



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# **STUDY OF THE TRANSLATION BUREAU**

## **Report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages**

**Hon. Denis Paradis  
Chair**

**JUNE 2016**

**42<sup>nd</sup> PARLIAMENT, 1<sup>st</sup> SESSION**

---

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

**SPEAKER'S PERMISSION**

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Standing Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site  
at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

# **STUDY OF THE TRANSLATION BUREAU**

## **Report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages**

**Hon. Denis Paradis  
Chair**

**JUNE 2016**

**42<sup>nd</sup> PARLIAMENT, 1<sup>st</sup> SESSION**



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

## **CHAIR**

Hon. Denis Paradis

## **VICE-CHAIRS**

John Nater  
François Choquette

## **MEMBERS**

Hon. Mauril Bélanger	Paul Lefebvre
Sylvie Boucher	Darrell Samson
Bernard Généreux	Dan Vandal
Linda Lapointe	

## **OTHER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WHO PARTICIPATED**

René Arseneault	Kelly McCauley
Randy Boissonnault	Jean-Claude Poissant
Greg Fergus	Sherry Romanado
Marilyn Gladu	Jamie Schmale
Larry Maguire	

## **CLERK OF THE COMMITTEE**

Georges Etoke

## **LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT**

### **Parliamentary Information and Research Service**

Chloé Forget  
Lucie Lecomte



# **THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

has the honour to present its

## **SECOND REPORT**

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the Committee on Wednesday, May 11, 2016, the Committee has studied the Translation Bureau:



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

LIST OF ACRONYMS .....	1
STUDY ON THE TRANSLATION BUREAU.....	3
1. INTRODUCTION .....	3
A. Background on the Committee’s study.....	3
B. Overview of the Committee’s report.....	3
2. DESCRIPTION OF THE TRANSLATION BUREAU .....	3
A. Mandate, duties and functions of the Translation Bureau .....	3
B. History of the Translation Bureau.....	5
3. THE ROLE OF TRANSLATION IN CANADA’S LINGUISTIC DUALITY.....	6
A. Respect for rights in the <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> and the <i>Official Languages Act</i> .....	7
B. The state of official languages in Canada .....	9
4. THE CURRENT SITUATION AT THE TRANSLATION BUREAU .....	10
A. The Translation Bureau’s volume of work and the effect of federal budget cuts over the years.....	10
B. The Translation Bureau’s use of the private sector .....	11
C. The Translation Bureau’s management as a special operating agency in terms of its duties, functions and mandate .....	12
1. The Translation Bureau’s perspective .....	13
2. Consequences of the Translation Bureau’s management as a special operating agency in terms of its duties, functions and mandate.....	14
(i) Creation of “Phantom” departmental translation units.....	15
3. Witnesses’ recommendations.....	16
D. Decrease in the number of Translation Bureau translators.....	17
1. Modernization of the Translation Bureau, a reduced staff and the need for flexibility .....	17
2. Impacts of a reduced staff on the Translation Bureau .....	18
E. Preparing the next generation: training future translators and interpreters ....	20
5. PORTAGE: THE TRANSLATION BUREAU’S NEW MACHINE TRANSLATION TOOL .....	21
A. How Portage functions .....	23
B. Benefits, risks and limitations of Portage .....	24

1. Security and confidentiality issues.....	24
2. Usefulness and efficiency.....	25
3. Risks associated with using Portage.....	25
4. Translation quality.....	26
5. Potential use of Portage.....	26
6. Parameters for using Portage.....	27
C. Witnesses' recommendations.....	28
6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	29
APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES.....	33
APPENDIX B: LIST OF BRIEFS.....	35
REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE.....	37
SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT FROM THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY.....	39

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

Canadian Association of Professional Employees (CAPE)

*Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (the Charter)

Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA)

Language Industry Association (ALIA)

Language Technologies Research Centre (LTRC)

*Official Languages Act* (OLA)

Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC)

Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC)

Special operating agency (SOA)

Translation Bureau (TB)



# STUDY ON THE TRANSLATION BUREAU

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background on the Committee's study

On 22 February 2016, it was agreed that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages (hereafter the "Committee") undertake a study on the Translation Bureau (hereafter the "TB").<sup>1</sup> The Committee held 6 meetings on this study and heard testimony from 18 witnesses.

The Committee undertook this study in light of concerning media reports about the TB, especially with regard to its reduced workforce and its announcement that it was introducing a machine translation tool within the federal public service. This tool, called Portage, is a machine translation software system that uses statistical analysis. The Committee therefore undertook this study to examine the impact of the situation at the TB on Canada's official languages within government.

### B. Overview of the Committee's report

First, the report presents the mandate, duties and functions of the TB as well as the organization's history. Second, it addresses the key issues and challenges raised by the various witnesses who appeared before the Committee. Lastly, the Committee proposes its recommendations.

The Committee thanks the participants in the study who took the time to make their presentations to promote the importance of translation in Canada, Canada's linguistic duality and respect for the equality of both official languages in Canada and to educate the Committee about language technology.

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE TRANSLATION BUREAU

### A. Mandate, duties and functions of the Translation Bureau

The TB is a special agency of Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) formerly known as Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) and is established under the *Translation Bureau Act*.<sup>2</sup> Its duties and functions are set out in subsection 4(1) of the Act:

4 (1) The Bureau shall collaborate with and act for all departments, boards, agencies and commissions established by Act of Parliament or appointed by order of the Governor in Council and collaborate with and act for both Houses of Parliament in all matters relating to the making and revising of translations from one language into another of documents,

---

1 House of Commons, Standing Committee on Official Languages (LANG), [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, Meeting No. 2, 22 February 2016.

2 [Translation Bureau Act](#), R.S.C., 1985, c. T-16.

including correspondence, reports, proceedings, debates, bills and Acts, and to interpretation, sign-language interpretation and terminology.

The TB is “responsible for supporting the Government of Canada in its efforts to communicate with and provide services for Canadians in the official language of their choice.”<sup>3</sup> It is the “federal government centre of expertise in translation and linguistic services”<sup>4</sup> and “is one of the leading translation organizations in the world and the largest employer of language professionals in Canada.”<sup>5</sup> The TB is the “sole internal linguistic services provider”<sup>6</sup> and “offers translation, revision, interpretation and other linguistic services for Parliament, the judiciary, and federal departments and agencies.”<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that the TB “is the exclusive supplier of translation, revision and interpretation services for Parliament.”<sup>8</sup>

In her appearance before the Committee, Ms. Donna Achimov, Chief Executive Officer of the TB, said that the TB translates approximately 354 million words a year, of which 44 million are translated for the Parliament of Canada.<sup>9</sup> The TB also provides interpretation services for “over 2,000 parliamentary meetings, 1,800 official language conferences, and 500 foreign language conferences.”<sup>10</sup>

The TB “is also the terminology authority within the federal government and has been mandated to develop terminology standards to ensure clear, uniform and quality communications within government.”<sup>11</sup> As well, the TB is involved in standardizing the vocabulary used in government operations. To these ends, the TB developed TERMIUM Plus<sup>®</sup>, Canada’s foremost linguistic database, and the Language Portal of Canada, which includes tools to help Canadians communicate in both official languages.

Specifically, as described in the PSPC’s 2015-16 Report on Plans and Priorities, the TB’s activities are divided into four sub-programs:

- **Terminology Standardization Program:** As the federal government’s terminology standardization and linguistic authority, the Translation Bureau is mandated with the development, standardization and distribution of terminology in the public service. In this capacity, this sub-program aims to ensure the establishment of terminology and language standards to promote consistency and quality in the government’s communication with Canadians and to optimally manage

---

3 Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), [Translation, Terminology and Interpretation](#).

4 PSPC, [About the Translation Bureau](#).

5 Ibid.

6 PSPC, [2015-16 Report on Plans and Priorities](#).

7 Ibid.

8 PSPC, [About the Translation Bureau](#).

9 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1635 (Ms. Donna Achimov, Chief Executive Officer, Translation Bureau).

10 Ibid.

11 PSPC, [2015-16 Report on Plans and Priorities](#).

the government's terminology expertise; strengthen the government's role in the language field on the national and international scenes; and showcase Canada's collective wealth of linguistic and terminological knowledge.

