could be received by Ms. Gaudreault, to use our previous example, and be told that she cannot possibly give him service in French even if she speaks French herself, and that he must go somewhere else, who knows how many kilometres away, simply because in her office things are done in English only.

An office being English or French is already a problem, because we are in Canada. The telephone service should be offered on site so that someone who has just arrived in the region could also fill out his form with help from an office employee. If the client cannot do this with a human being in front of him, he should be able to do it with the help of someone at the other end of a phone line who will do everything possible to make sure the client gets the service he is requesting. That can be an application for employment insurance, for a social insurance card or a passport, or any other service that Service Canada is supposed to provide. That is what we should do instead of telling the client to go back to his vehicle and to drive who knows how many kilometres to another office because the employees cannot serve him in his language on the spot. I hear people around me saying things like that.

Is it possible to offer this kind of service through a three-way telephone system? When I registered at the Elections Canada office, the supervisor, who was also on the telephone, did not understand French. I understand English but I wanted to be served in French. This is my right. If we do not use that right, we lose it; it's as simple as that. Assimilation being what it is, especially in predominantly anglophone regions like Saskatchewan—although it is also true in the Pontiac—if we do not use our French, we lose our rights. So the Service Canada employee translated my applications for the supervisor and vice versa. Everyone was happy. When the exercise was over, and it lasted for about 15 or 20 minutes, certainly less than an hour, I was registered with Elections Canada and I could vote in the 1993 elections.

Could you see developing that kind of mechanism instead of asking people to go to another office?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Thank you for your question. I should have mentioned that. Currently, we are conducting a pilot project of exactly that type at 10 unilingual sites in Canada. It began in May 2010 and will continue until May 2011. The pilot project is to test interpretation by telephone. The system is called CanTalk. It is just as you describe, a three-way conversation: the Service Canada officer, the customer and the interpreter. The interpretation service is provided by telephone. This year, once this 12-month pilot project is over, we will be able to assess the results of this service. We may consider broadening the use of the service if the results warrant. Implementing the service in 10 centres is not expensive: it costs us \$13,000 for one year.

• (1005)

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Thank you for your answer. Forget the \$13,000. Either a right exists or it does not. If we have to measure rights in dollars,...

[English]

let's all speak English, be American, be proud, and have the American flag with that.

[Translation]

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** I wanted to reassure you by telling you that it would not be an obstacle.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** You have to look beyond the pilot project. Follow the example of Elections Canada, a federal authority that operates very effectively. It is incomprehensible that in 2011, people's rights to receive French-language services at a Service Canada outlet or anywhere else should still be shrugged off. Trying to plug that gap with a pilot project is like putting a band-aid on a wooden leg. This type of service must be permanent. Citizens have the right to services in French, and they must get them.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Thank you, Mr. Nadeau.

Ms. Forand, you may give a brief answer if you wish.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** I would simply say that we will be reviewing the results of this pilot project. I mentioned the \$13,000, not to say that the amount of money is a problem, but rather to point out that, since it is not very costly, we do not expect it to be an obstacle in any way.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** That concludes our third round.

We have time left for a fourth round.

Mrs. Boucher, the floor is yours.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** I will be sharing my time with Mr. Généreux.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Do you want me to tell you when your time is up?

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Yes, please.

There is something bothering me. Some of your offices are unilingual English. We have been talking about this for the past hour. However, your offices are also located in areas where there are francophones. Your offices are like a front line.

When I get to your office, I feel like a poor francophone who needs a brochure. Unfortunately, you cannot even give me that, because you work in English even though there are plenty of francophones. I know that you care deeply about service to the public. Even if the office is not bilingual—which it should be in any case, because we are in Canada—there should be some kind of support. You must admit that driving 150 km to pick up a brochure in Cape Breton is a long way. If I live in Halifax, Nova Scotia, going to Cape Breton to pick up a brochure is quite the trip. Doesn't that kind of support exist? Service is provided in only one language in many places, but people should at least be able to obtain a couple of brochures.

We know that those offices will receive telephone calls, even if it is only once a week, once a month or once every six months. The demand is there, because those offices are in areas where there are francophones.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** As I said earlier, we try to offer the best service possible to all clients who come to our offices. For example, our unilingual front-line officers must complete a training session entitled "Putting Citizens First". This is front-line service training, a course that is very highly regarded and that is now offered by the provinces and in other countries.

