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Chair

The Honourable Michael Chong

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•(0830)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)): Welcome to the 45th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages on May 31, 2012. Pursuant to Standing Order 32, we will discuss the Annual Report on Official Languages 2010-2011 referred to the committee on Friday, December 9, 2011.

Today we welcome the President of the Treasury Board, as well as Marc Tremblay and Daphne Meredith. Welcome to you all.

[English]

We'll begin with an opening statement from the minister.

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board): Thank you.

[Translation]

Members of the committee, Mr. Chair, thank you for the invitation to come here today to discuss the latest annual report on official languages. I am pleased to have with me Daphne Meredith, Chief Human Resources Officer, as well as Marc Tremblay, Executive Director of the Official Languages Centre of Excellence within the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer.

[English]

As you know, responsibility for the application of the Official Languages Act is shared among a number of players in the government.

My department, the Treasury Board Secretariat, coordinates the policies and programs that relate to parts IV, V, and VI of the Official Languages Act. These three parts of the act deal respectively with services to the public, language of work, and the equitable participation of anglophone and francophone Canadians in federal institutions. The secretariat also plays a role in the implementation of part VII within institutions. This involves reviewing Treasury Board submissions to ensure that official languages issues are properly considered as part of initiatives proposed by federal institutions.

Every federal institution subject to the Official Languages Act is responsible for the application of the act within its organization, including designing and delivering effective official languages programming. This is consistent with the human resources management system established after Parliament passed the Public Service Modernization Act, and of course it is consistent with the Official Languages Act. Under this system, deputy heads are responsible for managing human resources, including implementation of the Official Languages Act, in their respective organizations.

Approximately two hundred institutions are subject to the Official Languages Act. These institutions are assessed and evaluated over a three-year period. Certain small, medium, and large institutions are evaluated annually, allowing the Treasury Board Secretariat to give an accurate portrait of the status of the official languages program in institutions across the public service every year.

[Translation]

As President of the Treasury Board, I have a responsibility to submit an annual report to Parliament on the status of the official languages program in federal institutions.

The Annual Report on Official Languages covers the application of parts IV, V and VI of the Official Languages Act.

[English]

Last December I tabled the *Annual Report on Official Languages 2010-2011*. Overall it shows that federal institutions are taking the necessary steps to ensure their services and communications with the Canadian public are available in both official languages. It also shows there has been consistent improvement over the last three years in creating and maintaining a bilingual work environment.

In terms of concrete numbers, the percentage of incumbents in bilingual positions serving the public who met the language requirements of their position continued to grow, reaching 94.3% in 2011, compared to 92.5% in 2009. The percentage of bilingual positions requiring superior proficiency—that is to say, level C in oral interaction to serve the public—has also gradually increased since 2009, from 34.8% to 36.1%.

Additionally, the report shows that based on the 2006 census, both official language communities continue to be relatively well represented in federal institutions.

•(0835)

Finally, I would add that the report highlights some of the measures federal institutions have taken to provide strong leadership in official languages. This includes the use of official languages action plans, as well as simple but effective measures such as regularly adding official languages to the agendas of executive management committee meetings.

[Translation]

These examples all demonstrate the steady progress that has been made in implementing parts IV, V and VI of the Official Languages Act, and in the promotion of linguistic duality in our federal institutions.

[English]

For its part, the Treasury Board Secretariat supports the federal institutions that are subject to the act in fulfilling their obligations. My department does this in many ways. For example, we develop policy instruments for adoption by the Treasury Board. We provide institutions with a full policy suite on official languages. We make available to federal institutions tools to help manage official languages, such as the official languages management dashboard. This tool allows institutions that are part of the core public administration to obtain a quick Internet overview of the official languages program in their organizations, with a series of quantitative and qualitative indicators.

We've also made available Clearspace, which is an electronic platform that enables those responsible for official languages to help and consult with each other, and to share information.

We also organize learning and networking events, such as the annual Conference of Official Languages Champions. This month we held our 16th annual conference in Sudbury, which is, of course, a city I know well—just to the north of my constituency—with a strong history of bilingualism.

We also assess the performance of federal institutions with regard to official languages through the management accountability framework. This tool supports deputy heads in improving management practices in their organizations.

We also inform federal institutions of particular issues and provide direction and guidance, as we have done for the Caldech Supreme Court decision, which further defined the nature and scope of the principle of substantive equality in the provision of services to the public in both official languages by the federal government. In fact, I would say the majority of federal institutions have used the analysis grid we developed to assist in the implementation of the Caldech decision. They are now looking to implement required changes to ensure their programs and services comply with the court's decision.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, federal institutions are committed to making linguistic duality an integral part of their everyday operations. And the government is likewise committed to supporting them in achieving their objectives.

This concludes my presentation. I would now be pleased to answer the committee's questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, minister.

We will begin with Mr. Godin.

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

I want to welcome Minister Clement and to thank him for appearing before the committee.

Minister, you know how important bilingualism is in Canada. You especially know what importance I attach to it, together with many of my colleagues and many Canadians. This act, which was put in place many years ago, is fundamentally important to our country.

However, 40 years on, we are still required to have a Standing Committee on Official Languages, which constantly deals with the question and always issues shocking reports.

At the start of your presentation, minister, you said that many stakeholders were responsible for official languages; you are not alone. I would like to know how you interpret your role as President of the Treasury Board in the implementation of the Official Languages Act. It is easy to come and testify this morning and to say that everyone is responsible, but I want to know what your specific role is as President of the Treasury Board, who is responsible for official languages. You did say you are responsible for parts IV, V and VI of the act.

• (0840)

Hon. Tony Clement: The Treasury Board Secretariat of course plays an important role with regard to official languages. The Treasury Board is responsible for the general thrust and coordination of the Canadian government's policies and programs relating to the implementation of part IV of the act, which concerns communications with and services to the public, of part V, which addresses language of work, and of part VI which concerns the participation of English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians.

I am of course responsible for presenting an annual report to Parliament on the situation of the official languages program in all federal institutions.

The Treasury Board also plays a role in the implementation of part VII of the Official Languages Act within the federal institutions. It ensures that the obligation to enhance the vitality of the English and French language minorities is reflected in the documents that are presented to it for approval. That is the general role of the Treasury Board, but I want to emphasize once more that every department of course also has its own responsibilities. Every department has a responsibility to implement the Official Languages Act effectively.

Mr. Yvon Godin: So we could say, minister, that your department is the watchdog of all those departments and that it ensures that they implement the act. They have responsibilities, but you are the head of all that, and that is your responsibility.

[English]

Mr. Minister, many were troubled by a number of aspects of your 2011 report that revealed wide gaps in both the consistency and quality of the structure in place to guarantee respect for the institution of bilingualism in the contemporary public service. One example is language of work.

The Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer found that bilingual meetings were public-service-wide problems, and amazingly, less than half of our federal institution holds meetings where employees can participate in the official language of their choice. What do you answer to that? What do you intend to do to correct it—or to tell your counterparts or the other ministers to do their job after 40 years of the law of the official languages?

Hon. Tony Clement: Let me underline once again the statistics I mentioned in my opening remarks, which indicate some progress. I think we should celebrate the progress. But at the same time, as Mr. Godin has indicated, there are some areas where we can continue to encourage, remind, and direct where applicable.

I don't know whether Mr. Tremblay or Madame Meredith wish to answer specifically to your question.

Do you have anything to add?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Daphne Meredith (Chief Human Resources Officer, Treasury Board Secretariat): Mr. Tremblay, do you want to talk about our meetings with the department, please?