- **Translation and Other Linguistic Services:** This sub-program aims to offer a full, integrated range of language solutions in both official languages, in Canada's Aboriginal languages, and in over 100 foreign languages. It ensures an effective and efficient provision of quality translation, revision, editing and language advice services at a reasonable cost to the judiciary and federal departments and agencies on a cost recovery basis.
- **Translation and Interpretation to Parliament:** This sub-program aims to ensure the provision of timely translation, interpretation and other linguistic services to Parliament. This enables Parliament to function in both official languages and any other languages required. More precisely, the Bureau translates and reviews documents from the House of Commons, the Senate, Senate and House of Commons committees, Members' of Parliament (MPs) and Senators' offices, administrative services of both Houses, the Library of Parliament, the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Officer, and the Office of the Senate Ethics Officer. It also provides official languages interpretation for the debates in the House of Commons, the Senate, Cabinet and their committees, press conferences, and the proceedings of parliamentary associations. Furthermore, interpreters regularly accompany Senators and MPs who belong to parliamentary committees when they travel in Canada and abroad.
- **Conference Interpretation:** This sub-program aims to ensure the provision of conference interpretation services in both official languages, in Canada's Aboriginal languages, in foreign languages, and in visual languages to all federal government departments and agencies. Conference interpreters provide interpretation services at events such as international summits, bilateral or multilateral discussions between heads of state/government, and intra- or inter-departmental conferences and meetings between federal ministers and their provincial or territorial counterparts.<sup>12</sup>

## B. History of the Translation Bureau

The TB was created in 1934 through the *Translation Bureau Act*. At that time, the TB reported to the Secretary of State, now known as Canadian Heritage.<sup>13</sup>

Mr. Donald Barabé, who worked at the TB for 35 years, was one of two witnesses appearing before the Committee as a representative of the Language Technologies Research Centre (LTRC). He explained that, "when the Bureau was created, it was an agency that all departments were required to use. Under the legislation and regulations, it

---

12 Ibid.

13 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1635 (Mr. Donald Barabé, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Language Technologies Research Centre).

was to do all translations requested by the departments and by Parliament.”<sup>14</sup> From 1934 to 1995, the TB was financed through parliamentary appropriations. As a result, during these years, use of the TB’s services was mandatory and free for federal departments.<sup>15</sup>

In 1993, most of the government’s common services were amalgamated into one portfolio, and the TB was moved to PWGSC, now PSPC.<sup>16</sup> Ms. Achimov said that the rationale behind this move was that the TB “does extensive procurement with the private sector and should be housed with the rest of the government’s procurement activities.”<sup>17</sup>

In 1995, the TB was made a special operating agency (SOA) by the Treasury Board. This meant that the TB’s services became optional and that from then on the TB had to operate on a cost-recovery basis.<sup>18</sup> In other words, “the Bureau had to start billing all its costs.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the departments were no longer required to use the TB’s services and could choose whether to do business with the private sector or the TB.<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that the TB still receives parliamentary appropriations for many of its services, including its Translation and Interpretation to Parliament sub-program.

In 2004, the Treasury Board made the TB the sole employer of translators in the public service.<sup>21</sup> This Treasury Board policy stipulates that federal institutions are not allowed to hire translators. This issue is discussed later in this report.

### 3. THE ROLE OF TRANSLATION IN CANADA’S LINGUISTIC DUALITY

Linguistic duality is fundamental to the Canadian identity and helps unite the country.<sup>22</sup> At the federal level, linguistic duality refers to bilingualism and to Canada’s two official languages, English and French.<sup>23</sup>

As part of this study, many witnesses, including language rights specialist Mr. Michel Doucet, University of Ottawa Professor Emeritus and translation specialist

---

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1635 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1635 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

20 Ibid.

21 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1635 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

22 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1610 (Ms. Linda Cardinal, Titular Professor, School of Political Studies, University of Ottawa).

23 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 18 April 2016, 1605 (Mr. Michel Doucet, Professor, Director, International Observatory on Language Rights, University of Moncton).

Jean Delisle, and the LTRC reiterated that translation plays an important role in Canada's linguistic duality.<sup>24</sup> Mr. Delisle explained this role as follows:

We all know that a lot of translation goes on in Canada. Translation is part of this country's DNA, even though many Canadians consider it to be a necessary evil of Confederation. The same could be said of official bilingualism because translation and bilingualism go hand in hand. Translation is not a by-product of bilingualism; it is a manifestation of bilingualism<sup>25</sup>.

Translators, as professionals, also play an essential role in Canadian society. Mr. Delisle pointed this out, stating that translators practise "a profession with a strong symbolic value"<sup>26</sup> and are "considered by many MPs, ministers and senators as the cement of national unity."<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Mr. Doucet said that the "translator plays a very important role for unilingual people, bilingual people, and for the Canadian public as a whole. People can rest assured that the texts they receive are of very high quality."<sup>28</sup>

The Canadian Association of Professional Employees (CAPE), which represents "all the government's translators, interpreters and terminologists, who are all employed by"<sup>29</sup> the TB, said that the TB plays an important cultural role in Canadian society. CAPE also stated that, unlike private suppliers in the language industry, the TB upholds linguistic duality, promotes language and "plays a role in the standardization of language through its terminologists."<sup>30</sup> CAPE therefore recommends that the TB "report to Canadian Heritage from now on rather than Public Services and Procurement Canada, because the latter department provides solely utilitarian services, whereas Canadian Heritage has a cultural role to play."<sup>31</sup>

#### **A. Respect for rights in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Official Languages Act***

Sections 16 to 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (the "Charter") deal with language rights. These sections make English and French the official languages of Canada and give them equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all legislatures, courts and statutes as well as institutions of the Government of Canada.

---

24 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1635 (Mr. Donald Barabé); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1550 (Mr. Jean Delisle, Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa, appearing as an individual); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 18 April 2016, 1605 and 1625 (Mr. Michel Doucet).

25 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1550 (Mr. Jean Delisle).

26 Ibid., 1555.

27 Ibid.

28 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 18 April 2016, 1625 (Mr. Michel Doucet).

29 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1540 (Ms. Emmanuelle Tremblay, National President, Canadian Association of Professional Employees).

30 Ibid., 1605 (Mr. André Picotte, Vice-President, Canadian Association of Professional Employees).

31 Ibid., 1550.

The *Official Languages Act* (OLA), a quasi-constitutional statute,<sup>32</sup> covers communications with and services to the public in Part IV and language of work in Part V.

Many witnesses discussed the issues raised about the TB and the introduction of the Portage machine translation tool within the public service in terms of respect for the rights in the Charter and in the OLA.

In that context, Mr. Doucet pointed out that the “equality of both languages is the basic principle or foundation of the Official Languages Act and the constitutional provisions, such as section 16 of the Charter”<sup>33</sup> and that this equality means that Canada’s two linguistic groups should be on an equal footing:

Equality of official languages, a concept inherent to the language rights recognized by Canada, means that exercising these rights must not be seen as simply a response to a request for accommodation. Rather, the goal is to ensure that both official language communities receive service of equal quality in their chosen official language. The federal government’s linguistic and constitutional obligations include the obligation to provide the public with services of equal quality in both official languages.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, with regard to translation, “[w]e must ensure that texts are of equal quality in both languages, in order to respect the principle of equality,”<sup>35</sup> so that one language group is not put at a disadvantage.

Several witnesses, including University of Ottawa Professor Linda Cardinal, CAPE, Mr. Doucet and the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne (FCFA), said that recent TB decisions, for example those to reduce staff and to introduce the Portage translation tool in the public service, raise questions about respect for the OLA.<sup>36</sup> The FCFA and Ms. Cardinal believe that more thought needs to be given to whether the policies adopted by the TB, like the introduction of Portage, respect the OLA:

I say that we should look at the interaction between the policies being adopted and the Official Languages Act...We have to try to analyze a proposal, such as the Portage tool, in light of its interaction with the Official Languages Act. I don’t feel that this has been done and, if it has, it should be redone.<sup>37</sup>

---

32 *Thibodeau v. Air Canada*, [2014] 3 S.C.R. 340; *Lavigne v. Canada (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages)*, [2002] 2 S.C.R. 773.

33 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 18 April 2016, 1605 (Mr. Michel Doucet).

34 *Ibid.*, 1545.

35 *Ibid.*, 1605.

36 LANG, [Evidence](#) 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1615 (Ms. Emmanuelle Tremblay); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1605 and 1630 (Ms. Linda Cardinal) and 1715 (Ms. Sylviane Lanthier, Chair, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 18 April 2016, 1630 (Mr. Michel Doucet).

37 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1630 (Ms. Linda Cardinal).

