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## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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**Tuesday, March 22, 2011**

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**Chair**

Mr. Steven Blaney



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• (0850)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)):** I'd like to welcome everyone to the 53rd meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

[English]

This morning, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f), we have the 2009-10 annual report of the Commissioner of Official Languages, which was referred to the committee on Tuesday, November 2, 2010.

[Translation]

We are pleased to have with us officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. I would like to welcome to our committee the Deputy Minister, Mr. Morris Rosenberg. With him is the Director General and Official Languages Champion, Ms. Roxanne Dubé, whom we have met with previously. We also welcome Ms. Monica Janecek, Director, Corporate Resourcing Division.

Without further ado, I invite you to make your opening statement, Mr. Rosenberg.

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg (Deputy Minister, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, Honourable Members of Parliament.

It is my pleasure to be here today to answer your questions regarding the Commissioner of Official Languages' Report Card on the application of the Official Languages Act at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

I understand that you have already heard from Susan Gregson, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Human Resources as well as from Christine Desloges, the Chief Executive Officer of Passport Canada. I also believe you have received a series of documents on the work being carried out by our department in the area of official languages.

[English]

In November 2010, for the first time, the department was the subject of a report card. We recognize that the overall rating of E is very poor and that we're one of three institutions to have received this rating. We're concerned, and we are already taking concrete steps to improve those areas requiring attention. You have my commitment that we are taking this seriously.

Our first step was to invite Graham Fraser, the commissioner, to present to our executive committee to discuss the report card results. That meeting took place on December 20, 2010.

I'd like to now address each of the five measures that made up the overall report card result and explain what corrective action we're taking.

[Translation]

First, we received an A for Part VI of the Official Languages Act - Participation of English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians. We presently have a francophone workforce that exceeds the rate of the Canadian population.

The reality is that 36% of our workforce is francophone, while the Canadian francophone population is 25%. I believe this feature, combined with the importance DFAIT personnel accord to actively representing our linguistic duality abroad, is a strong foundation on which to build our corrective action on official languages.

[English]

For the measure concerning overall management of the official languages program, we received a D. Although we were recognized for our good overall management of the official languages program in areas such as policy development, employee awareness, and complaint resolution, we lacked mechanisms to promote understanding of part IV, communication with and services to the public, and part VII, the minority language communities. Our action plan was considered to have ill-defined objectives and unclear monitoring mechanisms.

To rectify this, we're finalizing the development of a comprehensive new official languages action plan for 2011 and onwards. The plan is an important part of our corporate planning and is in keeping with our report on plans and priorities for 2011-12, which commits to an active promotion of the use of official languages in the workplace. The plan includes the implementation of strategies and monitoring mechanisms to improve the management of the official languages program and to increase the visibility of official languages in the department. It will be brought for review and approval at the executive council in May, following ongoing consultations within our headquarters, regional offices, missions abroad, and key partners with respect to part VII of the act, the official language minority communities. I'd be pleased to forward a copy to the committee once it's completed.

[*Translation*]

To ensure a broad and coherent planning and implementation process, we have accelerated the work of our Network of Official Languages Coordinators which represents HQ, regions and all our missions abroad, that is over 150 offices. The network holds quarterly meetings, chaired by our Official Languages Champion. The action plan will take further steps in response to the concerns voiced by some members of this committee with respect to the active offer of service in both official languages by our missions abroad.

This relates to the third measure evaluated by the Commissioner: Service to the Public (Part IV)(3), for which we received a C. The Commissioner acknowledged that the service we provided by e-mail was available 100% of the time in the official language of choice and that visual active offer was present 97% of the time. The Commissioner found, however, that service in the language of the minority was available 92% of the time.

[*English*]

However, we recognize there's work to be done to improve active offer of service in person and by phone. This was only done 56% of the time and 69% of the time respectively.

To address this, and with regard to the specific cases raised by members of this committee, we wrote to all our heads of mission and asked them to provide us with measures they have implemented to ensure bilingual service to the public. Missions responded with several positive proactive measures to ensure linguistic duality in services offered by all relevant sections of our mission. An example is the immigration section, which I take it was the subject of some discussion here.

Allow me to make reference to a few of the good practices they noted, such as maintaining a roster of bilingual staff available to provide services in both languages, conducting surveys on the quality of consular services offered to the public, reminding employees of the importance of offering an active offer of service in both languages, and ensuring that locally engaged employees receive training to maintain a level of bilingualism.

I'd like to note that since we have more than 5,000 locally engaged staff in our workforce, some considerable effort is required to ensure an active offer of bilingual service is systematically given in certain locations.

•(0855)

[*Translation*]

I have also asked that the assessment of official languages which is part of every mission inspection be the subject of a distinct section of the report, which as you know, is made public. From now on, the inspection on official languages will be more detailed and will cover the services offered by our partner departments, such as Immigration Canada. We will also intensify periodic, unannounced, independent verification, particularly in the wake of complaints, to ensure that remedial action is sustained. I have also put this issue on the agenda of the next meeting of the deputy ministers committee on representation abroad to ensure a solid interdepartmental partnership in the delivery of bilingual services abroad.

Finally, we have reviewed our approach to the training of heads of mission to ensure additional time and material is made available to them to review our obligations with respect to official languages. I will underline the leadership role our heads of mission are called upon to play in this area when I address them this spring. A session was also held on March 8 with the managers of our regional offices across Canada on this issue.