Mr. Marc Tremblay (Executive Director, Official Languages, Treasury Board Secretariat): Generally, when we identify areas requiring attention in an annual report, such as that of 2010-2011, the first finding is that it is a horizontal issue. That means that we find this is a challenge that applies to a number of institutions. Our attention is horizontal as well. We use our networks, such as the conference of official languages champions, the departmental advisory committees and the advisory committees of the crown corporations to add this subject to the agenda in order to identify best practices and to enable the champions to see for themselves the challenges our institutions are facing.

● (0845)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Pardon me for interrupting you, but I would like to ask you a question.

I recall an anecdote. Not so long ago, a member of the RCMP, who was responsible for registering firearms in Miramichi, lost his job because he did not speak French. That was the first time in the history of Canada that an RCMP member had been dismissed because he did not speak French. An officer of Parliament was also appointed and told that he was not required to be bilingual because he was the best candidate, but that person is responsible for an entire department.

How could such a person conduct bilingual meetings? How can employees communicate with an officer of Parliament, such as the Auditor General, if he does not speak French, despite the fact that he has promised to learn it. In fact, the time period has almost elapsed since he was supposed to learn French within a year.

How can you justify that? What message is the government sending to the nation if it continues to offer key positions to unilingual individuals who, according to the Commissioner of Official Languages, should be bilingual?

Hon. Tony Clement: I can answer that question. As the government has previously said, it is important to have bilingual institutions in our government; that is an obligation. In fact, it is an obligation under the act, but it is also an obligation for our society.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I agree with what you just said. It is an obligation under the act; that is to say that the government made a mistake.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Tony Clement: With regard to the Auditor General, the government selected the most qualified candidate. However, that individual promised to learn French as soon as possible.

Mr. Yvon Godin: He said within a year.

Hon. Tony Clement: That wasn't the perfect decision, but its purpose was to protect the institution of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. Learning the language is definitely an improvement.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Gourde, it is your turn.

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

Thank you for being here this morning, minister.

Thanks as well to Ms. Meredith and Mr. Tremblay for being here. It is very much appreciated.

Minister, as you know, the deputy heads are the main persons responsible for human resources in their organizations. Your annual report states that the deputy heads have greater flexibility, which enables them to exercise stronger leadership with regard to implementation of the Official Languages Act.

Minister, could you say more on that subject? What changes have given the deputy heads greater flexibility?

Hon. Tony Clement: I can say a few words about that, and perhaps Mr. Tremblay can add something to my answer.

The situation and the figures are encouraging. Our goal is to encourage the use of both official languages in the government workplace. Policy instruments can help us improve the situation and achieve that goal. The Official Languages Act is clear: it is important to create favourable conditions and a work environment conducive to the use of both languages. The figures show that the situation is better than it was five or six years ago.

We also have tools to protect our obligations, such as annual forums, the official languages champions and the audits that the secretariat has conducted. There is an audit process. These tools have demonstrated their effectiveness.

Mr. Tremblay or Ms. Meredith, would you like to continue?

● (0850)

Ms. Daphne Meredith: I can add that the minister is entirely right. We are currently putting the emphasis on leadership in the departments so that they meet their obligations under the Official Languages Act. We are also changing our relations with the departments. We want to strengthen their capacity to meet their obligations. As the minister and Mr. Tremblay previously said, we are working with the departments, together with our committees, to enhance their flexibility and to promote best practices among them. A change is taking place in the relations we have with them. We are putting the emphasis on their capacity and leadership in this area.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Minister, the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer provides the management, coordination and tools necessary to achieve the desired official language results. Your report states that the departments are facing challenges in meeting the official language objectives of a large part of the public service.

What tools have been put in place to assist institutions in achieving their official language objectives?

Hon. Tony Clement: As you said, the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer plays a main role in the application of our principles and obligations. The office monitors the status of the official languages program. I believe that is a key role. It considers the various elements, which are communications with and service to the public, language of work and the participation of English-speaking and French-speaking employees.

There are many examples to illustrate how the office is performing its role. The Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer develops official language policy instruments and monitors the institutions to ensure they meet their linguistic obligations under the Official Languages Act. Every year, it invites some of those institutions to report on achievements related to the official languages program. As I have already said, it of course submits an annual report to Parliament on the status of the official languages program in the federal institutions. That is the subject the committee is considering today. I can also say that it reports results.

Is there anything else?

Ms. Daphne Meredith: As the minister mentioned in his address, we have specific tools, in particular the Official Languages Management Dashboard and the ABCs of Linguistic Profiles at Your Fingertips, a tool that enables managers and human resources and official languages specialists to identify the language profiles of bilingual positions in an objective and standard manner. We have other tools. It depends on needs. We also meet the needs of the departments.

●(0855)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dion, you have seven minutes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, minister, Mr. Tremblay and Ms. Meredith. Thank you for being with us and for submitting a report that is succinct, unlike another report that we recently received. I am sure the committee appreciates that diversity.

However, minister, your report has raised a major concern for me, and I would like to give you the opportunity to allay it. My concern stems from the fact that, in the few pages of this report, we are told that the majority of institutions are complying with a given requirement. So that means that the minority are not complying. It states that a new majority are complying, which means that the majority are not complying, hence my concern. If you could respond in a style as succinct as that of your report, we could get to the bottom of this matter in the few minutes we have together.

You cover 200 federal institutions that are subject to the Official Languages Act. And you have asked 59 of them to submit a report. Is that because you operate in accordance with a random system every year, and all the institutions must be on the lookout in case they are required to submit a report? Is that how you cover the 200 institutions?

Hon. Tony Clement: Some major institutions have an obligation to submit an annual report, but we operate in accordance with a random method for the others. Does that answer your question?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Yes, but how do you select them?

Ms. Daphne Meredith: There are 200 institutions, and one-third of them answer the questions every year.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Do they know in advance in which year they will have to submit a report, or is that determined randomly, which forces them to be ready at any time?

Ms. Daphne Meredith: I believe it is predetermined.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: There may be emerging themes. We ensure that all are covered over three years. For example, at the time of the Vancouver Olympic Games, the selection of departments reflected the situation. We targeted to a greater degree institutions that had key roles to play in those events.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you.

Four of the 59 institutions have not submitted a report to you. Have they complied with that requirement since then? Have they submitted a report to you?

Ms. Daphne Meredith: They have to be asked to submit their report the following year. They are on our list for next year.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: This is quite incredible. If they are not even submitting the report to you, how can you check what they are doing? Whatever the case may be, I am quite surprised.

I am going to cite the example of a very troubling paragraph. On page 2, the report states, "A majority of institutions indicated that they have included language provisions in contracts and agreements signed with third parties acting on their behalf."

So this means that a minority are not doing that. It even seems to me that this is contrary to their obligations, which were established a very long time ago. They are required to do so in accordance with those obligations. This is troubling, isn't it? It implies that one-third can be called upon and yet not be asked to comply with the Official Languages Act? The fact that not all institutions are complying with the act is, in my view, very bad news. How can a minority not comply with those provisions?

What follows is even more disturbing, minister. The report states that "only a small proportion of the institutions have taken steps to ensure that the language provisions are implemented."

In other words, only a majority are requiring third parties to comply with the act. A minority of that majority, that is to say a small proportion, ensure that third parties comply with those provisions. I find this situation extremely troubling.

Hon. Tony Clement: Our obligation, of course, is to ensure that the Official Languages Act is part of the management of government. That management can be examined every year through a process.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: That is not what is stated in the report.

