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## **Standing Committee on Official Languages**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, March 1, 2011**

**Chair**

**Mr. Steven Blaney**



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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● (0855)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP)):** Order, please. My name is Yvon Godin and I am Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. The Chair, Mr. Blaney, cannot be here today because he is attending a session in Parliament with our French friends and counterparts who are visiting Canada this week.

On the agenda today, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f), we are studying the 2009-2010 Annual Report, Volume II, of the Commissioner of Official Languages. That report was referred to the committee on Tuesday, November 2, 2010.

Our witnesses today represent the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We welcome Ms. Claire Dansereau, Deputy Minister, Mr. Marc Grégoire, Commissioner of the Canadian Coast Guard, Mr. Mitch Bloom, Assistant Deputy Minister and Champion of Official Languages for the Strategic Policy Sector, and Ms. Michaela Huard, Assistant Deputy Minister for the Human Resources and Corporate Services Sector.

Ms. Dansereau, you have approximately 10 minutes to make your presentation. I believe you are the only person making a presentation this morning. I invite you to begin.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau (Deputy Minister, Department of Fisheries and Oceans):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really apologize for being late. It's inexcusable.

You have introduced my colleagues, who are here to answer your questions once I have completed my comments.

Mr. Chairman, honourable members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. We are here to discuss a topic of great importance for us at the department.

I am here with Marc Grégoire, Commissioner of the Canadian Coast Guard, Mitch Bloom, Official Languages Co-Champion. We have a second co-champion, who is the regional director general of the Gulf Region, but who is not here with us today. So there are two champions. Mr. Bloom is also assistant deputy minister for the development of official language minority communities. I am also accompanied by Ms. Michaela Huard, assistant deputy minister responsible for service to the public, language of work and equitable participation.

We are here today to discuss the department's work with respect to the Official Languages Act, including our evaluation of the 2009-2010 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

[English]

As one of the oldest federal departments, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has for decades been a trusted source of service and support to Canadians. The work we do in the country's thousands of coastal communities involves working every day with and for the public and a diverse group of stakeholders. Solid client service is what Fisheries and Oceans Canada is all about. It is at the core of who we are and what we do.

The department's performance with respect to official languages is measured against specific criteria

[Translation]

in five key areas that are evaluated individually,

[English]

leading to an overall rating. The department has made progress and is one of the two departments to receive an overall performance rating of good

[Translation]

among the five departments assessed in that regard.

As you know, five areas are assessed in the commissioner's report.

With regard to program management, our department received an "exemplary" rating for the third report card in a row, thanks to our use of an accountability framework and an action plan, the visibility of official languages and an effective complaint-resolution process.

On service to the public, the department received a "fair" rating. This was based on the Commissioner of Official Languages' observations between January and April 2010, as well as our promotion of service availability in both official languages and service agreements with third parties. This rating is an improvement over the previous report card. Although our own telephone assessment, in the form of spot checks, has contributed to this improvement, we must continue to focus on this area, and we know that.

In the area of language of work, the department received a "fair" rating, based primarily on an analysis of perceptions of francophone respondents in bilingual regions. This rating is lower than in the last two report cards, and it is therefore the second area targeted in our action plan.

As for equitable participation, the department received a "poor" rating. The rating is attributable to the fact that anglophones account for only 2.6% of the department's workforce in Quebec. It has been very difficult for our department to improve this rating, I admit, and it will continue to be difficult due to the current evaluation criteria, since we have no offices in Montreal, where there is a large concentration of anglophones. If the rating were based on the anglophone population of Quebec City, which is 1.5% and is where our regional headquarters are located—our other offices are located outside Quebec—we would actually exceed the anglophone representation rate.

And as for the advancement of linguistic duality and support for minority communities, Fisheries and Oceans Canada received an "exemplary" rating again this year. This is due primarily to the collaborative relationships we established with minority communities, anglophone communities in Quebec and francophone communities in other parts of the country, and the activities we have carried out to support their development and promote linguistic duality. For example, a project in celebration of the city of Gaspé's 475<sup>th</sup> birthday highlighted the contribution of official language minority communities in the fishing industry.

In the last five evaluations by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, the department's performance has progressed from "poor" to "fair" and now to "good". We are pleased to see that our performance has improved, but we know we must do more, and we have not let up in our efforts at further improvement.

● (0900)

[English]

For example, in late 2009 we carried out random telephone spot checks to ensure we were providing bilingual services to the public. These spot checks showed a marked improvement in our delivery of service in the preferred official language of the caller. In fact, our active offer on the telephone improved from zero in the last assessment to 86% in the current one. As well, a survey carried out by the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse in the spring of 2009 showed positive results for us in bilingual greetings and service delivery.

Regarding language of work, we actively encourage employees in bilingual regions to use the official language of their choice. Additionally, 94% of supervisors and all executives in bilingual positions meet the official languages requirements of their positions. I am pleased that we continue to demonstrate leadership, for example, by alternating between English and French at each weekly departmental management board meeting.

