Office of the
Commissioner of
Official Languages

Commissariat
aux langues
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Audit
of the Delivery of Bilingual Services
to the Public by Service Canada

December 2010

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HIGHLIGHTS

Service Canada, reporting to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, was created in 2005 to improve the delivery of government programs and services to Canadians by making access to them faster, easier and more convenient. Canadians now have single-window access to a wide range of Government of Canada programs and services through more than 600 service points located across the country (23% of which are designated bilingual), numerous call centres and a Web site.

Throughout their lives, Canadians will experience a number of major life events that will lead them to seek assistance or important information from approximately 70 Government of Canada programs, including employment insurance programs, the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security Program, social insurance numbers, passport services, pleasure craft licence applications, and numerous on-line applications and tools.

Inevitably, there are times when a visit to a Service Canada Centre may be difficult, such as when someone must apply for employment insurance. Serving Canadians in a sometimes harsh economic climate also creates significant challenges for the organization, and it must meet them in both official languages. The efforts are worth it, as we could see throughout our audit.

The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages conducted an audit of Service Canada from April 2009 to April 2010 to evaluate the services provided in both official languages by Service Canada Centres, their outreach sites and call centres. The audit also had the following objectives: to determine whether management was committed to actively offering services in both official languages at designated bilingual service points and to ensuring that these services are of equal quality in English and French; to establish whether Service Canada had formally consulted representatives of official language minority communities in the regions to identify their needs related to Service Canada programs; and to determine whether existing monitoring mechanisms enable Service Canada to successfully meet its obligations under Part IV of the *Official Languages Act*.

Our audit revealed that Human Resources and Skills Development Canada has a structure in place to administer the official languages program, and that members of senior management showed leadership and commitment to linguistic duality. Specifically, the Assistant Deputy Minister

of Service Canada's Citizen Service Branch promptly developed the *Directive on Active Offer of Service in Both Official Languages in Service Canada Centres and Outreach Sites* after observing poor performance in terms of active offer of bilingual services. It is encouraging to see that significant progress has been made in this respect since September 2008. To meet objectives that have been set, mandatory training is given to all front-line personnel, and all citizen service officers are required to provide active offer of bilingual services.

Service Canada must take additional measures, however, to meet its obligations under Part IV of the *Official Languages Act* and guarantee effective implementation of service delivery. Specifically, the institution must develop an official languages accountability framework and an official languages policy that includes all the components set out in Part IV of the *Official Languages Act*. It must also develop, implement and manage an action plan that reflects its national and regional realities. Service Canada must integrate its service delivery objectives into its performance evaluation process for senior executives, managers, team leaders and front-line staff. The institution must get back on track by setting up a structured and organized mechanism for formal consultation with representatives of official language minority communities. The institution also needs to create a formal monitoring process, applicable in all regions, to ensure regular and reliable oversight and compliance with the *Official Languages Act*.

In some regions, bilingual capacity leaves much to be desired, particularly with regard to the number of designated bilingual positions and the language profile for citizen service officers and team leaders. Better governance is needed in this area. Bilingual services offered under labour market development agreements with the Government of Canada, the provinces and the territories, especially in remote areas, also need to be monitored.

Based on these findings, the Commissioner has made seven recommendations to help Service Canada improve service delivery in both official languages at designated service points and provide services of equal quality in English and French.

We are satisfied with the measures and timelines proposed by Service Canada to implement our recommendations. As shown in Service Canada's action plan (see Appendix C), Service Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada have already taken steps to implement the recommendations.

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INTRODUCTION

Service Canada (SC), reporting to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), was created in 2005. The institution has the delegated authority to carry out its mandate, which consists of working with federal departments and other levels of government to provide Canadians with one-stop, easy-to-access, personalized service. Approximately 70 programs as well as all Government of Canada services are brought together in a single location. These include employment insurance programs, the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security Program, social insurance numbers, passport services and pleasure craft licence applications, as well as numerous on-line services and tools, such as Career Navigator and Appli-Web. The institution provides in-person service in Service Canada Centres (service centres), outreach sites and community offices, as well as service by telephone, mail and Internet. SC also provides information about various services on its Web site.

The Call Centres Directorate is responsible for providing quality services to Canadians over the telephone. There are two types of telephone service: the 1 800 O-Canada call centre and the SC telephone network. The 1 800 O-Canada line provides general information on all Government of Canada services and programs, as well as events such as the Speech from the Throne and elections. It can also be used to obtain information in emergency and crisis situations. The SC telephone network comprises 14 call centres and provides specific information on employment insurance programs, the Canada Pension Plan and the Old Age Security program.

The Commissioner of Official Languages has already stated that SC has become a key player in the delivery of front-line federal services, making it an institution to watch. Canadians place much importance on the overall quality of services and information, as well as the timeliness and accessibility of services, which influences their level of satisfaction with and trust in the government. To meet their expectations, SC created the Office for Client Satisfaction, where Canadians can provide feedback on the quality of all the services they receive, and Service Canada College, where employees can acquire the knowledge and skills they need to provide personalized service of the highest quality.

SC has more than 19,000 employees, nearly 90% of whom work in some 330 offices and 14 call centres. Of these, there are 136 designated bilingual service centres in four large regions: Western Canada and Territories, Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic. The Assistant Deputy Minister of the Citizen Service Branch, who is the official languages champion responsible for Part IV of the *Official Languages Act* (the Act), reports directly to the Senior Associate Deputy Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Chief Operating Officer for Service Canada.

It is important to emphasize at the outset that SC is in the process of adopting a new management model, called the Service Management Structural Model, to establish and maintain a culture of service excellence for Canadians. Through this model, work can be organized into four business streams. Our audit was conducted at the Citizen Service Branch, which is mandated to improve service delivery, enhance service flexibility and access, and increase public satisfaction through innovative approaches based on collaboration with regard to services. Through service transformation, SC is implementing a client group approach, which involves defining the main groups that make up its clientele (Aboriginal people, newcomers to Canada, families, people with disabilities, seniors, workers, employers and youth). It is also developing strategies for new services, building research capacity to identify new client needs and engaging each group through advisory groups made up of clients and representatives of volunteer and community sectors, especially official language minority communities.[1]

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1 In this report, official language minority communities are designated by the term "official language communities".

In short, this structural model clarifies roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. It ensures consistency of service delivery approaches across the country and provides greater clarity for performance expectations, both at organizational and individual levels, as well as greater flexibility in responding to changing demands and assigning personnel according to priorities. For example, using the model, SC went from 4,000 work descriptions, which varied from region to region, to 28 standard national work descriptions.

SC believes that this structure enables efficient expansion and contraction, such as shifting the balance between a full-time and part-time workforce, in an organization that delivers some time-limited programs and that regularly goes through peak operational cycles.

Service Management Structural Model*

Executive Head

Strategic Services*
- Planning and reporting
- Communications and marketing
- Ministerial services
- Federal-Provincial and stakeholder relations

National corporate functions
- Human resources
- Finance and administration
- Information technology

Four Business Streams

Citizen Services
- Operational
- Business Expertise

- Citizen knowledge
- Service offerings
- Client facing
- Outreach
- Interface with call centres and Web

Labour Market and Social Development Programs
- Operational
- Business Expertise

- G&Cs programs
- Community liaison
- Labour market information
- Foreign Worker Program

Integrity Services
- Operational
- Business Expertise

- Prevention
- Investigation
- Identification
- Authentication
- Risk management

Processing and Payment Services
- Operational
- Business Expertise

- EI
- CPP/OAS
- AIG
- CEP
- Eco-auto

* Diagram provided by Service Canada.

Service Management Conceptual Model*

* Diagram provided by Service Canada.

Audit objectives and legislative framework

Although SC has a number of responsibilities under the *Official Languages Act*, the audit focused mainly on Part IV: delivery of services to the public in both official languages in designated bilingual service centres and call centres. The purpose of the Act is to ensure respect for English and French as the official languages of Canada, their equality of status, and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all federal institutions. The Act also guarantees the public's right to communicate with and to receive services from federal institutions in either official language. This obligation applies to the head office or national headquarters of federal institutions and to offices where there is a significant demand for the use of English or French. SC is required to meet its obligations under the Act and the *Official Languages (Communications with and Services to the Public) Regulations.* To do this, SC must implement the policies relevant to its mandate, as it has 136 designated bilingual service centres across the country.

The institution is also subject to section 25 of the Act. This obligation applies to the decentralization of SC services to the provincial and territorial governments, as is the case for labour market development agreements, for example.