Hon. Tony Clement: No.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: The report does not tell us that you have audited what is going on in those departments that require nothing.

Hon. Tony Clement: There is a focus every year, Mr. Dion.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: We should take a look at it. Our committee wants to know because that paragraph is very troubling.

Another paragraph is very troubling. At the end of the second paragraph on page 2, the report states:

...slightly less than the majority of institutions indicated that they include clear objectives regarding official languages in executives' and managers' performance agreements.

That means that the majority of institutions that you cover require nothing from their executives or managers in the way of performance objectives. Not only that, but what are the performance objectives of those institutions that require them? Are they performance objectives that the Treasury Board considers of good quality? What percentage of those managers have achieved those performance objectives? We have no idea. Do you know? Can you tell the committee what percentage of managers have achieved the performance objectives?

Hon. Tony Clement: There are percentages in the annual report. Perhaps Mr. Tremblay could answer that.

● (0900)

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Yes. We see that the Treasury Board, the Office of the Chief Officer, has identified a subject that we believe is important and that shows that we have asked that question and honestly reported the results obtained, which already demonstrates the usefulness of our annual report, of the oversight we are conducting, since this committee asks us questions and asks the institutions questions.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Pardon me, Mr. Tremblay. I am asking you questions because this troubles me. So don't tell me that your report is, in itself, a measure that we should find comforting. The report states that only a minority have established performance objectives. And you are unable to tell me how many people in that minority have achieved those objectives or whether the Treasury Board is satisfied with the quality of those objectives.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: In the philosophy of human resource management in the public service, that is not our perception of the role we have. Our role is that of a leader that must make the departments, institutions, deputy ministers and official languages champions accountable. They have been informed of those results, which show that there is a horizontal challenge, like the other subject that we addressed earlier and for which we invite them to take the necessary steps. The fact that we have identified it emphasizes to them that this is an area requiring improvement. The champions therefore go back to the departments to play the role they have to play to ensure measures are taken.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: If you want to shake them up with this report, don't wrap it up in sugarcoated optimism, as is currently the case, by saying that everything is going very well; we have a few challenges to address. You have enormous challenges to address.

If only a minority have established performance objectives, and you are unable to tell us what percentage of them are achieving them, or whether those objectives seem professional, competent and demanding enough from the Treasury Board's standpoint...If you subsequently conduct no audits and are happy to receive the report and to pass it on to us, how do you think we will feel, if not very concerned about the way the Treasury Board closes its eyes to what is really happening on the ground?

Hon. Tony Clement: That is not true, Mr. Dion. Our goal is to cooperate with all departments to improve our results in achieving those objectives.

[English]

Our goal is to help the departments, in their responsibilities, apply the Official Languages Act. That's our goal. As I've outlined, we have various tools in our toolbox to help us do that. It's completely unrealistic for us to subvert the responsibility of each individual department to meet its goals. That's the department's responsibility. We play an oversight function, as does the Commissioner of Official Languages. We do our role, and then they have to fix what they have to fix.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Trottier.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here this morning, minister. I know you are very busy with the major changes you are trying to implement within the public service. Your appearance here this morning is very much appreciated.

I would like to talk to you about part V of the act, regarding the public service and language of work. I know the annual report provides an overview of the ways in which the institutions have created a working environment that enables bilingualism to develop. The report also states that there has been constant progress in the implementation of part V.

Could you tell us more about the measures that certain institutions have put in place to ensure and encourage the use of both official languages in the workplace?

Hon. Tony Clement: Yes. As you said, there has been progress. The figures show that both official languages are being used more than five or six years ago.

As I said at the start of the meeting, there are tools that we can use to cooperate with the departments. For example, there is the forum for the public service and directors general, the purpose of which is to give them more tools. We celebrate the progress that has been made, of course. There is assistance in implementing the Official Languages Act. All the tools help us achieve our objectives. There is also cooperation in giving the departments more tools.

Daphne, is there anything else?

● (0905)

Ms. Daphne Meredith: Yes. In our activities with the interdepartmental committees, there are examples of best practices in the departments, particularly the use and conduct of senior management meetings in English during one week and in French the following week. That is a best practice.

There is also the fact that an employee may have a partner who speaks his or her second language. We call that a language buddy. That enables that employee to improve his or her second language.

Perhaps Marc can provide other examples of best practices.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Yes, of course. When we look at the reports that are submitted to us, we see that a management committee or inter-sectoral committee on official languages is a best practice. It raises the profile of official languages and makes it possible to establish plans to address certain aspects that, according to the annual reports and other performance measures, should be improved.

There are very concrete measures. I can think of video campaigns that have been conducted or competitions involving employees to show their commitment and to increase their pride in linguistic duality. There are also celebrations for Linguistic Duality Day, which was introduced by our network of official languages champions. That day is now celebrated throughout the public service every year.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: I note from the report that there are approximately 12,000 offices and points of service, but that only 4,000 of them have an obligation to offer bilingual services to the public. In the other 8,000 offices, which are not responsible for offering bilingual services, are measures nevertheless being taken to encourage bilingualism?

[English]

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I can speak to that.

[Translation]

A basic distinction has to be drawn between the obligation to serve the public in both official languages where those offices are established and the regions that are designated bilingual for language-of-work purposes. The two do not always coincide. In the regional offices and regional federal councils, there are all kinds of activities that extend beyond the mere context of language of work, as determined by the requirements of the act, since we want to supervise, encourage and stimulate employees who are required to offer service in both official languages and who have a pronounced interest in learning their second language. So, yes, measures are being taken, particularly with regard to the regional federal councils.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: All right, thank you.

I have another question, which again concerns part V of the Official Languages Act. With respect to the implementation of that part, the Treasury Board is responsible for ensuring that public servants are able to work in the language of their choice.

What tools and mechanisms are certain institutions using to maintain a working environment conducive to the use of both official languages?

• (0910)

Hon. Tony Clement: As I previously said, it is important to note that every department has an obligation to find ways to reinforce its role under the Official Languages Act. Management is involved in each obligation.

Perhaps Ms. Meredith can add a few words.

Ms. Daphne Meredith: We have approaches for employees. I talked about the language buddy system. There are various learning methods. We encourage the use of both languages at meetings with employees. We also have examples of practices, such as having an official language committee or a champion in the departments to promote best practices. I believe we have noted a few tools that we encourage people to use in the departments.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Trottier.

Mr. Weston, you have five minutes.

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to welcome our minister. Saturday will be the first national health day. I would like to congratulate the minister, who is a role model because he is really in good shape.

I would also like to welcome you, Ms. Meredith, and your sister, who comes from Vancouver—my part of the country—and who is well established in British Columbia.

Minister, I would like to ask you some questions on part IV of the act.

The annual report provides us with an overview of the major official languages successes the government has had. More specifically, it states that the majority of institutions have taken effective measures to ensure they provide the public with services in both languages.

Can you explain some of the institutions' achievements in the implementation of part IV of the act, which concerns communications with and services to the public in both official languages?

Hon. Tony Clement: Thank you for your question.

Incidentally, I lost my squash match this morning.

[English]

It's not a good day for me when it comes to fitness and health. I didn't quite meet my targets on the squash court, but it's nice to know that we're meeting some targets with respect to this annual report. Certainly my colleagues here who are in the public service have, I'm sure, some wonderful examples of great success in our offices. But certainly from my perspective as a minister and as President of the Treasury Board, I think we do our job very well for the citizens of our country.