[Translation]

However, the results of the Public Service Employee Survey show that francophones do have some concerns regarding the preparation of documents in their language of choice, as well as the availability of tools and materials in their official language.

[English]

Our next official languages action plan for 2011-14 will place emphasis on service to the public and will give special attention to language of work, with a view to ensuring that employees' language-of-work rights are fully respected. The Department of Fisheries and

Oceans places a strong emphasis on the management and full implementation of the Official Languages Act. We are proud of our accomplishments and we know that we can and must show continued progress.

Each year we strive to improve our score, not only in the report card exercise, but in all other areas of assessment. We recognize that the assessment of our performance in the area of official languages can also be determined by the number of complaints the department receives and how they are dealt with.

[Translation]

In fact, the Commissioner of Official Languages has noted the professional level of cooperation he receives from our department in the analysis of complaints and the resolution of linguistic issues that are brought to his attention.

I hope that our continuous efforts demonstrate that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans takes its obligations under the Official Languages Act seriously and that we remain committed to serving the public in both official languages in accordance with the regulations, promoting a bilingual workplace where all employees feel free to work in the official language of their choice, and meeting the needs of the official language minority communities.

And now we will be happy to answer your questions.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** Thank you very much, Ms. Dansereau.

I wouldn't want to talk about being late, but it's known to happen. I was thinking about extending the meeting until 10 o'clock. That would give us an hour for the public portion of the meeting, and we would have 45 minutes left for committee business.

With that, I would like to give the floor to Mrs. Zarac, who will be the first person to ask questions.

● (0905)

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

Good morning. Ms. Dansereau, you don't have to apologize. It happens to everyone; we understand that. Thank you for being here today.

You are one of the departments that has received a good rating in the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages. However, there is always room for improvement.

As you said so well, for your department, client service is very important: it's the priority. And that's clearly stated on the departmental website, where you can consult the job offers. And yet you received a fair rating in that area, even though it's of prime importance. How do you explain that result in the most important area for you?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** As you can imagine, it's a work in progress. We constantly have to emphasize the importance of client service in both official languages. At times there are problems as a result of changes, at other times as a result of a minor organizational change in Ottawa that may have consequences.

Every year, we conduct an in-depth study of our weaknesses so that we can develop action plans that will help us improve. We have put a lot of effort into active response, and we have made a change in the way we respond to clients, and that may mean we missed other opportunities to serve clients better.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** You mentioned situations that have been corrected very well, for which you have taken good corrective measures.

Can you give me an example of the complaints you receive?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** The complaints we receive are forwarded directly to our human resources department.

**Ms. Michaela Huard (Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources and Corporate Services, Department of Fisheries and Oceans):** Yes, we have received some complaints. I remember one of them that concerned service.

[English]

The active offer wasn't given in English and French.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** However, you say that all employees occupying bilingual positions meet the requirements of those positions.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** I believe we said that 94% of key positions, if I remember correctly, are staffed. It's an on-going effort. Often people are hired and sent on training because their language proficiency levels, whether it's BCC or CBB, haven't been maintained. So they go and try to improve. What is important for us is to ensure that there is constant improvement in order to achieve the target of 100% of positions, and so that the necessary training is offered to enable employees to develop.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** What percentage of bilingual positions are occupied by people who are bilingual?

**Ms. Michaela Huard:** For supervisors, it's 94%.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** And those who occupy the other 6% of positions are getting training?

**Ms. Michaela Huard:** Exactly. They may be in training or about to retire. Our target is 100%.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** We include official language learning in all our development plans for employees for whom that's important and necessary.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** How many regions have you designated bilingual?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Two regions are bilingual: the National Capital and the Gulf Region, which includes part of New Brunswick and the entire Gulf of St. Lawrence. However, as is known, our offer of service to the public is bilingual across Canada.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Yes, that's the case.

In your view, do the recognized bilingual regions really meet the needs of the public? A fisheries officer, for example, must not just

serve people from the region. People come from everywhere across Canada; this isn't a sedentary clientele. How do you determine that a region is bilingual?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Our evaluation system is similar to the one in effect throughout the public service. Local standards determine the percentage of people who need service in another language.

The Gulf Region includes New Brunswick, which is bilingual, as you know, and part of Quebec. This is clearly necessary. That's clear for the National Capital Region as well.

I know you cited the example of fisheries officers. That's why I won't base my entire answer on that case. Nevertheless, the fisheries officers do a job at the local level. This isn't an industry where workers travel across Canada. Fishermen fish in the regions where they live. For us, client needs are quite clear, determined and similar to those that have been determined so that we can designate a centre bilingual.

• (0910)

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** So you're saying that certain places, like fishing centres or reserves, would be recognized as bilingual regions.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** That's the way it is in New Brunswick, yes.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** In principle, is that applied?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** By the way, I congratulate you for having already prepared your new plan. The old one expired in 2011. Could you provide us with that new plan?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes, that's definitely possible.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** That's perfect, thank you.