[*English*]

We believe strongly that every Canadian should be able to be served in their first language in our offices abroad and at home. We'll continue to provide awareness sessions on service to the public to all our staff; to provide missions with a glossary of basic bilingual terms and phrases; to regularly remind all employees, especially replacements for receptionists, about the tools at their disposal and the importance of locating a French-speaking employee should a visitor require service in French; to increase the signage that indicates we offer bilingual services; to conduct regular verification of active offer of service; and to meet with all staff to discuss the importance of providing an active offer of bilingual services at all times.

[*Translation*]

We received an E for Language of Work, Part V of the Official Languages Act. This is due to the fact that according to the 2008 Public Service Employee Survey, only 57% of our francophone employees felt free to write in the language of their choice and only 67% felt free to interact with their supervisors in their language of choice. To address this, we have just received fresh recommendations from a senior level committee which was struck to look at language of work issues.

[*English*]

The recommendations are now being implemented. They deal with issues of leadership, performance management, awareness, support, and tools for employees. As a result, we're providing more awareness sessions on language of work; we just gave one on February 22, and it was well attended. Of course senior management committees are routinely conducted in a bilingual format, and senior management has proactively encouraged all employees to write their briefing notes and other documents in the language of their choice.

We have invited Monique Collette, who has led a comprehensive study on how to create and promote a truly bilingual workforce, to address our departmental employees next Monday. She follows Graham Fraser, who addressed all DFAIT managers in late 2009.

[*Translation*]

Our Official Language Champion has created a web page to provide a one-stop point of service for a range of tools and best practices on official languages.

[English]

We received an E on development of official language minority communities and promotion of linguistic duality.

Having read the commissioner's report card on part VII, I have given thought to DFAIT's approach to supporting official language minority communities. It seems to me that our actions are concentrated in three main areas: first, in projecting Canada's values abroad, we play a critical role in ensuring that our country's linguistic duality acknowledges the presence and importance of official language minority communities as an essential component of the Canadian fabric; second, in attracting students to Canada, we take into consideration the needs and interests of official language minority communities; third, we recognize official language minority communities as important interlocutors and partners in advancing Canadian interests and values abroad, both with respect to key programs such as La Francophonie as well as in shaping Canada's foreign and trade policy and programs as a whole.

To further this effort, I will be inviting representatives of the official languages minority communities to an annual dialogue to provide them with a more formal and holistic opportunity to review and comment on all of our programs and policies, as well as to provide the department, including myself, with an opportunity to listen to the needs and challenges of these communities.

• (0900)

[Translation]

We will also continue to educate and increase the awareness of managers and employees on Part VII of the Official Languages Act by continuing to provide awareness sessions.

We are reviewing our tools and procedures to better assess the impact of programming decisions on OLMCs. This will take some time and effort.

In closing, I would like to say that we are well aware that there is still work to be done, and we would like to assure the committee that we will pursue initiatives already under way and will continue to evaluate how we can improve all aspects of the Official Languages Act at our department.

I will now be happy to answer your questions, if I can.

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

Mrs. Zarac will lead off the first round.

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

Good afternoon and thank you for joining us today.

You stated that you were in the process of developing an official languages action plan. Did you have such a plan in the past?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** Yes, we did.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** What years did the plan cover?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** If I'm not mistaken, the plan covered the period from 2009 to 2010. It ended in 2010.

**Ms. Roxanne Dubé (Director General and Champion of Official Languages, Corporate Secretariat, Department of**

**Foreign Affairs and International Trade):** The plan covered the period from 2008 to 2010.

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** That's right, from 2008 to 2010. I was appointed Assistant Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in June of 2010. So then, I wasn't around when the last plan was developed.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** The Commissioner's report card did not assign very good grades to your department. Was the plan in keeping with the department's needs?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** Are you referring to the former plan, or to the one that is currently being developed?

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** I'm talking about the former plan.

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** In my opinion, the plan had some shortcomings in terms of measuring performance, for example. We will try to make improvements in this area in the next plan. This is the first time that the Commissioner of Official Languages has given a grade to the department and we take this very seriously.

We have carefully considered the Commissioner's comments. At the very least, the action plan must address the concerns identified in the Commissioner's report.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** I congratulate you on meeting with the Commissioner. I think that was a step in the right direction.

I have a more specific question for you. In order to address the concerns mentioned in the Commissioner's report, did you take an objective look at your plan to determine what wasn't working so that you could then develop a new one?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** I'll ask Ms. Dubé to field that question.

**Ms. Roxanne Dubé:** Thank you for that question, Mrs. Zarac.

Further to the Commissioner's comments, we met with the staff in the Commissioner's office to get a clear idea of our shortcomings in each of the areas mentioned.

Subsequently, we drew up a list of our strengths, and shortcomings, in each area. Then, based on our findings, we formulated a new action plan. Mr. Rosenberg mentioned many of the initiatives in the plan.

We are currently consulting with our staff on this action plan, and soon we will carry out an external consultation. We will be happy to provide the committee with a copy of the plan.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** So the consultation process is under way.

When do you expect to complete your plan?

