



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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CANADA

**FOLLOW-UP TO THE STUDY OF THE
TRANSLATION BUREAU
REVERSE THE TREND: STRIVE FOR
EXCELLENCE**

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

**Hon. Denis Paradis
Chair**

APRIL 2017

42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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has the honour to present its

FOURTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(3)(f), and the motion adopted by the Committee on Monday, February 22, 2016, the Committee has studied the Translation Bureau and has agreed to report the following:

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FOLLOW-UP TO THE STUDY OF THE TRANSLATION BUREAU REVERSE THE TREND: STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE

INTRODUCTION

From 7 to 9 February 2017, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages (the Committee) turned its attention to the Translation Bureau (TB) again to follow up on the recommendations made in its report, presented to the House of Commons in June 2016.¹

GENERAL OBSERVATION

The Committee is satisfied with the measures that the Hon. Judy Foote, Minister of Public Services and Procurement, announced when she appeared before the Committee on 9 February 2017. Her testimony, seen as a supplementary government response to the Committee's report,² addressed all of the recommendations that the Committee had made concerning the TB in the summer of 2016.

A NEW ERA FOR THE TRANSLATION BUREAU

In broad terms, Minister Foote and Deputy Minister Marie Lemay announced the start of a new era for the TB.³

On the subject of governance, the Minister stated that the process is under way to hire a new chief executive officer (CEO). The CEO's priorities will focus on quality, hiring and training.⁴

The TB is also creating the position of chief quality officer, which will be filled by a language professional. In addition to overseeing the quality of the TB's services and products, the chief quality officer will "take part in decision-making on training, technology, staffing, and other issues."⁵

1 House of Commons, Standing Committee on Official Languages [LANG], [Study of the Translation Bureau](#), Second Report, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, June 2016.

2 The government [responded to the Committee's report on 17 October 2016](#).

3 LANG, [Evidence, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 9 February 2017](#), 1130 (Ms. Marie Lemay, Deputy Minister, Public Services and Procurement Canada).

4 *Ibid.*, 1105 (Hon. Judy Foote, Minister, Public Services and Procurement Canada).

5 *Ibid.*

On the issue of the status of TB services, Minister Foote has contacted the Hon. Scott Brison, President of the Treasury Board, and asked for his support in considering a mandatory service delivery model for the Translation Bureau.⁶

With regard to human resources, the Minister acknowledged that there has been a loss of corporate expertise in recent years and she made a commitment to reverse this trend.⁷ To transfer knowledge and prepare the next generation of professionals, the TB will hire language students (50 per year over five years), restore the co-op program and introduce initiatives to bring together experienced professionals and those just starting out in their careers.⁸ The Bureau has already entered into discussions with the Canadian post-secondary institutions that train language professionals.

Lastly, the Committee is very pleased with the Minister's announcement about cancelling the new procurement system for freelance interpretation services.⁹ The Canadian Branch of the International Association of Conference Interpreters pointed out that this new system, which would award contracts based on the lowest bid, would "undermine the government's ability to meet its official languages obligations."¹⁰

CONCLUSION

The Committee urges Minister Foote to act on the public commitments she made on 9 February 2017 regarding the TB:

- Hire a new CEO and ensure the person is in place before 31 March 2017.
- Ensure that the CEO's immediate priorities are quality, hiring and training within the TB.
- Create the position of chief quality officer and ensure the position is held by a language professional who reports directly to the CEO.
- Set up a service line that federal institutions can call to obtain advice on linguistic services.
- Ensure that the TB hires at least 50 students per year over the next five years.
- Implement initiatives to increase the number of interpreter graduates from recognized universities to support additional hiring by the TB and the language industry.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., 1110.

10 LANG, [Evidence, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 February 2017, 1115](#) (Ms. Nicole Gagnon, Canada's Lead for Advocacy, International Association of Conference Interpreters).