That's all for me.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** There are 45 seconds left.

Ms. Guay, it's your turn.

**Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Vice-Chair.

Thank you, madam. Don't worry about being late. It happens, especially with the building changes that we've just experienced.

I see that the department received a "fair" rating for service to the public. It also got a "fair" rating for language of work. However, on equitable participation, it was a bit more troubling: it received a "poor" rating.

The document you just submitted to us states that francophones have some concerns regarding the preparation of documents in their language of choice and the availability of tools and materials in their official language.

Can you explain that situation to me a little?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** In my opinion, you find that problem more or less across the public service, and I really intend to start focusing on it this year. With regard to the issue of document preparation, when we're really pressed, we prepare them in the first language of choice. Before translating them, we send them to someone, saying that the French or English will follow.

That happens because the work we do has to be done very quickly and on time. You always have to stand back a little in order to translate the documentation before sending it.

In all the work we do at the department, I focus on planning. We are generally improving our planning system. So we'll be doing things less at the last minute when it comes to translating. Documents will be translated as the work is being done.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Do you have enough translators to do that?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes, it's really a matter of speed with our work. We're in such a hurry.

We have to change our work method in all our files, not just this one. Better planning will give us a better chance of eliminating this problem.

In addition, we've changed the governance system for the entire department. The new system is much more focused on planning. So all our management or governance committees now have one-year work plans. In that way, it's very easy to know what's coming so that we can plan this kind of work more effectively.

I work very closely especially with the regional general manager for Quebec, for whom this is the biggest concern. So I hope we'll have vastly improved this aspect by next year when we see each other again.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Mr. Bloom, exactly when were you appointed?

**Mr. Mitch Bloom (Assistant Deputy Minister and Champion of Official Languages, Strategic Policy, Department of Fisheries and Oceans):** A year ago, I believe.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** That's the case of the champions we've met today. It was a year or a year and a half approximately. I hope this results in a major improvement in your department.

As for translation, you say you're pressed for time. But you aren't the only department in that situation. Even at Foreign Affairs, the two official languages are an obligation.

You mentioned an action plan, but I haven't yet seen it. I'd like you to submit it soon to the extent that's possible. What aspects of that plan will result in major changes?

● (0915)

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** As we said, we will continue to provide active offer; that's clear. We'll also continue our efforts on employee learning, the tools we discussed, the documentation and everything pertaining to our weaknesses. We're going to focus on that without, however, losing sight of what we've done well.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Do you offer second language training? How many people offer that kind of training at your department?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** You're talking about the people who offer the training?

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Yes. In other words, how many teachers do you have?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** I think there's one teacher here in the National Capital. However, employees have access to all kinds of other services.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** What kind of services?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Michaela seems to want to answer that question.

[English]

**Ms. Michaela Huard:** The Canada School of Public Service offers courses in English and in French. Sometimes if it's language training it can be offered by the private sector. We just insist that employees have the choice of taking it in their choice of language.

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Guay:** The department bears the cost of those services?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes, exactly.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** So people can take their training where they want.

All right, thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** Mr. Gravelle, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Vice-Chair.

Thank you for your presentation. I'd like to ask you how it is that the official languages are not part of your plans and priorities, as can be seen from your report on plans and priorities.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Mitch and Michaela will perhaps provide you with a better answer, but, in my opinion, the services we offer, or the work we do with regard to official languages, is considered a subactivity. Subactivities are not addressed in the report on plans and priorities. As you know, that report describes strategic outcomes. Then there are the activities. We have a number of subactivities. Our work would appear within that. It's as much a philosophy as a work approach.

As you know, our departmental management committee meets every week. The meeting is held in French one week and in English the following week. Since we now have a work plan that covers the next 12 months, we hold important and meaningful discussions in both languages. This kind of thing cannot be included in the report on plans and priorities because it really constitutes a way of working.

Our work in the area of official languages also touches on employee learning plans. It's in the context of those plans that we determine whether they will take courses in the other official language. Our philosophy is to take action across the board rather than to determine subactivities in the area.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** How do you explain why your department does not reflect official languages in the public accounts of Canada?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** The answer will be the same. The public accounts are based on the activities addressed in the reports on plans and priorities. That would be difficult since all that is spread out within the department. The work of the Commissioner of Official Languages is important in that it enables us to question whether the efforts we are making department-wide are producing the results necessary to offer services to clients and employees.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Can you commit to including official languages in the public accounts of Canada and in the report on plans and priorities next year?