**Ms. Roxanne Dubé:** Mr. Rosenberg said it would be brought before the executive council, the department's most senior decision-making authority, in May. After that, we will be able to provide a copy to the members of the committee.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** There is something I find a bit troubling. You said you held management meetings and that those meetings were conducted in a bilingual format. And yet, 57% of your employees said they did not feel they could communicate in the language of their choice.

How do you explain that?

• (0905)

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** I will try.

The way I see it, official languages is an area that requires leadership and the use of every possible tool, such as legislation—

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Forgive me for interrupting, Mr. Rosenberg.

You said you encouraged employees to write in the language of their choice. If an employee gives their supervisor a French-language document, is the supervisor able to understand it or does the supervisor have to send it to translation?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** Theoretically, the supervisor is supposed to be able to understand it, and theoretically, the employee has the right to use the language of their choice.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** You said theoretically, but what about realistically?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** It has to do with the culture. How do you change the culture? First of all, you change the culture by having those at the top lead by example. So we are first making an effort to conduct our meetings in a bilingual format, within our other committees, in other words, the executive council and the committees that I or an assistant deputy minister chairs.

That means that the meetings of the executive council or the policy committee that I chair, for instance, are conducted in both languages. Francophones speak French or English, and the same goes for anglophones. They are not reluctant, they use the language of their choice. Both languages are used. But that is not all. We use documents similar to decks. You are no doubt familiar with decks. They may be in English with a French translation, for example. In our department, we use a bilingual document, in other words, half English and half French. One page is in English, and the other is in French. We do that to try to promote the use of both languages.

But we realize that we cannot limit our efforts to the most senior levels of the department, even though it does send the right message. We also need to actively encourage employees at all levels to use the language of their choice.

How do we do that? We started down that path a few weeks ago, by asking our deputy ministers to spread the word that employees should communicate with us in the language of their choice, both orally and in writing.

The next step will be to ask our assistant deputy ministers to convey the exact same message to employees in their offices and to ask the director and director general to keep driving home the same message. We also need to find ways of measuring how effective that is.

What can we do to measure the effectiveness? A few things. Surveys are one way. No public service employee survey was conducted last year, but I think one will be done this year. It includes questions on the use of official languages. So that is one way.

The other way—and no decisions have been made yet, but it is under consideration—is the use of something called 360-degree feedback. It is an evaluation method where managers are assessed not only by their supervisors but also by their employees, so they, too, get a chance to give their feedback on the management style.

Obviously, with 360-degree feedback, protecting the anonymity of respondents and asking questions on the use of official languages will be key.

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

We will continue with Mr. Nadeau.

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

Good morning everyone.

To my knowledge, after the Statute of Westminster in 1931, the Foreign Office ceased to be responsible for foreign affairs in Canada. Canada became a sovereign state and created the department of foreign affairs.

Prior to that, Canada was a colony, a dominion. Then it became a sovereign state. Since 1931, then, a very anglophone culture has developed at the department of foreign affairs.

I am listening to you, Mr. Rosenberg. You just said you have taken action and have begun to make changes to move towards a culture where French and English are both respected. You have been on the job since June. Is DFAIT only now starting to realize that Canada is no longer a colony or dominion but a sovereign state, and that you are bound by the Official Languages Act?

• (0910)

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** We received an E, so we know we have weaknesses. But the report did acknowledge that we have also done a few things well.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Mr. Rosenberg, like anything else, you don't get on your kids' case when they are doing well. You received an E rating for language of work. In designated bilingual areas, 57% of your employees did not feel comfortable writing in French, and 67% did not feel comfortable speaking to their supervisor in French.

What are you going to do about that? Do your senior executives scowl when an employee gives them a document written in French because it takes them longer to understand the content or because it has to be translated? Does the content suffer in the translation, delaying the decision-making process?

That is what I have heard. I represent the federal riding with the most public servants in Canada. Believe me, the government is the big factory in our riding. We have more than 6,000 people working for the federal government on a full-time basis. Obviously, many of them are French-speaking. The riding of Gatineau is 92% francophone, in fact. And a number of those employees say that when they cross the bridge to go to work in Ottawa or when they come to Gatineau to go work in Hull, at Terrasses de la Chaudière, they switch from French to English because they no longer feel comfortable speaking in French.

What are you going to do to prove to me that, when we see you again in a year, we will be talking about how much better your rating is?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** The best I can do is reiterate what I have already said. First of all, we will see where we are at in a year. Clearly, the fact that the government is accountable to Parliament is a key mechanism. That is the whole purpose of this committee's very existence. We will be back here next year to report on where things stand and to see whether there was a real improvement or not.

All I can do is repeat what I told your colleague. We are putting flexible measures in place, such as making sure that the department's senior managers take the lead on an ongoing basis and carrying out verification procedures to determine whether things are changing or not. We need tools so that we can respond appropriately by providing help as needed and educating people on the importance of their official languages obligations.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Since this is DFAIT's first evaluation, is this the first time in your department's history that you are realizing how important it is that your francophone employees are not satisfied and do not feel free to work in French in your organization?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** It is hard for me to answer that. As I told you, I have not been at the department long, less than a year. This report is a big concern for me. I am talking to employees for their suggestions on how to improve the situation.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** So you are saying that it is thanks to you, Morris Rosenberg, that the department is starting to open its eyes to the importance of the French fact. In other words, the corporate memory is not adequate enough for you to know what was done before to ensure that francophones felt comfortable in your department.

