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## **Standing Committee on Official Languages**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, February 2, 2017**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Denis Paradis**



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

Thursday, February 2, 2017

• (1125)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.)):** We are resuming the session.

In summary, during the in camera portion of the meeting, we discussed a notice of motion introduced by our Vice-Chair John Nater. The purpose of the motion is to request that the Prime Minister issue a written response to the Committee within 30 calendar days explaining and justifying his use of the majority language in a minority language context.

[English]

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** I think I have to move the motion first before you can rule it out, so I've moved the motion.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Okay.

[English]

You have moved the motion.

[Translation]

I don't intend to go over the entire discussion that we already had. In short, I had to decide whether Mr. Nater's motion was in order. After consulting the regulations, I came to the conclusion that the motion was not in order.

The Commissioner of Official Languages has received complaints. I assume that he will determine whether they are in order or not. Of course, the committee can always receive the reports from the Commissioner of Official Languages, invite him to appear, and so on. As a result, in my view, this motion is not in order. We agreed to repeat those arguments publicly. There you go, now it's done.

We will suspend the meeting for a few minutes to allow the witnesses to settle in.

• (1120)

(Pause)

• (1125)

**The Chair:** We are resuming the meeting.

I would first like to welcome Mr. Trottier and Mr. Quell from the Treasury Board Secretariat. They will be giving a presentation this morning.

You have 10 minutes for the presentation, after which we will go around the table for questions and comments.

Mr. Trottier, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Carl Trottier (Assistant Deputy Minister, Governance, Planning and Policy Sector, Treasury Board Secretariat):** Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you.

I am pleased to be here with you today to contribute to the important role this committee has in achieving the objectives of the Official Languages Act.

Since September 2016, I have been responsible for the Governance, Planning and Policy Sector within the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, which is part of the Treasury Board Secretariat. The Official Languages Centre of Excellence is part of my sector. That is why I'm here to answer your questions.

It is an honour for me to lead the activities of the Secretariat and to be able to contribute to the continuous improvement of the results of the Government of Canada, particularly with respect to the provision of bilingual services and communications to the public, as well as with respect to the use of our two official languages in the workplace.

As you probably know, on November 17, the President of the Treasury Board announced a review of the Official Languages Regulations in an effort to modernize and adapt them to current realities.

[English]

I'm accompanied today by Carsten Quell, the director of policy and legislation with the Official Languages Centre of Excellence.

On November 29, 2016, I appeared before the Standing Committee on Official Languages, along with officials of Canadian Heritage, in support of the committee's study on accountability measures for official languages.

[Translation]

As I explained during this appearance, the Treasury Board Secretariat plays a role in supporting the implementation of parts IV, V and VI of the Official Languages Act.

Our activities can be grouped under three main themes: policy, support and evaluation.

First, we support the Treasury Board in developing and recommending policies on official languages. These clarify for all interested parties—public servants, parliamentarians and the Canadian public in general—the Treasury Board's expectations with regard to official languages.

Second, we play a supporting role and advise federal institutions and their deputy heads who are primarily responsible for the implementation of the Act and related policies. That is an important point to emphasize today.

Finally, we support the mission of the Treasury Board for assessing the overall state of the official languages program in federal institutions. The information we collect from federal institutions for this purpose is used in the preparation of an annual report that the President of the Treasury Board tables in Parliament. This report plays several roles.

On the one hand, the report serves to identify issues that deserve special attention because their implementation remains a challenge. In itself, this may indicate that it is necessary to amend the policies in order to clarify or improve them; or it may indicate that the implementation of a specific requirement poses greater challenges and requires the Secretariat to focus its efforts on awareness, guidance and advice to improve the implementation of these specific requirements.

The report is also an important part of the oversight mechanism created by the Parliament of Canada to ensure compliance with the objectives of the Official Languages Act. The report and its production allow a deputy head to take note of the performance of the organization—it allows them to take steps to assess and report on performance, and to take any corrective action required.

The annual report also aims to provide parliamentarians and the two committees, which have been established in accordance with the Act, the information necessary to play their role.

The annual report shows that federal institutions have made progress over the years, notably in the proportion of bilingual positions and in the proportion of incumbents of bilingual positions who meet the language requirements of their positions.

The report prepared by institutions is a self-assessment, as are indeed most measures of accountability submitted to Treasury Board Secretariat by federal institutions. This does not mean that the reports are not evidence-based. The reports submitted by institutions are based on several sources of information, and the transparency around them strongly encourages the rigorous analysis of the state of implementation.

● (1130)

In addition, this tool is not the only source that supports the report tabled in Parliament, as we also use the result of evaluations and audits, statistical data from human resource systems, as well as the results of the public service employee survey, just to name a few.

[English]

We understand that this honourable committee has questions about the annual report and the supporting reviews. During my November appearance, we undertook to provide the committee with further information to assist it in its role. We are here today to continue to do so.

I would like to add that we will, with enthusiasm and determination, come back to this committee as often as required to best respond to your questions to the best of our abilities, with the objective of supporting the valuable work this committee does. That

being said, the committee sought a list of problematic institutions, which we unfortunately don't have. I'd like to explain why, but I'd also like to explain what we do collect and the benefits derived.

[Translation]

Modern management principles for public institutions lead us to strive for continuous improvement by supporting those primarily responsible for the implementation of Treasury Board requirements to better achieve their work. That is why the Secretariat, under the guidance received by the Treasury Board, reviews the general state of implementation to identify issues that pose challenges for many federal institutions and to direct its attention to provide assistance, advice and support to all institutions.

The Secretariat aims for continuous improvement in all federal institutions while allowing each deputy head to establish the means necessary in their organization, in the context of their own realities and in accordance with their accountabilities.

[English]

Given that the Treasury Board's mandate is to oversee the general implementation of policies, but not to interfere with everyday deputy heads' own oversight responsibilities, the President of Treasury Board reports on overall results and does not rank the institutions. However, the institutions' reviews are made available to the parliamentary committees and to the Commissioner of Official Languages. This transparency ensures that reporting is taken seriously by deputy heads and allows for appropriate accountabilities to be exercised.

Those accountabilities do involve the Treasury Board Secretariat, but clearly Parliament intended that the commissioner and Parliament play a significant role in supporting the act's objectives. To assist the committee in understanding both the overall and individual results, we provided the committee with the information we received from reporting institutions for the 2014-15 reviews on official languages. The tables we produced present the responses received from each reporting institution on every question. This is the data we rely on to assist the president in reporting on the overall status of the official languages program. The annual report analyzes and presents these results in a transparent and open manner with the aim of encouraging compliance with and respect for the act.