• (0920)

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** I can check to see whether there is a place where we can report on that kind of work. We could definitely look into that question.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** How much time do I have left, Mr. Chairman?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** You have three minutes left.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** How do you explain why the "Reports and Publications" section of your website includes no documents on official languages?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** I can't explain that. Our action plan could definitely be there. We could check.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Does—

**Ms. Michaela Huard:** I believe our report may be in the human resources part of the website. I can check, but I think that's where we've posted that report.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** The minister of fisheries and oceans has delegated official language responsibilities to you. Has she given you any specific instructions to follow, and if so, which ones?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Pardon me, but I don't understand the question.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** The minister of fisheries and oceans has delegated official language responsibilities to you. Has she given you any specific instructions to follow, and if so, which ones?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** The minister expects us to provide services to clients in the language of their choice in order to give them good service. She also expects me to do my job in an equitable manner with regard to all employees.

That's really an important issue for the minister. It's a matter of client service, whether we're referring to employees or clients in the fishing communities.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Earlier you said that 94% of your supervisors were bilingual. What percentage of your front-line employees are bilingual?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Mr. Chairman, I can send you all that information. It depends on the communities. As you know better than I, I believe that, when it comes to client service and service to the public, we should always provide an active offer in both languages. So offer is very important. However, in the regions designated non-bilingual, we don't expect our employees to be bilingual because the communities in which they work are not bilingual communities. So it depends on the region and the work sector.

We can send you all the information on that subject. In all our offices across Canada, we have the necessary information to determine whether an office has been designated bilingual and, if so, what the percentage of bilingual people working there is.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** How many regions are designated non-bilingual?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** We have six regions for the department and five regions for the Canadian Coast Guard. Two departmental regions are designated bilingual, and I think that's true of the Canadian Coast Guard as well. That's based on the directives that determine whether a region should be bilingual.

As I said earlier, the Gulf Region, which includes part of New Brunswick, is designated bilingual. I can tell you that the regional director general himself is bilingual and that his employees are as well. It's very important for us, when we attend a meeting with the fishermen in that region, to ensure that our work is well done in both official languages. That's also the case in the National Capital Region because it's here that we work with all the people from across Canada.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** Thank you.

Deputy Minister, I believe there was a question that you did not answer. One of the questions was whether the minister has given you any instructions. In response, you discussed the minister's expectations. The question is clear: has the minister directly given you any instructions?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes. They're not written instructions, but they are given in the discussions in which the minister clearly asks me to ensure that that is done. So they're a kind of instruction.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** Thank you.

Mrs. Boucher, go ahead, please.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

During your presentation, you said that, over the past five years of evaluation by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, your department's performance has risen from "poor" to "fair" and to "good". So you've made a transition and changes in order to achieve a higher rating.

In the report, it seems to me the news is not as good in certain areas. In equitable participation, your department received a "poor" rating. You say on that subject that it is attributable to the fact that the anglophone population of Quebec represents only 2.6% of the department's workforce.

What current evaluation criteria pose a problem and prevent you from improving your equitable participation rating?

• (0925)

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** I believe Ms. Huard or Mr. Bloom could provide a better answer.

The criteria are based on Quebec's general population and on the percentage of anglophones in Quebec. Our regional office should therefore have the same percentage of anglophones at the office. However, our main office is located in Quebec City, where the percentage is completely different. I believe the percentage in Quebec is around 20%.

**A voice:** It's 13.5%.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** It's 13.5% for Quebec as a whole, whereas it's approximately 2% in Quebec City. So we hire most of our employees from a somewhat smaller pool. It's always a major problem for us to be able to reflect a percentage that would include Montreal, where we have no office or clients.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Your office is located in the national capital of Quebec City, but can you draw on the anglophone population pool of the Montreal region even though you don't have an office in Montreal? Is that possible or impossible? Perhaps you're not allowed to do so. Are you confined to hiring only anglophones who come from the Quebec City region?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** No, we aren't confined to that. We say that of course as a description of the situation, not as an excuse. So we'll continue to make every possible effort to succeed. Nothing prevents us from proceeding in that manner, although we have to be honest and say that it will always be a major difficulty.

That said, that's a difficulty in the kind of work we do, in the fisheries field. I don't know; I can't say. Apart from the percentages, it's hard to know exactly what other problem we'll have in that regard. However, we will obviously continue to make efforts with the universities. There are a lot of universities in Montreal, where graduates are probably bilingual, although I don't know whether they state that their first language is English. That might be another question to consider.

In short, we will definitely continue to make efforts because this is a fundamental problem.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Unlike our generation, which learned English on the job, our children are open to the world, with the Internet and all that. They're increasingly bilingual.

You aren't the only department that's experiencing this kind of thing. We've talked about this with all the departments and it seems to pose a problem. In Quebec, the minority is anglophone, unlike in other places, where it's francophone. We can find a lot of anglophones in certain areas, such as Sherbrooke. There's also an anglophone community in the Gaspé Peninsula. There are nevertheless a few places. It's the current assessment of the situation that I wanted to know.