The audit sought to determine whether SC management was committed to implementing Part IV of the Act in order to provide Canadians with services of equal quality in English and French, whether front-line personnel in SC bilingual service points provided active offer and whether they provided services of equal quality in both official languages to the public in person, by telephone and via computer systems. We also verified whether SC consulted representatives of official language communities in the various regions and whether it considered the results of these consultations when planning for the provision of bilingual services. Lastly, we verified whether the organization effectively monitored the quality of service delivery in both official languages.

Methodology

The audit involved an analysis of all the activities related to bilingual service delivery in order to verify SC's compliance with Part IV of the Act.

We began the audit at SC headquarters and then visited three designated bilingual call centres and 19 service centres between January and April 2010. These centres, located in ten provinces, are governed by four regional offices: Western Canada and Territories, Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic.

We began the audit by conducting more than 100 interviews with SC staff, including the official languages champion, senior executives, managers and team leaders, as well as with citizen service officers and front-line employees working in service centres and outreach sites. We also interviewed the person in charge of official languages training at the

Service Canada College, the HRSDC manager responsible for implementing Parts V and VI and section 91 of the Act, two HRSDC employees participating in the implementation of Part VII of the Act, and ten representatives of official language communities in various locations in Canada.

We then examined numerous documents obtained from the Official Languages Service for Citizens, which is responsible for compliance with Part IV of the Act, as well as documents collected during on-site visits—action plans, official language work tools, on-line training material, and copies of presentations, correspondence and performance agreements. We also examined SC's intranet network, the First Come, First Served system, the computer system used by clients in the service centres' multiservices zone, and SC's Web site.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective 1

Ensure that Service Canada management is committed to implementing Part IV of the *Official Languages Act* in order to provide appropriate bilingual services to Canadians.

a) Verify that Service Canada has a satisfactory official languages accountability framework.

HRSDC has a charter *(Service Charter: Our Commitment to Canadians)* stating that its helpful, bilingual staff are available to provide Canadians with accurate information in the official language of their choice. Specifically, the service standards state that SC provides services in various communities. SC has also established a structure for official languages. The Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) of the Citizen Service Branch is responsible for applying Part IV of the *Official Languages Act* for HRSDC, as agreed to in a memorandum of understanding between the Human Resources Service Branch, the Strategic Policy and Research Branch and the Citizen Service Branch. The fact that this ADM is also responsible for providing functional guidance for all SC service delivery allows him to integrate the necessary measures to fully exercise his responsibilities. The three ADMs who are responsible for the different parts of the Act regularly discuss official languages at management committee meetings, make presentations on related topics and attend the annual meeting of the network of official languages coordinators.

HRSDC has also appointed an ADM and a director general—as champion and co-champion—to be responsible for promoting the use of both official languages throughout the organization. The co-champion participates in the Council of the Network of Departmental Official Languages Champions. The SC senior executives and managers we met clearly expressed their commitment to implementing Part IV of the Act and recognized that there is still work to be done to better serve Canadians in the official language of their choice. SC executives also sit on federal council committees across Canada.

Official languages coordinators

HRSDC set up a network of official languages coordinators that includes employees from headquarters and regional offices. This network is well structured, although it does not have terms of reference. It holds monthly teleconferences at which minutes are taken. Items on the agenda include complaints, project updates, action plans and special activities. The network of official languages coordinators, which also includes the ADMs responsible for implementing Parts V, VI and VII and section 91 of the Act, as well as the other ADMs mentioned above, meets annually at the national workshop of official languages coordinators. The regional coordinators we interviewed said that they were completely satisfied with these meetings.

Our review shows that the official languages coordinators know their portfolios inside out and are familiar with the location of all designated bilingual offices in their region. They are obviously very involved in official languages issues. Most of the staff we met with know the official languages coordinators in their regions and do not hesitate to consult them. Some coordinators are also members of their region's interdepartmental network of official languages coordinators. They deplore the fact that official languages tasks are fragmented. They spend approximately 10% of their time on official languages, considering their regular workload, but would like to work more on this issue. One regional office planned to recruit a student through a co-op education program who would work with the coordinator and perform official languages tasks in the workplace and with the community, as well as organize meetings and special events. In addition to this information, our interviews revealed that the roles and responsibilities of official languages regional coordinators are not clearly defined, and that each coordinator works in his or her own way. Consequently, they are responsible for developing their own tools to implement Part IV of the Act. For example,

they send out mystery shoppers or hire consultants to do so, and prepare evaluation grids to record observations in designated bilingual service centres. We found that official languages management and practices varied from one regional office to the next, and that some were much more proactive than others. In addition, the coordinators' official languages responsibilities were not divided equally. In some regional offices, coordinators were responsible for applying Parts IV and VII, whereas in others, two coordinators shared the task, each being responsible for one part of the Act. Consequently, SC may wish to review this situation.

Work groups

The directors general who report to the ADMs responsible for applying the various parts of the Act meet regularly throughout the year to discuss official languages issues. On an operational level, employees responsible for applying Parts IV, V, VI and VII and section 91 of the Act also work in groups or committees to handle official languages issues. At the regional level, one of the offices set up an official languages committee that developed a work plan.

Conferences and meetings

In 2008, SC held a leadership conference to conduct an environmental scan and risk analysis of official languages. The organization wanted to understand the factors influencing official languages in order to take them into account in activity planning, to examine existing factors that could influence those activities, and to identify current issues and trends in official languages.

Although HRSDC has appointed key individuals to implement its official languages program, it does not have an accountability framework for this. We were told that the Official Languages Service for Citizens had begun work to develop a performance measurement framework for the implementation of Parts IV, V, VI and VII and section 91 of the Act at Service Canada. However, this work must be revised to reflect the new official languages governance structure that was implemented at HRSDC in October 2009.

Our interviews also revealed that there is a lack of stability at SC's Official Languages Service for Citizens, which sometimes complicates the work to be done by the personnel responsible for implementing the official languages program.

> ### RECOMMENDATION 1
> The Commissioner recommends that Service Canada develop and implement an accountability framework for official languages in order to clearly define all of its obligations. He also recommends that this framework be communicated to all staff.

b) Determine whether Service Canada's official languages action plan allows for effective implementation of Part IV of the Official Languages Act with regard to all bilingual services provided to the public.

Departmental (HRSDC) Integrated Business Plan

HRSDC has developed an integrated business plan for 2008–2011, which includes a section on SC. In this section, it is specifically mentioned that the status of official languages will continue to be closely monitored with a view to implementing a proactive and flexible approach to increase SC's capacity to provide quality service in bilingual offices. This section also includes a statement on the desire to improve training and to develop clearer directives for front-line employees, as well as on the need to establish a three-year communications strategy to involve all managers, staff and unions in resolving active offer problems.

In regard to the part of the plan on the human resources management strategy for building and maintaining a culture of service excellence, HRSDC indicated that a national learning strategy is being developed. This strategy aims to promote and achieve learning, training and professional advancement goals within the organization. Language training opportunities will be increased in order to provide better service in both official languages and thereby meet the needs of official language communities.

Only a small number of people we met with were aware of HRSDC's integrated business plan. Some employees mentioned that the financial resources for language training were very limited. The integrated business plan resulted in an action plan on active offer for SC in 2008–2009, which was renewed in 2009–2010.

Action plan on active offer

The action plan on active offer was developed by the Official Languages Service for Citizens and includes measures for improving SC's performance in terms of active offer of

service in both official languages. Its objectives deal mainly with SC's active offer performance and its ability to evaluate and report on its performance, as well as with the tools to be developed and the organization's commitment. However, this plan, which is a PowerPoint presentation, does not include responsibilities, timelines or performance indicators. In May 2008, SC set up a management committee to implement this action plan. All activities related to the active offer of bilingual services at SC were the result of the leadership of the Citizen Service Branch ADM and his determination to advance this issue. His staff were quick to tell us that he was an "ambassador" for official languages.

SC's official languages action plan addresses only the active offer of bilingual services and does not take into account all the obligations under Part IV of the Act. Most of the managers, team leaders and officers we interviewed were not aware of the existence of an integrated business plan or a national action plan on active offer, but were very familiar with the requirements of the *Directive on Active Offer of Service in Both Official Languages in Service Canada Centres and Outreach Sites*.

Regional action plans for bilingual service delivery

The regional offices provided us with copies of their action plans. These varied considerably from one region to another, and some were much more detailed than others. For example, our review found that one regional office has a comprehensive action plan for all its official languages obligations (Parts IV, V, VI and VII and section 91 of the Act). This plan contains data on the representation of official language communities, information on governance at the national and regional levels, a monitoring and reporting framework, risk management measures and mitigation strategies. The action plan implemented by another regional office referred to the need to raise employee awareness, to increase bilingual service delivery in non-designated service centres, to strengthen relations with official language communities, to monitor the delivery of active offer of bilingual services, and to maintain official languages responsibilities in manager performance evaluations.