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** That is not really what I said. The commissioner's report does nevertheless include some positive comments about the department's performance. But this is the first time the commissioner has ever done this kind of evaluation of DFAIT. And since this is the first time, we are examining the commissioner's findings with good faith. And that means we are going to strive for improvement in those areas where we fell short.

• (0915)

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

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

We will move on to Mr. Godin.

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

Welcome.

Since you are the official languages champion, Ms. Dubé, I would like to know how long you have been at the department.

**Ms. Roxanne Dubé:** Since 1998, but in the role of official languages champion since September 2008.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Did you see this coming? These Ds and Cs are not very flattering. On the inspection of the Canadian consulate general in Guangzhou between March 22 and 25, the report said that the standards were not met in terms of providing service to clients in both official languages. What is happening in your department?

**Ms. Roxanne Dubé:** That question is for me?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Yes, as the champion.

**Ms. Roxanne Dubé:** Quite frankly, we were not expecting the official languages commissioner to give us that kind of rating.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You thought everything was fine?

**Ms. Roxanne Dubé:** No, I would not go that far, but we have an excellent working relationship with the commissioner's office. As Mr. Rosenberg mentioned in his report, the most important thing was program management. They noted a number of really good practices, especially the fact that we had an action plan—the one we talked about earlier—and that it had been in place for two years at the time of the commissioner's investigation. They also noted the awareness sessions we ran for staff, the monitoring mechanisms we established for the appointment of bilingual positions, the high level of cooperation we provided to the commissioner's office with respect to complaint management, the action plan we developed to address part VII, and the meetings we planned to hold with representatives of official language minority communities.

Keep in mind that 88% of the positions in the department are bilingual. That is a huge number of positions that need to be managed both abroad and at headquarters. Corporate culture dictates that we provide bilingual service in all of our missions. The mere fact that you were able to know that the mission in question had some deficiencies can be attributed to the fact that Ms. Bogdan makes certain to include an official languages performance evaluation in every one of her inspection reports. And now we are responding to that evaluation.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** So 80% of your staff is bilingual?

**Ms. Roxanne Dubé:** I said that 88% of positions were bilingual.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** But a position is filled by a person. Are those people bilingual? I see a position as basically a desk. I would like an answer to my question; it shouldn't be that hard to answer.

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** Yes, I am going to give you an answer.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I would think that if you create a bilingual position, you put a bilingual person in that position. So are 88% of the people in the department bilingual? Is that the answer?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** I am going to give you some figures from September 30, 2010, because that is the most recent data we have. There were 1,177 Canadian employees working abroad. Of those, 85% met the requirements of the linguistic profile for their pool of positions, and 14.9% did not. The 14.9% was made up of non-imperative appointments, non-rotational single assignments of departmental employees and employees from other departments.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You are saying that 88% of positions are bilingual. When I asked you whether the people in those positions were bilingual, you checked your little document and listed off some figures. When you say bilingual positions, do you mean the same kind of bilingualism you come across at Air Canada, where you ask for orange juice and they bring you water? They are supposed to be bilingual positions, but once the employee has passed the exam, they are no longer able to do anything in the other language.

• (0920)

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** No. When they pass the exam, they should be able to provide services in French or in English.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** They should be able to provide services in both languages, but is there any monitoring of that? Have you received any complaints?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** Yes we do. The last time department officials appeared before your committee, one of your colleagues mentioned the fact that there had been complaints regarding five of our missions abroad. Shortcomings were noted with respect to service delivery in French. We took those complaints very seriously, and we spoke to the heads of the missions concerned. In every case, corrective steps were taken to improve the situation. We also made all of our heads of mission aware of the issue and their duty to ensure that service to the public was available in both languages.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** On page 3 of your presentation, it says that 36% of your workforce is francophone while just 24% of the Canadian population is francophone. So that is a difference of 12%. If 36% of your workforce is francophone, what proportion of that 24% is bilingual? Is it 36%? Why are you telling us about the 36%?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** I believe that refers to the report of the official languages commissioner, which talked about the

[English]

participation of English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** We have to move on to the other witness because your time is up. That will give you a chance to find the information you were looking for.

So we will move on to Ms. Boucher.

**Ms. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Good morning.

As you said, you have done some things well. But we never discuss those. You scored an E on development of official languages minority communities and promotion of linguistic duality. This is 2011, and you told us that you were looking at ways to improve that score. Canada has two official languages. You said you were starting to look at the situation, but was anything being done before? Did you have to report to the official languages commissioner? Is this the first time you received these kinds of ratings from the commissioner?

Ms. Dubé, you have been on the job since 1998. Was anything being done before this? Why now, in 2011, are we still dealing with the same problem, why do we have figures showing that 57% of francophones and 67% of anglophones do not feel comfortable? There is a problem. What has been done since to fix the problem and to make sure that you never get another E?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** I would like to respond, if I may.

As the commissioner points out in his report, there are deficiencies. This is not the first time we realized we had to do something about linguistic minorities. The department has done a great deal to promote the francophonie. We have formed relationships with many official languages communities, including the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne, the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française, the Quebec Community Groups Network and the English-Language Arts Network. We have met and consulted with these communities, and one of the objectives was to attract French-speaking foreign students to Canada to study in

French-language institutions outside Quebec. We took all those steps, but the commissioner still noted shortcomings in his report. I will read what he said:

• (0925)

[English]

However, DFAIT did not seize the occasion to identify official language communities...and...their needs. This necessary step should be undertaken so that the needs of these communities can be included in the management of the Department's official languages program.