You also talked about active offer and the people who respond to requests. Do you have any employees who are resistant to the idea of speaking the other language? For example, if I speak to Quebec employees in English, will they be reluctant to speak English with me? Similarly, will employees in another region be reluctant to speak French to me if I ask to be served in French?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Thank you for the question. No, I don't think they're resistant. I believe they're a bit afraid. These are human beings all the same. If they don't often practise the other official language, they're a bit embarrassed. It would mainly be that. In

addition, when you're so used to speaking one language all day, sometimes you forget. Sometimes it's forgetfulness, at others it's embarrassment, or all kinds of other problems. It's up to us, the managers, to always monitor that.

Official language learning doesn't just mean learning the language. The idea is also to grasp the importance of speaking both languages, to grasp the extent to which this is important for Canada. We have to ensure this is a fundamental part of our values, of our ethics. We have to be proud to offer that.

In short, I wouldn't say that our employees are opposed to the idea, but it's more that they're embarrassed

• (0930)

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** I have another question. Do you have resources, in training or immersion, for example, to support the people in your department who want to learn the other language? Do you have those kinds of frameworks for present and future employees?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** I wouldn't say there are any for future employees, but there are for those who are already on the job, absolutely. As I was saying, this is a fundamental part of our way of working. When I travel across Canada, I work in both languages with everyone. We're proud of that effort. We also have learning plans for 100% of our employees. So we always have manager-employee discussions to determine whether an official language learning plan is necessary. That's always a fundamental part of that discussion on learning.

We offer a support service. When we have employees who are developing in the other official language, they are even entitled to come to a meeting with another employee so that person can help them. It's a kind of mentoring, a kind of official instruction, a kind of philosophical and cultural support. So it's everywhere.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** Thank you.

Mr. Bélanger, go ahead, please.

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

I apologize for being late, Ms. Dansereau, but it was strategic: I didn't want to chair the meeting, but rather to be able to ask you questions. Thank you for being here.

The purpose of my first question is to determine whether the evaluation done by the commissioner applies as well and entirely to the coast guard.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I'm asking you the question because the coast guard used to report to another department, if I'm not mistaken.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** The coast guard used to report to the Department of Transport, but it has reported to us since 1995.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** So it's integrated and the evaluation is for both.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** The coast guard is a special agency for budget protection reasons, let's say, but apart from that it is an integral part of everything we do at the department.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** All right.



I especially want to try to understand what makes it so that things seem to be going well at the department. If you'll pardon my indiscretion, I would like to know how long you have been deputy minister at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, madam.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Thank you, sir. It will be two years tomorrow, and I admit that the good ratings are really attributable to the good work that my predecessors did. I accept that absolutely. My responsibility is to ensure, based on what they have done, that we do not lose our position and to improve the situation where they did not have time to do so. I don't take the—

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** All right. Happy anniversary!

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Thank you.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Is the fact that the champion and the two individuals accompanying you, who are responsible for official languages, occupy assistant deputy minister positions part of a strategic decision on your part? Was that already the case? How does that compare to what's being done elsewhere?

Please answer quickly because I have a whole series of questions to ask.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** All right.

I don't know. That's important and necessary for me. We have champions in other sectors of human resources and they have to report to the management committee to tell us what kind of work they've done. We also have coordinators for official language issues in the regions. We have this kind of approach everywhere. Was it that way before I arrived? I think so, but it's definitely something that I'm going to continue.

Mitch has been at the department for a little more than one year, but he was appointed partly because this is a passion for him, but also because we need a champion.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Bloom, what percentage of your time to you devote to official languages?

**Mr. Mitch Bloom:** I normally devote perhaps three days a month to it, but there are times, such as when we're preparing the action plan, when it's necessary to push the file.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** You spend roughly three days a month on it.

**Mr. Mitch Bloom:** Yes.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** So you devote three out of 20 days to it, unless you're working seven days a week.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Mitch Bloom:** That's true, but I wasn't counting the weekends.

And you, Ms. Huard?

**Ms. Michaela Huard:** It's very hard to answer that question. I spend perhaps 10% of my time on official languages. Since it's included in all the work, it's very difficult to determine the exact percentage.

• (0935)

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** I'd like to say that Ms. Huard isn't a champion in this area, but she is a champion—

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** That's what you told us.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** No, I said that Serge Thériault, who is regional general director for the Gulf Region, is the other co-champion, with Mr. Bloom. Ms. Huard is responsible for certain parts of the act because she is the assistant deputy minister responsible for human resources.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** You said she was responsible for service to the public, language of work and equitable participation.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes, that's correct.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I was listening to you.

Ms. Dansereau or Mr. Grégoire, do you receive any instructions from the clerk regarding official languages?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes, as for all the other files that are important for us, the minister's clerk, as I said earlier, expects us not only to make a real effort, even in our letters of offer, but also to produce very clear results.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** So you submit a report?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes, we prepare a big report every year on everything that goes on in the official languages field.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Who do you submit it to?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** It's part of the report...

Ms. Huard, is it part of the report to the Public Service Commissioner?

