

**FOLLOW-UP ON SPECIAL STUDY OF
FEDERAL OFFICES IN NOVA SCOTIA
DESIGNATED TO RESPOND TO THE PUBLIC
IN BOTH ENGLISH AND FRENCH**

Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages
<http://ocol-clo.gc.ca>

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SUMMARY

This report is a follow-up on the study that we undertook in 1994 to determine the extent to which federal offices which are designated bilingual provided good quality service in English and in French. It deals with the situation in Nova Scotia. Its purpose is to determine if the recommendations made in 1994 brought results and to correct effectively any deficiencies in the offices in question.

In light of the recommendations made in 1994 and the action plans that federal institutions prepared in response, the overall results are unsatisfactory. It is difficult to obtain quality service in French on a consistent basis, particularly by telephone. The overall two-language capability of the designated offices has diminished to a disturbing extent; it was inadequate in 40% of the offices visited. Some offices nevertheless continue to provide quality service in both languages.

The percentage of offices displaying the symbol for service in both languages has increased from 72% to 86%. However, only five of the 49 offices we visited offered a greeting in both languages in person. As for two-language greeting over the telephone, it was provided consistently in 67% of cases. The availability of service in French over the telephone has slipped compared to 1994: in only 73% of cases were the designated offices able to provide service consistently compared to 78% in 1994. Service in person remains stagnant at around 72%. Staff in bilingual offices are now better informed of their linguistic obligations. Unfortunately, directives are not always adhered to. Providing services in both official languages still does not form part of the routine functioning of most designated offices.

A) INTRODUCTION

1. Background

The new *Official Languages Act* (OLA) came into effect on September 15, 1988. Under the OLA, every federal institution has the duty to ensure that members of the public can communicate with and obtain services from its central office in English or French, and has the same duty with respect to offices located within the National Capital Region (NCR), in areas where there is significant demand, or when warranted by the nature of the office.

Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) published the Official Languages Regulations - Communication with and Services to the Public (Regulations) on December 16, 1991. The Regulations define the terms "significant demand" and "nature of the office" and establish general and specific rules governing their application. Federal institutions are required to designate the offices that must provide services in both official languages, based on the Regulations. TBS coordinated the process and compiled a list of designated points of service. The purpose of the Act and the Regulations is essentially to ensure the availability of services in either official language where a need exists and to enable the public to obtain services, at these designated offices, in the language of their choice.

In 1994, the Commissioner of Official Languages (COL) undertook a study to determine the extent to which federal institutions were complying with the provisions of the OLA and the Regulations. In his report (*A Study of Federal Offices Designated to Respond to the Public in Both English and French*) released on March 15, 1995, the COL found that services were available in both official languages in 79% of the designated offices (98.8% in Quebec and 72% on average in the other provinces and the territories), with variations from one province to another. The COL also made ten recommendations to improve service delivery in both official

* More information on this can be found in the Glossary in Appendix B.

languages at designated offices. These recommendations are listed in Appendix A. It should be noted that on March 17, 1995, TBS asked federal institutions to analyze the two-language capability of each office that is required to serve the public in both official languages. Institutions were also to draw up action plans for offices with unsatisfactory performance and report to TBS on their implementation. This exercise was completed in March 1996.

This study fulfills the COL's commitment to follow up on the implementation of the recommended corrective measures. Begun in the fall of 1996, this follow-up is being conducted region by region over a three-year period. Separate reports are being prepared for each province and territory as well as for the NCR. Proceeding in this manner will enable us to identify each linguistic community's specific problems, inform the federal institutions of situations concerning the delivery of their services in English and French and find solutions adapted to local and regional needs. Each report will enable the federal institutions involved to immediately correct shortcomings in service to the public. This report deals with Nova Scotia.

It should be borne in mind that the COL also specified in his study on points of service that "it should be possible to attain 100% effectiveness in two-language service to the public, where numbers warrant, which is the only figure that can be considered acceptable and satisfactory." In 1998, at the time of our follow-up, 232 federal offices out of 661 were designated to provide two-language service in Nova Scotia. It is essential that at these locations, members of the public can actually receive all services in the official language of their choice.

In view of the recommendations that the COL made in 1994 and the action plans that federal institutions developed at TBS's request, we were expecting that all the offices designated bilingual would have taken measures to ensure the provision of service in both official languages in Nova Scotia. We anticipated, however, finding occasional lapses, since the complaints we continue to receive show that the quality of services is inconsistent.

2. Objectives

Following the COL's recommendations, federal agencies made a commitment to take the required measures to ensure that services are provided in both official languages at their designated offices. This is, after all, a formal requirement under the OLA and the Regulations.

The purpose of the follow-up is to determine whether there has been improvement since 1994 and to assess the extent to which good quality services are offered and available in both official languages in these offices. Another goal is to efficiently correct any deficiencies in the offices being audited. To that end, specific recommendations are made for each office where there are shortcomings.

3. Scope, methodology and limits

In selecting the institutions to be included in the follow-up, special attention was paid to agencies which, under the Regulations, provide key services* : the Public Service Commission (PSC), Canada Post Corporation (CPC), Revenue Canada (Tax Services), Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) (Income Security and Human Resources Canada Centres), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Canadian Heritage. The other institutions selected provide services of a general nature to the public and/or are of special importance to the French-speaking population of Nova Scotia.

To evaluate the availability of service, our auditors chose the client approach; that is, they acted like French-speaking citizens of Nova Scotia trying to obtain service in their language. They therefore made their requests for service in French, and if the employee replied in English without directing them to a bilingual employee, the auditors recorded that services were not

* More information on this can be found in the Glossary in Appendix B.

available in French. They generally did not insist that the organization find someone who could serve them in French.

To begin with, they checked whether telephones were answered in both official languages and whether services were actually available in French at the numbers listed for that purpose in the Government of Canada section of the local telephone directories. They also compared the numbers in the telephone directories with those on the TBS list to identify any discrepancies.

They made at least two telephone calls to each of the offices. They then observed whether the greeting was in both languages and whether service was provided in French consistently, occasionally or not at all. When they were greeted in both languages and obtained service in French on each call, our auditors indicated that two-language greeting and service in French were consistent. When the greeting was sometimes in two languages and sometimes in only one, or when service was not available in French on each call, they indicated that two-language greeting and service in French were available occasionally. When, on each call, the greeting was in only one language and service was available in English only, they indicated that there was no two-language greeting and no service in French.

The auditors visited each office which provided service in person to check signage, documentation, greeting and the availability of service in French. They met the manager to inform him or her of the results of their audit. When they found shortcomings, they informed the manager of the recommendations that would be included in the COL's report.

They also told managers that any corrective action taken before the audit report was published would be noted in it. In addition, the auditors informed the regional director of each organization of their observations and of any recommendation involving the offices under that person's authority. The results of the audits were also sent to the deputy head of each federal institution for comment. We publish the institutions' responses in Part C of the report, immediately following the recommendations to each organization.

As for limits, it should be noted that in the 1994 study, the statistical data were weighted* and the results for Nova Scotia were valid within a limit of 10%. The data from the follow-up have not been weighted and are intended only to describe the situations in the offices visited.

Recommendations made in this report apply only to the offices we visited. However, federal institutions have a duty to examine the linguistic situation in their other offices designated to serve the public in both official languages, and to implement such recommendations as would be relevant there. Also, members of the public can inform us of any shortcomings they encounter at an office designated to provide services in both official languages. These would be investigated through the normal complaints handling process.

* More information on this can be found in the Glossary in Appendix B.

B) GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In our 1994 study, we audited 95 designated offices in Nova Scotia. In the follow-up, we audited 49. The audit exercise took place during the summer of 1998. Consultations with the regional directors of the federal institutions concerned were completed in November 1998.

The following pages present general observations on the offices of federal institutions which were included in the follow-up in Nova Scotia. The findings give a portrait of the situations in these offices, which are designated to serve the public in both official languages, and enable us to make some degree of comparison with the situation reported in the 1994 study.

At the time of our 1994 study, Nova Scotia had 787 federal offices, 280 of which were designated to provide services in both languages. In 1998, at the time of our follow-up, there were 661 offices, 232 of which were designated bilingual. Thus there has been an overall decrease of 16% in the number of federal offices. For offices designated to provide service in English and French, the decrease is about the same, at 17%. This decline reflects the many transformations that have occurred within the federal system in recent years.

1. Signs and documentation

Most of the physical elements associated with the provision of service in both official languages showed slight improvement, except for the availability of documentation. For example, it was noted during the follow-up that exterior signage in both languages increased from 93% in 1994 to 98% in the follow-up, while interior signage in both official languages increased from 92% to 93%. Forms were available in English and French in all of the offices. However, designated offices seem to experience some difficulty managing bilingual documentation. Although documentation was available in both languages in 96% of the offices in 1994, that percentage had dropped to 84% in 1998. A little more vigilance by the managers of designated offices would help improve the situation.

We have made specific recommendations for the offices with shortcomings in this area.

Table 1

Materials Available in Both Official Languages		
Type of material	1994 study	1998 follow-up
<i>Exterior sign</i>	93%	98%
<i>Interior sign</i>	92%	93%
<i>Documentation</i>	96%	84%
<i>Forms</i>	97%	100%

2. Active offer

Under Section 28 of the OLA, federal institutions are required to provide their clients with a choice of the official language in which they wish to communicate by ensuring that “appropriate measures are taken, including the provision of signs, notices and other information on services and the initiation of communication with the public, to make it known to members of the public that those services are available.” Therefore, the onus is not on members of the public to request or demand service in their language. On the contrary, the intent of the OLA is that federal institutions should invite members of the public to communicate with them in the official language of their choice.

The perception that members of the public have of the availability of service in their language depends largely on the effectiveness of measures related to signs and greetings in both languages, over the telephone and in person.

In 1994, we evaluated the quality of measures taken to encourage clients to choose the language in which they wish to be served. This evaluation was based in part on the presence or absence of

relevant signage, but also on whether or not employees used a greeting formula which would indicate to members of the public that they could be served in either language. A third element of the evaluation was the attitude shown by staff to a request for service in the language of the local linguistic minority. In 1994, the measures intended to promote the use of services in French in Nova Scotia were satisfactory or better in only 69% of cases.