## B. The state of official languages in Canada

Before the Committee, the FCFA addressed the issues at the TB more generally, saying that the problems that have been raised are “part of a much broader context—the pervasive erosion of federal institutions’ capacity to communicate in both official languages.”<sup>38</sup> The FCFA supported this statement by saying it had received unacceptable translations from the federal government and communications written only in English and by providing the following examples:

- [T]he Commissioner of Official Languages, himself, stated in January that, during the deficit reduction efforts of 2011-12, the Treasury Board had not provided federal institutions with any guidance as to their obligation to analyze and limit any potential negative impact on official language minority communities.<sup>39</sup>
- In an appearance before a Senate committee in 2013-14, the commissioner spoke about the subtle erosion of bilingualism in the public service owing to the transfer of federal offices from bilingual regions to unilingual ones. He spoke about the downgrading of the linguistic requirements of bilingual positions. He mentioned the pressure on public servants to produce documents in English only and the tendency to offer an insufficient number of training programs in French.<sup>40</sup>

The FCFA attributes this erosion of Canada’s official languages to budget cuts, in part to fight the deficit, the lack of understanding of language rights and obligations, and no central coordination for official languages.<sup>41</sup> The FCFA therefore recommended the appointment of a central coordinating body for Canada’s official languages:

Without a central coordinating body to ensure that the act is understood and implemented consistently throughout federal institutions, they are often left to their own devices in determining how to fulfill their language obligations.<sup>42</sup>

We would also be in a better position to verify what is done or not done. We have been saying for a long time that it would be important that a federal authority, perhaps Treasury Board, be given a clear mandate in this regard.<sup>43</sup>

With regard to translation, many witnesses said that the official languages have been eroded in the public service due in part to an imbalance in the use of the official languages. In fact, many witnesses said that the main language of work in the public service was English.<sup>44</sup> According to Mr. Doucet, the use of English is part of the culture in

---

38 Ibid., 1635 (Ms. Sylviane Lanthier).

39 Ibid., 1640.

40 Ibid., 1705.

41 Ibid., 1635 and 1640.

42 Ibid., 1640.

43 Ibid., 1710.

44 LANG, [Evidence](#) 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1615 (Ms. Emmanuelle Tremblay); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 18 April 2016, 1555 (Mr. Michel Doucet).

the public service.<sup>45</sup> As a result, French is a translated language in the public service: “85% of French documents are translations.”<sup>46</sup>

Mr. Delisle said that there “were 325 million words translated into French compared to 23 million into English in the last fiscal year.”<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the “first language to suffer the detrimental effects of machine translation would be French,”<sup>48</sup> which is the main language that is translated. Mr. Doucet therefore reiterated the importance of translation done by professionals in a context where French is a language of translation: “[t]ranslators are often the ones solely responsible for the quality of French documents...[t]ranslators also make it possible for French to be a language of creation, not just a destination.”<sup>49</sup>

To address this imbalance, Ms. Cardinal and Mr. Delisle recommended that “people be encouraged to draft original texts in French to counter the imbalance in texts sent for translation” and that “more francophone public servants [be given] the opportunity to write in French.”<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the FCFA believes that public servants should be given training on official languages:

[W]e think that all public servants should be given training on the federal government’s official languages obligations. In that way they could understand what this means for their department, what it means for them, their colleagues, and thus develop harmonious and respectful behaviours or work methods that would allow them to solve problems on a day-to-day basis more easily.<sup>51</sup>

The FCFA also recommended that there be “a complete review of the translation tools and practices in federal institutions, including all efforts related to awareness and training around linguistic obligations and communications in both official languages.”<sup>52</sup>

#### **4. THE CURRENT SITUATION AT THE TRANSLATION BUREAU**

##### **A. The Translation Bureau’s volume of work and the effect of federal budget cuts over the years**

In recent years, the TB has seen a decline in its business volume, number of words translated a year and revenues.<sup>53</sup> From 2008 to 2010, the TB translated more than

---

45 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 18 April 2016, 1555 (Mr. Michel Doucet).

46 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1545 (Ms. Linda Cardinal).

47 Ibid., 1600 (Mr. Jean Delisle).

48 Ibid.

49 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 18 April 2016, 1545 (Mr. Michel Doucet).

50 LANG, brief presented to the Committee by Mr. Jean Delisle; LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1545 (Ms. Linda Cardinal).

51 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1715 (Ms. Sylviane Lanthier).

52 Ibid., 1640.

53 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1715 (Mr. David Schwartz, Vice-President, Integrated Services, Translation Bureau).

400 million words a year. However, in recent years, the TB translates between 308 million and 310 million words a year.<sup>54</sup> The TB explains this decrease as follows:

In recent years, the size of our operations at the Bureau has been shaped by two forces: increasingly competitive and innovative Canadian language service providers that our departmental colleagues and clients can turn to at any time; and changing trends in government communications, and the rise of social media and plain language. This has led to an overall reduction in the volume of our translation business. As business volumes shifted and turnaround times shrunk, the translation Bureau had to improve its scalability.<sup>55</sup>

TB representatives also said that their volume of work has been affected by federal budget cuts in general:

[A] link can probably be made between pressure on budgets, the numbers of translations and our workload. Three years ago, there were more budget cuts. I feel that departments have become tighter and are limiting the number of documents sent for translation. That does not mean that the official languages are any less respected. However, we do notice changes in the number of requests we receive when there is more pressure on budgets.<sup>56</sup>

Many witnesses also said that federal budget cuts over the years have had an impact on translation. For example, CAPE said that “[a]nother major blow to the Translation Bureau is the result of all the budget cuts imposed on various departments. For many of them, translation is the first thing to be eliminated due to budget cuts. The number of documents being translated is therefore reduced.”<sup>57</sup> The FCFA also expressed concern about the “cumulative impact of the budget cuts on the federal government’s ability to meet its language obligations.”<sup>58</sup>

## **B. The Translation Bureau’s use of the private sector**

To adapt to new realities, such as the rise of social media, changes in federal communications and competition from the private sector, the TB has had to improve its scalability and is in the process of modernizing. For example, the TB wants to increase its collaboration with the private sector.<sup>59</sup> Ms. Achimov also underscored the importance that the TB be flexible and that its partnership with the private sector helps it manage fluctuations in demand:

[I]t is important for us to be flexible and to work with our professionals in order to meet our federal obligations. I also said that it was important to be flexible and to work closely with the private sector. I mentioned the fluctuations in demand. We have a lot of work at certain times of the year. As this financial year ends, and because of the new processes,

---

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., 1635.

56 Ibid., 1710 (M. Adam Gibson, Vice-President, Linguistic Services, Translationn Bureau).

57 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1545 (Ms. Emmanuelle Tremblay);

58 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1635 (Ms. Sylviane Lanthier)

59 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1710 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

we are extremely busy. It is good that Canada's language industry is there to handle fluctuations of that kind. Under our mandate, we can have that flexibility. As I mentioned, we have a good partnership with the Canadian language sector.<sup>60</sup>

The LTRC also believes that using contractors is an "absolute necessity"<sup>61</sup> because demand fluctuates: "[s]taffing positions to have everything done internally when there are peak periods would be very expensive for taxpayers and would not be efficient. So it is important to use the private sector."<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, he believes the TB should not use the private sector for certain documents such as "texts that the government uses to make decisions"<sup>63</sup> or "all texts with a security classification."<sup>64</sup> In her testimony, Ms. Achimov said that the TB looks very carefully at what it cannot ever outsource, such as "security documents, top secret work [and] classified work,"<sup>65</sup> and that the TB has sufficient staff to do this work.<sup>66</sup> The LTRC also recommended that the TB translate texts that the private sector does not want to translate, for example those that are not profitable, such as short or highly specialized texts.<sup>67</sup>

To CAPE, the TB's use of the private sector is a disadvantage for the TB and its employees:

Since 2000, the population of Canada has increased about 17%. It has gone from 30 million to 36 million. Departments therefore have increased demands. Instead of responding to that with good quality jobs and by hiring translators and interpreters who are recognized for their great skill and their great professionalism, they go increasingly to freelancers and to the private sector...the uneven quality of the freelancers also means that our members now have to correct the mistakes made outside. That ends up costing the Bureau a great deal and forces our members to salvage the institution's reputation by doing revisions for which they are often not adequately compensated.<sup>68</sup>

### **C. The Translation Bureau's management as a special operating agency in terms of its duties, functions and mandate**

As mentioned earlier in the sub-section entitled *History of the Translation Bureau*, in 1995 the TB went from a common services agency to an SOA. The TB, which operates on a cost-recovery basis, is focused on business principles and functions as a private company.