They know that we have these obligations. We for the most part meet these obligations. And I think it's the role of Monsieur Dion and Monsieur Godin and others to focus on where we don't meet these obligations, and that's fair. But the fact of the matter is, day in, day out, much more often than not, we meet those obligations. I think it's important for Canadians to know that. I think it's improving as well.

I think we're creating an atmosphere within our offices where our expectations are being met and they're being celebrated. And through our tools that are available electronically now, we have a greater way of sharing success, sharing the tools that work and making sure that the oversight is there.

That's my general overview. Maybe Daphne or Marc can add to that.

[Translation]

Ms. Daphne Meredith: We have explained our methods for evaluating the institutions' communications with and services to the public. We also have activities, and the institutions have theirs. For example, they may include putting in place an official languages action plan, regularly discussing official languages issues at regular and senior management meetings, or ensuring that the official languages champions and representatives meet regularly.

I am thinking of the Desrochers or CALDECH affair—

• (0915)

[English]

Mr. John Weston: I'm going to interrupt, Madam Meredith, because my time is so short.

I'm just wondering, on the international level, when you meet your counterparts, Minister, do you ever get comments about how unique it is that you are dealing in the two languages and how successful our country is in managing that challenge?

Hon. Tony Clement: I think Minister Moore could better answer that question, because he does meet his counterparts on those issues, and we obviously have representation at the Francophonie, for instance. My counterparts internationally are more involved in budgets and those kinds of things, so typically we don't talk about official languages.

Mr. John Weston: Okay.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I might just add one point of interest.

We do have the Sri Lankan delegation coming to Ottawa this week. They're meeting the Commissioner of Official Languages, our colleagues at Canadian Heritage, the Public Service Commission, and ourselves. They're very interested in the success stories of the Canadian experience and applying the lessons learned over the past 40 years to their own unique circumstances, where they think they can benefit from our experience.

That happens quite regularly. I've had occasion to go to Belfast to meet with the Northern Ireland people, who are also quite interested in our models.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston: Thank you, Mr. Tremblay.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Dionne Labelle.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Good morning, madam and gentlemen.

I am going to draw a parallel between various facts that I have retained. In 2006-2007, the Centre of Excellence for Official Languages had 74 employees. Now it has 20 or so as a result of the idea that the departments are now accountable for the role they must play in protecting and advancing official languages in the machinery of government, the institutions of government. At the same time, you say in your annual report that only a small number of those

institutions are conducting audits. Departments and institutions are asked to show more discipline and to conduct follow-up and analyses of performance in promoting the official languages. However, you yourselves have none on the official languages question in your Report on Plan and Priorities.

Isn't a bit of magical thinking involved in this way of believing that the departments will do the work, whereas you yourselves are not doing it and not even including it in your priorities?

Hon. Tony Clement: Thank you, sir.

As I previously said, the primary obligation is to ensure that we have tools in every department to encourage and promote bilingualism. Those tools must be able to be shared with the departments. That is a role provided for under the Official Languages Act. There is a very important function involved in encouraging people working in the public service to learn the other official language. That is a key role. There are ways to encourage that participation.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: You say that only a small number are doing that, that you expect this torch to be taken up within the departments. It seems that your approach is not working, doesn't it?

Hon. Tony Clement: No, as I previously said, that is the role of every department, but there are tools that we have used to encourage, promote and say that there are obligations. That is easier with today's electronic tools. Social media, for example, are tools that we can use.

• (0920)

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: There are a lot of tools, but the departments are apparently not using them. Only a small number of them are using them.

Another aspect of this is that cuts are being made virtually everywhere, and we do not know whether official languages are being taken into account in those cuts in the various departments. There have been cuts in Quebec, as we have seen, including those affecting the Marine Rescue Centre.

Have any directives been issued to reflect the impact of the budget cuts on official languages?

Hon. Tony Clement: Let me be clear: there are obligations under the Official Languages Act regarding the advancement and use of the two official languages. This is a statutory obligation. No budget cuts can affect that obligation.

[English]

I can assure you that nothing we do in our budgeting can detract meaningfully from that obligation. We have that obligation. So when we did our budgetary reviews, we were very mindful—

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: So directives to that effect were given to the departments at the time of the cuts.

Hon. Tony Clement: Every department has an obligation to implement the Official Languages Act. That is what has been done.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: But if you do not have the figures, how can you say they have met it or not? That is what [*Editor's Note: Inaudible*]

Hon. Tony Clement: The budgets of each department, the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality and things like that also help apply those principles in our society. I believe our government is achieving great success as a result of those tools.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: I personally expect that the Commissioner of Official Languages will have a lot of work as a result of these cuts, if only just to see how the implementation of the act is slowed down in the departments and so on.

We are also told that the budget was frozen. The Commissioner of Official Languages requested a \$6.4-million upgrade to his IT system, and he was denied. He will therefore have to upgrade his IT system out of his own budget. At the same time, there will be more work as a result of all these cuts. We do not know how the implementation of the act will be slowed.

Hon. Tony Clement: Yes, sir, but it must be emphasized that the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages is not subject to our cuts. The Commissioner of Official Languages is an officer of our Parliament, and there is no reason for him to be subject to our budget cuts.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: He submitted a request to you to modernize his IT system, in view of the fact that—

Hon. Tony Clement: Yes, and it is necessary—

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: And it was denied.

Hon. Tony Clement: —for that office to make changes, but there is a general, overall budget for that, I believe.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Boughen.

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Thanks, Chair.

Let me add my voice of welcome, Minister and officials.

I'm just wondering if you could share with us a statistic that talks about the responsibility of Treasury Board, because I'm hearing more and more that you have some responsibility in the dual languages. What percentage would you say is earmarked toward the language programs? Do you find that satisfactory, or is it up for grabs in terms of being able to satisfy the need that is out there?

Hon. Tony Clement: Thank you, Mr. Boughen.

Daphne, do you want to get into the details of that?

Ms. Daphne Meredith: Are you referring to the activities of training and what not within the secretariat itself, or...?

Mr. Ray Boughen: Yes, the facilitating, the training programs, instructional.... It just seems to me you're asked to do a whole lot, and I'm not sure my understanding of Treasury Board fits that model, so I'm trying to get my head around it a little bit.

Ms. Daphne Meredith: Sure, fair enough. We've got our Official Languages Centre of Excellence, of which Marc Tremblay is the executive director. They're the ones who play the horizontal role across the government to encourage and help departments meet their official languages obligations. We also provide a lot of support internally to the Treasury Board Secretariat so they can look at Treasury Board submissions through the lens of official languages to ensure that each submission is well assessed, that any implications in

terms of official languages are well documented, and that ministers are given good advice on them.

With respect to the Treasury Board Secretariat, of course, we have our own bilingual positions. We have our own requirements to supervise in both official languages, so we do our assessment just as any other department would, to make sure we've got it right and to ensure we've got training in place for individuals who have to meet language requirements of their positions. We happen to do so through a central budget, and we then prioritize who gets access to training, at what time, so we can control the program and make sure we get the best value for money out of it.

So that is the way we do it. I don't have with me the actual data on how much is spent on training, but I can certainly endeavour to get that.

• (0925)

Mr. Ray Boughen: Thanks.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Boughen.

Now we'll have a brief question from Madame Morin.

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): My question is about part VI of the act. The report mentions that both official language communities are relatively well represented in the federal institutions that are subject to the act. But even those limited successes cited in the report are defied by escalating complaints about the representation of linguistic communities in certain regions of the country. Especially in my riding in Montreal, there are a lot of anglophones, and some groups, such as the QCGN, believe that the anglophone community is not well represented in Quebec.