In the follow-up, we limited ourselves to observations on whether or not a two-language greeting was used over the telephone and in person and on the presence or absence of signs telling clients that they could be served in English or French.

a) **Signs**

A sign is often the only indication the public has that an office is designated to provide service in English and in French. A pictogram or a sign is therefore essential. Since 1988, official languages policies have required that institutions whose employer is the Treasury Board use TBS's official symbol (see left), and that other institutions use this or an equivalent symbol.



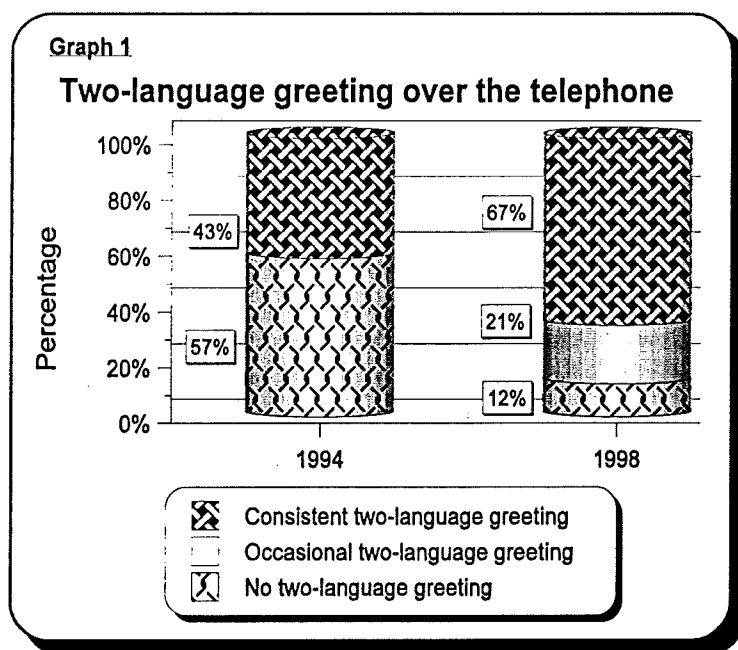
In 1994, 72% of designated offices in Nova Scotia displayed a sign (pictogram) indicating that service was available in English or French. At the time of the follow-up, 86% of the offices visited displayed the TBS pictogram or an equivalent symbol. This is a noteworthy improvement. However, we find it difficult to understand why seven of the designated offices visited still do not display an appropriate symbol, eight years after the TBS made its pictogram available to them.

Table 2

Signs on the Availability of Service in Both Official Languages		
Board or poster	1994 study	1998 follow-up
<i>Present</i>	72%	86%
<i>Absent</i>	28%	14%

b) Greeting on the telephone and in person

In 1994, employees in federal institutions in Nova Scotia used a two-language greeting on the telephone in only 43% of cases. At the time of our 1998 visit, we noted a marked improvement, but also a certain inconsistency in the way employees of designated offices in Nova Scotia answered telephone calls.



Employees used a two-language greeting consistently on the telephone in 67% of cases; they used a two-language greeting occasionally in 21% of cases; they did not use a two-language greeting in 12% of cases. We have made recommendations to institutions whose offices showed deficiencies in this regard.

**Active offer in person
is still inadequate.**

In 1994, there was a two-language greeting in person in barely 8% of cases. During our recent survey, only five of the 49 offices we visited (11%) provided a two-language greeting to our auditor. Federal institutions must take concrete measures to rectify this deficiency, which has persisted too long.

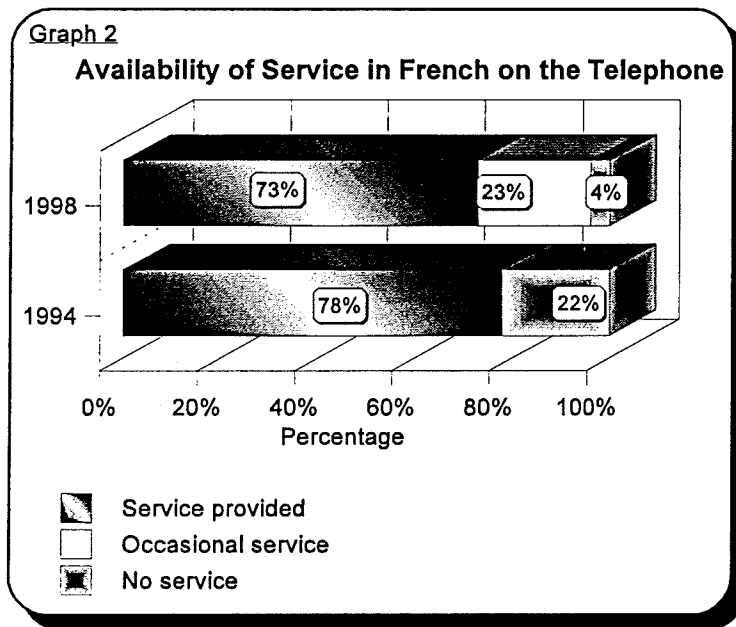
The absence of active offer by federal employees can only discourage French-speaking clients in Nova Scotia from exercising their language rights. In our experience, when members of the public are not clearly encouraged to choose the language of service, the level of demand in the minority language declines significantly.

It should also be noted that citizens often feel at a disadvantage when they deal with federal employees because public servants personify authority, have a better knowledge of the services the clients needs and control access to those services. It is even more important for clients to be invited and encouraged to choose the language of service when they deal with institutions responsible for law enforcement, such as the RCMP, Customs or Revenue Canada, or with institutions providing financial assistance such as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the Business Development Bank of Canada or the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

In short, active offer is an essential component of good service. The use of signs and a two-language greeting to indicate that services are available in either language is as indispensable to good service as common courtesy.

3. Service

a) Availability of service in French on the telephone



During the 1994 study, telephone receptionists at bilingual offices in Nova Scotia provided service in French in 78% of cases. The situation has deteriorated in 1998. Furthermore, in 1998, we once again found fault with the inconsistency shown by employees of certain designated offices in providing service in French over the telephone.

Employees provided service in French consistently in only 73% of cases; they did so occasionally in 23% of cases; and in 4% of cases telephone service was not available in French.

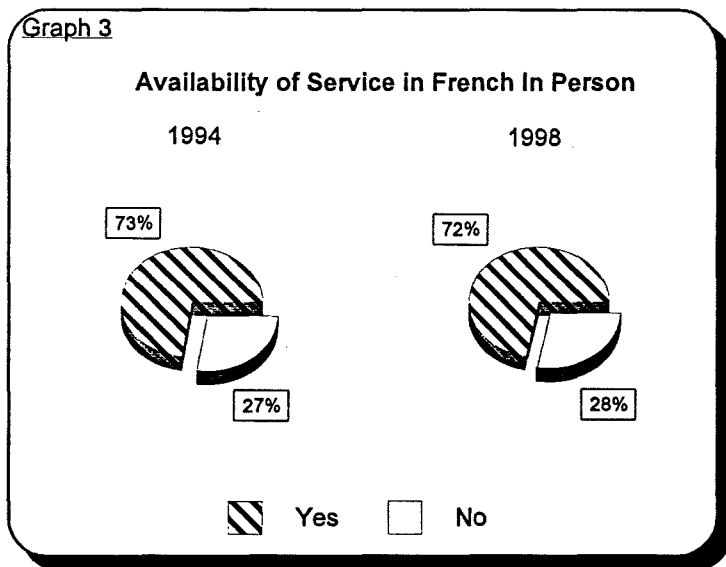
The main factors accounting for this performance are as follows: the poor two-language capability of many offices, the fact that calls are transferred in English only to voice mailboxes where messages are in English only, interruptions in the chain of service, and inaccuracies in the numbers listed for service in French in the Nova Scotia telephone directories; also, the fact that managers are not carrying out the necessary follow-up to ensure that their staff are using the standard formulas and following established procedures for serving members of the public in both official languages. We have made specific recommendations to rectify the situation in offices which showed deficiencies in this regard.

We also made calls to four toll-free telephone lines. In each case, we received good quality service in French.

As we stated earlier, reception clerks play a significant role in the provision of service to the public. Clients form their perception of the availability or unavailability of service in their language from the reception or greeting they receive. We deplore the fact that some telephone receptionists apologize for not being able to speak French or, wishing to ensure they fully understood the client's request, repeat it in English. In such circumstances, the offer of service conveyed by their two-language greeting is no longer really meaningful. Employees should instead call as quickly as possible upon the services of a colleague who is able to serve the client in French. By breaking the chain of service in which they are the first link, they oblige French-speaking clients to try to express themselves in English.

We also noted that French-speaking clients in Nova Scotia are too often transferred to a bilingual employee in English. This discourages the client from continuing the conversation in French. Federal institutions must take all necessary measures to ensure that French-speaking clients in Nova Scotia feel free to choose to communicate in French at every stage of service.

b) Availability of service in French in person



At the time of our follow-up in 1998, service in person was similar to 1994. Service in French was obtained at 72% of the offices visited, compared to 73% at the time of the initial study. This is simply not acceptable. The French-speaking community in Nova Scotia is entitled to better service in French from offices specifically designated to provide service in both languages. Such services should be

available at all times in all designated offices.

c) Quality of service in French and courtesy

When service in French was provided, the auditors assigned one of three ratings (“very good,” “satisfactory” or “poor”) to it by evaluating employees’ ability to communicate comprehensibly in French. In 1994, the overall evaluation of service provided in French (including telephone and in-person service) was satisfactory or better at 96% of the designated points of service in Nova Scotia.

At the time of our follow-up, the linguistic quality of the service provided in French over the telephone was rated satisfactory or better in 98% of cases. As for the linguistic quality of service in French in person, it was judged satisfactory or better at 97% of the offices that were able to provide service. Therefore, as in 1994, in offices able to offer service in both languages, the quality of the service in French is generally good.