**Ms. Michaela Huard:** I'm not sure.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** The report we submit to the Commissioner of Official Languages is really the main report and it's based on data—

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** You don't report to the commissioner, but you do report to someone on official languages. You don't report to the commissioner.

**Ms. Michaela Huard:** We have our own accountability framework at the department.

[English]

We also have to report how well we're doing with respect to official languages.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I understand, but to whom?

**Ms. Michaela Huard:** We have to respond to the report of the *commissaire aux langues officielles*. In our planning, we have to report to the clerk.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Is that report available?

[English]

**Ms. Michaela Huard:** We can find it, yes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Would you be kind enough to share it with us?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes, yes.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Do you have any relations with the Treasury Board Secretariat regarding official languages?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** What kind of relations?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** We very recently spoke with the Treasury Board secretary to ensure that the department is meeting the needs of the Commissioner of Official Languages and that we are well organized.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Are reports on official languages filed with the Treasury Board?

[English]

**Ms. Michaela Huard:** It would be part of other reports.

[Translation]

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** That's part of the accountability plan for the departments concerning management, and it's available.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** We're told that, of the some 200 government departments and agencies, the Treasury Board may evaluate a dozen by consulting the official language reports. Do you know whether your department is one of the 12 lucky ones?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** No, I can't say. An evaluation of the basic official language issues is conducted through the Management Accountability Framework. All the departments are evaluated through that accountability framework. All the departments are subject to the MAF.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** By whom?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** By the Treasury Board.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** Thank you.

It's now Ms. Guay's turn.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I'd simply like to add one final point.

Thank you, Ms. Dansereau. We'll have to check what you're saying because I don't believe that's the case.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** All right, thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** Go ahead, Ms. Guay.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Thank you very much.

You don't seem to know exactly who you have to report to and that concerns me. It's very important to know that. You seem to say that it may be to human resources, perhaps to the Public Service Commissioner, perhaps to the Commissioner of Official Languages. You have to give us a clear answer. It's extremely important for us.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** I can officially say that it's part of what we call the MAF—and I really apologize for just using the English acronym. As part of what we do every year through the MAF, we report on the official languages of work and on what we do to—

● (0940)

**Ms. Monique Guay:** And who receives that report?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** It's the Treasury Board.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Earlier you made a comment that shook me a little. You said that your official language efforts were focused on the departments or provinces where it's necessary to make them. However, there are francophones across Canada. There are

anglophone everywhere as well, so the department has to display its bilingualism from coast to coast.

**An hon. member:** *A mari usque ad mare.*

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Yes.

It troubles me to hear you say that you make efforts in certain regions. There are francophones in Nova Scotia, in Yellowknife and in Whitehorse; there are francophones everywhere who can work for your department or for any other department, and who are fighting to defend and protect their language and to work in their language.

So your comment earlier shook me somewhat. I'd like you to tell me a little more about that.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes, I'll definitely be pleased to do that.

This is a matter of determining the bilingual regions relative to unilingual regions, and the directives are quite clear. The designated bilingual regions are bilingual based mainly on employee rights. Ultimately, the bilingual or non-bilingual designation is based on the percentage of citizens who are anglophones or francophones. It's for language of work. As for offer of service across Canada, we provide an offer of bilingual service. After the first offer, if the person needs that service in another language in Vancouver, for example, which is a designated unilingual anglophone region with regard to language of work, we provide a bilingual offer.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** But if a francophone answers you and is interested, what do you do?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** The person who answers the telephone will ensure that we provide that person with service in French. For client service purposes, we offer bilingual service. For employee rights and work on a day-to-day basis in the office itself, it's designated unilingual. It's somewhat the best effort, but it's also the act that—

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I get the impression that can be improved.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes, absolutely. It could be improved.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** How many employees do you have at Fisheries and Oceans Canada?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** We have approximately 10,500.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** How many of that number are bilingual? You can tell me approximately if you don't know the exact figure.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** I'm trying to do the addition.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** First, how many designated bilingual positions do you have?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** I have all the information and I could send it to you.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** It would be good to have that information. The other departments have given it to us.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes, I can absolutely give you that information based on the regions.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** How many of those 10,500 are bilingual employees?

Let's suppose you make an offer of service because you need employees and you're in a designated anglophone region, if a francophone wants to work for you, will you nevertheless accept that person?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** That depends on the position. If the position is designated unilingual English because the person mainly has to work with anglophones, that person must then be able to work in English.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** If he or she has all the skills to occupy that position, do you offer that person training? Are you ready to do that?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** There are very strict rules about hiring someone who is unable to work in the language necessary to do the work. It's the same in Quebec. If an anglophone applied for a position, would we give it to that person? You have to conduct the analysis on a case-by-case basis.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** In Montreal, I'm not concerned.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** Thank you, Ms. Guay.

We'll now go to Mr. Gourde.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Thank you for being here this morning. This is very interesting.