- Ensure the TB restores its co-op program.
- Ensure the TB continues to operate its network of regional offices.
- Have the TB work closely with the Canada School of Public Service to introduce training as of spring 2017 for new public servants on the Government of Canada's language obligations, particularly with regard to translation.
- Implement the plan that has been developed to have professional translators regularly review the content of the language comprehension tool.
- Pursuant to the decision to cancel the request for standing offer, ensure that the TB develops a new approach for awarding contracts based on areas of expertise and further consultations with representatives from across the interpretation industry.

In conclusion, the Committee would like to acknowledge the outstanding contribution made by the Translation Bureau's translators, interpreters and terminologists as well as all of its employees to building a country that is proud and respectful of its two official languages.

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Association of Linguistic Services Managers Dominique Bohbot, Distinguished Member	2017/02/07	44
International Association of Conference Interpreters Nicole Gagnon, Canada's Lead for Advocacy Jim Thompson, Communication Counsel		
Department of Public Works and Government Services Hon. Judy Foote, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Services and Procurement Adam Gibson, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Translation Bureau Marie Lemay, Deputy Minister Lucie Séguin, Vice-President, Corporate Services, Translation Bureau	2017/02/09	45

APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS

Organizations and Individuals

Association of Linguistic Services Managers

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 44, 45, 50 and 52](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Denis Paradis
Chair

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA
ON THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE STUDY ON THE TRANSLATION BUREAU
“REVERSE THE TREND: STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE”

The New Democratic Party (NDP) would like to thank all those who appeared before the Standing Committee on Official Languages for its study of the Translation Bureau (TB). We appreciate the hard work the TB does to protect the official languages and promote the cultural development of our country.

The NDP agrees with the second response provided by the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. However, we would like to offer some comments regarding the TB’s role in hiring students and graduates, the focus on quality and the recruitment of a chief quality officer, the TB’s budget, reinvestment and official languages governance within the government.

Following the second response from Ms. Foote, we listened to stakeholders’ reactions and carefully analyzed their recommendations. We believe it is essential to add the following points:

First, the Minister’s commitment does not seem clear about the need to hire indeterminate employees. We ask for confirmation that the commitment indeed involves the hiring of 25 new indeterminate employees each year, not 25 interns. That said, we must point out that these new employees will not be sufficient to address stakeholders’ needs.

Second, we ask that the government conduct an immediate review of the procurement system. As Ms. Nicole Gagnon stated, “The proposed system discriminates against quality. It seeks to establish one all-inclusive rate for each of the streams, regardless of the mode of interpretation. As a result, the more versatile, specialized, and experienced interpreters will lose out to the lowest bidders.”¹ Consequently, a new quality-based strategy for translation and interpretation contracting must be implemented.

The NDP makes the following recommendations:

1. That a billing system based on the hours of work rather than the number of words be established in order to reflect the unique, intellectual, professional and qualitative nature of translation.
2. That the contracts awarded to bidding companies be classified according to size, security level, experience and other meaningful categories.
3. That contract length and size be increased in order to support Canadian suppliers.

¹ House of Commons, Standing Committee on Official Languages [LANG], [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 February 2017, 1115 (Ms. Nicole Gagnon, Canada’s Lead for Advocacy, International Association of Conference Interpreters).

4. That all projects and contracts be awarded to Canadian companies for obvious reasons of security and confidentiality.

Third, we ask that the Minister immediately respond to the stakeholders' request regarding the TB's governance. We would like the Minister to study the possibility of transferring responsibility for the TB to Canadian Heritage or the Privy Council Office. As Ms. Dominique Bohbot noted, responsibility for the TB "must be transferred to an authority other than Public Services and Procurement, because translation is a highly intellectual activity and not a simple product."²

Fourth, the Minister does not appear to be taking any steps regarding the TB's annual budget. Accordingly, we call on the Minister to present a plan to reinvest in the TB.

In closing, the NDP would like to thank Ms. Foote for her second response. However, like the stakeholders, we remain convinced that even stronger measures are needed to restore the TB to its former glory.

² LANG, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 7 February 2017, 1110 (Ms. Dominique Bohbot, Distinguished Member, Association of Linguistic Services Managers).