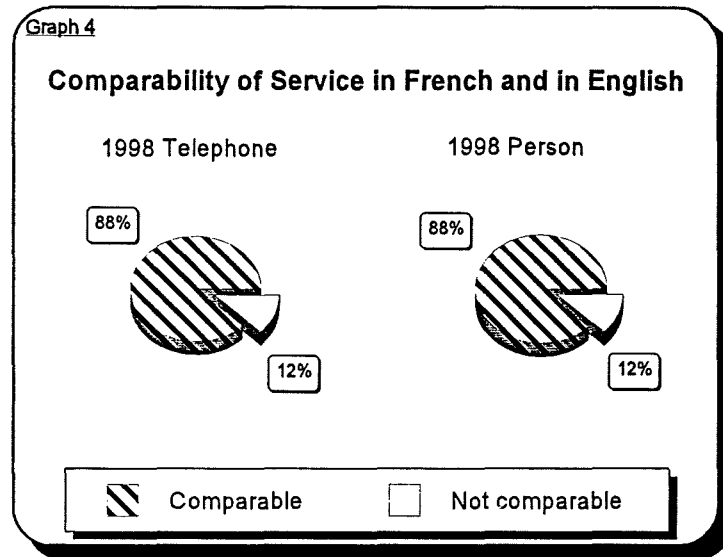
With regard to courtesy, almost all of the offices visited (97%) and all of the offices (100%) our auditors have communicated with by telephone have provided courteous service.

d) Comparability

The degree of comparability between service provided in French and that offered in English was judged “very good” when the employee immediately provided our auditor with the service requested in French. An office was rated “satisfactory” when the employee, perhaps after asking our auditor to speak more slowly, was able to provide him with adequate service in French.

Service on the telephone was rated “poor” in the following case, by way of example. Service was provided by means of an interpreter. The auditor had to ask his questions in French so that a third party could translate them into English. The employee answered the questions in English and the interpreter translated the answers into French. While the quality of the interpreter’s French may have been very good, we consider this manner of providing service in French inadequate.

During the follow-up, our auditors obtained service in French in person at 72% of the designated offices that they visited in Nova Scotia. They consistently obtained service in French on the telephone in 73% of cases and occasionally in 23% of cases.

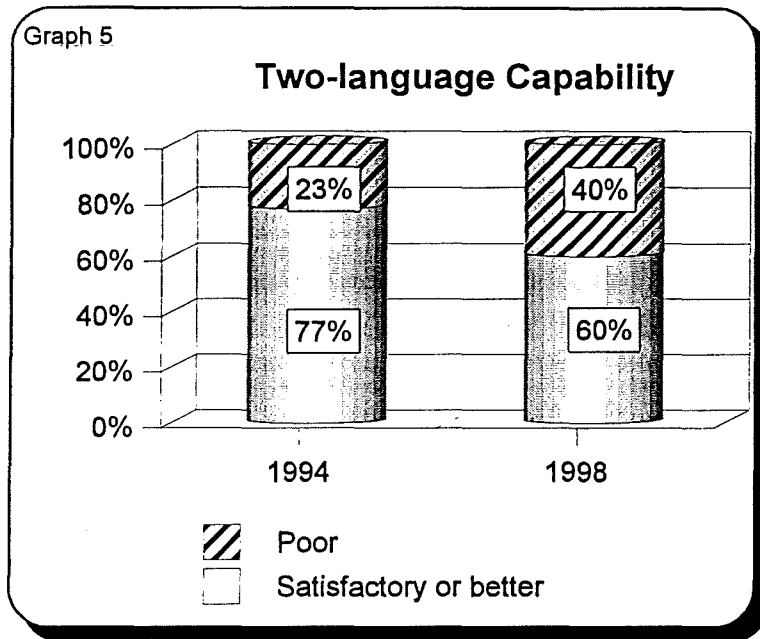


As a general rule, when they obtained service in French, our auditors estimated that it was comparable to that provided in English in 88% of cases, both by telephone and in person. The offices of federal institutions in Nova Scotia must take strong measures to ensure that services provided in French are of comparable quality to those available in English.

Thus, when service is provided in English 24 hours a day, it must be provided in French under the same conditions. When an office provides service in person in English, it is also required to provide service in French. The profiles of each office that are found in Part C of this report give details of the various reasons why the auditors judged that service was or was not comparable. The institutions cited should take the required measures to rectify the deficiencies.

4. Two-language capability of offices

The auditors evaluated the two-language capability of a point of service by considering the following two factors: whether or not the office had enough bilingual staff to provide good-quality service in both languages consistently, and whether or not these resources were assigned to positions and work shifts effectively.



In 1994, the capability to provide service in English and French was rated satisfactory or better at 77% of the offices in Nova Scotia. The follow-up showed that designated federal offices in the province had slipped significantly in their capability to provide service in both official languages. For example, five of the offices visited (10%) had no two-language capability, while 14 (30%) had

rather poor capability to serve the public in both languages. This was particularly apparent in offices where employees work shifts and bilingual staff are inadequate to provide service in both languages on each shift. Seven offices (15%) had only one bilingual employee to provide service in French. Thus when the employee is absent for any reason, these offices are no longer able to provide any service in French. For the minority official language community in Nova Scotia, this situation is cause for considerable concern.

At offices where two-language capability is deficient, service in French may be available through administrative arrangements which are usually cumbersome and inadequate. We recognize that some offices may need to take temporary administrative measures to provide service in French. Such arrangements, however, should not become permanent; otherwise, French-speaking clients are not receiving service of equal quality as required by the OLA. Of the offices audited in 1998 in Nova Scotia, five used administrative measures to provide service in French, successfully or unsuccessfully. No matter what arrangements are made to provide service in French, the absence of adequate two-language capability means that these offices are not meeting their linguistic obligations.

Federal institutions whose two-language capability leaves something to be desired are presently unable to adequately serve Nova Scotia's French-speaking citizens in French. They must immediately take the measures required to obtain the necessary resources for the effective provision of service in both official languages.

5. Informing managers and employees of their official languages obligations

In our 1994 study, we found that 86% of the managers and 82% of the employees of designated offices in Nova Scotia were fairly well informed about their linguistic obligations. At the time, we interviewed a considerable number of managers and employees. In our 1998 follow-up, we met mainly with managers. We found that 96% of the employees of designated offices were well informed of their linguistic obligations. This constitutes significant progress in this regard.

We note, however, as shown by the results of our audits, that employees do not always apply the directives received. In addition, the directives are not always explicit, particularly as regards the language to be used to direct French-speaking clients to a bilingual employee. We have made recommendations concerning offices where a reminder to staff would be helpful.

In carefully reviewing the performance of each office and the data on its linguistic obligations, we found that the managers of offices that performed well had made the provision of quality two-language service part of the routine administration of their office. In addition to circulating directives from their head or regional offices, they had organized staff training and orientation sessions; they also regularly discussed problems related to the provision of service in both languages with the staff and monitored the application of directives. In addition, most of them had regular contacts with Nova Scotia's French-speaking community.

6. Informing the public about offices designated bilingual

The 1994 study showed that federal institutions had not adequately informed the French-speaking community in Nova Scotia of the availability of services in French. The measures taken to inform them were rated very good or satisfactory in only 77% of cases. The follow-up shows that the situation has clearly improved in this regard.

We found that 93% of the offices audited in 1998 listed their services in the federal government pages of local telephone directories. However, this figure may be deceptive. Our review of the telephone directories shows that the current situation does not make it possible for French-speaking citizens to find out as easily as English-speaking citizens where they can obtain service in their first language. In Nova Scotia, English-speaking members of the public need only consult the blue pages of telephone directories to find out where service is available. This is not the case for French-speaking members of the public, since the publication of information in the French blue pages does not necessarily mean that an office is able to provide service in French or that it is designated bilingual.

The TBS compiles a directory of federal offices that are designated to serve the public in both official languages. In conducting our follow-up, we noted that much of the information in the TBS directory for offices in Nova Scotia was inaccurate. Anomalies were found for six out of 49 (12%) offices listed. Some telephone numbers in the directory did not match those found in the blue pages of local telephone directories. Other entries were out of date. In other cases, there was either no listing or the office had moved without updating the information. Federal agencies and the TBS will have to ensure the reliability of such information.

In June 1994, TBS published, in French-language media outside Quebec and in English-language media in Quebec, a list of federal offices designated to serve the public in both official languages. No update was provided in 1995 and in 1996. TBS now publishes the list of offices that provide services in both official languages on the Internet. However, not all Canadians have access to the Internet, far from it. OCOL therefore decided to join TBS in

making this list available to the general public as an insert, which appeared in minority official language newspapers in the spring of 1997.

We also noted in the course of our follow-up that many designated offices had established regular contact with representatives of the French-speaking community in that province. However, seven designated offices (14%) should establish ongoing communication with the French-speaking community in order to identify its needs and inform it of available services. We encourage the community's representatives to pursue the ongoing consultations with the managers of federal offices to make them better aware of the needs of their community.

7. COL's recommendations

When a designated point of service fails to serve the public adequately in both official languages, the COL makes recommendations to the federal agency concerned so that it can take corrective action to improve service. These recommendations are to be found in Part C of the report.

The OLA and the Regulations require that services in French have the same status as services in English at designated offices. For example, if services are available in English 24 hours a day in a designated office, they must also be available 24 hours a day in French.

It should also be noted that the provision of service in French includes any communication intended to transfer the client to a French-speaking employee. Thus, an employee who is unable to serve a client in French should use a formula such as "Un moment, s'il vous plaît" and ask a French-speaking colleague to look after the client's request.

The COL's recommendations aim to ensure 100% effectiveness of service to the public in both official languages where needed in Nova Scotia. Nothing less is acceptable in federal offices expressly designated to provide services in English and French.

8. Conclusion

We are disappointed with the findings for Nova Scotia as a whole. We expected a greater improvement in the situation since our 1994 report. Our findings show that in spite of some progress, overall the problems identified in the report persist.

We urge the TBS and federal institutions to take stronger measures to ensure that all the offices designated bilingual in Nova Scotia provide quality service in both official languages.