---

60 Ibid., 1705.

61 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1700 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1650 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

66 Ibid.

67 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1700 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

68 Ibid., 1545 (Ms. Emmanuelle Tremblay).

## 1. The Translation Bureau's perspective

From the TB's perspective, the Treasury Board's decision "laid the groundwork for making our operations more cost-effective and competitive by giving departments and agencies the authority to purchase translation services directly from the private sector."<sup>69</sup> Ms. Achimov also said that the TB is fulfilling the commitments in *Destination 2020*,<sup>70</sup> which requires managing taxpayers' money responsibly, hiring skilled staff and respecting the values and ethics that are core to the public service.<sup>71</sup>

Since 1995, departments have had to pay for the TB's translation services and can choose to use the private sector; 80% of departments use the TB's services. The decision to use the TB to translate their documents is not a question of cost alone: they "may use the services of an organization that provides a specialized service, or that operates a little differently."<sup>72</sup> Moreover, according to the TB, a department's choice to use the private sector is not because of problems with the TB's level of service, its ability to meet client needs, or its reduced staff.<sup>73</sup> However, the TB said that cost is a key factor in a department's decision to do business with the private sector rather than the TB:

[T]here isn't a tendency for us to lose business, but there have been a few very key files. We know some departments have chosen to go 100 per cent through the private sector without going through the bureau. In those instances, we talk to them and we try to find out their reasons for doing that. Often it's price. That's obviously a driver. Everyone has budgets they have to respect. In those cases, we do talk to them about whether we can use our buying power to bring them back and whether there are other services we can offer. We can work it out and we've had some successes...I wouldn't say there is a tendency for us to lose business, but it is a continuous risk that we manage.<sup>74</sup>

With the TB in constant competition with the private sector, it is trying to increase its productivity and efficiency while decreasing its rate per word:

Our rate per word is going down. As our CEO mentioned, we are constantly trying to find ways to be more effective and more efficient. The aim of our new technology is to support our translators and our language professionals so that they can be more efficient. Our productivity is increasing. Our price goes down each year. In this financial year, it is actually 39 cents per word. For the 2019-2020 financial year, we are planning for a rate of 34 cents per word, which is comparable to the private sector.<sup>75</sup>

TB officials said that, although the TB's rate per word is higher, several factors make it competitive on Canada's language market, such as its expertise, its secure

---

69 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1635 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

70 [Destination 2020](#), Clerk of the Privy Council, Government of Canada.

71 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1720 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

72 Ibid., 1705.

73 Ibid., 1705 (Mr. Adam Gibson).

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid., 1705 (Mr. David Schwartz).

infrastructure for documents that are classified or designated “Protected B” and the fact that it provides services seven days a week, 24 hours a day.<sup>76</sup>

The number of client institutions that did business with the TB during the year decreased from 149 in 2013-2014 to 143 in 2014-2015 and to 128 in 2015-2016.<sup>77</sup>

## **2. Consequences of the Translation Bureau’s management as a special operating agency in terms of its duties, functions and mandate**

Most witnesses who appeared as part of this study believe that the TB’s transformation from a common services agency to an SOA created problems that must be fixed.

First, many witnesses said that the TB’s status as an SOA, which, like a business, must consider costs and save money, goes against its mandate of promoting linguistic duality and “its history [that] is part and parcel of the evolution of a bilingual Canada.”<sup>78</sup> According to CAPE, in 1995, when the TB became an SOA, that was “when the dichotomy arose between its mandate to protect Canada’s linguistic duality and the need to recover its costs.”<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Mr. Delisle said that “the bureau’s status as a special operating agency—or SOA— [which dates back to 1995] prevents it from fulfilling a public organization’s mission in terms of innovation, training and terminology.”<sup>80</sup> Over the past few years, the TB has tried to reduce its expenses: “[o]ver the past three years alone, the bureau looked to save \$50 million thanks in some measure to new technology.”<sup>81</sup> Some witnesses said that the TB’s desire to cut costs has led to a loss of expertise. For example, CAPE said that the TB, in order to save money, reorganized into affinity groups, while before it used to work with federal departments and agencies, which developed expertise. “At the moment, with affinity groups, various areas, various departments, are grouped together”<sup>82</sup> and it is more difficult to develop this expertise. Mr. Delisle also said there has been a loss of expertise in terminology at the TB, where the number of terminologists has fallen sharply.<sup>83</sup>

Second, the fact that departments are not required to do business with the TB leads to some difficulties. According to the LTRC, the TB “must continue to meet the demand, but [...] the departments are not required to feed it. Even if they decide to use it, they fairly often change their mind during the year.”<sup>84</sup> CAPE made similar conclusions, saying that

---

76 Ibid., 1705.

77 Answers (Sessional Paper No. 8555-421-53) to Mr. Choquette’s Q-53 question from PSPC (formerly PWGSC).

78 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1600 (Mr. Jean Delisle).

79 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1540 (Mr. André Picotte).

80 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1600 (Mr. Jean Delisle).

81 Ibid., 1555.

82 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1540 (Mr. André Picotte).

83 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1600 (Mr. Jean Delisle).

84 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1635 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

departments could stop doing business with the TB at any time and that this situation “prevents the Bureau from planning in the medium and long terms.”<sup>85</sup> This creates uncertainty in terms of demand and, as the TB said, losing clients is a risk it constantly has to manage.

Third, the LTRC said that some of the rules imposed on the TB have also led to unintended consequences: “the rules that are imposed on the Bureau are such that if a department decides to use the services of the private sector and put out a call for tenders, the Bureau does not have the right to submit in response to these tenders.”<sup>86</sup> The departments have more procurement authorities in translation over the Translation Bureau: “[t]he Bureau’s procurement authorities for translation are \$25,000, while those of the departments are \$2 million.”<sup>87</sup> This has led to consequences such as delayed or cancelled translations.<sup>88</sup>

Lastly, witnesses said that the TB was asked to function like a private company, to compete with the private sector, even though it does not have anywhere near the same operating costs: “[t]he Bureau had no choice but to adopt a mercantile approach that led it astray from its core mandate.”<sup>89</sup> Because the TB works on a cost-recovery basis, it “must bill the departments for costs for which they are not appropriated,” such as rent for the departments and insurance for employees who are financed centrally.<sup>90</sup> According to the LTRC and the FCFA, billing departments causes “undue pressure” on them and results in undesirable consequences, such as the creation of internal translation units, often called “phantom translation units.”<sup>91</sup>

#### **(i) Creation of “Phantom” departmental translation units**

Several witnesses stated that some departments are creating their own internal translation units,<sup>92</sup> “even though this contravenes the Treasury Board directive, which gives the Bureau the monopoly on translation in the federal government.”<sup>93</sup> According to the Treasury Board’s rules, “federal departments and agencies can either do business entirely with the private sector or the Translation Bureau, but they cannot set up an internal translation service.”<sup>94</sup> As CAPE explained, departments are creating phantom translation

---

85 Ibid. 1540 (Mr. André Picotte).

86 Ibid., 1635 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid., 1540 (Mr. André Picotte).

90 Ibid., 1635 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

91 Ibid., 1540 (Ms. Emmanuelle Tremblay); 1640, 1655 and 1700 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

92 Ibid., 1605 (Ms. Louise Brunette, Professor, Université du Québec en Outaouais); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1600 (Mr. Jean Delisle).

93 Ibid. LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1545 (Mr. André Picotte).

94 Ibid., 1615.

positions that are given other titles but are essentially translation positions.<sup>95</sup> The LTRC described the issue as follows:

Given that the departments don't all have the money to pay for translation, some of them have decided to create an internal translation service, thinking that it would cost them less. Independent studies have shown that it sometimes cost three times more. That led to consequences for the industry. It's important to note that the Government of Canada is the largest translation client in Canada and one of the largest in the world. The way it provides work has an impact on the industry's development. By giving the departments the authority to conclude contracts, federal buying power in translation is fragmented, which contributed to the fragmentation and vulnerability.<sup>96</sup>

### 3. Witnesses' recommendations

Several witnesses recommended conducting a study of the TB's status in order to resolve its problems.

- Ms. Cardinal stated that there is a need to “rethink the Translation Bureau in order to give it the means to achieve its objectives and reverse the trend toward de-skilling translation professionals.”<sup>97</sup>
- The LTRC recommended that the TB's position within the federal government be reviewed, and that the difficulties and unintended consequences of its status as an SOA be corrected.<sup>98</sup>
- The FCFA noted that witnesses have described the TB as being in a state of crisis and it recommended that, since a number of federal institutions use private-sector translation firms, “the government conduct a study on the efficiency and effectiveness of both models, the public-sector one and the private-sector one.”<sup>99</sup>

Other witnesses, such as CAPE and Mr. Delisle, made a recommendation to “give control over all translation within the federal public service back to the Translation Bureau in accordance with the act that has governed it since 1934”<sup>100</sup> and to have the TB resume its role of coordinating and overseeing federal translation. In particular, Mr. Delisle recommended that the evolution of the TB “not be guided solely by financial considerations” and that “the cost-recovery policy, which prioritizes economic

---

95 Ibid., 1545.

96 Ibid., 1635 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

97 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1540 (Ms. Linda Cardinal).

98 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1640 and 1655 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

99 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1640 (Ms. Sylviane Lanthier).