[Translation]

He also criticized the fact that the department did not take the needs of linguistic communities and minorities into account when deciding whether or not to develop or revise certain programs. We accept those findings, and we are now trying to improve our performance based on those observations.

**Ms. Sylvie Boucher:** Very well. So you realized that programs were necessary.

In your discussions and meetings with the linguistic minority communities, did they have any suggestions or ideas on how to include them in the decision-making process?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** In a moment, I will ask Ms. Dubé to answer your question on the practices in place before.

But first, with respect to the consultations, as I said in my presentation, I plan to hold an annual dialogue with official language minority communities, as some other departments have done. The purpose would be twofold: (1) to ensure the members of these communities understand the full range of programs that the department has and how those programs and policies affect linguistic minority communities; and (2) to give department employees an opportunity to learn what the needs of those communities are so they can be given more adequate consideration during program and policy development. That is what I plan to do this year.

Ms. Dubé, could you talk about what we have done in the past?

**Ms. Roxanne Dubé:** I believe Mr. Rosenberg mentioned in his presentation our network of official languages coordinators. Every quarter, representatives from our missions, our 12 regional offices and every division at headquarters meet to take stock of where official languages stand. And each year, one of those meetings is dedicated solely to a discussion with representatives of linguistic minority communities and their input.

In October 2010, we asked Ms. Bossé, the director general of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne, to speak to the network. She spent a lot of time discussing internal concerns regarding Canadian Heritage's roadmap for linguistic duality. We were also able to identify needs in three areas.



First, there is education: our linguistic minority communities need to be supported. Within the department, we have a program to address that need, designed to carry out promotion and education efforts abroad, to attract francophone and anglophone students to regions with linguistic minority communities. They are on board with this initiative, as are the Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne and the Réseau des cégeps et des collèges francophones du Canada. We had an excellent discussion with Ms. Bossé on the matter.

The other area with a high level of participation—

● (0930)

**The Chair:** Ms. Dubé, I have to interrupt you there. I know you still have two areas to cover, but I have to make sure we keep to the time allotted to members. We may have a chance to come back to it later.

Thank you, Ms. Boucher.

We will now begin our second round of questions with Mr. Bélanger.

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

Ms. Dubé, you can have 15 seconds of my 5 minutes. Please continue briefly, you have 15 seconds.

**Ms. Roxanne Dubé:** Okay. The second area is the francophonie. As you know, further to the Francophonie Summit in Montreux, we are currently supporting the Quebec government as far as this international French-language forum is concerned.

The third key area with a high level of cooperation is export promotion with our regional offices in Winnipeg, Moncton and Prince Edward Island. Significant efforts are already under way on that end.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you kindly.

Good morning everyone.

Mr. Rosenberg, you are the unlucky one who has to take the rap for all those years of neglect by your predecessors. So I urge you to stay on the same track you have started on.

First, if I may, I would suggest that you consult your colleague, Mr. Dupont, the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources, who also appeared before the committee. His department got a less than stellar rating as well. Mr. Dupont came to us with a very convincing action plan, very well prepared, very appealing to look at and easy to understand. As a department, it may be worth your while to see what they did on their end.

Second, I want to commend you and encourage you to keep up that annual dialogue you plan to hold with official languages communities. That is something that used to be done. You would know since you took part in it when you were a deputy minister at Justice Canada. I urge you to continue with that dialogue. What's more, if possible and only if the other parties agree, I would be delighted to receive some sort of overview or minutes from the meeting.

Third, your department is Canada's face to the world. According to what you said, you communicated with 150 missions. You said so in your presentation. You contacted all of them. Did they all get back to you?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** No, not yet.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Can you tell us which missions have yet to respond?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** Yes, but I do not know the exact date we had asked them to respond by or whether there was a deadline.

Before I answer that, I would like to give those who have yet to respond one last chance.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** That is fine with me. If any of them fail to comply with a request from the deputy minister, the committee would be happy to bring them into line.

Seriously, though, I have had a chance to visit some missions, and what I saw was not good. I did not feel comfortable. As a French Canadian, I did not feel represented in some of those missions. I was also in one where I would not have felt represented as an English-speaking Canadian. That was the case in only one mission. I won't say which one, I will wait for your responses.

In addition, I have a minor concern about the second prong of your approach pertaining to part VII, and that is attracting immigrants to Canada, especially students. It should not be just students. Students have a tendency to leave again, when that is not really what our communities need. The committee has done a fairly in-depth study of that.

Ms. Dubé, I would recommend that you take a look at it. I believe it was the committee's first report.

I hope you will try to attract more than just students.

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** Allow me to explain that. I completely agree with you. I drew a distinction between the activities that fall within our mandate, the responsibility of our department, and the activities that fall within the mandate of other departments.

The institution responsible for immigration is Citizenship and Immigration Canada, even though we are on a joint committee to coordinate our plans and efforts to attract immigrants to Canada's official language minority communities. I completely agree with you. It was simply a matter of mandates.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I have just a minute left, Mr. Rosenberg. And there is one last thing I would like to explore, if we can in such a short amount of time, and that is the relationship between deputy ministers and the clerk.