Finally, before inviting you to ask any questions you may have, I want to reiterate how important the work of this committee is to us and to Canadians in general, and I wish to assure you that I will be at your disposal as long as you need me to be here, and for as many hearings as you need me to be here for, so we can answer your questions fully.

Now I will gladly answer your questions, and if I'm challenged on some, I'm going to ask Mr. Quell to give me a hand with that. Thank you.

● (1135)

[Translation]

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

We will start right away with the questions and comments.

You may start, Mr. Nater.

**Mr. John Nater:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses.

[English]

I'd like to challenge you a little bit. We asked for some information on which departments were problematic, and perhaps "problematic" is the wrong terminology. How about opportunities for improvement?

We see the results here. We see one example here from the annual report, that there are three departments that almost never greet the public in the official languages over the telephone. I see that as perhaps not problematic, but as an opportunity for improvement.

Could you provide us with the names of certain departments where you see great opportunities for improvement in greeting the public in the official languages or better complying with their official language requirements?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Thank you very much for that question. That question is in fact very different from the one that was initially asked. As you can see, this is thick. We'll have to go through this and come back to you.

Each department, in reality, has its strengths and weaknesses. That's just the reality of how it is. Some departments are doing very well when it comes to meetings. When they hold their meetings, they're very rigorous and they've developed some techniques from being rigorous in regard to their meetings. Other departments have more challenges and have ups and downs with regard to that. However, when we look at them overall, we see that they're actually quite healthy when it comes to the overall application of the official languages. You will find some where you see a lot of "no" boxes checked off, but they'll have a whole lot of "yes" boxes checked beside the other ones. The information you're asking for is actually quite a big volume, because all of these departments have some elements they can work on.

What we push and strive for is to make sure there's continual improvement in all instances. When we notice things, we then reach out to departments to find out how we can help. We try to identify a horizontal issue and we bring working groups together to be learn lessons and best practices, and it actually works.

**Mr. John Nater:** That leads to my next question, about the idea and concept of continual improvement. In the annual report for 2014-15, figure 20 refers to the percentage of institutions that carried out activities or reviews throughout the year. Only 69% of them do that throughout the year; 31% do not. What efforts is Treasury Board currently undertaking to encourage the remaining 31% to undertake continuous evaluation throughout the year, and not just at one point in a year when the self-assessment is undertaken?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I missed the beginning of your sentence. Are you referring to the action plans?

**Mr. John Nater:** No, I'm talking about the institutions that carry out activities throughout the year to measure the availability and quality of services offered in both official languages. In the annual report, figure 20 shows that only 69% of departments undertake activities throughout the year to review. So what's being done by

TBS to encourage that 31%? What tools are available to undertake that throughout the year?

**Mr. Carsten Quell (Director, Policy and Legislation, Treasury Board Secretariat):** The approach that Treasury Board Secretariat takes is to make this information available to departments, to the commissioner, and to the committee. By making information available, we take the first step so that institutions can look at each other and get inspired by each other's practices.

The fact that some carry out activities that others don't is something that can be discussed at the champions network; each federal institution has a champion. It's the availability of the information in and of itself that creates the beginning of the dialogue that will then help institutions to compare themselves to each another and look at best practices and ways to improve.

**Mr. John Nater:** Self-assessment and how it is undertaken has been on my mind since the last meeting. I've been reading through the information you provided. I very much appreciate it. In very few examples are requests for actual evidence being submitted. I know that when I was undertaking MAF assessments, we had a portal—this was back in 2009—and evidence by way of justification was submitted through the portal.

A lot of these questions are simply yes or no. I'm wondering what evidence might be provided to TBS. Second, what evidence is used internally in each department to assess some of these questions? They are awfully subjective in a lot of ways. What is considered a bilingual meeting? Is welcoming participants in English and French at the beginning considered a bilingual meeting?

What is considered a meeting in that sense? I attended a lot of meetings when I was in the public service. What is a meeting? Is it me and my supervisor? Is a third person needed for it to be considered a meeting? What types of criteria are there to provide the evidence both for the self-assessment and when it's also passed on to TBS to endorse the assessments provided?

● (1140)

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** The self-assessment is just one piece of information that's used. The information captured in the self-assessment is often corroborated by other pieces of information, such as the statistics we collect and the survey of the employees.

The survey of the employees is an excellent tool, by the way, because it gives you the real read of how the language is being used in the public service. We get tremendous pieces of information through that. We have other sections of information that come to us that corroborate how it is.

Your other question, or at least the other sense of your question, is how do we know they're doing things well in a meeting? Again, the responsibility for implementing it falls on the deputy head. We as advisers provide advice to the departments with regard to how they should be doing it. For example, a meeting is successful when everybody in the room feels they can have exchanges in the language of their choice, and it's not just saying "hi" at the beginning of the meeting. So, that's a best practice.

The trick is how you implement it in a way that it can be repeated systematically throughout the department. That's where departments sometimes strive and have to work hard at trying to get that. They'll put—

[*Translation*]

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

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Thank you.

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

I will now give the floor to Ms. Lapointe.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.):** Thank you.

Gentlemen, thank you for joining us this morning. It is much appreciated.

It was interesting to hear you talk about whether people could use the language of their choice in meetings. Could you convince me? Do you have any figures for that? In your meetings, do you feel comfortable speaking in French or do you speak mainly in English?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I, for one, feel comfortable speaking in both languages. I speak English very well and I'm not too bad in French. So I'm comfortable. I'm also comfortable letting the people around me speak in the language of their choice. That is my personal experience, and it does not always reflect the experience of all the departments.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** No, but that's fine.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** However, the departments provide information. They let us know whether they have given employees the option of using both languages in meetings. We have answers or data on that.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** At the beginning of your presentation, you said that you are in charge of the Governance, Planning and Policy Sector and that the Official Languages Centre of Excellence is part of your sector. Then, you said that the report and its production makes it possible to take note of the performance of organizations.

Over five years, have you noticed a significant improvement as a result of the measures you have taken? Do you have an example showing that the report allowed you to make improvements?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** It is difficult to provide a specific example when we are constantly working on making improvements.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Is there a positive trend?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Yes.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Are we talking about an increase of 1%, 2%, 5%, 10% or 20%?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I can give you some quite interesting data.

Between 1978 and 2015—

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** That's too far back. Tell us about the last 10 years.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** That's the data I have for you today, but I can forward the information for the past 10 years.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Yes.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** The number of bilingual positions is included in the data I have for you today. How many are there in the public service? In 1978, 25% of positions were bilingual. In 2004, there were 39%, and in 2015, 43%. This suggests that there's a constant upward trend.

• (1145)

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** There are ratings used to determine bilingualism, but what does it mean to be bilingual to you?