100 Ibid., 1555 (Mr. Jean Delisle); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1550 (Mr. André Picotte).

imperatives related to running the government over the linguistic aspects of translation, be scrapped.”<sup>101</sup>

CAPE pointed out that implementing this recommendation<sup>102</sup> would enable the TB to “plan in the medium and long term, something it cannot do currently because of the permanent state of uncertainty;” start hiring employees again; reduce “the administrative costs associated with awarding translation contracts and ... ensure that language expertise is maintained;” and “eliminate the phantom translation units or the phantom translator positions.”<sup>103</sup>

With regard to the role of translators in the TB, Mr. Delisle recommended that “translators, terminologists and interpreters participate fully in managing the Bureau. Half of the senior managers should be individuals with a background in translation.”<sup>104</sup> He also recommended that “translators be restored to their place at the core of translation operations. As the key players, they should have a say in how the work is done. Their status as professionals demands it.”<sup>105</sup>

Lastly, the LTRC recommended that the “Bureau’s expertise should also be used to consolidate the federal government’s buying power in translation to promote the development of Canada’s translation industry.”<sup>106</sup>

## **D. Decrease in the number of Translation Bureau translators**

### **1. Modernization of the Translation Bureau, a reduced staff and the need for flexibility**

According to TB officials, the number of positions in the organization has been reduced solely through attrition, in other words, through voluntary departures – primarily retirements. In addition, staffing needs at TB have been reduced due to the use of technological tools<sup>107</sup>: “We are smaller today because we do not need the same number of people to do the work that we once did.”<sup>108</sup>

In an effort to modernize, officials stated that the TB hired PricewaterhouseCoopers to study the practices of other organizations in Canada and elsewhere. The TB saw that it was not taking advantage of certain practices and processes, and so it introduced them to improve efficiency and productivity:

---

101 LANG, brief submitted to the Committee by Mr. Jean Delisle.

102 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1550 (Ms. Emmanuelle Tremblay).

103 Ibid., 1550 (Mr. André Picotte).

104 LANG, brief submitted to the Committee by Mr. Jean Delisle.

105 Ibid.

106 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1640 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

107 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1640 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

108 Ibid.

What we found was that all of these organizations had a few things going for them that we didn't have. They had flexibility, so they weren't encumbered by permanent large numbers of staff. They had a core team who were experts in what they did. They had the ability to use technology not to replace people, but actually to improve their business processes...We were missing some of those processes or, to be quite honest, we weren't actually following industry practices in terms of how they were to be used. We studied very closely these best practices and we were able to adopt those within the translation bureau.<sup>109</sup>

TB officials also reiterated the need for flexibility within the organization:

The bureau's biggest challenge revolves around fluctuating translation demand. And not having flexibility built into the system makes it extremely difficult to manage operations...With the support of our professional translators, as well as freelance experts, coupled with software tools, we have been able to find a balance.<sup>110</sup>

## 2. Impacts of a reduced staff on the Translation Bureau

CAPE also pointed out that the TB has not hired since 2011, resulting in a loss of 33% to 34% of the organization's translators.<sup>111</sup> Four or five years ago, the TB "had more than 1,200 TR [translator] positions, compared to about 800 now"<sup>112</sup> and this downward trend is continuing.<sup>113</sup>

The following table presents the number of employees in language sector positions at the TB from 2011-2012 to 2015-2016:

---

109 Ibid., 1640.

110 Ibid., 1645.

111 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1540 (Ms. Emmanuelle Tremblay).

112 Ibid., 1600.

113 Ibid.

**Table 1: Number of translators, interpreters, terminologists and language advisors at the Translation Bureau, and number of client institutions 2011-2012 to 2015-2016**

	(i) # of translators <sup>1</sup>	(i) # of interpreters	(i) # of terminologists	(i) # of language advisors <sup>2</sup>	(ii) # of client institutions <sup>3</sup>
2011-2012	595	61	61	347	171
2012-2013	568	62	57	321	159
2013-2014	549	65	51	301	149
2014-2015	515	65	46	282	143
2015-2016 (as at January 2016)	509	69	45	264	128

Table prepared based on answers (Sessional Paper No. 8555-421-53) by PSPC (formerly PWGSC) to Mr. Choquette's Q-53 question.

Notes:

- 1 The data provided for (i) includes actual staff and not organizational chart positions (which may include vacant positions).
- 2 "Reviser" positions at the Translation Bureau are called "Language Advisors", and it is important to note that language advisors do not exclusively do revision, but they also do translation, special projects, etc.
- 3 The number of client institutions represent the number of clients who have done business with the Translation Bureau throughout the year (e.g. "active clients").

CAPE informed the Committee that a reduction in staff means a loss of expertise: "Over the years, the Bureau has acquired great expertise in scientific and technical translation. Unfortunately, that expertise is fading away as people retire. As for multilingual translation, the Bureau's expertise is now external, and provided at discount prices."<sup>114</sup> Although there has been a significant decrease in the TB's staff, the quality of translation has been maintained.<sup>115</sup> However, CAPE pointed out that "this will not always be the case,"<sup>116</sup> if the situation does not change:

The truth is that people are under extreme stress, both administrative staff and translators. They are being pushed to the limit in order to do the work that they have to do. The organization itself is under stress. If you talk to Translation Bureau employees, you will see that they are constantly complaining about being pushed to the limit and given deadlines that are too tight. Administrative staff is being asked to perform miracles. Given the attrition that is still in effect, the situation is only going to get worse. Fewer and fewer people work at the Bureau. A 2014 survey of public service employees revealed that the Bureau has the worst record in terms of workplace satisfaction.<sup>117</sup>

---

114 Ibid., 1550 (Mr. André Picotte).

115 Ibid., 1610.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid., 1555.

CAPE therefore recommended that “the Translation Bureau be given all the financial and human resources it needs to fulfill its mandate. It is important to put an end to the policy of attrition at the Bureau, to give it the resources required to fulfill its mandate to support Canada’s linguistic duality and to stop making it bear the brunt of untenable budget cuts.”<sup>118</sup> To deal with the loss of expertise, CAPE recommended that the TB begin hiring again and “implement a program to restore its lost expertise in the areas of technical, scientific and multilingual translation.”<sup>119</sup>

### **E. Preparing the next generation: training future translators and interpreters**

According to many witnesses, including Ms. Brunette, a professor at the Université du Québec en Outaouais with close to 50 years of translation experience; CAPE; the FCFA and Mr. Delisle, training the next generation of TB employees is important, especially since the government must communicate with the public in both official languages.<sup>120</sup> Several witnesses stated that cancellation of the Traduca program made it difficult to train a skilled workforce and restricted job opportunities for students in translation. The FCFA described the situation as follows:

...the budget cuts of 2011–12 also reduced the translation bureau's ability to offer work placements. The Traduca program came to an end, at nearly the same time, further limiting opportunities for internships in translation. Funded through the 2008–13 roadmap for linguistic duality and managed by the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, Traduca saw the creation of 344 internships in 3 years. For students, the end of the program meant a loss of opportunities, while the translation bureau lost access to a new generation of professionals.<sup>121</sup>

To address this issue, CAPE recommended implementing “a succession plan that will make it possible for experienced employees to pass on their expertise by helping to train new colleagues.”<sup>122</sup> Similarly, Jean Delisle recommended that “offering translation internships be part of the Bureau’s mandate.”<sup>123</sup> He also noted that the TB’s corporate vision now prevents it from carrying out this mandate:

We know that the bureau has not been taking on co-op students for at least four years. As a private company, it aims to provide translation at the best possible cost. What has the bureau done to achieve that? It has reduced recruitment, as any large company trying to rationalize its productivity does.<sup>124</sup>

---

118 Ibid., 1550 (Ms. Emmanuelle Tremblay). With regard to this recommendation, CAPE provided the Committee with an evaluation of the resources that the Translation Bureau needs to fulfill its mandate.

119 Ibid.

120 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1710 (Ms. Sylviane Lanthier); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1615 (Ms. Emmanuelle Tremblay); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1555 and 1620 (Mr. Jean Delisle); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1610 (Ms. Louise Brunette).

121 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1640 (Ms. Sylviane Lanthier).

122 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1550 (Ms. Emmanuelle Tremblay).

123 LANG, brief submitted to the Committee by Mr. Jean Delisle.

124 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1620 (Mr. Jean Delisle).

## 5. PORTAGE: THE TRANSLATION BUREAU'S NEW MACHINE TRANSLATION TOOL

Since the 1970s, the TB has been exploring ways for technology to support its operations, the public service and Canadians.<sup>125</sup> In addition, “the bureau was asked by provinces and the public service to share its terminology and glossaries.”<sup>126</sup> In 1999, the TB launched TERMIUM Plus<sup>®</sup>, its first computer-based language tool that is today “an online repository of more than 4 million terms in English and French” and is available to everyone, free of charge, through the Government of Canada’s Language Portal.<sup>127</sup>

The TB recently announced that Portage, a machine translation tool, would be introduced throughout the federal government. Portage was designed in partnership with the National Research Council of Canada in the context of the Roadmap for Canada’s official languages<sup>128</sup>. According to the TB, Portage was developed to advance bilingualism within the public service.<sup>129</sup> PSPC mentioned that “research and analysis done by the National Research Council, machine translation specialists like Translation Automation User Society, and language industry experts like Common Sense Advisory showed that machine translation is widely used and is beneficial for improving second language use.”<sup>130</sup> As Ms. Achimov told the Committee, Portage contains “millions of professionally translated government-specific terms and phrases.”<sup>131</sup> It is intended to “make it easier for public servants to function effectively at work in their acquired official language”<sup>132</sup> and “give public servants the confidence to practice their second official language and work in it more often.”<sup>133</sup> She specified that “the tool is intended, first and foremost, to facilitate comprehension, not to provide official translations.”<sup>134</sup> According to PSPC, Portage “is intended to be used only to translate short internal non-official texts (e.g. e-mails, memos).”<sup>135</sup> During her appearance before the Committee, the Honourable Mélanie Joly stated as follows:

---

125 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1635 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

126 Ibid.

127 Ibid.

128 Answers (Sessional Paper No. 8555-421-53) to Mr. Choquette’s Q-53 question from PSPC (formerly PWGSC).

129 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1640 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

130 Answers (Sessional Paper No. 8555-421-53) to Mr. Choquette’s Q-53 question from PSPC (formerly PWGSC). Note that the [Translation Automation Uber Society](#), based in the Netherlands, is a resource center serving the global language and translation industries and its mission is to improve translation services using innovation and automation. The [Common Sense Advisory](#), headquartered in the United States, is a market research company that specializes in, among other things, best practices in translation.