Some regions, however, presented work plans with rather vague statements, despite the challenges of fulfilling official languages obligations and the need to increase bilingual capacity. Some regional offices chose to deal with the subject

of official languages in their human resources plan by indicating the number of bilingual employees to be recruited.

SC still has work to do to ensure proper planning of bilingual service delivery in its designated offices in order to meet all its obligations under Part IV of the Act.

> ### RECOMMENDATION 2
> The Commissioner recommends that Service Canada include additional objectives in its national action plan in order to guarantee the effective and complete implementation of Part IV of the *Official Languages Act* and ensure the delivery of services of equal quality in English and French in all designated bilingual service centres and call centres. The plan should also include timelines, performance indicators and an accountability mechanism. The regional offices should, in turn, develop and implement operational plans for official languages that follow the national action plan while taking their regional concerns into account. These plans should be communicated to all personnel.

c) Verify that Service Canada has an official languages policy or guidelines regarding service to the public that have been approved by senior management and comply with the Official Languages Act as well as with the principle of substantive equality (see DesRochers v. Canada (Industry)[2]).

As mentioned above, SC has made considerable effort to ensure that active offer is implemented effectively, and this effort has produced substantive results. In September 2008, the institution implemented and disseminated the *Directive on Active Offer of Service in Both Official Languages in Service Canada Centres and Outreach Sites* (Directive on Active Offer). This directive focuses on greeting and states that clients must be offered the opportunity to communicate in the official language of their choice, but it does not provide detailed information on the delivery of services as such. It outlines operational requirements both for employees and for team leaders and official languages coordinators. It also refers to training, tools and the responsibilities of other key partners. Appendix A of the Directive lists definitions regarding verbal greeting in both official languages—in person and over the telephone—as well as visual active offer (publications, notes, etc.).

The Directive on Active Offer was distributed by e-mail to SC senior management, along with questions and answers to help them with implementation. This directive and its related documents were posted on the intranet site, and an

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2 http://scc.lexum.umontreal.ca/en/2009/2009scc8/2009scc8.html

e-mail was sent to the in-person services network. Note that this directive applies to SC in accordance with the *Policy on the Use of Official Languages for Communications with and Services to the Public*, established by the Treasury Board Secretariat in July 2005.

SC employees are required to comply with the *Guidelines on Language Requirements of Positions and Staffing of Bilingual Positions* and the *Procedures on the Application of the Public Service Official Languages Exclusion Approval Order*. These documents specify official languages obligations to be met when identifying language requirements of positions and establishing their language profile—the level of language proficiency required for a bilingual position. Presentations on the application of these guidelines were made to numerous human resources consultants across Canada, whose duty it is to forward the information to senior executives and managers. Of course, SC must ensure that human resources consultants develop a mechanism to inform senior executives and managers of all aspects of the linguistic designation of positions and language profiles needed to meet the job description requirements so that the staffing of bilingual positions is managed effectively.

At the time of our audit, SC did not have a policy for all its obligations under Part IV of the Act. The institution needs to develop a policy that takes into account all of its official languages responsibilities and complies with its new service management structural model.

> ### RECOMMENDATION 3
> The Commissioner recommends that Service Canada develop an official languages policy that includes all the components of Part IV of the *Official Languages Act*. This policy should be effectively communicated to all staff. In addition, Service Canada should remind all employees of existing official language policies.

d) Verify that Service Canada promotes both official languages at its bilingual service points and that official languages are highly visible.

The list of bilingual service centres is posted on the Burolis[3] Web site, an electronic directory managed by the Treasury Board Secretariat. In addition, SC publications and its bilingual Web site give several telephone numbers, including toll-free dedicated lines (1 800)—English, French or bilingual—that clients can call to get information on various programs in both official languages. SC's main offices and services are also listed in both languages in the blue pages of regional telephone directories.

SC told us that it was using the media to communicate with the public, primarily to promote its programs and recruitment campaigns. Newspaper ads are placed in both the majority and minority language to reach members of both official languages groups equally.

In our visits to the designated bilingual service points, we observed outdoor and indoor bilingual signage. At the reception counter, a pictogram indicated that service is available in both official languages; notices for clients were bilingual; and English and French publications and promotional posters were displayed neatly and prominently. Regular, careful monitoring of these locations produces good results. SC is currently working on a way to visually identify bilingual citizen service officers.

e) Verify that Service Canada is effective in informing all front-line personnel about the requirements regarding service delivery in both official languages.

SC considers both official languages to be intrinsic to all of its activities, especially in designated bilingual service centres. Managers and team leaders told us that they remind employees who serve the public of their official languages obligations. Messages to this effect are communicated to them by e-mail, at staff meetings and in newsletters.

SC's intranet site contains a wealth of information on the official languages program, including management, learning and evaluation tools. Most of the employees interviewed knew where to find information, especially on official languages training available through Campus*direct*. The awareness campaign launched during the implementation of the Directive on Active Offer was a great success. SC must now do likewise for all delivery of its services in both official languages. Given the campaign's success, we encourage SC to use the same strategies as for active offer.

It is important to mention that SC is currently working on the production of a video about Part IV of the Act, including active offer. This tool will be used mainly for training SC managers, team leaders and front-line personnel. SC will also use it to raise awareness among its remaining personnel. The video will be released, as an example of good practice, to federal departments and organizations looking to raise employee awareness of linguistic duality and the *Official Languages Act*. We believe that SC could become an official languages role model for other federal institutions.

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3 www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/ollo/appollo/burolis/search-recherche/search-recherche-eng.aspx

Coordinators are informed of official-languages-related complaints and activities through their network. They maintain regular contact with all service centre staff, give presentations on official languages and intervene when needed. Official languages are also discussed in Management Committee meetings at the national and regional levels.

f) Verify that Service Canada includes official-languages-related obligations and responsibilities of employees in its training sessions on customer service.

Service Canada College is the national learning network for SC personnel. Its representatives develop official-languages-related content in collaboration with three groups: the Office of Coordination and Accountability for Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*, the Official Languages Service for Citizens and the Diversity and Official Languages Division. The College is not responsible for ensuring compliance with the Act.

Various official-languages-related initiatives have been proposed. An online course on Parts IV and VII of the Act was developed to support implementation of the Directive on Active Offer, which came into effect in September 2008. At the same time, a second initiative was launched to incorporate the official languages modules into the component on service excellence. This was offered in the classroom on a voluntary basis, although it was strongly recommended.

In addition, citizen service officers who provide services in person or by telephone must receive specific training, to be completed within 12 months of being hired. The goal of this training is twofold: to build the knowledge and skills required to ensure service excellence, and to consolidate appropriate behaviours in their relations with clients and colleagues. This highly successful training is a result of the service management structural model.

The classroom course includes a component on official languages to raise officers' awareness of the institution's obligations regarding Part IV (mainly active offer) and Part VII of the Act. We strongly recommend that SC expand the training to include all Part IV components.

To be eligible for the classroom training on service excellence, officers must first take the official languages training offered by the SC online campus. Employees told us that they also had access to information on official languages offered by the Pacific Federal Council, as well as the Campus*direct* network. Completely satisfied with the training they had received, the staff members we met with

told us that they preferred the classroom component, since this approach encourages discussions and avoids incorrect interpretations. We were told that participants' evaluations of the course were very positive. The institution's mandatory training and ongoing awareness campaigns have resulted in the fact that all front-line personnel are fully aware of their obligations with respect to active offer of bilingual services. We congratulate SC on this unqualified success.

Official languages training is voluntary for senior executives, managers and team leaders. The College developed a training program for managers, but did not receive a request to prepare one for senior executives. Given the problems with bilingual capacity and with the lack of knowledge of official language communities' specific needs—needs that are discussed later in this report—we strongly encourage SC to require mandatory training for all personnel on each part of the Act.

g) Verify that Service Canada includes official-languages-related items in the performance evaluations of senior executives and of bilingual service point managers.

Our review found that official languages obligations are not consistently defined in SC performance evaluations. The 2009–2010 agreements that we examined for executive directors, directors general and office managers did not contain specific objectives regarding official languages. However, we did not receive the evaluation template for many of them, even though this was requested. Some senior executives informed us that they were responsible for achieving objectives set out in the human resources plan, including those related to bilingual capacity.

The performance evaluations of most team leaders took official languages into account, particularly the monitoring of the active offer of bilingual services. As for the performance objectives of citizen service officers, some of these dealt only with the active offer of bilingual services, whereas others had a specific list of activities. We were surprised to find that some coordinators were not evaluated on their official languages responsibilities.