This course includes a module about the Official Languages Act that teaches people about the obligations of federal authorities under the act. It focuses on service rather than on legal matters. Participants are taught how they can best serve people who come to a unilingual centre.

As to brochures, our written material is available in both languages in all our offices. If there is a brochure on social insurance numbers, for example, it will be available in both languages, whether the office is unilingual or bilingual. Our entire focus is on service.

I would not like to give the impression that the people who come to our offices are simply told by the person behind the counter to go elsewhere for French-language services. We train our front-line officers to give the best service possible and they are proud to do so.

• (1010)

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

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Ms. Forand, you referred to the new services provided by the outreach centres. People move around. We live in the era of technology. Has this resulted in an improvement in the services you provide, and if so, how? Most regions of Canada, including rural regions, receive services from Internet service providers. So people have increasing access to great quantities of information, as do you and all other government departments. Does this have an impact on the quality of the services you may eventually provide?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Thank you. We have tried to maximize the use of available technology in order to be able to provide the same quality of services to all citizens. That includes people living in rural areas and even in the Far North, who can make regular visits to outreach sites. The term may give the impression that buses or vehicles of some kind are used, but that is not at all the case. It is the officers who travel and provide service in a safe and healthy environment.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** When they travel from place to place, they can use laptops and hook up to a remote network, likely high-speed. That implies that there are networks in those regions. You even mentioned the Far North. Are there remote connections everywhere there?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** When it is not possible to connect to a wireless or high-speed network, we use satellites. We have the technology we need. We use it in the Far North and in some regions of northern Quebec and northern Ontario as well.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** So your officers always have access to a network?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** They do the best they can, according to the availability of the satellite range. But...

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** I apologize for interrupting, but that raises another question.

Does this mean that service is automatically being improved in some regions, especially in the rural regions of Canada?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Absolutely. That is what we aim to do. As compared to the services we were able to provide five years ago in northern, remote and rural regions, the service we provide now is much more complete.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Thank you.

Ms. Zarac, the floor is yours.

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

Mr. La Salle, how long have you been champion of official languages?

**Mr. Dominique La Salle (Director General and Co-Champion of Official Languages, Seniors and Pension Policy, Service Canada):** For about a year and a half.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** What I have heard today about your unilingual offices is somewhat worrisome. There has been a lot of talk about services, but I would like to address the matter of language of work. Mr. Godin referred to this earlier. Under the Official Languages Act, there are language of work criteria to be complied with. As champion, do you consider that Service Canada is fulfilling all of its obligations under the Official Languages Act?

**Mr. Dominique La Salle:** Clearly, there is always room for improvement. We must keep in mind where we started from and what our target is. It is clear from everything that has been said this morning that we are not perfect. No one can say that we have reached our goal yet. However, I think that we are making great progress. The role of champion is to act as promoter and activist in the area of official languages. It is an opportunity.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** So in general, you influence the decision-making.

**Mr. Dominique La Salle:** That is right. I have a lot of contacts with people and I participate in events such as Linguistic Duality Week.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Back to my question, Mr. La Salle. As champion of official languages, do you consider that Service Canada is currently fulfilling all of its obligations under the Official Languages Act?

• (1015)

**Mr. Dominique La Salle:** Well, I...

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** I know there is room for improvement, but I would like you to be honest and to answer my question.

**Mr. Dominique La Salle:** The best answer I can give you, I think, is the following: there is always room for improvement, but I believe that the will is there and that we are fulfilling our obligations.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** I am not questioning your will: I simply want you to tell me honestly if you are currently fulfilling all your obligations.

**Mr. Dominique La Salle:** As far as I know, yes.

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

That is all, Mr. Chair.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Allow me to use Mrs. Zarac's remaining time.

Ms. Forand, you said earlier that 94% of the 3,745 designated bilingual positions were staffed by people who have the required linguistic profile. Do you have any statistics or a percentage for senior executives?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Yes, I believe so. I will ask Mrs. Rallis, who is responsible for human resources, to reply.

**Mrs. Gina Rallis (Assistant Deputy Minister of the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, Human Resources Services Branch, Service Canada):** Thank you for your question.