131 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1640 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid., 1645.

135 Answers (Sessional Paper No. 8555-421-53) to Mr. Choquette’s Q-53 question from PSPC (formerly PWGSC).

The idea behind the Portage tool was to contribute to the range of tools that was already available in order to improve internal communication in the public service. We wanted public servants to feel really comfortable sending internal emails in the language of their choice and for their colleagues to be able to respond in their language of choice.

The goal was certainly not to reduce the Translation Bureau's resources and it was certainly not to avoid our official languages obligations.<sup>136</sup>

The TB explained that departments were interested in this type of tool:

We decided that, at the translation bureau, we had an obligation. We are the official languages experts and we very often receive comments and questions from departments seeking to use certain tools better, like machine translation. They want to know how to use them in order to improve their understanding.<sup>137</sup>

As the TB and other witnesses<sup>138</sup> pointed out, public servants already use this type of translation tool regularly, and the next generation of public servants, who are heavy users of this kind of technology, expect it to be available in the workplace:

Today, in the federal public service, there are one million uses of Google translate every single week and all government desktops are equipped with Microsoft translator. A simple right-click on the mouse gives you translation free, any time of day.<sup>139</sup>

Ms. Achimov gave the Committee a copy of the terms of use that appear on Portage:

**This tool may be used for unclassified and Protected A texts only.** Given that this tool is on the network, it must never be used for texts with Protected B classification or higher. This tool should not be used for official publications.

Machine translation provides a general idea of a text's content and does not replace a professional translator. The Translation Bureau recommends using this tool for the purposes of improving the understanding and translation of short, simple, unofficial communications.

Every department is responsible for complying with the *Official Languages Act* and for ensuring that the official languages are used appropriately among its employees and with other parties. The machine translation tool provided by the Translation Bureau does not alter these responsibilities.

To obtain a translation of a professional quality, send your translation request to GC Translation or contact the Translation Bureau.

In using the machine translation tool, the user agrees to comply with the objectives and limitations and releases the Translation Bureau from any liability that may arise from misuse of the results produced by the tool.

---

136 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 20 April, 1700 (the Hon. Mélanie Joly, Minister of Canadian Heritage).

137 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1655 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

138 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1630 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

139 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1640 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

In the summer of 2015, the TB conducted a pilot project involving 300 public servants. The public service’s Network of Official Languages Champions was among the groups that helped test Portage. The following observation was made during the pilot:

Most of the communications consisted of short polite texts, emails between colleagues, and out-of-office messages. We believe it’s important to have a professional translator handle an official document for the sake of quality.<sup>140</sup>

### A. How Portage functions

Several witnesses explained how Portage, the TB’s machine translation tool, functions, and their testimony served to highlight the technology’s limitations. Professor Louise Brunette and the representative from the Language Industry Association (AILIA) – an organization advocating for the language industry – emphasized that “there is no actual translation or communication involved”<sup>141</sup> with Portage. It is a mathematical process.<sup>142</sup> Portage “works strictly by statistical matching”<sup>143</sup> and “works on binary coding: 1, 0, 1, 0, 1, 0.”<sup>144</sup>

Ms. Brunette explained that Portage is “an automated statistical system” that “learns.”<sup>145</sup> The corpus of Portage consists of what the software has learned and it contains the language of the public service since that is what it has been taught.<sup>146</sup> As a result, Portage “will not make the same mistake if it is properly corrected.”<sup>147</sup> As the LTRC explained to the Committee, “So that the system isn’t contaminated and an erroneous translation put in the system, these translations must be revised at sufficient intervals and fairly regularly.”<sup>148</sup>

Ms. Brunette also highlighted the importance of investing in the corpus: “Investing in corpus development means feeding the software with high-quality texts that it can compare.”<sup>149</sup> To have the best software possible, humans must be involved at the corpus stage of Portage.<sup>150</sup> Ms. Achimov stated that the translation tool will improve over time “as

---

140 Ibid., 1645.

141 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1645 (Ms. Maryse Benhoff, Vice-President, Language Industry Association).

142 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1530 (Ms. Louise Brunette).

143 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1645 (Ms. Maryse Benhoff); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1705 (Mr. Alan Bernardi, President and CEO, Language Technologies Research Centre).

144 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1530 (Ms. Louise Brunette).

145 Ibid., 1600.

146 Ibid., 1645 (Mr. Alan Bernardi).

147 Ibid., 1530 (Ms. Louise Brunette).

148 Ibid., 1635 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

149 Ibid., 1600 (Ms. Louise Brunette).

150 Ibid., 1530.

more government-specific translated terms and phrases are loaded into it and the translation bureau's linguistic professionals play their role in ensuring its quality.”<sup>151</sup>

Both Ms. Brunette and Ms. Achimov specified that Portage is not “meant to translate colloquialisms, such as ‘it's raining cats and dogs’”<sup>152</sup> since this expression is not used in the public service.<sup>153</sup> The LTRC also explained that a machine translation tool produces a better quality text when the tool’s learning is limited to a specific field, such as the weather: “The more variance increases, the more fields are involved, the more difficult it becomes to maintain the same level of quality.”<sup>154</sup>

Lastly, several witnesses stated that the text produced by Portage requires post-editing, in other words, humans need to be involved after the translation tool has been used. As Ms. Brunette explained, the text “also has to be refined by humans in a process that we call machine text editing, or more commonly, post-editing.”<sup>155</sup> AILIA described the process as follows, “Post-editing involves people reviewing and trying to improve the raw machine translation output, which is extremely tricky because of all the unpredictable mistakes and nonsense, things that you would never encounter in the work of human translators.”<sup>156</sup> Both AILIA and Ms. Brunette stated that it is wrong to think “machine translation with post-editing can deliver results that are equivalent to professional translation.”<sup>157</sup> AILIA stated that it is not uncommon to see “requests for post-editing often turning into complete retranslation.”<sup>158</sup>

## **B. Benefits, risks and limitations of Portage**

### **1. Security and confidentiality issues**

As the TB pointed out, Portage reduces some of the risks inherent in translation tools such as Google Translate because simple translations “stay inside the Government of Canada's firewall.”<sup>159</sup> Mr. Delisle and the LTRC also stated that Google Translate involves some risk since “[e]very time a public servant puts a government text in Google Translate, the text becomes Google's property, whether it has a security classification

---

151 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1640 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

152 Ibid.

153 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1530 (Ms. Louise Brunette).

154 Ibid., 1710 (Mr. Alan Bernardi).

155 Ibid., 1530 (Ms. Louise Brunette).

156 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1645 (Ms. Maryse Benhoff).

157 Ibid.

158 Ibid., 1650. The Language Industry Association is currently developing a standard for post-editing.

159 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1640 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

or not.”<sup>160</sup> The LTRC also proposed making Portage available to all Canadians, as this move “might keep Canada's trade secrets from being revealed.”<sup>161</sup>

## 2. Usefulness and efficiency

On the one hand, several witnesses told the Committee that Portage is useful but imperfect.<sup>162</sup> When used properly, the tool offers some advantages, particularly “gains in productivity.”<sup>163</sup> It was also suggested that Portage supports comprehension by enabling users to understand a text written in another language.<sup>164</sup> As a result, the translation tool may “encourage the use of both official languages as long as it is limited to understanding and not communication, and as long as it remains limited to personal use.”<sup>165</sup> CAPE also stated that technological tools are very useful to translators in certain circumstances:

I am a practitioner, a translator, actually. In our business, we are using computerized tools more and more, which is not a problem in itself. However, you really have to understand that those tools must be in the hands of professionals, people who know the area, not to just anyone at all, as is the case at the moment. With some texts, machine translation does not work at all. It just gives gibberish. For other texts, however, it helps translators to work much more quickly. Whatever the case, this tool must be in the hands of professionals, not of people who are not translators.<sup>166</sup>

On the other hand, the representative from AIIA believed that when a real translation is required, machine translation presents a high risk and “brings few efficiency gains,”<sup>167</sup> since post-editing requires a significant amount of time.<sup>168</sup>

For these reasons, the Committee firmly believes that Portage should be referred to as a language comprehension tool rather than a translation tool.