In the commissioner's reports over the past five years, your performance has risen from "poor" to "fair" and then to "good". For everyone's benefit, I would like you to say what the initial finding was and what the first actions that had to be taken at the department were to improve the situation and to obtain a better rating.

• (0945)

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** That depends. As we said, our ratings are based on five sectors. For each of them, we had to look at what could be done to improve the situation.

Offer of service was really a big problem for us. As you said, we started from scratch. So we clearly had a problem and we made a major effort in that regard. As I said earlier, we will continue to work especially on means and language of work. Our employees absolutely have to be comfortable working in their language of choice.

So we have to get well organized. Every year, we take different sectors and do the necessary work not only to improve the rating, which is really an indicator of the state of affairs, but also to be sure, as we previously said, that we are offering services to clients in their language of choice and that employees can work in their language of choice.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** You even said there was still work to do, and that's good. However, when you finally receive a good rating, it becomes even harder to improve it. What actions will you take over the coming year?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** It's especially in the area of active offer that we've made significant improvements. Since there is employee turnover, that is to say that since some employees arrive and others leave, it's absolutely necessary to remain watchful and not to stop trying on the ground that we've received a good rating. We have to

put the emphasis on needs. We need a lot of time and work to get a good rating, but it's very easy to lose it.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Your employee pools are located in the Atlantic region and in the Pacific region as well as in the north. Could you tell me where your 10,000 employees are located? There are no doubt some in Ottawa as well.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** In fact, 85% of our employees are located outside the National Capital. That is to say that 15% are here. Some are spread out up and down the west coast. We have offices everywhere in what we call the Centre and Arctic region, which includes Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario and the high north, that is Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. We have offices across Quebec, particularly on the Lower North Shore and the Upper North Shore, as well as the Magdalen Islands and Quebec City, where the headquarters is located. We have an office in Moncton, other small offices in Prince Edward Island and other locations in New Brunswick. We have a central office in Dartmouth and other offices elsewhere in New Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

There are also Canadian Coast Guard offices, which are often located in the same places. The coast guard has five administrative regions. In the Maritime region, the work of what we call the Gulf is done from the Halifax office.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** You say there are recruitment problems at the Quebec City office in order to serve the anglophone clientele, but is it also difficult to recruit francophones in the western region of the country?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** No, it's not the same thing at all. This problem is really specific to Quebec.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** It's in fact a francophone majority population pool, 97% or 98%. Are the people you recruit bilingual or unilingual francophones?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** The figures we have indicate that this isn't really a problem on the west coast. I couldn't tell you exactly why. We have to determine why it's this difficult in the Quebec region.

**Mr. Marc Grégoire (Commissioner, Canadian Coast Guard, Department of Fisheries and Oceans):** With your permission, I'll add a few comments.

The problem of anglophone representation in Quebec dates back a very long time. I spent a number of years working in Quebec, particularly at Transport Canada in Montreal. We tried to increase anglophone participation, but the means were very limited. All the departments combined their efforts and turned to the anglophone community to increase anglophone representation.

The fact is that the legislation on hiring does not include measures to promote the hiring of anglophones in Quebec. However, that's not the case for visible minorities or other groups covered by employment equity rules. This is an additional challenge. Why aren't anglophones inclined to work in the federal public service in Quebec? That remains a major mystery for me. The problem doesn't just affect Quebec City. However, francophone representation in British Columbia is very low. So it's not difficult to deal with that situation. The situation in Quebec is still a problem for all departments, I believe.

• (0950)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** Thank you.

Mr. Gravelle, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Is your report on results for the implementation of section 41 of the Official Languages Act ready?

**Ms. Michaela Huard:** I didn't hear the question.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Are you talking about Part VII of the act?

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** I'm talking about section 41.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Thank you.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** I'm talking about the report you have to submit to Canadian Heritage.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** All the work has been completed on the report on Part VII of the Official Languages Act.

**Mr. Mitch Bloom:** Yes, but there's no annual report—

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** I'm talking about section 41 and the report you should submit to Canadian Heritage.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** If it's a report on the project, yes, that's been done.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** You obviously don't understand section 41. Can you inquire and report to the committee as to whether the report is ready and, if it's not, when it will be?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Can you explain to me how official languages are integrated into the Committee on Economic Trends and Policy on which you sit?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Are you talking about the committee of deputy ministers? That committee is bilingual. As you know, it is co-chaired by deputy ministers Richard Dicerni, from Industry Canada, and Yaprak Baltacioglu. It's a completely bilingual committee: all the documentation is in both languages and the discussions are held in both languages.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Can you name the three official language subjects you discussed in that committee?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** We don't discuss official language issues; we discuss economic trends in both official languages. If you're asking us whether we consider the official language issue in Canada in that committee, I would tell you that it would be in the context of economic issues, not in the context of specific topics.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Are official languages part of your managers' performance agreements?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes, that's the case.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Can you explain to me how your official language plan deals with the operating budget freeze announced in Budget 2010?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** As I indicated in the report on plans and priorities, everything we do with regard to official languages is an integral part of our everyday work. So it's about service to the public, our offer, about service to employees. That's an integral part of our work.