Reactions from federal institutions

The OLA states that the COL must use administrative fairness to provide federal institutions with the possibility to answer any criticism to which they may be subject. The COL therefore sent this report in draft form for comments to the deputy head of each federal institution for which we audited an office in Nova Scotia.

The comments received show that our observations are an accurate reflection of the situation in the offices that we audited. In addition, our visits and meetings with managers have already allowed some offices to take concrete measures to correct certain deficiencies. In other cases, however, some institutions are rather parsimonious in providing services in French. The COL intends to inform TBS in these cases to ensure that the OLA and the Regulations are applied uniformly.

Treasury Board Secretariat's response

TBS notes improvement since our 1994 study, notably in the active offer of service both on the telephone and in person, signage, and in a better understanding by managers and employees of their obligations under the OLA. TBS considers it clear, however, that there are too many offices

where service in French has not improved or appears to have regressed and is concerned by the apparent slippage in the capacity of these offices to provide services in French.

TBS has given the COL its assurance that its Official Language Program, particularly the service to the public dimension, is one of the priorities of the Secretariat. The latter will take the findings of this study into account in developing and scheduling all of its activities.

Commissioner's reaction

The COL encourages TBS to include among its activities the performance monitoring of selected federal institutions that do not meet their linguistic obligations.

C) AUDIT OF OFFICES

This part contains the observations we made concerning each of the 49 offices we audited in Nova Scotia as part of the follow-up. Where relevant, we compared the present situation with that revealed in the 1994 study. The reader will note that some offices continue to provide quality services in French, while others have allowed their performance to decline in relation to 1994.

This part of the report also contains specific recommendations for correcting the deficiencies we noted. The comments of the federal institutions immediately follow the recommendations.

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

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When we conducted our study in 1994, this office provided very good service in French both over the telephone and in person. The findings of our 1998 follow-up were identical.

We made two telephone calls to (902) 426-6743, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. A two-language greeting was used on each call and service in French was of very good quality. However, on the first call, the receptionist asked our auditor if he would speak English as no bilingual officer was available. The office manager informed us subsequently that there was no officer on the premises at the time of our call. Thus service could not be provided in either language.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Documentation and forms were available in English and in French. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public. Greeting was in both official languages. Service provided in French in person was very good.

Thirteen of the 56 positions at the office require knowledge of both official languages at the intermediate or superior levels of proficiency, and all incumbents meet or exceed the requirements of their position. Also, four employees whose positions require knowledge of English only in fact have superior-level skills in French. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations.

The office maintains regular contact with the French-speaking community in the province.

Following our visit, office management reviewed with staff the office's linguistic obligations, particularly the requirement to greet the public in both official languages, and the procedure to follow when directing clients who wish to be served in French to bilingual colleagues. In exceptional cases, the receptionist should ask the client if the call can be returned later.

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation (88031)

P.O. Box 1750
Commerce Tower, 4th Floor
15 Dorchester Street
Sydney, Nova Scotia
B1P 6T7
(902) 564-3600

The Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation and Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) are located in the same office and employees work for both federal institutions. Our 1998 audit shows that as was the case in 1994, this office provides very good service in French.

Exterior and interior signage was bilingual. Two TBS pictograms indicating that the office provides service in English and in French were clearly visible to the public. Documentation and forms were available in both official languages. Greeting in person was in English only but service in French was very good.

Two telephone calls were made to (902) 564-3600, the number listed in the local telephone directory. This number is also listed under the name "Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation" in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual, but not under ACOA. On each call, a two-language greeting was used and service in French was very good.

The office has 55 employees, seven of whom are bilingual. Four positions require a superior level of proficiency in both languages. All seven employees meet or exceed that linguistic requirement. Staff have been informed of the office's linguistic obligations by means of written directives and reminders. This office has frequent contact with the French-speaking community. A Corporation representative takes part in consultations involving the community and federal institutions.

When management was made aware of the findings of our audit, it immediately took steps to remind staff at reception of the office's linguistic obligations, and particularly of the importance of using a two-language greeting for service in person.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French.

Agency's response

Appropriate measures have been taken to remind staff of their official languages obligations, particularly with respect to the use of a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with this office in the official language of their choice.

Staff have also been reminded of the procedures to be followed when serving French-speaking clients.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

(11163)

P.O. Box 9315, Station A
Halifax Branch
Halifax Shopping Centre
Tower 1, Room 300
7001 Mumford Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3K 5W9
(902) 426-3530

This office was not part of the 1994 study. The 1998 audit shows that it provides adequate service in French, both over the telephone and in person.

We made two telephone calls to (902) 426-3530, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. A two-language greeting was used on both calls and service provided in French was adequate.

Interior signage was in both official languages. Documentation and forms were also available to the public in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public, but the greeting in person was in English only. Although there was no active offer of service in both languages in person, service in French was very good.

Of the 75 positions at this office, 19 require knowledge of both official languages, the majority at the intermediate level of proficiency. Most of the incumbents of bilingual positions meet the linguistic requirements. Six incumbents are currently receiving language training. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations.

This office does not have regular contact with the French-speaking community, but would be well advised to do so in order to gain a better understanding of that community's needs and keep it informed of the services provided by the office.

The office manager undertook at the time of our visit to issue a reminder to staff members with respect to the obligation to greet the public in both official languages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. establish regular contact with the French-speaking community in Nova Scotia in order to identify its needs and keep it informed of the services the office provides.

Corporation's response

Employees who greet members of the public have been reminded that they must use a two-language greeting to encourage the public to communicate with them in English or in French. Moreover, a list has been drawn up of all bilingual employees in each sector and steps have been taken to ensure that these employees greet the public in both official languages.

The Corporation has also planned a meeting with the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse to discuss the needs of the French-speaking community and to develop an action plan accordingly.

Canada Post Corporation

(1202001)

Postal outlet
Middle West Pubnico, Nova Scotia
B0W 2M0

At the time of our 1994 study, service provided in French at this office was of very good quality. The 1998 follow-up shows that the quality of the service remains the same.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. The TBS pictogram indicating that the office provides services in both languages was clearly displayed. Documentation and forms in display racks were available in both official languages.

No telephone number is listed for this post office.

During our on-site visit, our auditor was greeted in both official languages and service in French was very good. The office has only two employees: the postmistress and one employee, both of whom are bilingual. The postmistress occasionally receives written directives from CPC with respect to serving the public in both official languages, which she always passes on to her employee. She also has frequent contact with the French-speaking community, which forms the majority in this village.

This office is complying fully with its linguistic obligations, and the COL encourages it to continue to do so.

Canada Post Corporation

(1202001)

495 Main Street
Kemptville, Nova Scotia
B0W 1Y0

At the time of our 1994 study, this office was unable to provide service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that the only notable improvement is exterior and interior signage in both official languages. The office is not complying fully with its linguistic obligations.

The office displays neither the TBS pictogram nor the Corporation logo to indicate that it provides service in English and in French. CPC documentation was available in both official languages on the counter, although it was arranged in such a way that only the English side was displayed.

No telephone number is listed for this post office.

Our auditor was greeted in English only. When asked a question in French, the employee did not answer. Although the auditor repeated his question, he still received no answer. In the end, he was served in English.

According to the Retail Sales Representative, two of the four employees of this variety store where the postal outlet is located are able to speak some French. In our opinion, the two-language capability of this postal station is poor, since service in French is not always available during working hours, given that employees generally work alone. According to the Retail Sales Representative, the owner of the variety store is aware of the postal station's linguistic obligations and should have made her employees aware of them, but results are not apparent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Canada Post Corporation:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the TBS pictogram or CPC logo is displayed in full view of the public at reception so that members of the public know that the postal station provides service in both official languages;

2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
3. inform postal outlet employees, within two months after the publication of this report, of their obligation to serve the public in both official languages;
4. ensure, within three months after the publication of this report, that the number of bilingual positions and employees at this outlet is sufficient to ensure that French-speaking citizens receive quality services in their language in just as timely a fashion as English-speaking citizens;
5. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that documentation intended for the public is displayed in such a way as to reflect the office's two-language service capability.

Corporation's response

The "active offer" pictogram has been installed, staff were reminded of their obligation to greet customers in both official languages at all times and documentation is now displayed in both languages.

Local officials are examining the question of linguistic capability at this outlet with a view to possibly transferring two-language services to a near-by community. The Corporation will advise the COL of developments in this regard.

Commissioner's comment

The COL considers that the Corporation ought to take whatever means are necessary to ensure the provision of adequate services in French at this outlet pending a decision concerning its transfer.

Canada Post Corporation

(1202001)

T. D'eon Pharmacy Ltd.
P.O. Box 100
West Pubnico, Nova Scotia
B0W 3S0

When we conducted our 1994 study, this postal outlet was unable to provide service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has improved considerably. Only active offer of service in both languages is still lacking.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. The TBS pictogram indicating that the office provides service in both official languages was clearly displayed.

No telephone service is provided at this postal outlet.

During our on-site visit, the auditor was greeted in English only. As soon as he expressed his language preference, the employee immediately continued the conversation in French. Service in French was of very good quality. This postal outlet is located in a pharmacy with 17 employees, 16 of whom are bilingual. There are at least four employees on duty at all times. Thus the two-language capability of this postal outlet is very good.

The Retail Sales Representative assured us that employees were aware of their linguistic obligations, but was unable to tell us when that information had been communicated to them. In fact, no reminder has been issued in a number of years and he undertook to rectify the situation.

Regional CPC management assured us that it has reminded the pharmacy owner of her obligations with respect to service to the public in both official languages, and particularly the obligation to greet the public in both official languages at all times. There are also plans to carry out spot checks.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Canada Post Corporation:

1. ensure, as soon as possible and within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French.

Corporation's response

The Corporation reminded the operator of the West Pubnico postal outlet of the requirement to actively offer services in both official languages and to follow-up in the customer's language. Since May 3, 1999, this postal outlet has been under a new operator who is providing full bilingual services.