## 3. Risks associated with using Portage

Several witnesses, including AIIA, Ms. Cardinal and Mr. Doucet, stated that introducing Portage sets a “troubling precedent,”<sup>169</sup> and could be interpreted as federal approval of this type of translation. According to the FCFA, there is “a strong possibility that the implementation of Portage will be seen, within the public service, as the

---

160 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1705 (Mr. Donald Barabé); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1625 (Mr. Jean Delisle).

161 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1705 (Mr. Alan Bernardi).

162 Ibid., 1640 (Mr. Donald Barabé) and 1615 (Ms. Louise Brunette).

163 Ibid., 1650 (Mr. Donald Barabé) and 1615 (Ms. Louise Brunette).

164 Ibid., 1650 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

165 Ibid., 1710.

166 Ibid., 1555 (Mr. André Picotte).

167 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1650 (Ms. Maryse Benhoff).

168 Ibid.

169 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 18 April 2016, 1545 (Mr. Michel Doucet).

legitimation of automated translation systems as perfectly acceptable tools to ensure communication in both official languages.”<sup>170</sup> Mr. Doucet also stated that introduction of Portage “could have repercussions on the legal and constitutional obligations of federal institutions with respect to official languages.”<sup>171</sup>

#### 4. Translation quality

Most of the witnesses appearing before the Committee stated that Portage cannot guarantee the quality of the translation.<sup>172</sup> Ms. Brunette, the LTRC and AILIA all stated that the text produced using Portage would be of a lesser quality than the original text even with post-editing and an excellent corpus.<sup>173</sup> Since the official languages have equal status – “a concept inherent to the language rights recognized by Canada”<sup>174</sup> – the two official language communities must receive service of equal quality in the official language of their choice. Since Portage cannot produce a translation of the same quality as the original document, it compromises the equality of the official languages.<sup>175</sup>

The FCFA and Ms. Cardinal also expressed concern about compliance with the OLA if Portage is deployed throughout the public service: “If, as the Translation Bureau says, the tool is supposed to be used only for informal exchanges among public servants, there is a risk of violating Part V of the *Official Languages Act* and public servants' right to work in the official language of their choice.”<sup>176</sup> The FCFA also highlighted the risk of non-compliance with Part IV of the OLA should Portage be used more broadly.<sup>177</sup> As stated earlier in this report, Ms. Cardinal believes that “we have to see how a policy in this area interacts with the *Official Languages Act*.”<sup>178</sup>

#### 5. Potential use of Portage

The FCFA stated that the intended use for Portage was unclear and it was difficult to know how the translation tool will be used: “The program might not be used only for unofficial communications in the future.”<sup>179</sup> According to several witnesses, such as the

---

170 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1635 (Ms. Sylviane Lanthier).

171 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 18 April 2016, 1545 (Mr. Michel Doucet).

172 Ibid.

173 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1640 (Mr. Donald Barabé); 1530 and 1615 (Ms. Louise Brunette); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1645 (Ms. Maryse Benhoff).

174 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 18 April 2016, 1545 (Mr. Michel Doucet); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1550 (Mr. Jean Delisle).

175 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 18 April 2016, 1545 (Mr. Michel Doucet).

176 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1635 (Ms. Sylviane Lanthier).

177 Ibid.

178 Ibid., 1605 (Ms. Linda Cardinal).

179 Ibid., 1700 (Ms. Sylviane Lanthier).

LTRC, Mr. Doucet and Mr. Delisle, Portage should be used only to understand a text.<sup>180</sup> In their opinion, a text produced with Portage should not be used for any form of communication, even informal. In fact, as stated previously, use of Portage for informal communications between public servants could contravene Part V of the OLA.<sup>181</sup> Similarly, ALLIA recommends that Portage and post-editing not be used for a text intended for communication, and that translators be involved at the start of the process.<sup>182</sup>

Several witnesses stated that Portage should be used only by translators, as they are qualified to determine the quality of the translation produced.<sup>183</sup>

## 6. Parameters for using Portage

As stated previously, Ms. Achimov explained that the primary purpose of Portage is not to translate official documents but to facilitate comprehension. For that reason, persons using the translation tool will receive a notice stating the conditions for its use, such as “documents of a more official nature should be translated by a translation bureau professional.”<sup>184</sup> A link is built directly into Portage so that users can request the services of a TB translator.<sup>185</sup>

Several witnesses highlighted the need to set clear guidelines and inform users of Portage’s uses and limitations. ALLIA recommends educating and informing the public, public servants and parliamentarians about Portage and the work of translators.<sup>186</sup> Mr. Delisle recommended that “a team of experts develop a guide to the use of technology in translation and bilingualism. A mechanism should be in place to ensure compliance with the guidelines.”<sup>187</sup> As Mr. Doucet stated, “It is important to seriously examine the issue and to have very clear directives and guidelines. People need to understand that the tool must not be used to communicate with the public or even to communicate with other people within the public service.”<sup>188</sup> The LTRC emphasized that the tool should include a notice stating that “it is for the purposes of understanding, not communication.”<sup>189</sup>

---

180 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1650 (Mr. Donald Barabé); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1610 (Mr. Jean Delisle).

181 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1635 (Ms. Sylviane Lanthier).

182 Ibid., 1655 (Ms. Maryse Benhoff).

183 Ibid., 1610 (Ms. Linda Cardinal); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1555 (Mr. André Picotte); LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1655 (Ms. Maryse Benhoff); LANG, brief submitted to the Committee by Mr. Jean Delisle.

184 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 7 March 2016, 1645 (Ms. Donna Achimov).

185 Ibid.

186 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1650 (Ms. Maryse Benhoff).

187 LANG, brief submitted to the Committee by Mr. Jean Delisle.

188 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 18 April 2016, 1625 (Mr. Michel Doucet).

189 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1705 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

### C. Witnesses' recommendations

In addition to the suggestions described previously, witnesses made many recommendations regarding the TB's Portage machine translation tool.

Ms. Cardinal called for the Portage deployment to be cancelled and the government's decision to be reversed, because "the approach for the proposed tool is a utilitarian one that aims to gradually get rid of translators, to replace the translators."<sup>190</sup> Mr. Delisle recommended that the "roll-out of Portage software to all federal public servants' desktops be suspended indefinitely until clear usage guidelines are established."<sup>191</sup>

The LTRC recommended the following:

In terms of machine translation, it is important to ensure that the four conditions are applied for a successful implementation of the machine translation software. Departments need to be educated on the benefits and limitations of machine translation and on issues relating to the *Official Languages Act*.<sup>192</sup>

The four conditions referred to are as follows:

- 1) Classified texts must not be loaded into the machine translation tool.
- 2) The tool is for personal use and information.
- 3) If a document is to be distributed, it must first be revised by a professional translator, not a bilingual clerk.
- 4) Translations must be revised at regular and fairly frequent intervals so that incorrect translations are not loaded into the system and the system is not contaminated.<sup>193</sup>

Ms. Brunette, a professor at the Université du Québec en Outaouais, explained that

... machine translation must be dealt with as a long-term pilot project overseen by professional, certified translators, such as those in the Translation Bureau, for example. Then, post-editing workshops need to be established, because few people know how to post-edit, since my university is the only one to teach it. There must also be investments in corpus development and, above all, experts other than software designers must be consulted, since they are pretty focused....Finally, contacts must be established between the software designers and those who use machine translation. That means translators, not the public.<sup>194</sup>

---

190 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1605 (Ms. Linda Cardinal).

191 LANG, brief submitted to the Committee by Mr. Jean Delisle.

192 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 11 April 2016, 1640 (Mr. Donald Barabé).

193 Ibid., 1635.

194 Ibid., 1540 (Ms. Louise Brunette).

Lastly, Ms. Cardinal and Mr. Doucet recommended that a working group be created to study language rights, linguistic equality, the status of official languages in the public service, translation, privatization of translation services, and the use of language technologies in the public service. Specifically, Ms. Cardinal recommended that:

... the Government of Canada establish a working group on the status of official languages in the public service and that this working group devote particular attention to the role of language technologies in promoting linguistic duality, the situation at the Translation Bureau and the impact of the privatization of services, such as French courses, on official languages.<sup>195</sup>

Mr. Doucet added that the purpose of the working group “would be to look at developing a system to guarantee that Canadians can access service of equal quality in both official languages at all times that is consistent with Canada’s constitutional and legislative obligations.”<sup>196</sup> He added that the working group could also consider “the federal government’s obligations and what methods it could use to ensure that its communication with the public fully respects the constitutional and legislative obligations.”<sup>197</sup> Mr Doucet also specified that the working group should include the Commissioner of Official Languages and other experts.<sup>198</sup>

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the evidence presented during the study of the Translation Bureau by language technology experts, the representatives of TB translators, translators, and researchers specializing in translation, official language minority communities and language rights, the Committee makes the following recommendations:

### Recommendation 1

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada mandate an existing federal authority to ensure that the *Official Languages Act* is properly implemented with regard to such aspects as the Translation Bureau. In particular, this authority would play a coordinating role to ensure that federal institutions apply and comply with the *Official Languages Act*.**

### Recommendation 2

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada provide all federal public servants with training on the role of the Translation Bureau and the obligations of the Government of Canada with regard to translation, pursuant to the *Official Languages Act*.**

---

195 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 April 2016, 1545 (Ms. Linda Cardinal).