I would like your comments on that. It's not like in Canada we have anglophone communities somewhere and francophone communities in Quebec. There are anglophones in Quebec, and I want to know your excuses about that. What do you want to do for anglophones?

Hon. Tony Clement: Thank you. I don't know the details in Montreal, but perhaps Marc does.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: It's a fairly technical issue. I'd be glad to answer the question.

Yes, numbers are provided. I think the first thing to ask, when we look back 40 years, is what progress has been achieved over that period of time. It was one of the fundamental goals of the Official Languages Act, to begin with, to right that balance in the public service overall.

It's important, as well, to understand that part VI is not framed like the other parts and provisions of the act. We're talking about a broad commitment to get to a certain representation and to ensure that there are no systemic barriers to employment and chances of advancement in the public service. I think if we look to the data, our data begins to be more precise starting in 1978, for reasons I won't go into. But from 1978 to now, we see that great strides have been achieved throughout the public service at various levels of representation and in different occupational groups. There are differences, particularly between the core public administration and the rest of the broader public service covered by the act. But overall, it has to be said that the balance is fairly good. If we were to do any measures, if there's an under-representation on the one hand, that would kind of beg the question of what would happen. Would you then reduce the employment of anglophones in the example on the other hand? That's a particular challenge.

Really, what the policies and directives given to departments aim to do is to ensure that there are no systemic barriers, and in situations where there are indicators of potential problems.... And potential problems is all I would concede at this point; I'm not making excuses, I have to say, but if there are such indicators, then we remind them that they should ensure that they are advertised broadly, that they use the minority community media to advertise positions, that they maintain good relationships and rapport with the anglophone minority community organizations, and that they ensure that their boards are representative of the population they try to attract. Those are the only types of measures. It's quite clear, both under the policies and under the act, that merit is the overarching principle here. You cannot have quotas and you cannot target particular groups in any staffing action.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Morin. You have no more time. It is 9:30 a.m.

[English]

We're finished with our first panel. We want to thank Minister Clement, President of the Treasury Board, for his appearance in front of our committee.

We'll suspend for ten minutes to allow him to leave before we move on to the second part of our meeting.

● (0930)

[Translation]

Hon. Tony Clement: Thank you.

● (0930)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (0935)

The Chair: We are continuing our meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

I hand the floor over to Mr. Menegakis.

[English]

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to welcome our witnesses appearing before us today. It's always nice to have officials from the department so we can get

some clarifications on some questions. I listened with great attention to the first part of this morning's meeting.

Over the last so many months of this 41st Parliament, we've been studying the road map for linguistic duality. It's a fairly large initiative, representing a significant amount of money—well over \$1 billion throughout the entire program. I'm wondering if you can elaborate for us how the Treasury Board monitors programming funded to the road map.

Ms. Daphne Meredith: We have our own role in carrying out the activities of the road map. In fact we had \$17 million dedicated to the Treasury Board Secretariat to that end: \$3.4 million a year. That money funds the Official Languages Centre of Excellence, of which Marc is a director.

I've described some of the things that we do, including assisting our analysts at the Treasury Board in reviewing Treasury Board submissions. Indeed, in the recent strategic and operating review, all of those proposals were assessed through the lens of official languages, and all of that was spearheaded by Marc's group.

The road map money in the secretariat also funds other activities, including the assessment of organizations against the management accountability framework. It's an annual assessment of them, and it provides them with some tools. We're encouraging community activity, and we've introduced several tools for it, including WebPoint 2.0 and analytical grids. This allows them to determine whether their thinking's on track, whether it promotes service to the public and encourages a healthy workplace for both official languages to flourish in. Our role in the road map is based in our centre of excellence for official languages, which has all of those activities at the horizontal level, including analytics and tool provision.

● (0940)

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Canadian Heritage and the Official Languages Secretariat are charged with the horizontal coordination and management of the road map, with the 14 or so partners involved. It's not the centre as part of the Treasury Board Secretariat that handles those functions. They've set out the performance measurements and the indicators. They're working on the horizontal evaluation of the road map. Of course, that will come back through governmental decision processes to Treasury Board Secretariat when funding decisions have to be taken. There are analysts in the Treasury Board who are tasked with following the initiatives, as they do with any other spending.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Do you have a role in monitoring how the funds that go to a partner are used? Do we audit the partner? There were a lot of witnesses who appeared, and an awful lot of them were recipients of funding. I'm just wondering how that is monitored.

You give somebody money, they can put it in their operation and the administration of their operation. We're interested in ensuring that the money actually goes into programming that promotes linguistic duality, primarily for the English community in Quebec and for the francophone community in the rest of the country.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: So we come back to our basic starting premise that individual departments are responsible—the deputy heads are responsible for the spending that occurs in their department. There is an audit and evaluation policy for the Government of Canada at large, so programs are subject to audit and evaluation in that regard.

As to road map money itself, as I indicated a little earlier, there is an evaluation process going on overall, so they will be looking at the reception of funds, the outflow of funds, and the results obtained for the funds. We're undergoing that evaluation.

Madam Meredith referred to the \$17 million we got over five years. Our evaluators are looking at the expenditures and asking the relevant questions. They are asking other institutions as well as members of the minority community representative groups for their views and input in order to assess whether this aspect of the program has been good value for money and has reached the results we set out to reach.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Morin, you have used three minutes. So you have two minutes left.

Mr. Godin, you will be entitled to five minutes.

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for allowing me to use my two remaining minutes.

The TBS Centre of Excellence for Evaluation is currently developing an evaluation plan for the Government of Canada. How will official languages be part of that plan? We get the impression that the Centre of Excellence for Evaluation people do not really communicate with those of the Centre of Excellence for Official Languages. We would like to know why that is the case. What is your view on the matter? Are communications good? What can be done to improve communications between the two centres?

• (0945)

Ms. Daphne Meredith: Mr. Tremblay can answer that question.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: The TBS Centre of Excellence for Evaluation has its own activities. We are aware of some of them. However, it is true that we have not had any direct contact with them. That does not mean that official languages are not part of their projects or that official languages are not being evaluated. In general, official languages programs are part of specific evaluations.

Ms. Isabelle Morin: It seems to me it would be logical for you to speak to each other. That would be more effective, wouldn't it?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: That is a good suggestion. We could definitely follow up on it.

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Again according to the 2010 Annual Report on the Health of the Evaluation Function, the departments have nine years to increase their evaluation capacity and to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of their direct program spending. Will you be able to send us a list of what TBS requires from the institutions with regard to official languages for the purpose of that exercise? Can you tell us a little about that?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I would not want to speak on behalf of colleagues. You are talking to the wrong centre, since it is the

Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat that performs those responsibilities. Although we belong to that organization through the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, there are nevertheless separate responsibilities. I can definitely inquire with my colleagues and send you the answers.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Morin.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

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

Responsibility for official languages is increasingly being handed over to human resources. Does human resources seriously have the power and analytical capability to discharge that responsibility?

Ms. Daphne Meredith: We are still trying to increase the capacity of human resources. We have a few ways of doing that, learning, our interactions with the community and the authorities of the departments as well. That is an ongoing effort. That is what I can tell you on that point.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Have you evaluated the consequences of those changes for the institutions' ability to meet their obligations under the act?