For senior executives, 95% of them have the required linguistic profile.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** When our clerk invited people from the department to appear, the reaction was very interesting. The clerk mentioned that we wished to meet with the champion of official languages, Mr. Dominique La Salle. The clerk was told that the duties of the champion dealt mainly with work within the department. That is what we were told. I saw two people nodding.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Yes, the champion carries out his duties almost entirely within the department, with a view to promoting respect for official languages.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Could you explain to me how you perceive the department's responsibility under part VII of the Official Languages Act and the champion's role in this regard?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We take our role with regard to part VII very seriously. They are not here today, but we have another branch in the department that looks after part VII for HRSDC in a very proactive fashion. We report to Canadian Heritage each year, as do the other designated departments. Ensuring that there is an awareness within the department of the importance of part VII and of the department's role under part VII are part and parcel of the champions' role in promoting official languages. It is a role that they fulfill very vigorously.

So we have two champions: Dominique La Salle in the National Capital Region, and another champion for the regions. Both of them are responsible for promoting all the relevant parts of the Official Languages Act.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** I am somewhat surprised at your answer, because we see the role of the champion has been not only focused within the department, but definitely focused on the communities, as the act stipulates.

Mr. Godin, it is your turn.

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



The 2008-2009 annual report has been tabled. When will you be tabling the 2009-2010 annual report?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Are you referring to the annual report of Service Canada?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Yes.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** When Service Canada was created, one of its obligations was to provide an annual report at the end of the first three years of its existence, which we did. We were not required to produce an annual report for subsequent years. We are now considering reporting on our activities in a more public fashion. Obviously, we do this when we table the ministerial report before the House each year. It was in that context that we followed up. We are currently considering producing a report in a more public fashion.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Will you be talking more about official languages and the changes that have occurred in the Atlantic provinces, which were not changes for the better?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We will certainly be referring to official languages in all public reports about Service Canada that we prepare.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You may find that I am belabouring the point, but I would like to come back to the Atlantic provinces. You said that, in New Brunswick, the service was bilingual before the reorganization. But was the administration bilingual?

•(1020)

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** I would not say that the administration was unilingual or bilingual. There were designated bilingual positions in New Brunswick, under the Official Languages Act.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** So the position of director of services for New Brunswick was bilingual.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** That is true.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** So you agree with me.

I called Mr. Wood, in New Brunswick. He told me that he no longer works there and that he had been replaced by Mr. Doug Johnson, an anglophone. So this means we lost a bilingual position.

You just told me that this position was designated bilingual but the employee was replaced by Mr. Doug Johnson from Newfoundland. This bilingual position is located in the Atlantic provinces and it is no longer bilingual.

Do you acknowledge the step backwards?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** I would not say that. According to what I...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Come to our province and you will see that it is a step backwards.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Mr. Johnson is senior director for processing services. As far as I know, this is an EX-3 position. Mr. Johnson has taken second language training. I don't know whether he currently meets the requirements for a bilingual position.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Whether he meets the requirements or not, you said earlier that the position was not designated bilingual.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** I will let you finish your answer. Do you know whether or not he meets the requirements?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** It is true that he is not in a bilingual position at this time, I think. We will provide you with the information on all bilingual or unilingual positions in the Atlantic region.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** And the names of those who do not meet the requirements.

Excuse me, Mr. Godin.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Yes, as well as the names of those who do not meet them.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Then, there was Mr. Ferguson, who was replaced by Ms. Louise Branch. She was bilingual but she was replaced by the lady who is now taking French courses. When I spoke to her for the first time, she apologized and told me that her assistant would speak to me because she personally did not speak enough French. She is the director of the employment insurance processing services for the Atlantic region.

Earlier, in New Brunswick, it was bilingual. I have been the MP for Acadie-Bathurst for the past 14 years and it has always been bilingual, but since the new reorganization, you say the Atlantic region is not designated as bilingual.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** As an administrative region, the Atlantic is not designated bilingual, but the positions in New Brunswick that must offer assistance because of the demand and the supervisory responsibilities are designated as bilingual.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** If the administration is not designated as bilingual, the francophone employees in New Brunswick who want to communicate with management cannot do so in the language of their choice.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** I will ask Mrs. Rallis to give her comments on the issue of the language of work. However, as I said earlier, there are language requirements when you are in charge of supervising people who occupy bilingual positions. Supervisors must be able to communicate with them in their language.