Canada Post Corporation

(1202001)

7 Court Street
Tusket, Nova Scotia
B0W 3M0
(902) 648-2962

At the time of our 1994 study, we received very good service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has deteriorated and that improvements are needed.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Both the TBS pictogram and the CPC logo were clearly displayed. CPC documentation was available in both official languages, although it was arranged in such a way that only the English side was visible.

Two telephone calls enabled our auditor to determine that the greeting was in English only. On the first call, the auditor received good service in French. On the second call, the lady responded in English to questions put to her in French by our auditor. She clearly understood French but preferred to speak English.

During our on-site visit, the auditor was greeted in English only. When he asked questions in French, the postmistress responded in English. During the discussion that ensued, the auditor discovered that he was dealing with the same person who had answered the two calls earlier. It would seem that this person has some knowledge of French and is able to use it, but does not always choose to do so. She has taken courses in French in order to reach the elementary level of proficiency that her position requires. The only other employee, who works part-time, does not meet the elementary-level language requirements of her position.

The two-language capability of this postal outlet is rather poor. According to the Retail Sales Representative, the postmistress and her employee are both aware of their linguistic obligations. We believe CPC should find some way of encouraging the postmistress to make greater use of her language skills in French.

The Corporation is prepared to provide language training to the postmistress if necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Canada Post Corporation:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone and who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. ensure, within three months after the publication of this report, that the linguistic requirements of the positions are high enough to ensure the provision of quality service in both official languages;
3. ensure, as soon as possible and within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet members of the public serve them in the official language of their choice;
4. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that documentation displayed at the postal outlet projects the image of an institution that provides services in both official languages.

Corporation's response

Documentation is now displayed in both official languages.

Following the audit, the Postmistress was re-tested and confirmed as meeting the language requirement of her position. She was also reminded of the importance of actively offering services in both English and French and of following up in the customer's language.

It was also confirmed that the regular part-time employee was tested in 1993 and passed.

The Corporation will continue to monitor this outlet closely.

Commissioner's comment

The COL is of the opinion that the intermediate level of language proficiency would better serve to provide adequate service in both official languages.

Canada Post Corporation

(1203001)

Clare Pharmacy Ltd.
8693 Main Street
Meteghan Centre, Nova Scotia
B0W 2K0

In our 1994 study, we determined that service in French was of very good quality. Only the two-language greeting in person was lacking. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation remains the same.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. The TBS pictogram indicating that the office provides service in English and in French was clearly displayed. Because this point of service is a postal outlet located inside a pharmacy, space is limited and thus no documentation or forms were available to the public.

No telephone service is provided at this postal outlet.

During his on-site visit, the auditor was greeted in French only. He received very good service in that language. Service at the postal outlet is provided by 13 pharmacy employees, all of whom are bilingual. The two-language capability of this postal outlet is very good.

The Retail Sales Representative assured us that employees were aware of their linguistic obligations, since they periodically receive CPC documentation in that regard.

Regional CPC management assured us that they have reminded the owner of the pharmacy of his obligation to serve the public in both official languages, and particularly to greet the public in both official languages at all times. Spot checks are also planned.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Canada Post Corporation:

1. ensure, as soon as possible and within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French.

Corporation's response

The operator of the Meteghan postal outlet has been reminded of his obligation to greet customers in both official languages and to follow-up in the customer's language.

Canada Post Corporation

(1209021)

IGA Clayton Park
278 Lacewood Drive
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3M 3N0
(902) 443-4535

At the time of our 1994 study, this office provided satisfactory service in French. Our 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has deteriorated somewhat. Improvements are therefore needed.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as were the Corporation's documentation and forms. Although the CPC logo indicating that the office provides service in English and in French was displayed, the greeting in person was in English only. Service was also provided in English only, as the employee at the counter did not seek the assistance of a bilingual colleague.

No telephone service is provided at this postal outlet.

This point of service has four positions, two of which require knowledge of both official languages. One bilingual position is now vacant, the incumbent having just left his job. At the time of our on-site visit, the franchisee was seeking a bilingual employee to fill the bilingual position left vacant. With two bilingual positions out of a total of four, it should be possible to provide service in both official languages at all times.

The Retail Sales Representative informed us that the franchise is now under new ownership and that he intends to meet with the new franchisee to inform him of his linguistic obligations, including the requirement to offer service actively in both official languages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Canada Post Corporation:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;

2. take the necessary steps, as soon as possible and within two months after the publication of this report, to ensure that service in person is provided in French.

Corporation's response

Employees have been informed of their obligation to greet customers in both official languages. Moreover, an additional bilingual employee has been hired at this outlet.

Canada Post Corporation

(1216006)

334 Main Street
Louisdale, Nova Scotia
B0E 1V0
(902) 345-2433

When we conducted our study in 1994, service in French at this office was of very good quality. The 1998 follow-up shows that the quality of the service remains the same.

Two telephone calls were made to (902) 345-2433, the number listed in the English version of the white pages of the local telephone directory. However, this number is not listed in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual. A two-language greeting was used and the service provided in French was very good on each call.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, with the exception of a few handwritten notices which were in English only. The TBS pictogram indicating that the office provides service in English and in French was clearly visible to the public. Documentation and forms were available in both official languages. Although the greeting in person was in English only, the service provided in French subsequently was very good.

Three of the four post office employees are bilingual. The fourth employee had not yet taken a test to ascertain her level of proficiency at the time of our visit. Staff are aware of the obligation to serve members of the public in the language of their choice. Employees were informed of this requirement at the time of their hiring and by means of written directives. The office has no contact with the minority official language community. That responsibility falls to CPC management.

When the postmistress was informed that a two-language greeting was not being used and that some notices were written in English only, she immediately removed the notices and informed the employee at the counter of the procedure with respect to active offer of service in both official languages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Canada Post Corporation:

1. ensure that the office's telephone number is published in French in the next edition of the white pages of the local telephone directory;
2. inform TBS immediately of the telephone number to be listed in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees are regularly made aware of their linguistic obligations and of the importance of greeting members of the public in person in both official languages.

Corporation's response

Customer Service Atlantic has been asked to ensure that the outlet telephone number is listed in French in the next edition of the local telephone directory scheduled for renewal in June 1999.

The Postmistress' position has been designated "bilingual" and training has been provided to the employee.

The Retail Representative reminded the Postmistress of the requirement to greet customers in both official languages.

Commissioner's comment

The COL considers that the Corporation ought to address Recommendation 2 immediately, if this has not already been done.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

(91177)

1992 Baffin Street
P.O. Box 1060
Shannon Park
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
B2Y 3Z7
(902) 426-3828

At the time of our 1994 study, this office provided service in French over the telephone but was unable to provide the same service in person. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has improved considerably, as it is now able to offer good service, both over the telephone and in person.

We made two telephone calls to (902) 426-3828, the number listed in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual. However, this number is actually the one listed for the Inspection Branch of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. A recorded message, in English only, invited callers to leave their name and telephone number. However, when we dialed (902) 426-2160, the number published in the local telephone directory for the Food Inspection Division, a two-language greeting was used and the service provided in French was adequate.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as was the documentation available to the public. Although the TBS pictogram was displayed to let the public know that the office provides service in English and in French, the verbal greeting was in English only. Service offered in French subsequently was very good.

This office has 45 positions, only two of which are designated bilingual. The two inspectors who fill these positions have the required level of language proficiency. However, over the long term, the office should consider improving its ability to provide services in both official languages. Staff are aware of the office's linguistic obligations.

The manager informed us of his intention to remind all staff members of the office's linguistic obligations including greeting members of the public in both official languages in person.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or French;
2. inform TBS immediately of the appropriate telephone number to list in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages;
3. over a longer term, increase the office's two-language capability so that services can be provided in both official languages.

Agency's response

The following actions have been taken to address the recommendations:

- Staff have been reminded of the requirement to use a two-language greeting when dealing with the public in person and over the telephone. (Periodic monitoring revealed that this requirement is being met and thus no action has had to be taken.)
- The Agency has confirmed that the telephone number once listed in the TBS directory is no longer an Agency location. Rather, the office in question has moved to the Dartmouth location and the new telephone number is reflected in the TBS directory.
- The structure of the Agency in the Atlantic Region is under review and will be finalized at the end of April 1999. Once the structure is in place, the language requirements of positions will be identified and a long term plan will be put in place. The plan will explore such possibilities as the deployment of bilingual staff and the provision of additional language training to existing staff.

Commissioner's comment

The COL encourages the use of ongoing monitoring in determining the extent to which a two-language greeting is being used routinely.

Citizenship and Immigration

Canada Immigration Centre Halifax International Airport (11247)

1875 Brunswick Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2G8
(888) 242-2100

When we conducted our study in 1994, this office provided good service in French in person, but was unable to offer the same service over the telephone. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has improved considerably. The office is now in a position to provide very good service in French, both over the telephone and in person.

We made two telephone calls to (888) 242-2100, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. The recorded greeting was in both official languages. Our auditor chose to speak to an officer by pressing the appropriate button. He immediately received very good service in French.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as were the documentation and forms available to the public. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public. The greeting in person was in both official languages and the service provided in French was very good.

Only two of the 16 positions at this office require knowledge of both official languages. The two incumbents exceed the linguistic requirements of their position. The manager also informed us that he intends to increase the two-language capability of the office by staffing two other bilingual positions in order to better meet clients' needs.

This office is complying fully with its linguistic obligations, and the COL encourages it to continue to do so.

Citizenship and Immigration

Case Processing Mail-In Centre (86012)

P.O. Box 7000
Sydney, Nova Scotia
B1P 6V6
(902) 564-7816

The 1994 study showed that service in French in person was very good, but that this office did not provide the same service over the telephone. The 1998 follow-up shows the service is now very good, both over the telephone and in person.

Two telephone calls were made, the first to (902) 564-7816 and the second to 1-888-242-2100. The first number was not listed in the local telephone directory, either in English or in French. However, it is listed in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual. The first number is that of the Sydney office, while the second is for the call centre in Montreal. On the first call, a two-language greeting was used and the service provided in French was very good. At the toll-free number, an automated system allowed the caller to choose one of the two official languages and the service offered in French was also very good.