The federal government has a way to assess a person's level of bilingualism. For instance, I'm francophone and my second language is English.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** It depends on the requirements of the position. In some cases, level A may be required, meaning a level of bilingualism making it possible to carry on a conversation. Level B is a little more advanced and level C allows for a very good conversation.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Does it depend on the position?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** It depends on the position and the related requirements. People meet the requirements of the position. That's how bilingual positions are designated.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Okay.

I will now turn to the oversight of official languages. I would like to ask you a more specific question about that.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** May I add something?

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Yes, of course.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I have an interesting figure for you. You talked about employees not meeting the requirements. In 1978, the percentage of those meeting the requirements was 69%. This means that not everyone was meeting the requirements.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** I think 1978 is much too long ago.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** In 2004, the percentage was 82%.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** That's better.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** In 2015, the percentage was 95.5%. That's why I think the program is working well. We have reached 95.5% and that's not all.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Let's suppose that—

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** We have also raised the profile.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Yes. I would like to move on, given that I don't have much time.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** So the objective is even harder to achieve, but we are nonetheless achieving it.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Yes.

In terms of the 95.5% you mentioned, let's suppose that it's based on self-assessments. According to the information I have here, there may be something going on with the Royal Canadian Mint. People there apparently have a hard time achieving the objectives. The large institutions seem to do better; people have answered "almost always" or at least "very often".

Am I mistaken in saying that the Royal Canadian Mint is in the Ottawa region?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Yes, it is.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Okay.

It would appear that its situation is more difficult. Let me read the following:

It is interesting that the Royal Canadian Mint stands out from all other small and large institutions with a generally low score for language of work.

That's referring to people's preferred language of work.

It answered "sometimes" for the four following statements:

incumbents of bilingual positions are supervised in their preferred official language;

In other words, it is not always the case, or it is very rarely.

managers and supervisors who occupy bilingual positions in bilingual regions supervise each employee in the language chosen by that employee;

We are in a bilingual region. However, it seems more challenging here.

meetings are conducted in both official languages and employees may use their official language of choice during meetings;

This is still the Ottawa region, and it seems that the Royal Canadian Mint is having trouble.

employees can write documents in their official language of choice.

Have you noticed that, especially at the Royal Canadian Mint?

I have no particular grievance against that agency, by the way.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** We take note of the changes, of course, and we are providing support to those departments. I cannot tell you specifically what we have done in this case, but I can forward you the information if you wish.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** I would very much appreciate it.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** We could also provide you with more details about our reasons for doing so.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Yes.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Our role—

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** That agency does not seem to have reached a percentage as high as the 95.5% you mentioned earlier.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** No.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** It really seems to be at the back of the pack.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Yes, I agree with you.

As I mentioned earlier, some departments have more difficulty than others. Some do very well. We also know that most departments are very successful in certain areas, but have work to do in others. We are trying to work with the departments to make changes.

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

Mr. Choquette, the floor is yours.

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Once again, thank you very much for being here today.

The idea of self-assessment and the objectivity of these reports remains a little fuzzy for me. The annual reviews have turned into three-year reviews, just as we hear about reinstating the long-form census to gather more data. Similarly, I think the annual reports should be reinstated so that we have more information.

I believe the annual reports on official languages should automatically be sent to the FCFA and to the QCGN. It seems that those organizations have difficulty following up on what they are entitled to receive and what they do not receive.

Does the Treasury Board Secretariat provide the FCFA and the QCGN with a list of institutions that must submit a report during the current three-year cycle so that they can keep track of whether they have received everything or whether something is missing?

● (1150)

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I identified two questions. Let me answer the first one that deals with self-assessment. Is that right?

**Mr. François Choquette:** Yes.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** You said that we should go back to an annual review. It is important to understand that the small departments, the departments that do well and the departments that have the least impact conduct a review every three years. There are still some large, high-impact departments that carry out annual reviews. So we must make a distinction.

The Auditor General has looked into this issue. He told us that it was a good approach to manage the risks and to ensure that the assessments are relevant and provided in time.

We feel that our approach is not bad. We have not established a clear guideline requiring that reviews be conducted every three years in all cases. That's not true. The more at-risk groups have to do annual reviews. In those cases, we like to have the data.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Are the annual reports submitted to the FCFA and the QCGN?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I'm getting to your second question.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Okay.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** At the moment, we do not send the reports. The Treasury Board Secretariat is going to change its practice in order to provide the necessary information to the FCFA and the QCGN. At the moment, it is not our practice to provide that information, but nothing prevents us from doing so. We are going to ask the federal institutions that send in data to add two email addresses to their distribution lists. It's really not because we don't want to be transparent. On the contrary, we do want to be transparent. We are just simply going to change our practice.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Okay.

At the same time, can you send the committee the list of federal institutions subject to the Official Languages Act and a list of institutions that have to complete a report in any cycle, whether every year or every three years? Some institutions have to submit an annual report while others have to submit a report every three years. Can you send that to the clerk, so that we have a complete list of the institutions that are subject to the Official Languages Act, as well as of those that have to submit a report every year or every three years? In that way, we will be able to follow up and check whether we have received all the documents or whether we are missing some.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Yes. We will even provide you with a little template that will allow you to more easily monitor the documents you have received.

**Mr. François Choquette:** There have been a number of complaints about job postings because bilingualism was no longer mentioned. They simply said “bilingualism preferred” rather than “bilingualism essential”, CAC, or whatever.

What discussions have you had with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages about the complaints you have received?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** The Commissioner has decided that every supervisory position should require a level of CBC and the President has taken careful note of that.

After an exchange of correspondence, we have set up a working group with the Office of the Commissioner. We hope that the working group will allow us to come up with solutions. One of the challenges for the institutions is to correctly establish the linguistic profile of the positions.

We are very interested in having all available information about the practices being used. Those responsible for official languages must be provided with the best possible information, which they will then communicate to managers. That will give us a system that complies with section 91 of the Official Languages Act.

**Mr. François Choquette:** That's fine, thank you.

**The Chair:** We will give the floor to Mr. Arseneault.

**Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** I will let Mr. Samson speak instead.

**Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.):** Thank you. I will accept any invitation that is offered.

Thank you very much for being here. I greatly appreciate your presence today in helping us to better understand what is happening on the ground.

I would like to ask you some questions about matters that affect me greatly.

First, what changes has your department made in the last year and three months? Have you received any guidelines from the new government? Is anything different happening?

• (1155)

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** Actually, there is a clear commitment from the government to fully comply with the Official Languages Act. That commitment is found in the public mandate letters of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the President of the Treasury Board, who share that responsibility.

If you are asking me for an idea of how that commitment is being made into reality, I have to tell you that, last November 17, an announcement was made about reviewing the Official Languages Regulations. We are fully committed to complete that review and to communicate with key stakeholders. That is the concrete result of action being taken since 2015.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Thank you. I am happy that you touched on the matter of the Official Languages Regulations.