To remedy this situation, we believe that all levels of management should be made accountable for the delivery of services in both official languages and that this should appear in their performance agreement. In addition, given this situation and the fact that the personnel perform the same tasks across Canada, we believe that it would be desirable to set consistent performance objectives for bilingual service delivery.

OBJECTIVE 2

ENSURE THAT FRONT-LINE PERSONNEL IN SERVICE CANADA'S BILINGUAL SERVICE POINTS PROVIDE ACTIVE OFFER AND DELIVER SERVICES OF EQUAL QUALITY IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH TO THE PUBLIC.

a) Verify that Service Canada's bilingual service points (including outreach service sites) provide active offer and all bilingual services to official language minority communities, and that posters, publications and computer systems at these service points are of equal quality in both official languages.

Part IV of the Act guarantees Canadians the "right to communicate with and to receive available services" in the official language of their choice. We examined whether bilingual service delivery was adequate at SC bilingual service centres.

SC has put noticeable effort into the layout of its service centres. Every service centre has four areas, and clients can speak the official language of their choice in each since officers move from one area to another and actively offer services in both official languages at first contact. These areas are as follows: reception, interview area, transaction area (where clients submit their applications online) and multiservices zone (where clients can use computers to find programs, print résumés, send faxes, etc.).

HRSDC has updated its data on Burolis and the data of SC's "Find Services Where You Live" system. Internal guidelines have been developed in cooperation with the Treasury Board Secretariat to determine which offices need to be included on Burolis.

Active offer

The service centres that we visited had a pictogram in the reception area, indicating that services are provided in both official languages, and in some offices where officers meet with clients for interviews.

All citizen service officers are obliged to actively offer bilingual services in service centres, outreach sites, designated bilingual community offices and call centres, except for officers answering calls on dedicated telephone lines.

We were informed in our interviews that some unilingual officers are sometimes hesitant to provide active offer because they are not comfortable speaking to clients in the minority language, even if only to use key sentences. Our interviews also revealed that some unilingual employees are indifferent to providing bilingual services and that they serve French-speaking clients in English, assuming that they speak that language as well. Unilingual officers are required to refer clients who speak the minority language to a bilingual co-worker. These officers are provided with a small card (a "pocket translator") that lists greetings in both official languages. This initiative stems from the Directive on Active Offer described earlier in this report.

"Bilingual staff at the reception counter would be necessary." [translation] – **Citizen service officer**

Delivery of services in person, by telephone, and via the Internet and the SC computer system

In person — From April 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010, close to 10 million people visited SC service points. To track the numbers, SC uses a management system to ensure client service of equal quality. The First Come, First Served system is in operation across Canada and captures information such as the client's contact information, the program for which information is required and the client's preferred language. It also manages requests so that clients are served in the order of their arrival. Consequently, we expected that the wait times and quality of service would be equal for English-speaking and French-speaking clients.

Our interviews with both management and front-line personnel revealed that, in reality, service is not always of equal quality. There are times when Canadians who speak the minority language have longer waits, sometimes over an hour, depending on the time of day and the time of year.

The order in which clients speaking the official language of their choice are served depends more on the availability of bilingual officers than on the first-come, first-served principle. We were also told of problems created by a lack of bilingual staff at the reception counter. Since unilingual students often man the counter, they must look for a bilingual officer from the other service areas. A bulletin board lists the names of the bilingual officers on duty. The fact that there are no bilingual employees at the reception counter means that the simplest request for information, such as giving out the required form to a client, cannot be handled quickly.

"There is a lack of bilingual officers, and French-speaking clients wait longer." [translation]
– Citizen service officer

We must now address the responsibilities of team leaders. The limited number of bilingual officers sometimes creates difficulties in managing work schedules when employees are absent. Team leaders are called upon to serve clients in the minority language when there is a shortage of bilingual front-line personnel. They must also work with clients who are dealing with complex situations. We were surprised to learn that the vast majority of team leaders working in bilingual service centres do not hold designated bilingual positions and are not bilingual. And yet, the team leader job description clearly states that they must establish and maintain relations with internal and external clients and partners; that they are the primary contact persons for dealing with client complaints and resolving problems and conflicts between employees and the public; that they are often the sole contact persons for the community; that they may act as the main on-site representative for HRSDC; that they must deal with complex cases requiring review, interpretation or decision; and that they can administer oaths as well as write and receive affidavits, statements and affirmations. Team leaders must also make presentations to the public and to key partners. We emphasize that these tasks must be performed in both official languages in designated bilingual service points. Moreover, we believe that language requirements should also apply to operational levels. SC needs to analyze, evaluate and take all necessary measures to remedy the lack of bilingualism among team leaders, a lack that could have a negative impact on the monitoring of the quality of services provided in the minority language by bilingual officers.

Telephone — During the past year, SC received 3,407,306 calls on the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security line, and 7,729,107 calls on the Employment Insurance line. Similar to services in person and its First Come, First Served system, the telephone service has a calling queue whose throughput is regulated according to the number of calls. "English" or "French" appears on the screen, indicating the language chosen by the client. It is possible that clients choosing to be served in the minority language wait longer in the queue, depending on the centre where the call came in (which can sometimes have fewer bilingual officers) and on the time (depending on the time zone, the call may come in when fewer officers are working). Generally, the existing system makes it possible to provide good service to Canadians.

Internet and computer system — More and more Canadians are using the Internet to get information on HRSDC programs—in 2009, there were 55 million visits. A bilingual computer system is available to the public in service centres. It is connected to the Internet and can be used to obtain information on programs. We noted during our visits that the keyboards were not bilingual in several service centres. To resolve this situation, a list of codes to type French characters was placed next to computers in some service points. However, all the links for handling citizen requests and accessing the various programs used by officers or clients are bilingual.

b) Verify that Service Canada's bilingual capacity is sufficient to ensure proper delivery of services in both official languages.

It is important that SC ensure that there are enough bilingual employees at all times to provide service of equal quality in English and French at its designated bilingual service points. At the beginning of our audit, SC did not have data records on its bilingual capacity for each office, although it had data for HRSDC overall and by sectors (HRSDC Policy, Service Canada and the Employment Program). The HRSDC Diversity and Official Languages Division, which is responsible for producing this type of data, prepared an analysis report on the bilingual capacity of SC bilingual service points in March 2010. This was a fairly difficult task since HRSDC's management system was not able to produce reliable reports on the bilingual capacity of employees in each office. Managers in the designated bilingual service points had to

validate and correct the data provided. Only the data for citizen service officers in an indeterminate position were analyzed. Casual employees, staff in acting positions and students were excluded from this analysis.

At the national level, findings showed that 94% of front-line personnel meet the language requirements of their position. HRSDC indicated that the Diversity and Official Languages Division plans to implement measures to correct the existing shortcomings over the coming year. First, it indicated that it will follow up with managers who have employees on their staff who do not meet the language profile of their position or for whom the data are not known and inform them to implement corrective measures (for example, temporary administrative measures or language training). The Division will also follow up with managers to ensure compliance with the *Public Service Official Languages Exclusion Approval Order* and will thereby make sure that employees appointed to bilingual non-imperative positions meet the established language profile in the specified timeframes. Lastly, the Division will continue to make the necessary updates to HRSDC's management system in order to include Burolis codes in the system so that reports on bilingual capacity can be generated for each of the offices designated bilingual for the purposes of service to the public. We appreciate the work done throughout this audit and encourage SC to closely monitor the measures that we propose, through which it will be able to obtain an ongoing profile of its bilingual capacity and ensure better management thereof.

Our audit did not allow us to determine the number of designated bilingual positions that would be required in each of the designated bilingual service points to meet the needs of minority language clients. We were told that no structured analysis had been done on this subject. Senior executives told us that they generally felt unequipped to determine how many positions must be designated bilingual and that there was no documentation on the subject. Several people we met with recognized the lack of bilingual citizen service officers in their office. According to some senior executives, there were very few requests in the minority language in the bilingual service centres of their region, which justified fewer bilingual citizen service officers. However, our review of requests in the First Come, First Served system and our interviews with officers told a different story. In this context, SC was not able to provide us with accurate data on the number of requests made in the minority language in each of the regions.

"There are no guidelines on the number of bilingual positions we should have." – **Manager**

It is therefore apparent that there are not enough designated bilingual positions to meet the requirements of the Act in some of the designated bilingual centres. Four of the highest-traffic centres we visited had only two bilingual citizen service officers, and two others only had one. The recent lists of employees occupying bilingual positions that had been provided to us for the audit did not necessarily reflect the actual situation in the office; for example, the name of an employee on maternity leave and of another on long-term sick leave appeared on these lists. We believe that SC must obtain an accurate profile of employees occupying designated bilingual positions and ensure that measures are taken to ensure bilingual service excellence at all times and to reduce wait times as per its mandate.