196 LANG, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 18 April 2016, 1550 (Mr. Michel Doucet).

197 Ibid., 1615.

198 Ibid., 1610.

### **Recommendation 3**

**The Committee recommends that:**

- a) the Government of Canada recognize the essential role that translation and translators play in Canada's linguistic duality;**
- b) the Government of Canada determine which department the Translation Bureau shall report to, and that translators, interpreters and terminologists participate fully in managing the Translation Bureau.**

### **Recommendation 4**

**The Committee recommends that:**

- a) the Government of Canada allocate all necessary financial resources to the Translation Bureau so that it can provide high-quality translation services;**
- b) the Government of Canada implement a program to regain its lost expertise in technical, scientific and multilingual translation;**
- c) the Government of Canada implement a plan to ensure that preparing the next generation of translators, training them and offering internships in the language field is an integral part of the Translation Bureau's mandate.**

### **Recommendation 5**

**The Committee recommends to the Government of Canada that the Portage language comprehension tool be used solely by federal public servants for the purpose of understanding a text and not for disseminating public or internal documents or information.**

### **Recommendation 6**

**The Committee recommends to the Government of Canada that:**

- a) users of the Portage language comprehension tool receive a notice stating that it is to be used solely for the purpose of comprehension rather than communication;**
- b) clear guidelines be developed regarding use of the Portage language comprehension tool before it is implemented in federal institutions, and that a verification mechanism be put in place to ensure the guidelines are followed.**

### **Recommendation 7**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada:**

- a) provide the funding required to develop a high-quality corpus for the Portage language comprehension software, and consult experts other than the tool's designers;**
- b) ensure the translations produced by the tool are revised regularly as a means of quality control;**
- c) encourage communication between the tool's designers and translators;**
- d) develop post-editing training workshops for translators.**

### **Recommendation 8**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada study the status of the Translation Bureau as a special operating agency and the impact of privatizing specific translation services on federal institutions' ability to meet their language obligations regarding communications with and services to the public.**



# APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<b>Canadian Association of Professional Employees</b> Emmanuelle Tremblay, National President André Picotte, Vice-President	2016/04/11	7
<b>Language Technologies Research Centre</b> Donald Barabé, Chairman of the Board of Directors Alan Bernardi, President General Director		
<b>Université du Québec en Outaouais</b> Louise Brunette, Professor		
<b>As an individual</b> Jean Delisle, Professor Emeritus	2016/04/13	8
<b>Language Industry Association</b> Maryse Benhoff, Vice-President		
<b>Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada</b> Sylviane Lanthier, President Suzanne Bossé, Executive Director		
<b>University of Ottawa</b> Linda Cardinal, Titular Professor School of Political Studies		
<b>As an individual</b> Michel Doucet, Professor, Director, Observer of International language rights Moncton University	2016/04/18	9
<b>Department of Public Works and Government Services</b> Donna Achimov, Chief Executive Officer Translation Bureau Nancy Gauthier, Vice-President Business Strategies and Partnerships, Translation Bureau Adam Gibson, Vice-President Linguistic Services, Translation Bureau Lucie Séguin, Vice-President Corporate Services, Translation Bureau	2016/05/30	15

---

<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>National Research Council of Canada</b> Joel David Martin, Director of Research and Development Information and Communications Technologies François Cordeau, Vice-President Emerging Technologies, Platforms	2016/06/01	16

# **APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS**

---

## **Organizations and Individuals**

---

**Canadian Association of Professional Employees**

**Delisle, Jean**

**Language Industry Association**



# REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant Minutes of Proceedings ([Meetings Nos. 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15 and 16](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Denis Paradis  
Chair



## SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT FROM THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY ON THE STUDY OF THE TRANSLATION BUREAU

The New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP) would like to thank all who appeared before or submitted written briefs to the Standing Committee on Official Languages during the Committee's study of the Translation Bureau.

The NDP supports the report and all of the recommendations made by the Committee. However, we would like to make the following remarks concerning the role of the Translation Bureau, its budget and the next generation of translators, as well the more general issue of governance over official languages within the federal government.

The Translation Bureau's objectives are larger than simply translation and interpretation. It aims to further the mission of the *Official Languages Act* by maintaining the equality of both official languages and preserving the integrity and quality of the translations it provides. Limiting the purpose of the Translation Bureau to mere input and output fails to recognize the greater impact it holds on the application of the *Official Languages Act*.

"In a normal and ideal situation, the Translation Bureau does more than that. It promotes language, it plays a role in the standardization of language through its terminologists." - André Picotte<sup>1</sup>

"There is also a cultural aspect to our work that we mentioned in our brief. We stand up for linguistic duality. We care about more than producing words and paying our bills." - André Picotte<sup>2</sup>

The NDP therefore believes that the government must stop this practice of pushing the Translation Bureau aside and must recognize its role and specific mandate. We call on the government to implement Recommendation 8 by October 31, 2016, at the latest.

In addition to this, it is essential for the government to restore the financial resources required by the Translation Bureau to carry out its mandate. The repeated cuts made by Conservative governments and continued by the current Liberal government have resulted, and will continue to result in, a loss of expertise and lack of vision for the future within the Translation Bureau.

---

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, Standing Committee on Official Languages, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, Meeting No. 7, 11 April 2016.

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons, Standing Committee on Official Languages, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, Meeting No. 7, 11 April 2016.

“In a context where several federal institutions have lost resources and where 31% of Translation Bureau jobs have disappeared, it is not surprising that corners are often cut in the federal government when it comes to communication in both official languages. However, that changes nothing in terms of institutions' language obligations, and that is where we share the concerns of many stakeholders regarding the Portage tool.” - Sylviane Lanthier<sup>3</sup>

In addition, without the perspective provided by the youth benefiting from internship programs such as Traduca, we limit the development of future interpreters and the quality of work provided by the Translation Bureau. The government must reinstate this program or introduce a similar one.

“We are losing expertise, especially in scientific and technical translation. As I said just now, we had accumulated tons of expertise over the years and the decades. The veterans had that expertise, but they have left.” - André Picotte<sup>4</sup>

“Beforehand, when young people were hired, the experienced people trained them and passed on their knowledge. Now, those people are leaving and nothing is left any more [...] In other words, the Bureau is killing scientific and technical translation.” - André Picotte<sup>5</sup>

Lastly, we would also like to draw attention to the question of responsibility concerning the direction of the Translation Bureau. The Honourable Judy Foote, the current Minister of Public Services and Procurement, failed to find the time to attend a committee meeting regarding this study, which leads us to ask who is in charge since she clearly doesn't see this as her priority. The Treasury Board and Canadian Heritage are both in positions where they could be considered overseers of the Translation Bureau. This question raises the broader matter of monitoring the enforcement of the *Official Languages Act* within government, as mentioned by Ms. Bossé of the FCFA.

“From 2009 until the elections last fall, we have repeatedly asked the government to appoint an authority responsible for enforcing the act. Currently, as Ms. Lanthier said, Canadian Heritage has an important role to play, as do Justice Canada and Treasury Board. Those are the three federal institutions responsible for the enforcement of the Official

---

<sup>3</sup> House of Commons, Standing Committee on Official Languages, [Evidence](#), Meeting No. 8, 13 April, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> House of Commons, Standing Committee on Official Languages, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, Meeting No. 7, 11 April 2016.

<sup>5</sup> House of Commons, Standing Committee on Official Languages, [Evidence](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, Meeting No. 7, 11 April 2016.

Languages Act. Each one of them has a specific role to play involving different parts of the act. However, none of these ministers, pursuant to their respective mandates, have the authority to tell their colleagues what they must do in their department, or to ask them to ensure that the legislation is applied. That is the authority we are asking for, or which we had been asking for up until the fall. The reply we got was that no such authority existed.” - Suzanne Bossé<sup>6</sup>

The decentralized model put forward by the previous government has been an abject failure. The NDP has raised this matter many times since the Liberal government came to power, but the Liberals have yet to show any real interest in strengthening the governance of official languages. We call on the government to implement Recommendation 1 of the Committee immediately.

---

<sup>6</sup> House of Commons, Standing Committee on Official Languages, [Evidence](#), Meeting No. 8, 13 April, 2016.