I have noticed that reports on plans and priorities and departmental reports do not mention the answers about official languages. There are no indicators on which to base an opinion. Do you think that is acceptable? You are responsible for enforcing the

act, but there is no mention of it. It is not likely that a lot is going to happen on the ground, because there is no mention of it.

**Mr. Carl Trotter:** I am trying to understand your question.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** I am talking about the reports that are submitted, like reports on plans and priorities, departmental reports or performance reports. Those reports do not deal with the matter of official languages at all. For example, with environment and climate change, there is no reference to official languages.

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** Some institutions and departments do make mention of it in their reports, such as ours, Canadian Heritage. You will certainly find it in the program activities. There are 200 institutions, and people responsible for official languages in each one of them. There is activity on official languages in each department.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** If reports are produced with no requirement to deal with the most significant issue in the country, providing Canadians with bilingual services, it seems to me that we are missing the boat. How can you be sure about what you are telling us? You rely on people internally, and I am not saying that they are not doing their job. However, in order to ensure that there is compliance, and to be able to announce that to the public, it seems to me that we should be able to base that on something.

**Mr. Carl Trotter:** It is the role of the deputy heads to provide that information in full, to provide the reports, so that we have an overall view of the health of the official languages in the public service. It is their role to do so within the confines of a report for a given department and perhaps for a representative of that department. Unfortunately, that does not provide an overview of the situation in general.

The Treasury Board has given us the mandate to take good care of the overall health of the official languages horizontally. We work with the departments to make sure that it is done.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** However, if the department has no report to submit, it has no need to make a lot of effort. That is my opinion.

Second, do you believe that an external evaluation should be conducted from time to time, at random, in one or two departments? At the Olympic Games, for example, they do random tests to detect drugs. Likewise, we could choose one or two departments per year, in rotation, at random, that would have to answer specific questions as part of their evaluation.

**Mr. Carl Trotter:** I would say that our process is quite rigorous. In fact, the Commissioner of Official Languages is not part of our department and he closely follows what we do on official languages. I agree with you, but I feel that an external organization does follow what we do.

• (1200)

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** I am pleased to hear you emphasize that, because the Commissioner is doing an outstanding job.

I am more concerned about the connection, or lack thereof, between the report and the action. There is no guarantee that you, the government or the department, are going to implement those measures and move matters forward. Although the report says that the institution must change the way it is doing things, there are no obligations or consequences.



Do you think that's acceptable? As my colleague Mr. Généreux often says, in the private sector, there's a review, followed by changes and actions.

I have trouble with all that.

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** The issue of bilingual meetings was addressed. Thanks to the public service survey, we have a pretty good idea of the situation. The Commissioner has looked into the issue. We have two advisory committees with officials from the departments and crown corporations. We have invited the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages to share its tools, best practices and approaches with our communities. This co-operation is one of our activities in support of institutions, in addition to the actions we take ourselves.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** I cannot assess your answer, but I appreciate it, because the Commissioner plays for our team. We really like him.

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

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** He's the player who tells us whether the rules are being followed and to what extent. This helps improve the situation.

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

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lefebvre, go ahead.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to go back to your speaking notes. You clearly stated that, under your leadership, there were policies, support and reviews. We have talked at length about reviews. In terms of policies, you said that you recommended that official languages policies be adopted.

What are the latest official languages policies that you have recommended?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** They are the ones currently in place.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** So you're implementing them, and you are recommending—

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** They were adopted by Treasury Board. We can now apply them. They are applied in all federal institutions.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** So there is support and evaluation to determine whether that support exists.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Evaluations indicate how things are going. As to support, that is the work we will be doing with departments and stakeholders to make improvements where there might be some shortcomings.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** We have some concerns about evaluations and what is done with them. In the case of self-evaluations, people can say anything.

You talked about successes and challenges. Why are there challenges? What steps are being taken to meet them? Is that measured? Are the challenges measured? Is the way they will be met measured?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Self-evaluation is mentioned a great deal as regards official languages, and that is also an aspect of management now. Deputy ministers are responsible for that. We ask them to be

transparent, knowing that what they report will have to be consistent with other findings. We consider the information about official languages that deputy ministers provide to be reliable and accurate.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** You were the one who said that there are still challenges.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Yes, and they tell us that. We are not—

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** So there are still challenges. Do you ask the institutions how they will meet the challenges and what steps they will take?

Let me try a different tack. Does each department have an action plan in order to comply with the official languages requirements?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Unfortunately, not all departments have an action plan, but the majority of them do.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Who has the power to require them to have one? Is it you?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** It is the deputy minister, the delegate, who is responsible for the action plan. Once we see that it is systematic and that too many departments do not have one, we consider that to be a horizontal problem. Then we create working groups and try to work with the departments to make sure they develop an action plan.

● (1205)

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Is it a requirement or a suggestion for each department to have an official languages action plan? I hope you say a requirement and not a suggestion.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Yes.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** I might be dreaming in technicolour, but I hope not.

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** Specifically, there is a cycle of policy, evaluation and support.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Okay.

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** We start with a policy. The last time it was updated was in 2012. An evaluation is then conducted every year and we meet with the departments and crown corporations in the context of support activities in order to make improvements.

Let me give you a specific example. In 2012, we added to the policy the requirement that each institution must have official languages governance. In other words, each institution must have an official languages champion.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** That has been done. We have official languages champions.

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** We did that because we saw there was a need.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** You saw a need.

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** Yes, exactly. We saw a need.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** So there is a policy, evaluation, and support, but monitoring must also be included. You have to build in accountability. That bothers me a bit. Accountability seems to be random.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** It is not random. It is required by deputy ministers, deputy heads.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** There are some who agree, others who agree more or less.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Departments have very different realities, we know that.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** I see.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Some departments are very successful in some regards but have problems in others. They try to find ways to meet the challenges.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** That is what I want to know.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** No department has ever said no to us.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** No, I know. I am not saying that either.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** It is really not like that.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** I am wondering what steps are taken once challenges are identified.

The reason I said it is random is that some indicate that it is an ongoing, perennial challenge, and they wash their hands of it.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Deputy heads are responsible for identifying the challenge and finding ways of addressing the shortcoming. That is the first step.