When there is a shortage of bilingual officers at designated service points, SC assigns one from a different service point, which may entail a 50-kilometre commute for that person. Senior executives, managers and team leaders we met with were comfortable with that approach. Bilingual citizen service officers told us that they sometimes felt guilty being absent on leave or training, knowing that there would be few bilingual officers left in their office. They also said that they felt a bit stressed when they could see on the screen that there was a French-speaking client in the queue, but the system did not provide a wait time.

We cannot overlook the fact that citizen service officers must make presentations to groups of clients in both official languages about the programs offered by SC. Officers with a level B language profile told us that they were uncomfortable making presentations and answering questions from clients speaking to them in the minority language. There is currently no mechanism at SC to verify that evaluated language skills have been maintained.

"During information sessions, clients do not have service of equal quality because citizen service officers hesitate and stumble. We start the sessions by saying that this is not our first language." [translation] – **Citizen service officer**

During our audit, we reviewed the language profiles of citizen service officer and team leader designated bilingual positions as well as how these profiles were established. The findings appear problematic: we found a lack of consistency in the language profiles, not only from one region to another, but also among the various citizen service officer positions in the same service centre. For example, correspondence obtained during our visits revealed that the language requirements were different for two officers with identical job descriptions (generic job descriptions for front-line personnel) and who were hired two months apart at the same designated service centre: one required level BBB; the other, CBC. Clearly, SC must apply more stringent practices for staffing bilingual positions. We believe that B levels are inadequate and that CBC should be the required proficiency level.

The following table gives an overview of language profiles that we received for citizen service officers and team leaders in the four regions. It also gives the language profiles for citizen service officers who work in call centres.

WEST	British Columbia (Vancouver)	Citizen service officers	BBB or CBC
		Team leaders	English essential
	Alberta (Edmonton)	Citizen service officers	BBB
		Team leaders	English essential
	Saskatchewan and Manitoba	Citizen service officers	CBC
		Team leaders	English essential
ONTARIO	Toronto	Citizen service officers	BBB or BBC
		Team leaders	CBC (The team leader we met was unilingual and occupied a position designated English essential.)
	Ottawa	Citizen service officers	BBC
		Team leaders	BBB
QUEBEC		Citizen service officers	BBB
		Team leaders	BBB (One of the team leaders we met was unilingual and occupied a position designated French essential.)
ATLANTIC		Citizen service officers	CCC
		Team leaders	English essential
CALL CENTRES		Citizen service officers	BBC

As shown by the above table, which presents information obtained from senior management, there are no standards at the national level for language profiles or for the number of bilingual positions in various offices, except for the call centres. To rectify the situation, SC must review the linguistic profiles when staffing citizen service officer and team leader positions. We trust that SC will provide sound governance for its human resources needs (number of designated bilingual positions) and required language profiles to ensure the delivery of services of equal quality in English and French at all of its designated bilingual service points.

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RECOMMENDATION 5

The Commissioner recommends that Service Canada review the number of designated bilingual citizen service officer and team leader positions in designated bilingual service points across Canada. He also recommends that Service Canada define the language profile required to perform the tasks in the job descriptions of employees who must serve the public in person, by telephone and via the Internet or the computer system.

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Almost all of the personnel we met with believed that recruitment, retention and the lack of bilingual candidates in some regions were the main difficulties associated with the delivery of bilingual services in the designated service centres. In particular, we were told that citizen service officer positions were at the bottom of the ladder. Since bilingual employees have better opportunities for advancement in the public service, they get promoted, which results in a higher turnover rate.

"The number of bilingual positions is just sufficient. We are attempting to staff bilingual positions and be a little more proactive."
– Senior executive

OBJECTIVE 3
ENSURE THAT SERVICE CANADA CONSULTS REPRESENTATIVES OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGE MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN THE VARIOUS REGIONS AND TAKES THE RESULTS INTO CONSIDERATION WHEN PLANNING FOR THE PROVISION OF BILINGUAL SERVICES.

a) Verify that Service Canada consults official language minority communities in all regions of Canada to identify service needs.

SC is obligated to consult official language communities to identify their specific needs for the programs and services that it offers. During the audit, we discussed the question of consultations with these communities with senior executives and managers working in SC regional offices. We also interviewed representatives of official language communities in the provinces and, at the national level, we interviewed representatives of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne.

Our interviews confirmed that there is no structured, coordinated mechanism for consulting communities to identify their specific service delivery needs in both official languages. We were told, however, that SC met with some 60 representatives of official language communities in 2006 in order to develop guiding principles to make its programs and services more accessible to these communities, to determine their most pressing needs and to improve SC's service delivery model. Our interviews did not reveal whether official language communities were informed of any decisions made following these consultations.

It must be noted that, after signing labour market development agreements with the Government of Canada, the provinces and the territories, HRSDC met with official language community representatives in some provinces to inform them of this new approach. These representatives had the impression that this exercise was reactive rather than proactive.

We also learned that, in some provinces, SC approached official language community representatives as part of a bilingual personnel recruitment campaign as well as in the context of a grants and contributions program.

These communities are concerned about losing their assets and about being able to use the official language of their choice when accessing certain programs, including those associated with bilateral labour market development agreements whose objective is to help unemployed Canadians find work quickly. These agreements have been made with the Government of Canada, the provinces and the territories, which may not be familiar with the specific needs of official language communities.

"SC could be more strategic in consulting rather than using a piecemeal approach."
– Representative of official language community

Official language communities are also concerned about the quality of services in French at designated service centres. Several of their representatives said that service in both official languages is not a reflex, even though an active offer is provided. Officers at the reception counter regularly seek out bilingual personnel, instead of being willing to serve clients effectively in the official language of their choice. SC must implement measures encouraging staff to acquire this reflex in order to create an environment where the public feels truly comfortable using either English or French.

To better meet its obligations, SC will have to consult regularly with official language communities in a structured and organized fashion when restructuring or decentralizing its services and when deciding on the location of its service points, as well as when offering new programs or developing guidelines that might affect the communities' specific needs. Official language communities in several provinces have seen two or three years go by since their last meeting with an SC senior executive. Some official language community representatives feel that their role is being trivialized, even at meetings with coordinators.

"The high turnover and restructuring at SC have a negative impact on official language minority communities." [translation]
– Representative of official language community

By establishing a consultation mechanism, SC would not only be able to work more closely with official language communities and identify their specific needs, it would also be able to improve planning and determine whether services currently provided by designated bilingual offices meet their expectations.

> ### RECOMMENDATION 6
> The Commissioner recommends that Service Canada establish a structured and coordinated mechanism for regular consultation with national, provincial and regional representatives of official language minority communities in order to identify their specific needs with respect to the programs and services provided by the institution. An ongoing feedback process should be added to this consultation mechanism.

b) Verify that Service Canada considers the needs of official language minority communities when developing and implementing services and when deciding where to locate bilingual service points. Also verify that it informs these communities of decisions made with respect to these issues.

On a more positive note, SC has developed a project to map—geographically and demographically—all official language communities in order to verify whether in-person service in the official language of their choice is available within a 50-kilometre radius. Elementary schools in official language communities were used as vitality indicators for this project. Preliminary recommendations included reviewing the methodology to determine the language designation of scheduled outreach sites, using the findings to suggest potential sites for the telephone interpretation service pilot project (described below), and conducting an analysis of unilingual service centres that serve an area in which a minority language school is located. The next step is to present the project to the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne and the Quebec Community Groups Network and have them validate the recommendations, which must then be approved by senior HRSDC management, central agencies and the Treasury Board.

In addition, a pilot project launched in May 2010 offers telephone interpretation service to official language communities whose numbers are insufficient to warrant bilingual service in person under the *Official Languages Regulations*. The telephone interpretation service is seen as a tool to support and enhance the vitality of official language communities and Canada's linguistic duality. SC told us that it had informed the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne of the pilot project and planned to share the results with the federation.

While recognizing the continuous effort put in so far by SC, we encourage it to formally consult official language communities about all its ongoing projects.

OBJECTIVE 4

ENSURE THAT SERVICE CANADA IS EFFECTIVELY MONITORING THE QUALITY OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN BOTH OFFICIAL LANGUAGES.

a) Verify that Service Canada has oversight mechanisms (including internal auditing) to monitor the quality of all its bilingual services.