Let me ask Mrs. Rallis, who is responsible for the language of work, to answer your question.

**Mrs. Gina Rallis:** Thank you very much for your question.

As for a supervisor residing in a place that is designated as unilingual under the legislation, but who directly supervises employees in a region that has been designated bilingual, the position that the supervisor occupies must also be designated as bilingual. Therefore, that person must take a training course.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I do not want to harp too much on Mr. Carson's case, but since he was the supervisor for the Atlantic region, was his position designated bilingual?

**Mrs. Gina Rallis:** According to part V of the act, which deals with the language of work, if the person holds a position where there are employees who hold bilingual positions in a bilingual region, such as New Brunswick, their position must be designated bilingual. This person will then have two years to meet the requirements of the language profile of their position, and they will have access to language training.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** And francophones have to wait on a list for two years.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Are there any circumstances where a given position must be designated bilingual imperative?

**Mrs. Gina Rallis:** The vast majority of the positions that we staff in the department, that is to say 86% of the positions, must be designated bilingual imperative.

•(1025)

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Perhaps we could also know which ones are not, if you have a list.

Mr. Nadeau, I give you the floor for one last intervention in this round, which will probably be the very last one.

I know that Mr. Galipeau also wants to speak, and that he is the only one who did not ask any questions. So, unless there are objections, we will give the floor to Mr. Galipeau.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Just now, Mr. Généreux said something about the outreach service that seems very important to me. However, my remarks have more to do with what Ms. Boucher was proposing. When someone comes to an outlet to get a form in French, given the Internet and the technology we have these days, can the person get the form in French, even in a unilingual English office, or does the person have to drive all over the place for kilometres in order to get it?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Normally, with written documents, we provide them in both languages.

I will ask Mr. Nixon to answer your question about a specific form rather than a publication that we keep on the shelf.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Let us be clear. When people come, they come to obtain a service.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** I'm thinking about a passport application form, for example.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** They come to obtain a service that has been recognized and that is provided. So if they want to have a form that is part of that recognized service, can they leave with the form in French?

**Mr. Charles Nixon:** If it is available in the office, people can have it.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** All right, Mr. Nixon, let me ask you the question another way, because time is getting short.

Anyone can get any form on the Internet. If a person does not have the Internet at home, I presume that the anglophone employee will be smart enough to know that the word "passport" is the same as the word "passeport" in French, that he will print out the French form and give it to the client.

I want to know if that is the case, yes or no.

**Mr. Charles Nixon:** Yes.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** The other topic that I am very interested in is the issue of bilingual positions held by people who are not bilingual.

Just now we were discussing the expiration dates for bilingualism: a position can lose its bilingual status overnight. I want to know how you are managing this situation. In my mind, I am bilingual and I have trouble seeing how I could stop being bilingual tomorrow. That

is a personal matter. Scientifically, we will not challenge it, we will not even go there.

If a person holds a management position or some other position in a bilingual service, according to you, depending on the training they have received, they could potentially lose their French at some point. We agree that French is the minority language here, meaning the language we want.

Please explain that to me, because it is beyond me.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** I will ask Mrs. Rallis to answer your question but first, I should say that an entire system has been set up to make sure that people have the required language skills to hold bilingual positions.

**Mrs. Gina Rallis:** Thank you very much.

Every five years, people must be tested to make sure that they meet the required level in their second official language. For various reasons, some people could possibly fail their test. In that case, they do not meet the requirements of the linguistic profile.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Did you say that they do not want to pass?

**Mrs. Gina Rallis:** No, they were unable to pass. They had to take the test at the Public Service Commission and, for some reason or other, they were unable to express themselves clearly enough, say, in an oral test.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** They failed their test.

**Mrs. Gina Rallis:** Precisely.

In a case like that, they do not meet the requirements of the language profile of their position. So we have to make sure that the department offers training so that they can meet the requirements.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** In a case like that, does the person lose his or her job immediately?

**Mrs. Gina Rallis:** They do not lose their jobs. They are entitled to language training so that they can pass.

Of course, in our organization, our language of work strategy, as Ms. Forand mentioned just now, involved the raising of a great deal of awareness on the importance of maintaining a knowledge of the second official language once it is acquired.