For our part, we take a very broad view of the environment. If we identify systemic problems that are present in many departments, that means there is a problem. It means that the policy may not be sufficient, that it might have to be enhanced or changed, or perhaps those departments need tools that they do not have at that time in order to take action.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** That is what I am getting at. Who determines that? How are departments supported in meeting the challenge?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** At the horizontal level, we support them. We look at their record and identify systemic problems.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Are you satisfied with the data you have? Are you able to do your work? Are you able to identify the departments that have challenges and ensure that they will meet those challenges?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** I could perhaps send you the official languages annual report of the President of the Treasury Board. The support activities are indicated at the end. A working group on language training and a working group on active offer are examples of the measures departments may take. A working group is created based on the recognition, drawing in particular on the findings of the reviews, that there are issues to be evaluated at the horizontal level. Moreover, the departmental officials we meet with on a regular basis are well aware of how their institution is doing as regards their mandate and the official languages.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Can we—

**The Chair:** Mr. Lefebvre—

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Is my time up already, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes.

I would like to ask for a clarification. I understand there is a self-evaluation. I also understand that you rely to a certain extent on the evaluation reports submitted to you by deputy ministers. Are you not a watchdog in that regard, or do you simply trust without question the reports you receive?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** It's somewhere in between. We are not a watchdog, but we do not trust blindly either.

The mandate we received from Treasury Board is in fact just as we described it: to establish a policy, then conduct an evaluation and offer support to the departments. That is the role we play.

Moreover, as I said earlier, the deputy ministers are responsible for implementation. We have to let them play that role and then measure the results. We work with deputy ministers to identify problem areas. As Mr. Quell said earlier, steps have been taken to encourage them to respond to the current requirements or to step up their efforts.

• (1210)

**The Chair:** From what I understand, the committee members expect to see a bit more involvement from you, a bit more energy put into your work.

I will now give the floor to Ms. Boucher.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC):** Thank you.

Good morning, gentlemen. I am pleased to see you here again.

That said, the more you talk, the more you lose me. There are some concepts I have a lot of trouble understanding, including self-evaluation. I think we all agree on that. If I evaluate myself, I would say good things all around. I am perfectly bilingual: I know the words for “yes”, “no”, “toaster”, and so forth.

I do not understand why evaluation is not mandatory. Self-evaluations should not even be used, especially in Ottawa. Evaluations should be conducted by third parties. We cannot let institutions self-evaluate and then report that everything is going smoothly. The fact is that everything is not going smoothly in 2017.

You said something else that I—

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Can I respond to that?

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Yes, go ahead.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** We are not trying to be difficult. I just want to make that clear. We are trying to explain the mandate that we were given under a Treasury Board decision. We are required to act in accordance with that decision. That is what we are doing. As to whether there is a better approach, that is clearly not up to us as public servants to decide.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Okay.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** We act in accordance with—

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** ...the mandate you have been given.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Yet you make recommendations.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Yes.

Suppose we were to ask you to recommend to a superior that more specific evaluations be conducted as opposed to self-evaluations. Would it be within your scope to make such a recommendation? Is that your role?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I think that is something for you to discuss.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Okay.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** That is not our role.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Thank you. That makes things clearer.

I touched on another matter earlier. When you were asked for the list of problematic institutions, you said you do not have it. My first reflex was to ask you why. You explained it briefly, but I did not really understand.

If you, at Treasury Board, receive evaluations or self-evaluations from problematic institutions, why is it that you do not have a list?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I tried to explain it to you earlier. This is quite a vast matrix that includes several departments and many questions. It happens that a department succeeds very well in some areas, and not very well in others. In addition, the questions are different.

How can I know that if one question is more important than another? There is no criterion that tells me that. How may I know if the reality of one department is more difficult than that of another? There is nothing to show that. There is no framework that would allow me to draw up a list. Unfortunately, that brings me back to my first observation, which was that this is not the context in which we were asked to work.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** I see.

You sent us several dossiers and documents. Here is a list we received.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** We gave you everything we had received.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Nevertheless, in certain cases, we need a code to open them. It's impossible to access some of those documents. Since we would like to consult those documents to do our work, it would be important that we be able to access them.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Of course.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** However, that is not the case currently. We asked you for documents and you gave us files which we cannot open, and I find that somewhat frustrating. This means we cannot verify the data from those files.

There was another issue that bothered me, like...

• (1215)

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I would like to reassure you by saying that in future we will send you documents that you can open.

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

Earlier, Mr. John Nater spoke about the letter we received, which contained a series of “yeses” and “nos”. I too would have liked to have an explanation. Under Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, it says “yes”, but what does that mean? Does it mean that the department is bilingual, that an indigenous language is spoken there, or that there is a kitchen in the building? What does the “yes” mean?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I already have trouble...

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** There are no explanations, no examples.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** There is a question at the beginning.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Yes. It asks whether mechanisms are in place to ensure a follow-up, and so on, and then there is a choice between “yes” and “no”. Could some explanations not be provided?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** The departments have to answer whether, yes or no, they have been doing what is set out in the question.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** For instance, under Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, it says “yes”, but there are no explanations, no examples. So that department has mechanisms, but what is their scope? Do you have that information?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** You are referring to part of the Management Accountability Framework, the MAF. What you are seeing is a screen capture. This is what the institutions give us, but it does not mean that they do not also provide additional comments once they have checked “yes” or “no”.

Under the MAF, we ask the institutions to keep their supporting documentation. The instructions on how to answer the questions are clear, that is to say that we accept “yes” and “no” answers, but of course, this has to be based on back-up data.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** In that case, may we have the justification that came with the “yes” or “no”? The answer is “yes” for the Public Health Agency of Canada, but in what proportion, and why?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** As Mr. Quell said, in certain cases the institutions provide more written information, and in other cases, they simply check “yes” to indicate that they are doing what is spelled out in the question.

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

Thank you, Ms. Boucher.

Allow me to intervene briefly to mention that the Official Languages Act is a quasi-constitutional act. I am gobsmacked to see that we are talking about self-assessment here with regard to a quasi-constitutional act.

I would like to direct the attention of the members of the committee to part VIII of the act, entitled “Responsibilities and Duties of Treasury Board in Relation to the Official Languages of Canada”, which reads as follows:

(2) In carrying out its responsibilities under subsection (1) the Treasury Board may

[...]

(c) issue directives to give effect to parts IV, V and VI;

(d) monitor and audit federal institutions in respect of which it has responsibility for their compliance with policies and [...]

So there are some firm obligations. However, in paragraph (g), it says you may “delegate any of its powers under this section to the deputy heads”. This gives the impression that despite paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d), paragraph (g) suggests that Treasury Board will delegate its powers to deputy heads. However, I think the members of the committee would like you to be more active, and they want you to be the guard dog of official languages.

I now yield the floor to Mr. Arseneault.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** Thank you.

Good morning, Mr. Trottier and Mr. Quell. I thank you for your presence and your patience.

I'm sure you have cleverly detected some surprise and quasi-frustration on the part of the committee regarding what I might call, with all due respect, a certain laxness in the evaluation of what is going on with official languages in the various departments.