Does your mandate letter or mission mention official languages?

● (0935)

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** No, not the mandate letter. But that does not mean we do not discuss the issue of official languages. Deputy ministers address it in a few ways.

First, there is a deputy ministers' committee chaired by the Secretary of the Treasury Board. That committee examines various key management concerns across the federal administration. And it is that committee that deals with official languages. I believe that Mr. Fraser was even invited to meet with that committee.

Second—

**The Chair:** Once again, I have the thankless task of interrupting you. I apologize.

We will continue with Ms. Nadeau. Sorry, I mean Ms. Guay.

**Some hon. members:** Ha, ha!

**Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Please don't make that mistake too often, Mr. Chair. I am very fond of my colleague, but come on.

**The Chair:** Let's not start any rumours this morning.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I know his wife well, and she would not be very happy. Forgive me. Back to the matter at hand.

You talked about your overall management of the official languages program. You received a D. You said something that really struck me, Mr. Rosenberg. It is on page 4 of your presentation, where you say:

[...] we lacked mechanisms to promote understanding of Part IV (Communications with and Services to the Public) and Part VII (Minority Language Communities) and our action plan was considered to have ill-defined objectives and an unclear monitoring mechanism.

I would like you to elaborate on that a bit more. Page 4 of your presentation, first paragraph.

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** Yes.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Basically, you said you did not have any tools.

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** Actually, we did have tools, but they were flawed. The objectives were not laid out clearly enough. For instance, what we want now are new performance measures so we can improve our performance. We want to reduce the number of instances where people do not receive service in French. We want to improve our positive response rate so that more French-speaking employees feel free to use the language of their choice in the course of their daily work such as writing memos. One way to measure that may be through a survey. That is the kind of thing that our last plan was lacking and that we are trying to improve this time around.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** How much time are you giving yourselves to bring about a real improvement?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** As I said in my presentation, the plan will be finalized in May. So it will be put—

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Can we get a copy?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** Yes, we will provide you with a copy as soon as it is finalized and approved by the department's executive council.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Earlier, during his wonderful PowerPoint presentation, my colleague was explaining how to translate certain words in both official languages. Do you plan to do anything similar, or do you already have such a plan?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** We do not have one right now. When we finalize our plan, we are going to try to make the objectives, as well as the performance measures for those objectives, as clear as possible. We will also make the connection with those aspects of the plan that respond to the comments of the official languages commissioner.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I have to say that it pains us to see that the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade scored Ds, Cs and even Es. I see other departments that are doing well and making an effort, but when it comes to DFAIT, that is something you absolutely must do.

I have been to a number of embassies around the world. When I get there, they know full well where I am from, who I am, that I am part of the Bloc Québécois, and that I am a francophone and a francophile. Oftentimes, they assign their only French speaker to me, and that person tends to me immediately, speaking to me in French. But just as often, the rest of the staff there are not necessarily bilingual. So no matter what country it is, it is paramount that the people who are representing us there be bilingual. You have a long road ahead of you.

Ms. Dubé, as someone who has been with the department for a while now, you know what I am talking about and you have seen it in other places.

● (0940)

**Ms. Roxanne Dubé:** I have been posted abroad myself. I have been in the department for many years now. I have held good practices forums with the young and not-so-young employees of the department. In my opinion, our missions and our heads of mission are highly aware of their responsibility to offer services...

**Ms. Monique Guay:** If that were the case, you wouldn't have the rating you received.

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

Mr. Godin, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I would like to continue with that question and ask you how they can be aware of it when you got the ratings you did.

**Ms. Roxanne Dubé:** The people in our missions abroad are very much aware that they are responsible for promoting the interests and values of Canada as a whole and Canada's linguistic groups, particularly the official language groups. Every day, as they perform their duties, they are called upon to do all kinds of outreach activities for Canada, such as Canada Day celebrations or speaking in both official languages when they give a public speech. Also, the fact that they use both official languages when speaking with representatives of foreign governments increases Canada's outreach. Of course, in our missions abroad, we use both official languages as languages of work.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Does Passport Canada come under your department?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** Yes.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** So, explain to me how Passport Canada can provide bilingual services across the country through Canada Post, whereas that agency is not bilingual in many regions. Perhaps I didn't put my question properly, but it's well acknowledged that, in a good many places, the agency works on the principle that the number must justify the service. What mechanisms have you put in place at Passport Canada to ensure that people can get information and talk to the persons responsible? Things have changed: in the past, Passport Canada did not use Canada Post as an office to provide information, but now they do.

Do you have any data on that?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** I don't have it with me, but we can try to find it and get it to you later.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Okay.

I would like to go back to the 36% and 24%. The remaining 52% is missing, and I want to know where it is. You said that 88%...

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** Yes, the 36% includes everyone in the department. I think that 36% of employees in the department are francophone or have French as their first official language. Now, that doesn't mean that all those people are in rotational positions or are in our missions abroad. The figures are not measuring the same things. But, as we have already said, we are trying to do our utmost to ensure that our heads of mission are bilingual—and in this case, it's clear—and that most of our staff abroad are Canadians in bilingual positions.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You said that, in some areas, it's a matter of mentality or culture. What type of measures are you applying in the case of offices where you detect a problem or receive complaints? What do you do?