Ms. Daphne Meredith: We have tools to evaluate the institutions' performance. We have already talked about the Management Accountability Framework that we use to evaluate the departments' official languages performance. We also have other tools and even an annual report on official languages. That is what enabled us to determine where the institutions stand with regard to their capacity. It is an ongoing effort.

Mr. Tremblay can perhaps say more about that.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Earlier we talked about cultural change. We are establishing a new culture in the organizations. We will have to see what effect that has. We believe that things will improve. We are completing a three-year cycle, and the first annual report in no way indicates that the change of approach has had any harmful effects. The main indicators are still improving, although certain areas require improvement.

I would like to go back to the human resources issue. Some fundamental aspects of the official languages program clearly require this staffing capability, this ability to identify needs and requirements. That is generally handled by people who work in human resources.

However, several elements lead us to reconsider the functions of the type of skills required to administer the programs in each department. Part VII of the act, the interest in development of the minorities, particularly in communications and service, and the CALDECH affair have given new impetus to the act.

Our approach is different. It is the approach of a centre that sets a general and horizontal direction, and of departments that are fundamentally and mainly concerned with the performance of their obligations. This change that we are effecting makes it possible to avoid planning a structure that would be too rigid and that would be suitable in certain departments perhaps, but not in others.

In other words, some departments tell us that it is fine to have a unit that deals with part VII and a unit that deals with part V. Others tell us that this does not really work and that they want integrated functions because those elements necessarily have to talk to each other. We let them discuss the matter and the models in place. It is up to each one to make the best choice in their own departments.

● (0950)

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is what I do not understand. You would think that Treasury Board expresses ideas, states what has to be done in a very gentle manner, but it will do nothing more than prepare a report in the end. I asked the minister a question earlier. He said that the act is the act and that it has to be complied with. When a non-bilingual Auditor General was appointed, the Commissioner of Official Languages said that the act had been violated.

The act is the act, but it is not being complied with. If we did it, we would not need to speak to each other today. That is not our fault, Mr. Tremblay. The department has a mandate to enforce the act. You work in that department. Do you feel you have power when you work with them, or are there just horizontal discussions? We see the moon set, and then it's a sunny new day.

The Chair: That's good.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: With your permission, Mr. Chair.

With regard to the matter of the Auditor General, you will understand that I will make no comment.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I don't blame you.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: You are referring to a preliminary comment by the Commissioner of Official Languages, but I have not read it.

Mr. Yvon Godin: This is ridiculous.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: However, when it comes to the tools that are at our disposal, I am talking about a cycle of change. First we aim to establish a culture of respect for values. A number of commissioners of official languages have urged us to stop talking about rules and to talk more about values. That is what we are trying to do. We are trying to focus our actions on values and to do the right thing.

That does not mean that we do not have other, more powerful tools and methods at our disposal to ensure the departments abide by the rules. Before using the stick, we try the carrot.

The Chair: That's good.

Thank you.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We've been trying the carrot for 40 years.

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

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On page 5 of his presentation, the minister states, "For its part, Treasury Board Secretariat supports the federal institutions that are subject to the Act in fulfilling their obligations."

The third paragraph on page 6 reads as follows: "We make available to federal institutions tools to help manage official languages policies such as the 'Official Languages Management Dashboard'."

Can you tell me about this Official Languages Management Dashboard?

Ms. Daphne Meredith: Yes.

Mr. Tremblay, can you answer, please?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: The annual report contains a series of tables and indicators that have been measured for many years now, including participation, incumbents who meet the requirements of their positions, and so on. For each institution, the dashboard brings together this essential information, which is regularly amended and entered in the electronic systems for central public administration purposes. That updates the department's health picture, showing how many non-imperative staffing actions were taken in the last cycle, how many of its EX group employees meet the language requirements of their positions and how many do not. It also helps determine whether there are any indicators that deserve their attention.

Lastly, this enables the person responsible for official languages in the department to give the departmental champion, who is a senior official in the organization, a one-page tool. That page provides a snapshot of the challenges that have arisen and enables the champion to question why there have been a number of non-imperative staffing actions or whether there has been any change in that regard. The champion generally sits at the senior management table with the deputy minister and can therefore act as the official languages spokesperson or conscience to the deputy minister and to report whether there may be some changes to make, issues to monitor or measures to take to improve the program.

I will take this opportunity to single out the exemplary work that the official language officers are doing in the departments. These people often work in a human resources or staffing unit which carries on activities. They are on the front line in that regard.

● (0955)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Are there any initiatives in the departments such as the one in which they say that, on Tuesday morning, all those who are capable of doing so will speak French? I have previously seen a similar initiative at the Department of Natural Resources, where all those who were able to speak French worked in French on a particular morning. Does that exist elsewhere?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Yes. As the occasion lends itself to this, I can refer you to the best practices guide, which is available on a website managed by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development called "Oser! Dare!". Our network of champions annually or regularly compiles and publishes best practices.

We talked about Sudbury a few weeks ago. A regional representative from the west told us that, in a region where the language of work is neither English nor French, employees in her organization meet once a week at lunchtime to talk about various business, film or cultural topics in French. They do that in order to improve their language skills and to establish a place where they can practise without the tension of having to use their second language in a parliamentary or senior management committee.

There are a number of initiatives of that kind in various departments. In showing these best practices, they encourage other departments that have not considered doing so to draw inspiration from it and make their own measures public.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: The Treasury Board Secretariat develops policy instruments that will be adopted by the Treasury Board. What does the term "policy instruments" mean?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Go ahead, Ms. Meredith.

Ms. Daphne Meredith: There is a set of policies that have been approved by Treasury Board. We are in the process of revising them in order to simplify them and to afford the institutions greater flexibility in exercising their leadership. Mr. Tremblay and his team are doing a lot of work with the departments to determine the key directions that should be included in our new policy. He could talk to you a little more about engagement with the departments and about our approach.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Part VIII of the act grants us authority to issue policies and directives. The act very generally provides for certain obligations, such as the obligation of active offer. We are required to provide an active offer, but, between you and me, what is active offer? That should be clarified, and it is often through policies that we give departments clearer information on what should be done and the way it should be done. In the current policy review cycle, we have adopted an innovative way of consulting the departments, by using electronic platforms commonly called social media.

There were no participants when this electronic community started up two years ago. However, now there are almost 200. All that has been done because we use this method to put our policies forward and to survey the knowledge and reactions of the departments called upon to implement them so as to improve the products. That took on a life of its own, as a result of which we were able to create an electronic community based on practices and to achieve all kinds of other objectives.

●(1000)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dionne Labelle.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: I see that a range of tools are made available to the departments to follow up the official language evaluations. Among other things, there is a dashboard.

Could you tell us how many resources are allocated to official languages in Canada? Do you have an idea of what that represents in terms of positions, work and money?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: The financial evaluation of the program is a regularly recurring question. At the Treasury Board and, more broadly, at the Treasury Board Secretariat, the approach consists—out of necessity, I believe—in saying that the official languages budget is part of operating budgets. In other words, if a department wants a 100-office structure, some of those offices will be required to offer services in both official languages. There will be various needs, particularly translation needs. All that will be part of that department's operating costs. When the department requests funding from the Treasury Board Secretariat, it will have to take that factor into account. It will not request 10¢ for the francophone function and 90¢ for the rest, or the reverse.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: You do not have any information that would make it possible to determine that?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: There is some general information. Some expenditure items are reported.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: It is hard to see how the various institutions take the advancement of official languages into account over time, since we do not have figures on that. That is one of the conclusions we are coming to.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: There are no specific figures on that subject.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: You say a culture change is currently under way, that you want to make the departments and various institutions accountable. However, that culture change takes time. And there are culture changes in the machinery of government that are related to the cuts. Offices are being eliminated, positions centralized and some services to the public stopped.