SC conducted a client satisfaction survey in 2006, and a follow-up in 2008. Results showed that 96% of respondents had received service in the language of their choice. As part of SC's client satisfaction program, several managers and team leaders we met said that they closely monitored the comments received from the "Your Opinion Counts!" cards and they considered this activity to be a good monitoring system. Unfortunately, SC neglected to include a statement on official languages and satisfaction regarding the quality of services obtained in the client's choice of official language. This should be added to the evaluation tool.

SC performs some oversight of service delivery in both official languages at its designated bilingual offices. The institution conducted mystery shopper spot checks across Canada between July 2007 and September 2008. The results revealed poor performance in terms of in-person active offer, which was provided only in 30% of cases. At 1 800 O-Canada, however, there was 94% active offer by telephone. This type of activity gives SC a good idea of the actual quality of services provided, and we believe that it should be done regularly in order to ensure compliance with Part IV of the Act.

Other than this exercise, most monitoring is not done in any specific way or with any regularity from one region to the next. As mentioned previously in this report, regional offices must develop their own oversight tools, such as mystery shoppers, to monitor the delivery of bilingual services. Keep in mind that the service centre team leaders who must monitor the quality of services in their workplace are not able to evaluate services provided to clients in the minority language because most of them are not bilingual. In call centres, however, a monitoring mechanism is in place to measure wait times as well as service quality by means of a national quality assurance program.

During our review of the First Come, First Served system, we learned that it is possible to extract information about requests made in the minority language; SC does not use the tool for this purpose, however.

There has been no internal audit of official languages, nor does it appear in the current audit calendar.

b) Verify that the results of monitoring are used in service quality management to ensure ongoing improvement.

The findings of mystery shoppers who visited designated bilingual service points enabled SC to pinpoint shortcomings and take measures to address them. Managers and senior executives are generally informed of any problems.

It is also encouraging to see that the Directive on Active Offer resulted from a mystery shopping exercise conducted in 2007–2008, and that SC's performance in terms of active offer has improved considerably since then. SC also needs to make sure that all requirements of Part IV of the Act are met by providing service of equal quality in English and French.

> **RECOMMENDATION 7**
> The Commissioner recommends that Service Canada institute a formal monitoring mechanism that can be applied accurately in all regions to periodically measure and report on the quality of services provided in both official languages, including wait times.

CONCLUSION

During this audit, we sought to determine whether SC management was committed to actively offering and providing quality service in English and French at its designated bilingual service points; whether the organization had consulted representatives of official language communities of the various regions in a structured and coordinated fashion to identify their needs in relation to programs offered by SC; and whether existing monitoring mechanisms allow SC to successfully meet its obligations under Part IV of the *Official Languages Act*.

The audit found that senior management showed leadership and commitment to linguistic duality. SC has a structure for administering the various parts of the Act, with three ADMs responsible for these parts, as well as a champion and a co-champion to promote linguistic duality. SC has also set up a network of official languages coordinators that works very well.

In summary, SC provides bilingual services at its designated service points, promotes both official languages and ensures their visibility, and effectively communicates its bilingual service delivery requirements to its front-line personnel, mainly through mandatory training on client service excellence that includes a component on official languages requirements. Performance evaluations of citizen service officers take active offer obligations into account. However, the institution needs to review its performance evaluation procedure and take official languages into consideration for senior executives, managers, team leaders and official languages coordinators.

We are satisfied that SC actively offers its bilingual services to the public and that signage, publications and computer system software used by staff and clients are of equal quality in both official languages. Some oversight mechanisms are used to monitor the quality of services; however, there is still work to be done in that respect. The organization is about to complete a mapping project so that it can use community vitality indicators to help determine the location of official language communities. We believe that the results of this project could be an example to all federal institutions.

Despite the measures already taken, SC needs to develop an accountability framework and a policy that, in addition to the requirements for active offer of bilingual services, must include all the requirements under Part IV of the Act concerning all bilingual services provided in person, by telephone, in writing, and via automated systems and the Internet. This framework will provide operational sectors with the necessary parameters and guidance. In addition, the Official Languages Service for Citizens must ensure that the regional offices develop and implement official languages action plans that follow the SC national action plan while taking regional concerns into account.

We noted weaknesses in bilingual capacity in some regions, specifically with regard to the number of designated bilingual positions and the language requirements for team leaders and citizen service officers, who are required to provide services of equal quality in English and French. Weaknesses were also observed with respect to wait times for Canadians speaking the minority language.

It is also important to mention that SC must get back on track by setting up a structured and organized mechanism for regular formal consultation with representatives of official language communities in order to identify their specific needs in terms of bilingual service delivery.

Lastly, our audit revealed that SC has not set up formal mechanisms for ensuring accurate and regular oversight to measure the availability and the quality of its bilingual services in all designated bilingual regions, as stipulated by the *Official Languages Act*.

The Commissioner has made seven recommendations to SC to help improve delivery of bilingual services. Although our audit focused on the delivery of bilingual services by front-line personnel, these recommendations also apply to any sector where employees have to deal with the public, including analysts working in processing centres.

Implementing all the recommendations in this report will enable SC to meet most of the Act's requirements regarding communications with and delivery of bilingual services to the public. It will also allow SC to continue implementing its Service Management Structural Model.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF REGIONAL OFFICES AND SERVICE CANADA CENTRES VISITED

BUROLIS CODE	CITY	PROVINCE
15166	Vancouver 125 10th Avenue East	British Columbia
93272	Vancouver Call centre	British Columbia
1555	Abbotsford 100-32525 Simon Avenue	British Columbia
11558	Edmonton 9700 Jasper Avenue	Alberta
11585	Red Deer 4911 51st Street	Alberta
12019	Regina 1783 Hamilton Street	Saskatchewan
12020	Saskatoon 101 22nd Street East	Saskatchewan
88073	St. Vital (Winnipeg) 1001 St. Mary's Road	Manitoba
10080	Steinbach 321 Main Street	Manitoba
1594	Toronto 25 St. Clair Avenue East	Ontario
16003	Scarborough 200 Town Centre Court	Ontario
93272	Sudbury Call centre	Ontario
12526	Montréal 200 René-Lévesque Boulevard West	Quebec
93272	Montréal Call centre	Quebec
12488	Vaudreuil-Dorion 2555 Dutrisac Avenue	Quebec
10406	Fredericton 633 Queen Street	New Brunswick
11210	Halifax 7001 Mumford Road	Nova Scotia
95356	Charlottetown 191 University Avenue	Prince Edward Island
10774	St. John's 223 Churchill Avenue	Newfoundland and Labrador
15952	Ottawa 2339 Ogilvie Road	National Capital Region
12497	Gatineau 920 St. Joseph Boulevard	National Capital Region

APPENDIX B

LIST OF AUDIT OBJECTIVES AND CRITERIA

OBJECTIVES	CRITERIA
1. Ensure that Service Canada management is committed to implementing Part IV of the *Official Languages Act* in order to provide appropriate bilingual services to Canadians.	a) Verify that Service Canada has a satisfactory official languages accountability framework. b) Determine whether Service Canada's official languages action plan allows for effective implementation of Part IV of the *Official Languages Act* with regard to all bilingual services provided to the public. c) Verify that Service Canada has an official languages policy or guidelines regarding service to the public that have been approved by senior management and comply with the *Official Languages Act* as well as with the principle of substantive equality (see *DesRochers v. Canada* (*Industry*)). d) Verify that Service Canada promotes both official languages at its bilingual service points and that official languages are highly visible. e) Verify that Service Canada is effective in informing all front-line personnel about the requirements regarding service delivery in both official languages. f) Verify that Service Canada includes official-languages-related obligations and responsibilities of employees in its training sessions on customer service. g) Verify that Service Canada includes official-languages-related items in the performance evaluations of senior executives and of bilingual service point managers.
2. Ensure that front-line personnel in Service Canada's bilingual service points provide active offer and deliver services of equal quality in English and French to the public.	a) Verify that Service Canada's bilingual service points (including outreach service sites) provide active offer and all bilingual services to official language minority communities, and that posters, publications and computer systems at these service points are of equal quality in both official languages. b) Verify that Service Canada's bilingual capacity is sufficient to ensure proper delivery of services in both official languages.
3. Ensure that Service Canada consults representatives of official language minority communities in the various regions and takes the results into consideration when planning for the provision of bilingual services.	a) Verify that Service Canada consults official language minority communities in all regions of Canada to identify service needs. b) Verify that Service Canada considers the needs of official language minority communities when developing and implementing services and when deciding where to locate bilingual service points. Also verify that it informs these communities of decisions made with respect to these issues.
4. Ensure that Service Canada is effectively monitoring the quality of service delivery in both official languages.	a) Verify that Service Canada has oversight mechanisms (including internal auditing) to monitor the quality of all its bilingual services. b) Verify that the results of monitoring are used in service quality management to ensure ongoing improvement.