As everyone has said including the chair, it seems that self-assessment is delegated to deputy heads. You said that 200 different organizations do their self-assessment to see whether they are compliant with parts IV and V of the Official Languages Act. Did I understand that correctly?

• (1220)

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Yes, approximately 200.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** That are registered?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Yes.

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** As indicated, there are various sources of information. For example, for those who meet the linguistic requirements of their position, the data do not derive from a self-assessment, but from our human resources system. That is a fact and not an answer to a question. The Secretariat of the Treasury Board has the database.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** And that database is provided to you by these 200 or so administrators, correct?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** No. We have the human resources data, the data on public service employees. The information on employees who meet the language requirements is verified with the Public Service Commission of Canada. That data is based on the language tests. It covers all of the central public administration.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** I will word my question another way. What is the role of these deputy heads?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** The role of the deputy heads is to apply the act within their...

**Mr. René Arseneault:** ... respective departments.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** That is correct.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** And how many deputy heads are there, approximately?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** There are approximately 200, that is to say one deputy head per institution.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** Do we know who they are? Do you know the names of the people who fill out this assessment and send it to you? Is that information public?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** That information is already public.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** That's fine.

Can you tell me how bilingual these deputy heads are, generally speaking? Without naming anyone, can you tell me, for instance, if there are three bilingual managers, 50 unilingual francophone managers, and if the rest is made up of unilingual anglophones? Can you tell me that?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** Most of the deputy heads are appointed by the Governor in Council. Treasury Board policies do not apply to people who are appointed by the Governor in Council.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** Yes, I saw that, the exception is in the law.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** There are a few exceptions.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** Could you answer me with yes or no. Is it possible that the information sent to you by these deputy heads is being sent by people who are for the most part unilingual anglophones?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Unfortunately, it is impossible for us to know that.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** It's impossible?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** We do not know.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** Fine.

I'd like to go back a bit. During your last visit on November 29, the second question put to you by the committee concerned a list of organizations considered problematic regarding bilingualism—you were asked whether you could provide it—and what percentage of institutions were not doing their work. I read your presentation at the outset carefully. It is nice, but I'm not satisfied. In my opinion, you have the clear mandate to answer that question and your organization should not flood us with documents we are supposed to plow through by ourselves. I really got the feeling that we were told to go and sort through all of this information on our own.

Mr. Chair, I don't know if this is possible, but I would like to reword that question. I would like us to be provided with a list of those institutions that are performing under par regarding bilingualism, and the percentage of those who do not do their work. I would like the secretariat to give us the answer and not bury us in documents. I want an answer; I believe it is its role to provide it. Once we have that, perhaps we can then make recommendations.

Would that be possible, Mr. Trottier?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** If that list existed, I would have it today and I would give it to you with a big smile.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** Mr. Trottier, the list does not exist because you have not drawn it up. Because you have not done so, the office is closing its eyes to an essential point, that is to say evaluating the level of compliance with official language requirements among federal departments.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** However, we measure that annually and we support the departments to ensure that they meet the requirements and that there is continuous improvement regarding official languages. What—

**Mr. René Arseneault:** Forgive me for interrupting you, Mr. Trottier, but I have very little time.

You say that you cannot answer my question. And yet, it is your role to know whether this obligation to respect official languages in the federal departments is being fulfilled or not. You are not able to tell me that today. I do not want to point the finger at you personally, but your organization is incapable of telling us today if we are on the right track or not. You say that is impossible. Is that really what you are telling me?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** No, not at all. I think we are headed in the right direction.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** If I have the committee or the chair's authorization, I will ask you to provide an accurate response to the following question: Will you provide a list of the institutions that seem problematic to you?

**The Chair:** Is that okay, Mr. Trottier?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** As I mentioned—

**The Chair:** Basically, he is asking you for an assessment.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** We do not have that assessment. We don't have the parameters that would allow us to say which department is better than another. We feel terrible but that is not part of our mandate. Our mandate is global. We are expected to do a global evaluation regarding official languages.

•(1225)

**Mr. René Arseneault:** Mr. Trottier, there is no evaluation; what your organization is providing to us is not an evaluation.

**The Chair:** Mr. Arseneault, I think that Mr. Trottier has just given his reply.

We will hold this discussion internally, and we will get back to this point. We will put the question directly to Treasury Board later.

We will go on to our next speaker.

Mr. Gagné, you have the floor.

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

I thank the witnesses for being here with us today.

Mr. Trottier, is a questionnaire distributed to all of the departments in order that people may assess themselves?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** Are you talking about the questionnaire we send to the institutions?

**Mr. Bernard Gagné:** I am talking about the questionnaire. I imagine it does not only contain a question on whether one is bilingual or not.

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** In fact, there are five series of questions. It is included in the documents.

**Mr. Bernard Gagné:** Is that what we saw earlier? Fine, I will analyze that.

Following Mr. Arseneault's intervention, I would like to put the following question to you. If you were in our shoes, what questions would you ask? Since you are with the Secretariat of the Treasury Board, you are responsible for enforcing the act. I am sure you know this, and there are grounds to support what I am saying. If you were in our shoes, what would you change, or what would you ask people to change?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I always feel a little uncomfortable when I'm asked for my opinion.

**Mr. Bernard Gagné:** Indeed, your opinion is what I am after.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I come here to help you and to provide all of the data I have. I don't like to invent anything and I don't want to.

**Mr. Bernard Gagné:** I'm not asking you to invent anything at all.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I want to give you what we have. However, my opinion is not a part of those facts.

**Mr. Bernard Gagné:** I think that your opinion is a part of the facts, Mr. Trottier. You work for that organization.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I'm going to answer your question somewhat differently.

Currently, we are working within a framework under which we were asked to create a policy. We developed one and we reviewed it in 2012. We made changes to ensure that it was in proper form and that it would advance the interests of official languages in Canada. We were also asked to do an annual evaluation. Consequently, we must ask a lot of questions of the departments and deputy heads so that we know what is going on.

How can we ensure that the self-assessment is accurate? By making it transparent and ensuring that it is distributed to everyone. In that way, the deputy heads will want to provide a true picture.

I was also asked to go and see some deputy heads to tell them that they had some serious systemic issues and that we wanted to work with them to help them to resolve these issues.

So, if you ask, I would say that I am comfortable with what we achieved within that framework.

However, someone asked earlier if making recommendations to someone else was a part of our mandate. The answer is no, it is not up to us to do that.

•(1230)

**Mr. Bernard Gagné:** I will put the question another way.

You say that you work within a framework that applies to all of the organization. If you could change that framework and if you could improve it, what improvements would you make to it?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I'm going to reply by making an offer to the committee. Rather than talking to you about what I think, I would like to offer you a technical briefing to present an overview of our program and to explain everything we do.