In the context of those cuts, have guidelines been sent to the departments concerning the impact of the cuts on French-language services and the ability to interact with Canadian citizens in both languages?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: First, official languages are part of the routine in the Government of Canada. In principle, nothing has changed. The president, Mr. Clement, talked about that earlier. At the fundamental level, there is the act and a series of policies that are applicable, and everyone must comply with them at all times. According to the Official Languages Act, every federal institution must implement part IV, part V and so on. That is the foundation.

However, when the departments received the Treasury Board Secretariat's instructions for the purpose of carrying out their projects, official languages, among a number of other issues that had to be addressed, was clearly one of the factors the departments were urged to consider.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: From our point of view, certain French-language services in the departments and agencies have been disproportionately reduced. Consider, for example, the cuts to CBC/Radio-Canada, where 240 French-language radio and television positions have been cut as well as some 200 positions in the anglophone sector. That is disproportionate to the population served by that institution. It seems to me that is not in the official languages spirit.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I will not speak directly to the example you cite. The government has put forward a plan of budget cuts. It appears that the departments will be reducing the scope of their services. If the envelope or scope of federal services is reduced, that will simply have an impact on service delivery.

●(1005)

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Have your services analyzed that impact? Consider CBC/Radio-Canada, for example. How can cutting half the positions in the francophone sector help advance official languages? In what way does that comply or not comply with the Official Languages Act?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: You are asking me to speculate about—

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Are you going to analyze that after the fact?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: We measure the departments' compliance with their obligations under part IV. Are the points of service that are required to communicate with the public in both official languages doing that? Do the offices located in bilingual regions enable their employees to use their language at work and to create an effective workplace? We will continue measuring the compliance of the government's actions with the provisions of the act.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Trottier, you have the floor.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: In the past few months, we have worked on a new version of the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality. I know that concerns the Treasury Board. The Government of Canada has allocated \$17 million over five years to the Centre of Excellence for Official Languages of the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer at the Treasury Board Secretariat.

Could you explain to us what long-term role the Treasury Board Secretariat plays in the implementation of the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality?

Ms. Daphne Meredith: Yes. We have described our activities, including the development of official language policies for the Treasury Board's approval. We also explain those policies to the departments so that they can implement them. We develop those tools and have them analyzed by the analysts of the Treasury Board Secretariat for presentation to Treasury Board. Those are a few activities of the centre of excellence.

The minister and Mr. Tremblay mentioned other tools. We use the funding to give the departments a strategic direction and to coordinate their efforts in meeting their obligations under the act.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: You know that the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality is managed by Canadian Heritage. Has there been good cooperation with Canadian Heritage and other departments? Has the framework provided by the roadmap given you a good opportunity to work more effectively with other departments?

Ms. Daphne Meredith: I believe it is working well. Marc talked about our activities, which are carried out in close cooperation with the other departments and Canadian Heritage. We have just decided to ask the departments for figures. We have a partnership with Canadian Heritage for the purpose of collecting information from the departments on their activities.

Marc, could you talk a little more about our partnership with Canadian Heritage?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: One of the objectives of the roadmap and the action plan that preceded it, which is well known to some members around the table, was to create a space for coordination and collaboration. Responsibilities under the Official Languages Act are diffuse. They apply to all 200 departments. That space makes it possible to speak with partners about horizontal themes. Those may include immigration, economic development, health, justice and, obviously, the language in which federal services are delivered or the language of work in federal institutions. All that represents a quite disparate whole, but one that must have common objectives. It is important to create that space so that we can coordinate our objectives and focus our efforts so that we are in a better position to

achieve them. It produces results such as these ones, that is to say partnerships.

Ms. Meredith referred to an initiative designed to focus the departments' attention on official languages. They were previously asked to submit a report on part VII of the act and another report on parts IV, V and VI. That caused some confusion in the departments.

To create conditions more conducive to an examination of the official languages program—an examination conducted by the deputy ministers, the departments—we are cooperating with Canadian Heritage so that there is a single joint request for information. That would enable the departments to get their deputy ministers to focus just once on all the issues and to see all the links created between effective implementation of parts IV, V and VI and effective implementation of their responsibilities under part VII.

•(1010)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dion, you have five minutes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for staying with us, Ms. Meredith and Mr. Tremblay.

I want to resume the conversation with the minister where I left off. I am going to use a very concrete example. I am going to read section 25, in part IV of the Official Languages Act: it states, "Every federal institution has the duty to ensure that, where services are provided or made available by another person or organization on its behalf, any member of the public in Canada or elsewhere can communicate" in either official language. It states, "Every federal institution has the duty." So this is an obligation under the act, isn't it?

I am rereading this paragraph from the report that was distributed to us. This is the third paragraph from the top of page 2, in English: "A majority of institutions indicated that they have included language provisions in contracts and agreements signed with third parties acting on their behalf." That means a minority are not complying with the act. "However, only a small proportion of the institutions have taken steps to ensure that the language provisions are implemented." May we conclude from this that only a small proportion of institutions are complying with section 25 of part IV of the Official Languages Act.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I do not believe we can draw that conclusion. This is an indicator telling us that some areas may require improvement. We suspected that there might be areas requiring improvement. We are using this request for an annual report to target issues. This question was not raised in reports of previous requests. It is because we thought one element should be subject to further exploration that we asked that question. We asked it, we got answers and we are now starting to take action on this matter to bring about an improvement.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I believe that means that those institutions are not complying with the act. They have a duty to ensure the act is complied with. However, they are not doing it. If your paragraph means anything, in English or in French, it means that they are not auditing, and if they are not auditing, they are not complying with the act. It is their obligation to do so.

For someone who is supposed to monitor them, I find you extremely indulgent, and that troubles me. You cannot give parliamentarians on this committee a paragraph such as this to read without expecting to startle them. Your answer startles me even more. I would have expected you to say that this is troubling, that you are going to take such and such a measure to ensure that those institutions ensure that the Official Languages Act is complied with when they contract certain services out to third parties. There are serious indications that this is not being done.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: We are taking measures to conduct follow-up.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Please tell us what those measures are because they are not in the report. The report smooths over the matter and concludes that things are going well, without telling us what must be done to address the problem, which is one of a number of problems. In the following three pages, there are seven or eight examples of the kind, where you tell us that a majority are doing this, whereas a minority are not, and everything is fine. When I read this report, I have no idea what you are going to do to correct this troubling situation. And nowhere does it say that it is troubling.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I said a little earlier that we have taken measures—

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Please tell us which ones. What are you going to do for those who—

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I was first going to answer the more general question about the various issues that are raised in the annual reports. In this more specific case, we present the subject to our advisory committees, which are the main bodies responsible for official languages, the executive bodies in the departments that must take measures. We inform them that we have identified deficiencies and that there is work to do. We also report this to the champions. As I said earlier, other measures can gradually be taken, but we have to give the person or unit concerned a chance to improve.

With regard to language clauses, there is a working group consisting of representatives of various central agencies. That group is working on developing measures that could improve the situation. The group will consider whether it is useful or necessary to adopt other instruments to address the issue.

It should nevertheless be seen that our policies require the departments to deal with third parties acting on their behalf, that they are ensuring that they meet their obligations. So at the first level, this is the information we give the departments. This is the individual responsibility of the departments.

• (1015)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have one minute left.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Very well.