We aren't like the Department of Canadian Heritage, which is closely related to official language issues, but that's part of our everyday work. It's in the context of that work that we've made our changes and improvements in the area of official languages.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** How do you coordinate official languages among the deputy ministers committees?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Are you talking, for example, about the committee on the economy? As I said earlier, all the meetings of the deputy ministers committees are conducted in both languages. The documentation, discussions, presentations, everything is done in both languages. As I said, that's an integral part of our work.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** Thank you, Mr. Gravelle.

Now we're going to begin a third round. I believe everyone will have approximately two minutes. We'll start with Mr. Bélanger.

• (0955)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Ms. Dansereau, can you tell me whether your department is designated, within the meaning of the Official Languages Act, as having to report to either the Department of Canadian Heritage or to Treasury Board?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** We aren't a designated department.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Since when has that been the case?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Mr. Bloom will be able to answer you.

**Mr. Mitch Bloom:** I don't know exactly when the Department of Canadian Heritage decided to make a change with regard to that designation, but we are no longer a department designated by Canadian Heritage. However, all the departments are responsible for reporting every year, as the deputy minister said, to the Treasury Board with regard to the MAF.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** However, we submit reports on Part VII of the Official Languages Act to the Department of Canadian Heritage.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Could you send that report to us as well?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** We'll now go to Mr. Gagné.

**Mr. Bernard Gagné (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Good morning to everyone.

On page 4 of your presentation, you state: "In the last five evaluations by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages..." Were the last five evaluations done in the last five years, or were they done over a longer period of time?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** It's an annual report.

**Mr. Bernard Gagné:** You're talking about the last five evaluations.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes.

**Mr. Bernard Gagné:** Were they for the last five years?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** You told us about a significant improvement in the commissioner's evaluation. I find it interesting that you were evaluated over the past five years. Not all departments are evaluated. Is there a particular reason why yours was evaluated? Was that the commissioner's choice? Not all the departments are evaluated so frequently, to my knowledge.

That's a good question, isn't it? When a witness is left speechless, that means the question is a good one.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes, that's true.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Did you have an action plan over the past five years to ensure your rating improved from "poor" to "good"?

Is that action plan renewed every year, or do you have a three-year or a five-year plan?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** It's a three-year plan.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** When did it start?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** The plan started in 2008 and ends this year in 2011.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Is the new plan already on paper?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** It's being developed. A little earlier, we thought it was ready, but it's being developed and is almost ready.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Could you send it to us once it's ready?

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Certainly.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** It would be interesting to see the difference between that and what you've done. Could you tell us to what you attribute your improvements so that we can conduct a kind of evaluation or comparison of the measures you put in place and that have resulted in such a significant improvement in your evaluation?

We've heard from a number of representatives of various departments to date. Obviously, every department is different and has its own specific characteristics. There are also continuous trends for everyone, to a certain degree, and certain factors could be transferrable.

Are the champions in contact with the other departments so that they can share the successes you've had in the past and that you are still having in order to improve service?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** Please answer quickly.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** Yes, we can give you the work plan, but also the analysis that we've conducted of the ratings we've previously obtained. We monitor that very closely.

Employees, particularly those in human resources, work closely with colleagues from other departments to ensure everyone learns from everyone else.

We'll send you the information as soon as we have it.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** Thank you.

**Ms. Guay,** go ahead, please.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I very much hope you improve, even though you have received Bs, which is still good. There nevertheless has to be an improvement so that francophones and anglophones can feel comfortable working in their language and translation is done quickly. This is extremely important because there are decisions that follow and sometimes a delay can cause irreparable harm.

I'd like to know whether you have a service like those in other departments. Some departments gave us PowerPoint presentations in which they explained how they operate. They have official languages, but also a certain translation dictionary. It was extremely interesting. They're very advanced compared to other departments. Do you have anything similar to that? Do you intend to do that, if you don't have that kind of tool?

● (1000)

**Ms. Michaela Huard:** The deputy minister doesn't like acronyms, but we have lists of acronyms in English and French. We have tools to assist translation and the people who draft reports in their own official language.

**Ms. Claire Dansereau:** But we're always ready to learn from those who have—

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I suggest you check with your colleagues from other departments who are highly advanced. They made a PowerPoint presentation that was extremely interesting. We saw that they were making a constant bilingualism effort.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin):** Thank you.

This brings our meeting with representatives from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to an end.

Deputy Minister Dansereau, I want to thank you and your colleagues.

We will now complete this first part of our meeting. In a few minutes, we'll continue our business in camera with the committee Chair, Mr. Steven Blaney, in the chair.

Thanks to everyone and good day.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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