Our auditor visited the building which houses Citizenship and Immigration. Upon entering the building, a commissionaire provided him, in English, with the toll-free number to call to reach the Department. Seeing that the auditor spoke French, the commissionaire sought assistance from a bilingual colleague in order to inform him that he had to make an appointment with an officer in order to gain access to the departmental office.

At the entrance to the building, information concerning the Department is displayed in both official languages. Outside the door to the office, a poster in both official languages informs members of the public that they are to see the commissionaire on the first floor at the entrance to the building in order to gain access to the office. When we visited the office, the commissionaire accompanied our auditor and told the departmental employee what his language preference was. The service provided in French was very good.

Our auditor subsequently spoke with the manager over the telephone. According to him, clients communicate with the Sydney office, which serves the entire country, either in writing or through the toll-free number. The office has 224 employees, 49 of whom fill bilingual positions which in most cases require the intermediate level of language proficiency. Eight of the bilingual positions were vacant at the time of our recent visit, and two employees did not meet these requirements. Most of the other bilingual employees exceed the requirements. Staff are informed of their

linguistic obligations at general meetings as well as by means of memoranda. This office has no contact with the minority official language community.

When the manager was informed that the toll-free number should be listed in the TBS directory for federal services available in both official languages, he undertook to find out from departmental headquarters whether the necessary steps had been taken to inform TBS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Citizenship and Immigration:

1. inform TBS immediately of the toll-free number to be listed in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages;
2. ask Public Works and Government Services Canada, within two months after the publication of this report, to include in its contract with the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires the requirement that staff assigned to the building that houses the offices of Citizenship and Immigration be able to greet and serve members of the public in both official languages.

Department's comment

Arrangements have been made to list the telephone number of the Montreal Call Centre in the TBS directory. CPC Sydney is also taking the necessary steps to amend its contract with the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires to include a clause requiring that commissionaires greet and serve members of the public in both official languages. It is anticipated that this service will be in place in the first quarter of fiscal 1999-2000.

Environment Canada
Atmospheric Environment Branch
Atlantic Regional Office
Environmental Monitoring Division
(11269)

1496 Bedford Highway
Bedford Tower, 5th Floor
Bedford, Nova Scotia
B4A 1E5
(902) 426-9095

At the time of our 1994 study, this office provided satisfactory service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that it has improved the quality of its service over the telephone and in person.

When we made two telephone calls to (902) 426-9095, the number for service in French, the greeting was in French only and the service received in that language was very good. This number is listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as was the documentation available to the public. The office displayed both the TBS and OCOL pictograms to let the public know that it provides service in English and French. When we visited the office, the greeting was in English only, but very good service was offered in French subsequently.

This office has 128 positions, 27 of which require knowledge of both official languages. Almost as many positions require the superior as the intermediate level of language proficiency. Also, when the need arises, calls from members of the public are transferred to Fredericton, New Brunswick, where 13 employees with superior level language skills can provide assistance. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations.

Following our visit, management reminded staff of their responsibilities with respect to greeting the public in both official languages.

Business Development Bank of Canada

(11301)

225 Charlotte Street
P.O. Box 726
Sydney, Nova Scotia
B1P 6H7
(902) 564-7700

At the time of our 1994 study, this office was not able to provide service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has not changed. This office is still unable to offer service in French in person. Also, when service is provided in French over the telephone, it is because the call has been directed to the service centre in Montreal. The Bank must take immediate corrective action.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. The TBS pictogram indicating that the office provides services in English and French was clearly visible to the public.

Documentation and forms were available in both languages. The greeting was in English only. Perceiving that our auditor wished to be served in French, the employee provided the name and telephone number of an employee at the Dartmouth office with whom he could communicate in French.

Two telephone calls were made to (902) 564-7700, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. In each case, a two-language greeting was used. On the first call, very good service in French was provided by the Montreal office. On the second call, the message on the automated system was in both official languages and allowed callers to select one official language or the other or to speak with an officer at the Sydney office. Our auditor chose the second option. Service was not available in French and the officer did not seek assistance from a bilingual colleague to provide service in French.

This office has three employees, none of whom is bilingual or fills a position designated to provide service in both official languages. Staff are made aware of the Bank's linguistic obligations by means of memoranda or via conference calls. This office has no contact with the minority official language community. It would be in the interest of this office to maintain regular contact with representatives of that community in order to better understand their needs and keep them informed of the services it provides.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Business Development Bank of Canada:

1. increase, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, the office's two-language capability to provide service over the telephone and in person of equivalent quality in both English and French;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
3. establish regular contact with the local French-speaking community in order to identify its needs and keep it informed of the services the office provides.

Bank's response

A new, bilingual manager has taken up duties at the Sydney Branch during the summer of 1999. Thus, the Branch has the two-language capability necessary for providing services of equal quality in English and in French, both on the telephone and in person. This appointment enable the Branch to establish regular contact with the local French-speaking community.

The current manager has confirmed that employees who meet the public now use a two-language greeting.

Fisheries and Oceans

Fisheries Management (2246)

215 Main Street
Yarmouth, Nova Scotia
B5A 1C6
(902) 742-0871

At the time of our 1994 study, service in French at this office was determined to be adequate. The 1998 follow-up shows that the quality of the service has been maintained.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Documentation was available in English and French, with English and French versions of all departmental documentation being alternately displayed. However, the TBS pictogram was hidden behind a computer screen, and thus our auditor only noticed it when he went to the counter. Another pictogram was clearly visible to visitors, once inside the administrative area of the office. The new TBS active offer poster is also visible in that area.

Two telephone calls were made to the local number of this office. A two-language greeting was used and the service provided in French was adequate.

During our on-site visit, the auditor was greeted in English only. However, as soon as he expressed his language preference, he received adequate service in French.

This office has 11 employees, eight of whom fill bilingual positions. All the incumbents meet the language requirements of their positions. Employees are aware of their linguistic obligations and are kept informed of them at office meetings. This office maintains regular contact with the French-speaking community, as the latter represents a significant portion of its clientele, which in this case are fishing vessel captains.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Fisheries and Oceans:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the TBS pictogram is displayed in full view of the public.

Department's response

The Area Chief will remind all staff who meet the public to use a two-language greeting in order to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in the language of their choice. In addition to including active offer as an agenda item at an Area Management meeting, active offer briefing sessions, including the viewing of the Treasury Board video on active offer, and a one-day workshop on active offer for unilingual employees will be offered, ~~during the summer of 1999~~.

The TBS pictogram is now displayed in full view of the public.

Fisheries and Oceans

Bedford Institute of Oceanography (91160)

Shannon Park
P.O. Box 1006
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
B2Y 4A2
(902) 426-2373

At the time of our 1994 study, this office provided very good service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has deteriorated. Service over the telephone in French was only offered on one call out of two, and the office was unable to provide the service in person.

We made two telephone calls to (902) 426-2373, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. A two-language greeting was used on only one of the two calls. Service in French was adequate, but was only provided on one call out of two.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as was the documentation available to the public. The TBS pictogram as well as another departmental poster let the public know that this office provides service in English and French. However, the greeting in person was in English only and the commissionaire, who spoke no French, did not seek the assistance of a colleague in order to offer service in that language.

This office has 223 positions, 26 of which require knowledge of both official languages, in most cases at the intermediate and superior levels of proficiency. It should be noted, however, that seven of the 26 incumbents of these bilingual positions were on language training at the time of our follow-up. The office's two-language capability is satisfactory, but management must ensure that staff are following procedures for directing clients who wish to be served in French to bilingual employees. Office staff are supposed to be aware of their linguistic obligations.

On our visit, management drew attention to problems with the evaluation of employees' language proficiency, particularly because evaluation practices there are different from those used by the Department in other regions. Management also undertook to ensure that quality services would be provided in both languages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Fisheries and Oceans:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone and who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office, including commissionaires who are the first point of contact with the public, follow established procedures for referring French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
3. ensure, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, that this office is able to provide services over the telephone and in person in both official languages, at all times;
4. remind the supervisor and office employees, within two months after the publication of this report, of their obligation to provide services to members of the public in the official language of their choice.

Department's response

In response to the observation concerning the deterioration of the situation at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography (BIO), the bilingual capacity of BIO has increased significantly, principally due to the merger of the Gulf and Maritimes Regions of the Department and the greater requirement for bilingual managers and administrative support staff at BIO.

Key staff at first points of contact offices are already fully aware of their linguistic obligations and have bilingual capacity. However, BIO is a huge complex, and the possibility of a client wishing to speak French encountering a unilingual-English person somewhere in the halls of BIO is real. Many people at BIO are not federal government employees (students, visiting scientists, etc.). An advisory to staff concerning the appropriate procedure to follow in meeting BIO's clients' linguistic needs will be issued through the BIO Management Committee, which is chaired by the Regional Director, Science. In addition, unilingual employees in first points of contact offices have taken the one-day active offer workshop for unilingual employees and this will continue as necessary.

Following the OCOL auditor's visit, Science has taken measures to ensure that a fully bilingual back-up capability is available at the front desk for planned absences. However, to ensure that

the Commissioner's recommendation is fully implemented, the Department will ensure that a list of bilingual employees at BIO is made available to the designated first points of contact with the public to provide appropriate additional bilingual back-up.

Except as noted above regarding improved back-up/contingency plans, BIO is generally able to provide services over the telephone and in person in both official languages at all times.

Supervisors and employees will be reminded of their obligation to provide services to members of the public in the official language of their choice through the BIO Management Committee. Reminders will be made to offices designated within BIO as first points of contact. The BIO Management Committee will also be providing guidance to all BIO employees regarding the procedure to be followed in the event of a contact between a unilingual employee and a French-speaking client.

Commissioner's comment

The COL considers that the advisory to staff concerning the procedure for meeting BIO's clients' linguistic needs ought to include the commissionaires, if this is not already the intention.