Here is another example for you. You say you have developed an analysis grid to ensure that the decision in the Desrochers, or CALDECH, affair is complied with. We have no idea what that analysis grid is. Then you say that a majority of federal institutions have used the grid, but unevenly. The minority are therefore not even interested in your grid. Things are going well. We do not even know

whether it is a good grid, but we know that a minority may not even have read it.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: We will be pleased to send it to you.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I will also point out that the reports indicate the measures taken. In fact, some issues require the departments to explain the measures they have taken to implement this CALDECH grid. So the departments are providing an enormous amount of detail. It is on that basis that we are making our observations.

Those reviews are then submitted to this committee. The clerk of the committee receives a copy of each of the reviews submitted by each federal institution. So this information is widely available for the study of that department. We will be pleased to send you the analysis grid from the CALDECH affair.

The Chair: All right, thank you.

Mr. Menegakis, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Costas Menegakis: I am listening carefully to the exchange back and forth, and I want to bring the discussion back to the strong effort being done to promote linguistic duality. I think the Treasury Board and you folks have been partners of ours in ensuring that happens. I was going through the submission of the minister, his annual report of last year. I was struck with something when reading it. It sounded to me like it was a positive measure. Perhaps you can explain to us what the difference was from before. Specifically in the report, it says:

The human resources management regime has undergone changes over the preceding year, allowing deputy heads to have flexibility and to be able to exercise stronger leadership in human resources management...

Can you explain to us what changed, how that changed, and how that has given the department heads more prerogative, if you will, to exercise leadership?

Ms. Daphne Meredith: Thanks for the question.

I talked earlier to Marc about the changes we have been working on for our suite of Treasury Board policies respecting departments with a view to simplifying them. Those are not yet approved by Treasury Board, but we hope to be taking them to the board soon. Partly, it's working with departments to focus on the key requirements that we want to retain, and where we're going to be offering them greater flexibility. That's in terms of instruments—how we're working on greater flexibility.

I would say most of the activity to date, though, has revolved around changing the culture to really make clear to them that they have responsibility. We have been trying to help them in that regard. Obviously we have the data that has been long-standing in the annual report, and against which we reported progress over the years. We have posed to departments the questions that some of the members of this committee are focusing on, because we thought they would be relevant questions that would help departments get on track. From some of the feedback we're getting, that is valuable feedback for us to then send to the leadership of departments, to say that this is what is determined to be relevant, what parliamentarians are interested in having them do. We can then use these as ways to direct the focus of their activity.

Giving them flexibility, reinforcing the flexibility, and reinforcing the fact that it's their responsibility and that they need to build the capacity within through some of the measures we have highlighted in this report is how we're repositioning our role.

• (1020)

Mr. Marc Tremblay: If I can just add a very concrete example, we've been having discussions with departments about the role of champions and whether they need a committee, and whether we could impose that or should impose that by way of policy in a really structured approach to official languages. In our central agency minds, that sounded like a series of good ideas.

They weren't bad ideas, I'd say, in our defence, but some of the departments told us that they have six employees and to have a committee structure created is completely useless to them; when they sit around the table, they're all there.

So the idea is that we don't know everything at the centre. We give the impulsion to the program, and then we let the doers do, adapt, make it real, and make it theirs. We think that has a great potential for change to actually occur, and we're seeing positive signs in that regard.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: I'm a big believer in recognizing those who are exemplary in performing their tasks. I've heard the word "champions" used several times this morning. Can you tell us how someone achieves that title? What do they have to do to become a champion? Or is that a job they take on?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: On the champions, this was an initiative the office took a number of years ago. I think we're at our sixteenth annual conference now.

The idea was that you'd take a senior official—someone who was identified by the deputy head—aside from their normal functions, an official who, in addition to their normal functions, would really be able to speak the truth to power, and to tell the deputy head things that maybe the deputy head needs to hear but may not be getting through the normal structure. For example, somebody is responsible for human resources or somebody is responsible for programs and services, and maybe they're performing well, but not great. The champion can bring that type of information forward.

The champion is always there. We've seen fantastic work being done by champions—real changes. I can tell you that I was at the justice department before, and I have seen the great enthusiasm that a highly motivated senior official can bring to the ranks, so that all of a sudden you have a lot of people who are interested in the matter, but who take it up because they can see that someone in the higher ranks values what they're doing and thinks it's important.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: That's excellent. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Weston.

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you again for your answers. We are concerned: we fear that what is being done here in Ottawa does not take into account people elsewhere in the country. Is what we are doing here relevant? Can

you tell us whether the work we are talking about this morning improves the lives of people in St. John's or Vancouver, for example?

Ms. Daphne Meredith: I think there is a lot of enthusiasm about official languages across Canada. A few years ago, a deputy minister spoke to people from a number of departments in various regions of Canada about practices in the field. There are a lot of examples outside Ottawa, in all regions of Canada. This is a program that inspires public service employees, regardless of where they work.

Marc, do you have some examples?

• (1025)

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I can cite a concrete example that comes to mind; there are many. These networks that we encourage are having an impact. We have coordinators, official language officers in the departments. A number of departments have officers in the regions. The example that comes to my mind is taking place in Saskatchewan. All Fridays are French Fridays, which are an initiative of federal employees who are members of our networks. They are taking it upon themselves to organize what are essentially wine and cheese parties with the local community. Francophones and people wanting to practise their French attend a social event, speak among themselves and learn about the news concerning their community, whether it be about a theatre play, a concert and so on.

There is real community involvement. It has to be said that our bilingual staff across the country consists of people who have families and who believe in the official languages program. Many of them have adopted French as a second language, or English in the case of Quebec. They send their children to immersion schools and create demand for school programs in the minority French-language schools. All that is having an impact not only on service delivery, but also on opportunities for working in their language. These are what I consider fundamentally important supports for linguistic duality.

Mr. John Weston: That is very encouraging. Even if we know the extent of those activities, if we do not encourage people to use their second official language, we may perhaps be able to say that all our work has not achieved the goal that we set for ourselves across Canada with the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality. Do you want to comment on that?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Do you want me to comment on second language use?

Mr. John Weston: All of us here hope that our children and grandchildren will use both languages. This is a gift that we receive as Canadians, that the rest of the world may not know. Given our work on this committee, is it a dream that we can pass on to the next generation?

The Chair: Please answer briefly.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: The official languages program has been having effects for 40 years. Linguistic duality has been progressively and gradually accepted. There are more people, anglophones and francophones, taking part in this great linguistic duality, across the country.

The Chair: Ms. Morin, there is one minute left.

Ms. Isabelle Morin: You are responsible for the reports on plans and priorities. It was said that it should be mandatory for official languages to be included in the reports on plans and priorities of all the institutions.

Why have you not yet issued directives requiring that official languages be included in those reports? Can you promise us that they will be included in those reports in future? We saw in your report that there were deficiencies. That would be one concrete measure that could help improve the situation. Will you promise that? Why have you not done it yet? What is happening in that regard?

Ms. Daphne Meredith: To begin with, compliance with the Official Languages Act is an obligation; it is not necessarily—

• (1030)

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mistakes are being made. They are not doing this. Can this be included in the plan?

Ms. Daphne Meredith: The departments' approach to official languages must be applied to all their activities. This is not the only thing they are going to mention in their reports on plans and priorities. They are going to talk about all their activities, which cover everything they do.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Morin.

Thanks to our witnesses.

[*English*]

Thank you to everyone for their contribution today.

This meeting is adjourned.

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