**Mr. Bernard Gagné:** That sounds fine to me.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** It would last more than an hour and I apologize for that, but I think it would be beneficial. I really do want to work with this committee, to support it and provide it with what it needs to do its work on official languages.

**Mr. Bernard Gagné:** If you had to rank official languages on a priority scale from 1 to 10 at Treasury Board, where would you situate official languages?

I'll go back to what Mr. Samson was saying earlier. As a private citizen I worked in private enterprise. In that environment we regularly analyze components that are put in place in order to ensure that our systems function, provide results and generate profits. It is that simple. That is how it works in the private sector.

In government, we provide services to a clientele that is the whole of the Canadian population.

Regarding the priority of French and official languages, what is the position of Treasury Board? How do you assess yourselves in that regard? Are you at 2, at the bottom of the scale? Does anyone care a hoot about official languages?

There are people I have known here in Ottawa for many years. They are public servants who work in certain departments. Let's examine a very concrete situation involving official languages that happens in offices and departments. When meetings are held, if there is a single person around the table who speaks only English and does not understand French, all of the francophones speak English. This happens over and over again in Ottawa, and has for many years.

We are talking about self-assessments. I think that everyone here has roundly denounced this method. How can we change a system if we are told, when this evaluation is done, that everything is going well, that there is no problem, when in reality meetings are held in English only?

There is a real difference between applying the act and the assessment that people make of it, and what really happens during staff meetings.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I'm going to answer your question because—

**The Chair:** Before letting you answer, Mr. Trottier, I'm simply going to thank Mr. Généreux.

I have to leave. I'm going to ask Mr. Nater to chair the meeting in my stead.

I want to thank you for that offer of co-operation with the committee. I think that will be helpful.

You may now reply.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Very well, thank you.

To answer your question, I am not going to choose a ranking from 1 to 10. I will simply say that the topic of official languages is extremely important at Treasury Board. I'll put it that way. Not only is it important for the Secretariat of the Treasury Board, but also for the Clerk of the Privy Council and for the minister responsible for Treasury Board. These are files that are very important to them.

The Clerk of the Privy Council even asked two deputy ministers to create a working group on the language of work to try to find solutions in order to improve the situation with regard to language of work in the public service. A study is being done and a report is going to be given to the Clerk of the Privy Council. I am sure that this will lead to recommendations for measures to be implemented to improve the situation.

That is the only way I can answer you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Thank you.

Mr. Choquette, you have three minutes.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to come back to section 91 of the act as it relates to supervisory positions. A working group has been set up. Is the purpose to figure out how you can comply with the regulations and thus address the commissioner's concerns? Or is the idea to find

some sort of compromise? What exactly is the group trying to achieve?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** I would say that its first objective is to develop a good understanding of where things stand and to identify how many positions are affected. Investigations have also been carried out to determine what kinds of problems managers face when it comes to identifying the positions.

The basis for the exercise is a solid understanding of the facts and trends, as well as a recognition that improvements have been made. The goal is to better understand the positive measures that can facilitate compliance with section 91 and to determine what the barriers are. That is the goal.

• (1235)

**Mr. François Choquette:** What is the group's timetable?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** We hope to have finished gathering data by the spring and to then start evaluating possible solutions.

**Mr. François Choquette:** You are working with someone from the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages on this, are you not?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** Yes, indeed.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Very well.

In the meantime, though, bilingualism continues to be referred to as an asset in job postings.

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** Treasury Board policy has not changed and does apply. The commissioner has commented on that. We endeavour to establish appropriate language requirements for each position. That's why we sat down with the commissioner and his colleagues; we wanted to understand the issue as best we could. We are convinced that solutions emerge when all the facts can be taken into account.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Are you working with the commissioner's office on other issues?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** We've discussed the active offer issue. We've also set up a working group with the commissioner's office to review the Official Languages Regulations, in co-operation with the FCFA and the QCGN.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Mr. Généreux, you may go ahead.

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

Earlier you talked about providing us with a technical briefing. That's obviously something the committee will discuss. The chair thanked you for your co-operation, and I would like to do the same.

In addition to the technical briefing, would it be possible to provide us with an organization chart? Are you able to put together an organization chart? That way, we could see at a glance all the elements of each department and everyone's roles, particularly those of the champions.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Okay.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** As a visual person, I quite appreciate being able to see where things are going and who to turn to in order to get things done.

For years, people I know have told me that the reality of bilingualism on the ground isn't always as rosy as the picture we are asked to present, and that's unfortunate.

That brings me back to the self-assessment. I realize that it's one piece of the puzzle that helps you arrive at the end result.

In your speaking notes, you indicate that you don't really have the information requested. Allow me to find the paragraph. It begins, "This being said". You stated that the committee sought a list of problematic institutions, which you unfortunately didn't have.

I have trouble understanding how you cannot have a clear picture of that or, at the very least, some idea.

If I were to ask you which government institution was struggling the most right now on the bilingualism front, could you give me an answer off the top of your head? I'm not asking for a list.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I'm trying to be as clear as I possibly can. What measure do you use to determine that?

Take, for example, a department with customs operations that has trouble hiring staff or a department that operates ships. The data for those departments will differ from the data of other institutions, despite the fact that the deputy head may have done more than the deputy head of another department in order to address the shortcomings. Should I tell that deputy head that their organization is in the bottom 10?

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** It's important for you to understand that the committee's objective isn't to point the finger at the guilty parties or to single out those who aren't doing their jobs. Rather, we are trying to identify the measures that work. Earlier you mentioned elements that help some departments perform quite well. Those best practices could be shared with other departments.

What tools do you provide to departments that have sound practices in place so that they can share those practices with organizations that aren't doing as well?

I realize that people who work on a ship and those who work in an office don't operate under the same working conditions. Given the chain of command and other aspects, they are in different situations. It's all relative. Clearly, the idea isn't to compare apples and oranges.

It would be useful if we could pinpoint the places where things are working well. The committee's role is to improve services to Canadians.

• (1240)

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Yes.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** That is the Standing Committee on Official Languages' top objective. Achieving that objective means we need information to tell us what additional steps can be taken in a particular location and which policies can be introduced to help you fix the problems.

If we don't have that information and we can't pinpoint the problem areas, how would you suggest we determine the right practices to adopt? It's akin to a dog chasing its tail. We'll never get anywhere if we can't zero in on the issues as precisely as possible.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** When we look at the data, however, we are able to say what the current themes or problem types are. We can

identify the key problems, and we can do that precisely because we examine everyone.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** As I previously said, I have a private sector mindset. When I scrutinize my business or a given problematic situation, certain elements emerge, certain themes and categories. My next move is to put measures in place to address a particular issue.

If we don't have that information, how can we equip you with the tools you need or help lay the groundwork for certain tools so that you have the resources to fix the problem?