Fisheries and Oceans

Conservation and Protection (91194)

P.O. Box 147
Meteghan, Nova Scotia
B0W 2J0
(902) 645-2045

At the time of our 1994 study, this office provided good quality service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that it has been able to maintain the same quality of service.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as was the documentation available to the public, with English and French versions of all departmental documentation being alternately displayed. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public at the entrance to the office.

Two telephone calls to this office's local number allowed our auditors to determine that a two-language greeting is used and that service provided in French is of good quality.

During our on-site visit, the auditor was greeted in English only. However, as soon as he made his language preference clear, he received adequate service in French. At the time of the follow-up, this office had three employees filling bilingual positions. All the incumbents met the linguistic requirements of their positions.

The manager, who has been in charge of the office for three years, does not recall ever informing his employees, either verbally or in writing, of the office's linguistic obligations. This office maintains regular contact with French-speaking fishers, who represent a considerable proportion of its clientele.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Fisheries and Oceans:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;

2. remind office employees, within two months after the publication of this report, of their obligation to provide services to members of the public in the official language of their choice.

Department's response

The Area Chief will remind all staff who meet the public to use a two-language greeting in order to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in the language of their choice. In addition to including active offer as an agenda item at an Area Management meeting, active offer briefing sessions, including the viewing of the Treasury Board video on active offer, and a one-day workshop on active offer for unilingual employees will be offered.

Fisheries and Oceans

Conservation and Protection (92365)

P.O. Box 508
Cheticamp, Nova Scotia
BOE 1H0
(902) 224-2017

At the time of our 1994 study, this office provided very good service in French, both over the telephone and in person. The 1998 follow-up did not allow us to examine service in person, but the service over the telephone is still of very good quality.

Two telephone calls were made to (902) 224-2017, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. On the first call, a two-language greeting was used and the service provided in French was very good. In the second case, a two-language recording invited members of the public to leave their name and telephone number so that an employee could return their call. The message was of very good quality in both English and French.

During our on-site visit, we noted that exterior signage was in both official languages. On the door, a two-language message invited the public to call (902) 224-2017 so that an employee is able to provide telephone service.

Our auditor spoke on the telephone with the office manager in order to complete our audit of this point of service. According to the information collected, the office has four employees, three of whom fill bilingual positions requiring the intermediate level of proficiency. One employee meets this requirement, while the other two exceed it. Staff work in the office one day per week. On the other days of the week, employees go in to the office to return phone calls from members of the public or to prepare reports.

According to the manager, interior signage is in both official languages and the TBS pictogram indicating that the office provides services in English and French is clearly visible to the public. Documentation and forms are available in both languages. According to him, a two-language greeting is used unless the unilingual English employee is alone at the office, which is very rare. The manager pointed out that communication with members of the public occurs primarily by telephone and rarely in person. According to him, staff are made aware of their linguistic obligations by means of written directives. Service provided in French by the manager was of very good quality. This office does not have ongoing contact with representatives of the minority official language community. That responsibility is not assigned to this office.

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The manager undertook to provide the unilingual English employee with a reference card indicating the various steps he should follow to ensure that French-speaking clients are able to leave their name and phone number so that a bilingual officer can get in touch with them subsequently.

Health Canada

Health Protection Atlantic Regional Office (11319)

1992 Baffin Street
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
B3B 1Y9
(902) 426-2160

At the time of our 1994 study, we determined that service provided in French over the telephone and in person was of good quality. The 1998 follow-up shows that it has even been able to improve the quality of the service it offers.

Two telephone calls were made to (902) 426-2160, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. A two-language greeting was used on each of the calls and the service provided in French was very good.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as was the documentation available to the public. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public. Although the receptionist did not greet our auditor in both official languages, she did provide very good quality service in French.

This office has 28 positions, eleven of which require knowledge of both official languages, most at the intermediate level. The majority of incumbents have attained the required level of proficiency. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations.

Following our visit, the manager reminded the receptionist of the importance of greeting members of the public in both official languages.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Health Canada:

1. ensure, as soon as possible and within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French.

At the time this report was being finalized, the Department had not provided us with its comments. The Commissioner notes the action taken by the manager following our auditor's visit.

Health Canada
Medical Services Branch
Indian and Northern Health Services
(2775A)

Ralston Building
Suite 634
1557 Hollis Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 1J6
(902) 426-6201

When we conducted our 1994 study, the service provided in French at this office over the telephone and in person was of very good quality. The situation in 1998 reflects a slight deterioration. Indeed, our follow-up shows that although the office is still offering very good service in French over the telephone, it is unable to provide the same service in person.

We made two telephone calls to (902) 426-6201, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. The greeting was recorded in both official languages. When the auditor spoke directly to an officer, he received very good service in French.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Documentation and forms were available in English and French. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public. The greeting in person was in English only, however, and service could not be provided in French.

This office has 30 positions, six of which require knowledge of both official languages at the intermediate level of language proficiency. All the incumbents meet the requirements of their positions. Staff are aware of the office's linguistic obligations.

The manager informed us that he intends to issue a reminder to all staff that they have an obligation to greet the public in both official languages, both in person and over the telephone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Health Canada:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. take the necessary steps, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, to ensure that service in person is provided in French;
3. remind office supervisors and employees, within two months after the publication of this report, of their obligation to serve members of the public in the official language of their choice.

At the time this report was being finalized, the Department had not provided us with its comments.

Human Resources Development Canada

InfoCentre Employment Insurance (1614)

P.O. Box 310
633 Main Street
Glace Bay, Nova Scotia
B1A 5V4
(902) 426-1895

At the time of our 1994 study, we received very good service in French at this call centre. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation remains the same and that the quality of the service has been maintained.

The call centre responsible for handling all telephone calls within the province is located in Glace Bay. We placed two calls to the local number of this office, which is a line dedicated to service in French. A very good quality recorded message greets clients at all hours of the day. On each call, the service received was very good. In the first case, the greeting was in French only, but in the second case, a two-language greeting was used. It is important to remember that when service is provided by means of telephone lines dedicated to service in one language only, employees are not required to greet the public in both languages.

This call centre, which has been operating for approximately one year, employs 21 people, three of whom fill bilingual positions at the superior level for oral communication. The three incumbents have attained the level of language proficiency their position requires. Employees were informed of their linguistic responsibilities at the time of their training.

This point of service is complying fully with its linguistic obligations.

Industry Canada

(11173)

Arts Building, 1st Floor
P.O. Box 1927
196 George Street
Sydney, Nova Scotia
B1P 6W4
(902) 564-7000

At the time of our 1994 study, this office provided service in French over the telephone, but was unable to offer the same service in person. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has not really changed. The office is not adequately complying with its linguistic obligations.

Three telephone calls were made to (902) 564-7000, the number listed in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual as well as the local telephone directory. A two-language greeting was used each time. On the first call, very good service in French was provided from Dartmouth. In the second case, the call was transferred in English. A third call was transferred to an employee who asked our auditor to speak English. Service in French was thus offered over the telephone on only one of the three calls.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. The office did not display the TBS pictogram to let the public know that it provides service in English and French. However, our auditor noted that the pictogram of OCOL, which serves the same purpose, was displayed. Documentation and forms were available in both official languages. The greeting was in English only. When our auditor spoke French, the employee immediately got in touch with the Dartmouth office so that service could be provided in French. Service in French over the telephone was of very good quality, although it was not comparable to that offered to English-speaking clients in person.

This office has only one employee, and his position is not bilingual. Any request for service in French is transferred to the Dartmouth office, which is responsible for serving French-speaking clients in Sydney. This manner of providing service in French, by relying on resources located at another office, is an administrative measure that should be only temporary. The French-speaking population should receive the same quality of service as do English-speaking clients. The Department must take steps to that end. This office has no contact with the local French-speaking community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Industry Canada:

1. ensure, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, that this office can provide services over the telephone and in person in both official languages at all times;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
3. ensure immediately, until this office is able to provide service in French on its own, that employees who meet members of the public follow established procedures for transferring calls in the official language of the client;
4. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the TBS pictogram is displayed in full view of the public;
5. establish regular contact with the local French-speaking community in order to identify its needs and keep it informed of the services provided by the office.

Department's response

It is important to note that this location, staffed by only one employee, is essentially a remote work location/extension of the Dartmouth Spectrum office, responsible for providing spectrum services in the province of Nova Scotia. All requests for service in French at the Sydney location are immediately transferred and handled in Dartmouth. In addition, a toll free 1-800 number has been installed to provide full services in both languages within the province. It will be published in the blue pages of the upcoming editions of the telephone directories.

All employees of the Spectrum office have been reminded to use a two-language form of greeting when meeting the public to encourage communication in either official language. They have also been reminded to comply with established telephone procedures for transferring calls in the official language of the client. The Sydney office will be provided with signage to be displayed in full view of the public.

Industry Canada maintains contacts with the French-speaking communities in Atlantic Canada through its regional coordinator for Section 41 of the OLA, based in Moncton, as well as a Section 41 representative based in Halifax.

Industry Canada

District Office Consumer Products (11174)

50 Brown Avenue
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
B3B 1X8
(902) 426-6055

At the time of our 1994 study, this office provided good service in French, both over the telephone and in person. The 1998 follow-up shows that it has maintained the quality of its service.

We made two telephone calls to (902) 426-6055, the number listed in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual. This number is not, however, listed in the local telephone directory. A two-language greeting was used on each call and the service received in French was adequate.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as were the documentation and forms available to the public. The TBS pictogram indicated that service was available in both languages. The greeting in person was in English only, but service provided in French subsequently was very good.

This office has five positions, only one of which requires knowledge of both official languages at the intermediate level of proficiency. The incumbent meets the requirements of the position. Staff at this point of service are aware of their linguistic obligations.

Although the service offered in French was adequate, this office should consider strengthening its ability to provide services in both official languages. Under the current circumstances, when the only bilingual employee is absent, the office is completely deprived of its ability to provide services in both official languages.

The manager undertook to issue a reminder to staff with respect to the obligation to actively offer service in both official languages to members of the public who visit the office.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Industry Canada:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. have the number for service in French listed in the next edition of the local telephone directory;
3. ensure, within three months after the publication of this report, that this office has a sufficient two-language capability to provide services in both official languages at all times.