• (0945)

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** As we said, the head of the mission is primarily responsible for overseeing the entire mission. We work hard to raise awareness among the heads of mission of their responsibilities. For the most part, I think that they are well aware of those responsibilities. I am going to insist on this aspect when I meet with the heads of mission next year. They will be given a two-week course in May or June. I am going to be speaking to them, and I will emphasize the importance of providing this level of service so that Canadians can be served in the language of their choice.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You have an action plan for the coming years?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** Yes. We will give it to you in May.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Are you also going to tell us what the consequences were of transferring the responsibility of providing bilingual services from Passport Canada to Canada Post?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** I don't have that information here, but we will try to find it for you.

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

I made a mistake. I gave the floor to our vice-chair, Mr. Godin, before giving it to our parliamentary secretary.

So, Mr. Gourde, you have the opportunity to have the final word.

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

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here, and I congratulate them on the work they are doing. We know that the Department of Foreign Affairs works 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We would like to thank you. Keep up the good work.

In your presentation, Mr. Rosenberg, you spoke about accountability to Parliament. You're aware that you have had a negative official languages evaluation.

So, when it comes to your department's obligation to be accountable to Parliament, with regard to complying with the Official Languages Act, do you feel that there is some pressure that will lead you to submit a strategic plan?

It's not simply about submitting it. The evaluation you received indicates that you need to work with it and not just shove it in a drawer. All the departments in our government must improve their ratings. What are you going to do?

**Mr. Morris Rosenberg:** I agree with you. It's not enough to say we have a plan. End of story. There are a few important issues. You need a plan because, without a plan, you don't know where you're headed. So that's important.

There's also the implementation of the plan. I've already spoken about balanced mechanisms, such as leadership at all levels, and quantifiable mechanisms that allow us to measure progress. They let us see where things stand and let us intervene, if necessary, in order to improve performance and accountability, and to report to Parliament or to the committee from time to time. They are responsible for making sure the government is accountable for our actions.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Thank you for your answer. I think we need to understand that, before our government came in, there was a moral obligation to do this work, but now I think that there is a real obligation to obtain results. We really want to see this difference. Certainly, we are going to invite you to come back next year so we can see the difference.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all I have to say.

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

That ends the first part of our meeting. I would like to thank Mr. Rosenberg and his team for testifying before our committee this morning. We do know that you have very busy days. So thank you very much. We look forward to seeing you again.

We will be suspending the meeting for a few minutes so we can go in camera to work on ongoing business.

I give the floor to Mr. Bélanger.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Could we have a notice of motion that I tabled a few days ago?

**The Chair:** Yes, we can do that. I am going to validate that.

Mr. Bélanger, you have a motion...

• (0950)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Yes, Mr. Chair. Please allow me to present a motion that asks the committee to reinvite Ms. Liseanne Forand, senior associate deputy minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and chief operating officer for Service Canada, and champion of official languages, to follow up on the meeting of March 8, 2011. We all remember the meeting of March 8, 2011 and the repercussions of that meeting. It's important to make some things clear. That's why I am proposing that we invite them to reappear before the committee.

**The Chair:** Do you have any comments on the motion, Mr. Bélanger?

The floor is yours, Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chair, I do have an amendment to this motion. I propose that they appear on Thursday of this week.

**The Chair:** I remind you that an hour to meet with Industry Canada representatives has already been set aside. The hour may change depending on the wishes of the members and the availability of the witnesses. That will be on Thursday.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I think it is important for them to come back to discuss this motion. I have nothing against them personally, but I feel some contradiction in the air.

For example, from Ms. Forand's testimony, it was very clear that the administrative structure of the Atlantic region was unilingual. You will recall that I asked her whether it was unilingual French. When she said that it was unilingual English, she was smiling.

Now one of the directors of Service Canada in the Atlantic region has sent a message saying that that was a mistake and the services are bilingual. That is according to Michael Alexander.

Let's not mix up services and administrative structure. We were not talking about the services, we were talking about the administration. There was an administration in New Brunswick, one in Nova Scotia, one in Newfoundland and one in Prince Edward Island. Those four administrations were centralized but the players changed. I realized that the administration was anglophone when I contacted it. The director of the Newfoundland office went so far as to call me to say that she would prefer me not to call their offices any more, but to go directly to the minister. Anglophones can deal with the administration but francophones have to deal with the minister. It makes no sense.

But Ms. Forand seems to say that she made a mistake, meaning that it is apparently bilingual. I would like her to say that publicly. She said publicly that it is unilingual English. So let's have her come and tell us publicly that the administration in the Atlantic region, with its 500,000 francophones, is bilingual. I see it as very important for her to come and tell us that as quickly as possible in order to clarify the matter. Otherwise, it will keep going in the papers and on television and people will be talking about two different things.

I think that francophones in the Atlantic region need to be reassured regarding services and regarding the administration. We need to know and Canadians need to know. Otherwise, people are going to get up in arms about something that the government has already decided, that it is bilingual. So let it say so; it is as simple as that. They always talk about the services, but they have said nothing

about the administration. The question asked here was very clear. It was about the administrative structure, the directors of the employment insurance offices, the directors of Service Canada and the directors of the Canada Summer Jobs program. All the people we dealt with before are now anglophone. She also said that it took two years to learn another language. But these are new positions. So why have unilingual people been put into positions that should be bilingual?