APPENDIX C

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EACH OBJECTIVE, SERVICE CANADA ACTION PLAN AND COMMISSIONNER'S COMMENTS

We are satisfied with the measures and timelines proposed by Service Canada (SC) and we acknowledge the work it has accomplished in terms of implementing the recommendations regarding official languages. We applaud the organization's commitment throughout the audit. However, we believe that SC must strengthen its mechanisms for consultations with representatives from official language minority communities, given that there are currently no formal structured or organized mechanisms for this type of consultation. SC must ensure that all official language community representatives are consulted—including those at the regional and provincial levels as well as those at the national level.

OBJECTIVE 1

ENSURE THAT SERVICE CANADA MANAGEMENT IS COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENTING PART IV OF THE *OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT* IN ORDER TO PROVIDE APPROPRIATE BILINGUAL SERVICES TO CANADIANS.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Commissioner recommends that Service Canada develop and implement an accountability framework for official languages in order to clearly define all of its obligations. He also recommends that this framework be communicated to all staff.

Service Canada Action Plan

In order to establish an integrated governance structure for official languages, on October 30, 2009, roles and responsibilities for the *Official Languages Act* (the Act) were re-aligned and clearly articulated in a memorandum of understanding between the Official Languages Service for Citizens (OLSC) in the Citizen Service Branch (CSB); the Office of Coordination and Accountability for Part VII of the *Official Languages Act* (the Office) in the Strategic Policy and Research Branch (SPRB); and the Diversity and Official Languages (DOL) Division of the Human Resources Services Branch (HRSB). Whereas previously the OLSC was responsible for Parts IV and VII for Service Canada, under the new structure, the OLSC is now responsible for Part IV for all of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) while

Part VII is now under the responsibility of the SPRB's Office. The DOL continues to be accountable for Part V, Part VI and Section 91.

The implementation of the new governance structure, along with the recent consolidation of the regional structure in the spring of 2010, has had an impact on the network of official languages coordinators. The OLSC is consolidating its network of regional coordinators responsible for Part IV, and is strengthening the network of coordinators at National Headquarters. Roles and responsibilities for all HRSDC coordinators responsible for Part IV will be defined and the network will be in place by the end of this fiscal year.

As one of its priorities, the OLSC will continue to work on developing a results-based management and accountability framework for Part IV of the Act. This framework, which will be in place at the end of the fiscal year, will specify the accountability mechanisms and the roles of managers, coordinators and employees who provide service to the public, both in the regions and at National Headquarters. It will also set out performance indicators for HRSDC. Moreover, the framework will identify the roles and responsibilities of HRSDC's official languages champions.

The OLSC is also developing a communications strategy to inform employees of their obligations under Part IV of the Act and of the tools and resources available to support them. A video is being produced to serve as a reminder of employees' obligations and to raise awareness of the importance of providing quality bilingual services as a key element of service excellence. The communications strategy will draw inspiration from the success of the awareness campaign held during the implementation of the *Directive on the Active Offer of Services in Both Official Languages in Service Canada Centres and Outreach Sites* as part of the 2008–2009 action plan to improve the active offer of service (see response to Recommendation 2).

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Commissioner recommends that Service Canada include additional objectives in its national action plan in order to guarantee the effective and complete implementation of Part IV of the *Official Languages Act* and ensure the delivery of services of equal quality in English and French in all designated bilingual service centres and call centres. The plan should also include timelines, performance indicators and an accountability mechanism. The regional offices should, in turn, develop and implement operational plans for official languages that follow the national action plan while taking their regional concerns into account. These plans should be communicated to all personnel.

Service Canada Action Plan

In response to poor results in the active offer of service in both official languages, as identified by the Commissioner of Official Languages in his 2007–2008 annual report, an action plan was developed by Service Canada for 2008–2009. The plan focussed on measures to improve performance with regard to active offer of service, though it was not necessarily limited to that aspect of Part IV.

In summary, the action plan proposed a series of measures to position Service Canada for a consistently stellar performance, to enhance its ability to evaluate and report on performance, and to demonstrate organizational commitment through leadership. Most of the measures from the action plan were implemented within the prescribed deadlines, including the *Directive on the Active Offer of Services in Both Official Languages in Service Canada Centres and Outreach Sites*, which has been in effect since September 2, 2008.

HRSDC is committed to developing, by the end of the fiscal year, a new departmental action plan for Part IV of the Act. This action plan, which will be implemented over a three-year period from 2011 to 2014, will take into account services delivered in person, by telephone, via the Internet and by mail, and will include the following:

- developing a results-based management and accountability framework for Part IV (see response to Recommendation 1);

- establishing a performance measurement framework and strategy to implement Part IV (see responses to Recommendations 1 and 7);

- developing policies and directives, where appropriate, to support the implementation of Part IV (see response to Recommendation 3);

- developing an internal communications strategy and implementation strategy (see response to Recommendation 1);

- establishing mandatory training on official languages through the Service Canada College (see response to Recommendation 3); and

- strengthening mechanisms for consultations with representatives from official language minority communities (see response to Recommendation 6).

Existing regional action plans on official languages will be aligned with the departmental action plan on Part IV of the Act.

Commissioner's Comments

We are satisfied with all of the proposed measures that will be included in the new departmental action plan for Part IV of the *Official Languages Act*. However, SC must build on the action plan and establish concrete steps to set up a structured and coordinated mechanism for regular consultation with national, provincial and regional representatives of official language communities. This approach will enable SC to better identify the specific program and service needs of these communities. Provisions must also be added to the plan to ensure that representatives of official language communities are kept abreast of all departmental decisions.

> ### RECOMMENDATION 3
> The Commissioner recommends that Service Canada develop an official languages policy that includes all the components of Part IV of the *Official Languages Act*. This policy should be effectively communicated to all staff. In addition, Service Canada should remind all employees of existing official language policies.

Service Canada Action Plan

As part of its three-year action plan (see response to Recommendation 2), HRSDC will work to determine which policies and directives are needed to support the implementation of all departmental obligations under Part IV of the Act. The policies and directives regarding Part IV activities are distributed internally by the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) of CSB via e-mail.

The Service Canada College is currently working with the OLSC, the DOL, and the SPRB's Office to develop an enhanced online training module covering all aspects of the Act in order to offer training on official languages. This training will be available to all employees and will be mandatory for those who are responsible for serving the public. The online course will be followed by a day of in-class learning or a virtual session in which designated learners will be able to broaden the depth of their knowledge in an interactive forum with official languages specialists. This innovative approach will help increase employees' awareness of Canada's linguistic duality and their respective rights and responsibilities, including services offered to Canadians under HRSDC's mandate.

Service Canada Action Plan

To encourage leadership management excellence and to reflect public service renewal, all of HRSDC's 2010–2011 Performance Management Agreements include a mandatory performance measure relevant to a representative workforce that is respectful of Canada's linguistic duality. This performance measure is intended to contribute to a healthy and enabling workforce and workplace, and to help meet both current and future organizational needs.

Moreover, as of 2011–2012, performance objectives reflecting all departmental bilingual service delivery obligations will be included in procedures for evaluating the performance of relevant employees, including senior executives, managers, team leaders and front-line personnel responsible for serving the public in English and French at designated bilingual service points. Targets will be based on the management and accountability framework to be developed for Part IV of the Act (see response to Recommendation 1).

In 2009–2010, the DOL developed *Departmental Guidelines on the Language Requirements of Positions and the Staffing of Bilingual Positions* and *Departmental Procedures on the Application of the Exclusion Approval Order* to assist managers at all levels and the human resources (HR) community in ensuring that language requirements for all positions are established and positions are staffed in compliance with the Act and the *Public Service Employment Act*.

The departmental guidelines and procedures were piloted within the HR community to ensure that the level of expertise and knowledge that is required to assist managers in their staffing and HR planning processes was adequate. These documents were also posted on the DOL intranet

site for reference and sent to regional HR directors for distribution to staffing advisors. Documents were also developed to assist in promoting these guidelines and procedures to the Portfolio Senior Management Committee (Deputy Ministers and ADMs) and were posted on the DOL intranet site. From November 2009 to mid-January 2010, the DOL hosted in-person sessions in the National Capital Region and teleconference sessions for all HR advisors in the regions, to ensure that the guidelines and procedures were being effectively implemented in all regions.

The DOL will explore in 2011–2012, in partnership with departmental stakeholders, the possibility of giving mandatory training to senior executives and managers with staffing authority, on all aspects of the linguistic designation of positions and language profiles required to meet job descriptions.