There are modules on our intranet where, instead of waiting for the end of the five-year period, people can prepare and get practice in their second official language, be it French or English.

•(1030)

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Let me add that, if the person takes the test, fails and has to go for training, administrative measures of some kind must be taken to ensure that the bilingual employees who report to that person are supervised in the language of their choice.

So the manager must take extra measures like that, once it is known that the person does not meet the requirements of the job. We can use another manager or a higher level manager to supervise the employees in the language of their choice.

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Mr. Nadeau, I have to interrupt you.

Mr. Galipeau, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the members from all political parties.

I have three points that I want to raise.

First, there was a time when I was not bilingual. I was brought up in Ontario and my ancestors have lived in Ontario for more than 160 years, but I did not speak any English. It was not because my parents did not want me to learn it. On the contrary, they pressured me to learn English, but I was foolish because I had also learned to hold certain prejudices against anglophones. Much more than a communication issue, it was an identity issue and I was not about to learn English.

A time came when I got over my prejudice and I became bilingual. Five years later, I was no less bilingual; five years later, I was more bilingual. Put yourselves in my situation, 64 years old as I am.

[English]

When I speak English, you can hardly tell I have the slightest accent, except if I'm tired.

[Translation]

I know Kemptville and I can easily imagine that two francophones speaking to each other in French there would raise eyebrows all around them. That has nothing to do with the department's policy but with people's attitudes. They must be made aware in the same way that I was. This is serious and it is systemic.

I am sure that you all know how to ride a bicycle. Some of you may have not been on a bicycle for two years. But, if I gave you one, you would be able to ride it. Similarly, if you lose your language skills over a period of five years, it is perhaps a case of use it or lose it.

We do not need training, we need the right attitude. You can listen to the radio in the other language during your free time, while you are shaving or driving your car. That helps. You really need the will. Where there's a will, there's a way.

On another subject, when I go to an office and ask to be served in my language, if the employee is not capable of doing so, how does he react? Does he say: "Sorry, I don't speak French" or does he say "*Un instant, s'il vous plaît*"? What happens in situations like that?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Could I ask Mr. Nixon to answer the question, because he might have more experience on the ground than I have.

When our front-line workers begin to be trained for service, we tell them to do their best, to be as courteous as possible, as polite and as helpful as possible, to show people where they should call or to direct them to another office. They must do this in the second language if they can, by using phrases that they have learned, and they must direct people to someone on the premises who could

perhaps be able to serve them. They must provide them with all the information they need, as politely as possible, as practically and as efficiently as possible.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Are they also told not to make the client feel guilty?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** Absolutely.

Is there anything else to add?

**Mr. Charles Nixon:** No.

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** We try to impress on our front-line employees that they must take all the measures they can and make every effort they can, as they have learned in their training, to offer the best possible service to the clients. Most of them are very proud to do so.

●(1035)

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Let me ask you one last question. I see that, in his report, the Official Languages Commissioner gave you a mark of 54%, although your survey gives you 98% in client satisfaction. Is there something there I do not understand?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** The mark of 58% was for the active offer. When the commissioner's officers phoned the office in the course of their audit, the first thing that the employee said to them, in 58% of the cases, was "hello, bonjour" or "bonjour, hello"—or something of the sort. The active offer is a specific component of our bilingual service.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Why isn't it 100%?

**Ms. Liseanne Forand:** It should be 100%. That is our objective. The last time we audited the active offer performance, we got a mark of 85%. That is not enough. Saying "hello, bonjour" is not too much to ask. Anyone should be able to do it, and that is the result we are trying to achieve by making every effort that we can possibly make. The mark of 98%...

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Thank you very much...

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

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Thank you, Madam. Excuse me for interrupting you, but we need a few minutes in committee to plan next Thursday's agenda.

On behalf of my colleagues, let me thank you, your team and yourself, for coming here this morning. We discussed a fairly important issue, a perceived conflict between a regulation in one part of the legislation and the application of other parts of the legislation. I feel that we will be able to go on exploring this question. The committee will decide. Thank you so much.

Colleagues, let us take two minutes to plan our agenda for next Thursday.

[Proceedings continue in camera]





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