I think it is very important for her to come and explain the differences between the two public statements.

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

We will do that on Thursday, then.

Mr. Nadeau, the floor is yours.

• (0955)

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** If Thursday works for the person who moved the motion, it is no problem for me. We are all friends here.

Mr. Chair, the Bloc Québécois will certainly support the motion. I talked about it with Mr. Bélanger at the Festival du film de l'Outaouais recently, when he made the suggestion.

There is one thing. I remember Ms. Forand's presentation when she as much as said "the Maritimes are now anglophone only". Frankly, I behaved myself and said that there were ways in which things could be done, like conference calls, for example, so that service in French can be provided if no one in the office is able to speak the language of Molière.

I mentioned my experience in an Elections Canada office a long time ago. Today, I can tell you that, if I found myself in an office in Acadie being told "we don't serve in French", whether by a Mme Gaudreault or by a Ms. MacMillan, it would probably take the RCMP or a tow truck to get me out of that office. I would not be a happy camper and I would make sure that I got service in French. The first language in Acadie, after all, is French. That is why.

If Ms. Forand really did make a mistake, we should know about it. As Mr. Godin said, we have seen the opposite message in the few days after the stir in the media that the presentation by Ms. Forand and the Service Canada people caused.

So I feel that Mr. Bélanger's suggestion is perfectly appropriate. I would like it to become a proposal from the Standing Committee on Official Languages. I hope it will set the record straight. I hope that, in the Maritimes, Acadians will have as much right to services in their language as the descendants of the Loyalists have in theirs.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Murphy, you wanted to add a comment.

[English]

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** I want to echo what the two previous speakers have said, but it's even a little more serious than... I think Yvon said he didn't want to be mean or anything; I might want to be mean, because I think the split message is deliberate. I'll go so far as to say that Service Canada, in their releases printed in Atlantic Canadian newspapers—and I'll remind Mr. Nadeau that it's not just the Maritimes, but the region of the Atlantic provinces, which are four; I know that the Bloc would be sensitive to geography, as we are—Service Canada said that nothing has changed, yet they admit that there is a designation for administrative purposes in one region, which is, in fact, a change. They also say that the place of work and the services offered are both unaffected; that is not what we heard from the witness, so either it's the “right hand, left hand” situation, meaning that either the person we heard hadn't relayed the message to the people in the press office or that there's some sort of deliberate confusion being attempted here between what we all understand as services delivered in both languages and what I call the “back office” place of work where parts IV and V of the act have to be complied with.

I think the agency should be called here, but I also think it should be stated in the strongest words from you, Mr. Chair, or from those inviting the witness, that they be prepared to answer what I would say is a deliberate contradiction among the public.

If it's easily solved, great; somebody, however, has to be rebuked, because there is a contradiction now among the public, let alone in the evidence, so I fully support the motion, obviously.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Murphy. I have taken careful note of your comment. In fact, we generally do tell witnesses about the topics that might potentially come up when they appear.

Our parliamentary secretary now has the floor. Mr. Gourde.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

We on our side are also going to support your motion, Mr. Bélanger, as well as the NDP motion asking that Service Canada representatives appear again on Thursday of this week.

We do not understand whether Ms. Forand made a mistake. There is a contradiction. We on our side were here during her presentation too, and we were very surprised to hear the comments she made.

I think we must hear from Ms. Forand again in order to clear the situation up.

• (1000)

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

Are you ready for the question?

Yes, Mr. Godin?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I think that Mr. Bélanger wants to wrap up the discussion.

**The Chair:** It would normally be Mr. Bélanger's turn, but...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I don't want to wrap it but, but I would just like to say a few words.

Ms. Forand needs to understand that she and her colleagues were not mistaken, in my opinion. They are now stuck with the situation and they will have to get out of it. There is a difference between customer service and the administrative structure.

Jim Wood, who used to represent the administration in New Brunswick, was bilingual. We used to call him when there were problems. When I last wanted to talk to him, he had been replaced by Doug Johnson from Newfoundland, who does not speak French. Every time someone from Bathurst wants to talk to someone in the administration, they have to talk to Doug Johnson, an anglophone who does not speak French.

There had better be some fancy footwork from those people when they come here on Thursday.

**The Chair:** We seem to have consensus.

Mr. Bélanger, over to you.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** First, I thank my colleagues for their support.

Second, in preparation for the meeting, would it be possible to get some notes on the administrative structure we will be talking about? That could help us in our deliberations.

Third, I have a confession to make. I was in the chair for that session. It was correctly pointed out to me that I forgot to mention that it was International Women's Day. So may I wish everyone a happy, but slightly belated International Women's Day.

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I want to mention one other thing that Ms. Forand told the committee. She said that there had been consultation in the Chéticamp area when services were withdrawn from certain groups. In fact, she said that a person had been assigned to go there and do the job. After that announcement, groups have said that they were never consulted, they were simply told that the services had been done away with.

I do not want her to be surprised.

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

We are now going to vote on Mr. Bélanger's motion, including the date of Thursday, March 24.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** We are now going to suspend the session for a few minutes in order to continue our work in camera.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chair, the RCMP has not reported to us. We have sent them letters, but there has been no reply.

**The Chair:** We are going to suspend the work and we will come back to that.

[ *Proceedings continue in camera* ]





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