It's crucial to pinpoint the problem. It's important to have a list of the institutions that aren't performing well in order to figure out why that is. As things stand, we aren't in a position to address the issues. That's what we have been trying to tell you all morning. I believe it was the same in the fall. You can send us all the reports you want, but the fact remains that we aren't able to ascertain which of the 220 federal departments and agencies are struggling the most. Nor are we able to determine whether any tendencies that would help us hone in on the problem are emerging.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I heard you loud and clear, but I also want to let you know what my constraints are. You have to have the right measure when you are evaluating something.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** I agree with you completely.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I don't have any measures, however.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** How is it that you don't have any measures?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** There are 220 departments and organizations, and they are all different.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** The country is 150 years old, and the Official Languages Act is 60 years old, if I'm not mistaken. How is it that, after 60 years, we still don't have any measures in the departments to determine whether their official languages performance is adequate or not?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** As you, yourself, said, it's important not to compare apples and oranges. The realities of some departments are quite different.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** That fact is not lost on any of us.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** There are 220 institutions, and they are all different.

I would like nothing more than to have a measure that would apply to all of them, making it possible for me to compare apples and apples and to rank them so I could see exactly who was doing well and who wasn't. Unfortunately, though, I don't have such a measure.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** So there we have a problem.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** It is possible, however, to establish a horizontal—

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** We have to stop. We have to go on.

Before I go to Mr. Vandal, you mentioned that you have to work within the framework you're given. Would you be able to provide us with that framework?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** We'll put it together and we'll give it to you, yes.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Okay.

Monsieur Vandal.

[Translation]

**Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to pick up on my colleague Mr. Arseneault's question. Can you give me an idea of how many public servants in the Treasury Board Secretariat work on official languages? You cited a figure earlier. What was it?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I wasn't talking about the Treasury Board Secretariat. That said, 20 or so employees work on official languages there, primarily on support and evaluation activities. You could also include all the champions across the public service, who work on official languages as well.

• (1245)

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Of your three main activity themes—policy, support, and evaluation—which receives the bulk of your resources and time?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** It's a continuum. An official languages policy exists, so what we actually do is provide guidance and advice to the departments on how to comply with the policy. We gather data, and we support the departments. That is part of our responsibilities.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** You mentioned a continuum. Does that mean things are always changing?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** No. It's a cycle. We have a policy, we collect data, we carry out an evaluation, and we provide support to the departments in an effort to help them improve their performance. The following year, we gather data and so forth. The improvement is ongoing from year to year.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** I don't want to repeat what everyone has already said, but I just want to make sure that you understand our position.

According to our briefing note, Environment and Climate Change Canada makes no mention of official languages or official language minority communities in its reports on plans and priorities. That applies to both the 2015-16 and 2016-17 reports.

How is that possible? Do you have the tools to figure that out? How can that be true this year?

That is our view, and I just want to make sure you understand where we are coming from.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** I understand. I am now aware of it. Thank you.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** How is it possible for a department like Environment and Climate Change Canada to make no mention of official languages in its 2017 report on plans and priorities?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** I don't have the report in front of me, so I'm not prepared to comment on that.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Very well.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** We have just three minutes left. Would anyone else care to take the floor?

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** I have a question.

You said that you had about 22 employees reporting to you. Was that always the case? Was the staff larger or smaller in the past? Do you have enough people to do the job?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** The staff was larger before.

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** The team was bigger prior to 2006.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** How many people were there?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** I would have to check.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** A lot more or just slightly more?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** Let's just say that the team operated differently. The direction we've taken is to make the departments responsible and to build on the support we have across the 200 institutions subject to the act. Each of them has at least one person responsible for official languages, a champion. The big departments have entire teams. The idea was to focus on giving those people tools, since they are the ones working on official languages and the ones most familiar with their department's operational reality.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Do you have the resources you need to do your job? Were you better off before? Did you have an easier time doing your job before?

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** We have what we need to do our work.

During our briefing—

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Despite the—

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** We have diverging views, and I really don't want there to be any misunderstanding with the committee, which I have the utmost respect for. I want to provide the committee members with whatever information I can. You are asking us to operate in a way that does not line up with what Treasury Board asks of us. That is the constraint I'm under.

I operate however the Treasury Board dictates. I am bound by that. I am able to satisfy the Treasury Board's requirements with my 22 or 23 employees. We see ongoing improvement being made. Earlier, we briefly talked about the figures from 2004 to 2015. Things continue to improve. The results are positive. I simply don't have the framework you are asking me to apply.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Very well. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Mr. Choquette, you may go ahead.

**Mr. François Choquette:** No, it's okay.

• (1250)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Very good.

[English]

Okay. If there's nothing further—

[Translation]

Yes, Mr. Choquette?

**Mr. François Choquette:** On second thought, yes, I would like to say something. I'll make it very quick.



**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Go ahead, Mr. Choquette.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Job postings are still a concern for me. We talked about them. You indicated that we would likely see some results from the working group in the spring.

Would you mind sharing the working group's results with the committee?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** No, of course not. During the technical briefing, we would be pleased to tell you about all our activities.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Will there be a written report?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** We've held three meetings, I believe. I can't speak for the commissioner's office. We expect to identify potential solutions come the spring. We can definitely share that with you.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Your working group won't be writing a report?

**Mr. Carsten Quell:** We haven't yet decided what form the report will take. We are at the data collection stage. That said, a report will certainly be produced. Potential solutions need to be laid out. That will come from the group's work.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** We could share the information we collect with you.

**Mr. François Choquette:** The important thing is that you let the committee know once you've completed the work. Then, we will invite you to share your findings with us.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Of course.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Thank you kindly.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Mr. Lefebvre, you have the floor.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for meeting with us today. I learned quite a bit from today's meeting. I would like to see you again, though. I am certain we will have need for further follow-up on how to improve compliance with the Official Languages Act across the federal public service.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Thank you.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** I think you've had an opportunity to see the committee's enthusiasm, its co-operative spirit, and its desire to make progress. Thank you. I know, at times, it felt as though we were coming at you a bit hard, but I still very much appreciated our meeting. I learned a lot, as I said. We will no doubt pick up the discussion again.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** Very good.

I quite enjoyed the experience. Thank you.

We truly do want to help the committee. Just ask, and we will provide whatever help we can. We'll be back to share what we have with you. As I mentioned a few times, when we are limited as to the answers we are able to give, I will say so. That may not be ideal, but it is nonetheless the reality. We can certainly have discussions.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** We're getting somewhere.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** It may be necessary to amend the Official Languages Act to get the answers we are looking for.

**Mr. Carl Trottier:** We are currently working on the Official Languages Regulations.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Thank you very much, Mr. Trottier and Mr. Quell.

Meeting adjourned.

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