The DOL plays an active role in supporting the development of HRSDC's managers and team leaders. To this end, a member of the DOL acts as a facilitator and subject matter expert for Parts V and VI and section 91 of the *Official Languages Act* by attending the Service Leadership and Management Excellence Development Program sessions that are offered by the Service Canada College.

OBJECTIVE 2

ENSURE THAT FRONT-LINE PERSONNEL IN SERVICE CANADA'S BILINGUAL SERVICE POINTS PROVIDE ACTIVE OFFER AND DELIVER SERVICES OF EQUAL QUALITY IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH TO THE PUBLIC.

Service Canada Action Plan

The *Guidelines on Language Requirements of Positions and Staffing of Bilingual Positions* developed by the DOL include tools to assist managers at all levels in establishing and reviewing the language requirements of their positions,

ensuring that they have the capacity for service to the public and to employees and that positions are staffed in compliance with the Act and the *Public Service Employment Act*.

With regard to service to the public, HRSDC will examine the number of designated bilingual positions in bilingual service points to ensure that it is sufficient for providing bilingual services at all times. In addition, HRSDC will establish a directive to determine the language profile required by employees whose job descriptions include serving the public in both official languages in person, by telephone, via the Internet or by mail. This work is part of the review of the policies and directives needed to support the implementation of all of HRSDC's obligations under Part IV of the *Official Languages Act* (see response to Recommendation 3).

Moreover, the DOL and Service Canada College will be developing initiatives to support employees in maintaining their second language. This work will also include a strategic plan to inform managers and highlight the importance of supporting their employees to attain and maintain a second language competency in their work environment. An online self-study language acquisition program is being negotiated for release in the fall of 2010. This free program will be available to all HRSDC employees and will be available for use both at home and at work.

Service Canada's *Official Languages Training Policy* provides an opportunity to strengthen bilingualism by emphasizing the employer's and the employees' personal commitment to maintaining a second language. Also, a great effort is ongoing to shift the culture at Service Canada in regard to language training and language competency acquisition.

Commissioner's Comments

We are satisfied with the proposed measures for this recommendation. We believe that it is important for SC to review the number of designated bilingual positions in bilingual service points to ensure that there are enough bilingual employees to provide service in both official languages at all times. HRSDC must also factor in the number of bilingual positions for employees who are not necessarily front-line staff, but who must also deal with the

public, especially team leaders and analysts working in processing centres. When developing and implementing a directive to define the language profile for staff who serve the public in both languages in person, by telephone, via the Internet or in writing, HRSDC must conduct a careful review of the work descriptions to ensure that they reflect the actual tasks performed by employees working in various sectors.

OBJECTIVE 3

ENSURE THAT SERVICE CANADA CONSULTS REPRESENTATIVES OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGE MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN THE VARIOUS REGIONS AND TAKES THE RESULTS INTO CONSIDERATION WHEN PLANNING FOR THE PROVISION OF BILINGUAL SERVICES.

RECOMMENDATION 6
The Commissioner recommends that Service Canada establish a structured and coordinated mechanism for regular consultation with national, provincial and regional representatives of official language minority communities in order to identify their specific needs with respect to the programs and services provided by the institution. An ongoing feedback process should be added to this consultation mechanism.

Service Canada Action Plan

Service Canada is committed to putting citizens at the centre of its service delivery strategy. To that end, it undertakes research and analysis relating to demographics; economic and social trends; clients' perceptions, attitudes and characteristics; specific client needs; and international and domestic best practices to identify and guide the development and improvement of service policies and strategies aimed at meeting the service needs of key client segments. Research on official language minority communities is incorporated, where relevant, into strategy implementation plans. These plans are under development for strategies related to youth, seniors, and newcomers.

Service Canada's regional senior directors, managers, program officers, citizen service specialists, and senior development officers regularly meet, through different forums over the year, with official language minority community representatives at the provincial, regional and local levels. For example, citizen service specialists regularly meet with official language minority communities to explain Service Canada's programs and services. These meetings

provide an excellent opportunity for Service Canada to identify the types of services that members of the official language minority communities are interested in receiving, and whether they are satisfied with the services that they are receiving (including the active offer of service). Members of official language minority organizations also use these opportunities to inform Service Canada representatives about the programs and services they offer. This two-way sharing of information has resulted in stronger ties and further discussions on ways to collaborate.

Official language minority communities are consulted when deciding whether to relocate or close bilingual service points, and all requests to open new service centres, including requests from official language minority communities, are examined as part of Service Canada's plans and priorities to improve its service delivery network. Service Canada is proud of its collaboration with the Province of Manitoba and the Franco-Manitoban community, which resulted in the opening of the Saint-Pierre-Jolys Service Canada Centre in 2002 and the relocation of the Winnipeg St-Vital Service Canada Centre in 2009. These bilingual service centres concentrate federal, provincial, municipal, and community-based French-language services in single-window outlets, as recommended by Judge Richard Chartier in his report on the implementation of Manitoba's *Policy on French-Language Services*.

In February 2010, the Office of Coordination and Accountability for Part VII of the *Official Languages Act* organized discussions with both English and French national official language minority organizations. The purpose of the dialogue sessions was to gain a better understanding of community needs and priorities, and for community organizations to better understand the role of the Office. A follow-up session is planned for the fall of 2010. Though these regular dialogue sessions focus on departmental policy and program issues, HRSDC will explore the possibility of adding specific questions regarding the delivery of services in both official languages.

HRSDC is committed to implementing formal mechanisms at the provincial and regional levels for consulting with official language minority communities regarding service delivery. This work will be conducted as part of the three-year action plan (see response to Recommendation 2).

Commissioner's Comments

We acknowledge the work SC has done in the context of the aforementioned activities. However, the objective of the recommendation is to ensure that HRSDC establishes a formal structured and coordinated mechanism for regular consultation with national, provincial and regional representatives of official language communities in order to better identify their specific service delivery needs. HRSDC must also ensure that these formal consultations include a feedback process for decisions. The new official languages action plan on Part IV of the *Official Languages Act* must cover all of the elements in this recommendation.

OBJECTIVE 4

ENSURE THAT SERVICE CANADA IS EFFECTIVELY MONITORING THE QUALITY OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN BOTH OFFICIAL LANGUAGES.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Commissioner recommends that Service Canada institute a formal monitoring mechanism that can be applied accurately in all regions to periodically measure and report on the quality of services provided in both official languages, including wait times.

Service Canada Action Plan

Service Canada currently monitors performance of service in both official languages in several ways. For example, the Office for Client Satisfaction regularly conducts surveys to measure client satisfaction and assess service quality, including service in both official languages. Two client satisfaction telephone surveys, conducted in 2006 and 2008, sought the views of clients who had recently received services from Service Canada. The surveys' main focus was on the quality of service that clients had received, including being served in their language of choice. Additionally, a national in-person Mystery Shopper exercise was conducted for the first time in 2007–2008, which also yielded tangible results regarding active offer performance at selected Service Canada offices.

This year, Service Canada is conducting an in-person survey. Clients will be asked whether they were greeted in both English and French and whether they received service in the language of their choice. A client satisfaction survey and an in-person Mystery Shopper exercise are also scheduled for this year. Future plans are to conduct the client satisfaction survey and the in-person Mystery Shopper exercise every two years, on an alternating basis.

Currently, team leaders are responsible for the ongoing monitoring of the active offer of bilingual services provided by staff under their responsibility. Wait time indicators that take clients' choice of language into consideration are also being developed. Furthermore, Service Canada will be replacing the First Come, First Served system in the fall of 2010. The functionality of the new In-Person Client Management Tracking and Reporting Tool will allow for tracking and statistical reporting on the number of requests by language (including official language minority requests) and can be linked by the use of GEOMATIC software to identify communities.

Finally, HRSDC's Internal Audit Services Branch will be considering the Official Languages Program in the HRSDC 2011–2014 Risk-Based Internal Audit Plan. As part of the departmental audit planning process, elements from the various programs are evaluated based on a risk assessment methodology to assist in determining audit priorities.

It is recognized that, despite these measures, a more systematic and consistent approach would enhance HRSDC's ability to measure and monitor performance. As part of its three-year action plan (see response to Recommendation 2), HRSDC will put in place a performance measurement framework for the implementation of Part IV of the Act. The framework will include results from the client satisfaction survey, the Mystery Shopper exercise and a more systematic approach to on-site observations.

A project is currently underway to support this work and involves consultations with 10 federal departments and agencies to gather best practices in the area of performance management, which will be incorporated, as appropriate, into the framework.