Department's response

All staff who meet the public in the Dartmouth office either have the capacity to provide service in both official languages or have been trained on how to address the public in both languages. Also, bilingual staff are on hand at all times to assist with requests for information in either language. All staff who greet the public have been reminded of their responsibility to do so in both official languages.

The numbers for service in French are currently listed in both languages in the local telephone directories throughout the region. As the directories come up for renewal, any inconsistencies with listings will be corrected.

The Dartmouth office has sufficient two-language capability to provide service in both official languages at all times. If the bilingual incumbent is not available to handle incoming calls, they are transferred to either the Moncton or the St. John's location. As well, there is a 1-800 number published in all telephone directories in the region where requests for information can be forwarded for service in both official languages.

In an effort to improve service in both languages, all future staffing actions for the Fair Business Practices Branch positions will include a bilingual requirement.

Commissioner's comment

The COL would like to remind the Department of the importance of providing service of comparable quality, both on the telephone and in person, in both languages. The current administrative arrangements ought to be reviewed with this objective in mind.

Justice Canada

(11347)

5251 Duke Street
Suite 1400
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 1P3
(902) 426-3260

We did not examine the service provided in French at this office in our 1994 study. The 1998 audit shows that it offers very good service in French over the telephone, but is unable to provide the same service in person.

Two telephone calls were made to (902) 426-3260, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. The greeting was in English only in both cases. Our auditor subsequently received very good service in French, on each call.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as was the documentation available to the public. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public. The greeting in person was in English only. In answer to a question asked in French by our auditor, the employee simply stated that she spoke no French but did not seek the assistance of a bilingual colleague.

This office has 65 positions, 17 of which require knowledge of both official languages at the intermediate or superior level of proficiency. Most of the incumbents meet or exceed the language requirements of their position. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations.

Following our visit, the senior manager circulated a memorandum to the staff informing them of the findings of our audit. Receptionists were reminded of the obligation to greet members of the public in both official languages and provide service in the language chosen by the client. Unilingual staff were also reminded of the procedure for directing members of the public who wish to be served in French to bilingual colleagues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Justice Canada:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone and who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees at this office follow established procedures for directing French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues.

Department's response

In addition to the measures taken by the Senior Regional Director following our auditor's visit, the situation has been monitored to ensure compliance with the directives.

Moreover, a list of appropriate bilingual responses has been posted at the reception area to ensure that unilingual staff assigned to this area have immediate access to a suitable response until a bilingual employee is able to deal with the client directly.

National Defence

Emergency Preparedness Canada Nova Scotia Regional Office (11191)

6009 Quinpool Road
Suite 801
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B2K 5J7
(902) 426-2082

We did not examine the service provided in French by this office in our 1994 study. The 1998 audit shows that it is unable to offer service in French. The organization must act promptly to correct the situation.

Exterior signage was in both official languages. Interior signage, although limited, was in English only. The TBS pictogram was not displayed. Emergency Preparedness Canada documentation was available in both official languages, but it had to be requested, as none was displayed on the table at the entrance.

Two telephone calls were made to the local office number, which is listed in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual. The recorded message was in English only on the first call. A few moments later, an employee took the call. She indicated that she spoke no French and asked the auditor if he spoke English. The conversation continued in that language. The same situation occurred on the second call. The employee told our auditor that had he not been able to speak English, she would have transferred the call to Ottawa.

When we visited the office, the greeting was in English only. Because the assistant who answered the calls speaks no French, the conversation continued in English. Only the director is bilingual, and he was absent at the time of our visit.

This office has only two employees, the director and his assistant. The director position requires knowledge of both official languages at the intermediate level, and the incumbent exceeds that requirement. However, his assistant, who answers telephone calls and meets members of the public, speaks no French. Thus when the director is absent, the office is completely deprived of its ability to provide service in French. This office has no contact with representatives of the French-language community in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the National Defence:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the TBS pictogram is displayed in full view of the public;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all interior signage at the office is in both official languages;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that members of the public who telephone the office or come in person are greeted in both official languages, so that they feel free to communicate with the office in the official language of their choice;
4. ensure, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, that this office is able to provide service over the telephone and in person in both official languages at all times;
5. increase, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, the office's two-language capability to provide service over the telephone and in person of equivalent quality in both English and French;
6. immediately put in place, pending improvement of the office's two-language capability, an effective temporary administrative measure so that members of the public who wish to communicate with the office in French can receive service in that language;
7. establish regular contact with the local French-speaking community in order to identify its needs and keep it informed of the services the office provides.

Department's response

The TBS pictogram is now posted well in view of the public and all interior signage reflects both official languages equally.

Administrative measures have been put in place to ensure that members of the public who telephone or present themselves at the office are greeted in both official languages. Also, in addition to the position of Assistant Regional Director, which has been occupied by a bilingual incumbent since April 1, 1999, the Department has undertaken to hire a bilingual receptionist.

Liaison with the French-speaking community is assured through meetings with provincial MLAs representing the region concerned. Moreover, all media communications destined for the public are carried out in both official languages.

Commissioner's comment

The COL would like to be informed of the temporary measures put in place pending improvement of the office's two-language capability.

National Defence

Canadian Forces Recruiting Centre (11356)

196 George Street
Suite 115
Sydney, Nova Scotia
B1P 1J3
(902) 564-7058

At the time of our 1994 study, this office provided very good service in French both in person and over the telephone. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has deteriorated considerably.

Two telephone calls were made to (902) 564-7056, the number listed in the local telephone directory. This number is not the one that appears in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual. On each call, the greeting was in English only. In the first case, the call was transferred in English only. In the second case, the employee, speaking rudimentary French, provided a toll-free number the auditor could call to receive service in French. In both cases, service in French was not available from the Sydney centre, and was offered instead by the military base located in Gagetown, New Brunswick.

The address listed for this Recruiting Centre is not the same one that appears in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual. Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public. Documentation and forms were available in both official languages. The greeting was in English only. A ten-minute wait was required before the employee could reach the military base in Gagetown, New Brunswick. Service provided in French over the telephone via the Gagetown base was of very good quality, but was not comparable to that offered in person to English-speaking members of the public.

This Centre has three employees, none of whom fills a position designated bilingual. Staff are informed of their linguistic obligations when they join the Armed Forces. Reminders are issued each season when members are assigned to the various bases across the country or to recruiting centres.

This office is in contact with the minority official language community in the province. Recruitment among members of this community is carried out in English. Staff from the Recruiting Centre are also called on to make presentations in schools located in French-speaking

communities. On such occasions, presentations are made in English without regard to the language of instruction in these schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the National Defence:

1. inform TBS immediately of the appropriate telephone number and address to be listed in the directory of federal offices designated to provide service in both official languages;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone and who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
3. ensure, within three months after receiving this report, that this office has a sufficient two-language capability to provide services in both official languages on the telephone and in person, and to make presentations in the schools based on their language of instruction;
4. immediately put in place, pending improvement of the office's two-language capability, an effective temporary administrative measure so that members of the public who wish to communicate with the office in French can receive service in that language.

Department's response

TBS listings have been updated and Recruiting Centre staff have been reminded to use a two-language greeting at all times in addressing the public.

Since November 1998, this office has a bilingual officer. Moreover, Recruitment Services has put in a request to increase its staff by two positions, which would bring the total number to five (three unilingual and two bilingual). However, given the significant budgetary restrictions facing the Canadian forces, as well as the reduction in the movement of personnel, it is not expected that this increase will take effect until the summer of 2000. Since the Recruiting Centre already has a bilingual officer, it is in a position to ensure adequate services in both official languages.

National Defence

Public Affairs Office Maritime Forces Atlantic (2578)

FMO Halifax
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3K 2X0
(902) 427-0550, ext. 2311

At the time of our 1994 study, service provided in French at this office was of very good quality. The 1998 follow-up shows that the Public Affairs Office is still able to offer very good service. However, anyone wanting to access this point of service in person must proceed through a number of security checks at the base where staff are not able to provide service in French. As base security service staff are the first point of contact with the public for service in person, they should at least be able to provide directions in French to French-speaking clients wanting to communicate with this office.

Our auditor placed two telephone calls. The first was made to (902) 427-6688, the number listed in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual. The greeting was in both official languages, as was the recorded message asking callers to leave their name and telephone number so that someone could return their call. In the second case, the call was made to (902) 427-0550, ext. 2311, the number listed in the local telephone directory to reach this office. Both the greeting and the recorded message were in both official languages. Our auditor did not pursue his audit of the availability of telephone service in French.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as was the documentation available to the public. No TBS pictogram was displayed at security check points. The greeting was in English only at both check points that had to be passed before gaining access to the Public Affairs Office. The commissionaires on duty at the time of our visit did not speak French. At the Public Affairs Office, the TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public. The greeting in person was in both official languages and the service provided in French was of very good quality.

Three of the five positions at the Public Affairs Office require knowledge of both official languages at the superior level of proficiency. The three incumbents either meet or exceed that requirement. Staff are aware of their linguistic obligations.

The manager of the Public Affairs Office informed us that improving service in both official languages at security check points was the responsibility of the base commander.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the National Defence:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the TBS pictogram is displayed in full view of the public at security check points;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that commissionaires who direct the public to various service units on the base use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that commissionaires responsible for conducting security checks follow established procedures for providing service in French, including directing French-speaking clients, in French, to their bilingual colleagues;
4. inform TBS immediately of the telephone number to be listed in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages.

Department's response

It is not expressly within the mandate of a military base to provide services to the neighbouring community. In fact, contrary to the majority of federal organizations whose main objective is to provide a quality service to members of the public, the mandate of a military base is to provide operational support to the Canadian Forces. Thus, service to a base's clientele is geared inwards rather than outwards.

However, in accordance with the *Official Languages (Communications with and Services to the Public) Regulations*, National Defence has designated on most of its bases a contact point for members of the public who are seeking information. This contact point is the base's public affairs office which represents the commander where the general public is concerned. The Maritime Forces Atlantic public affairs office is the only contact point designated by the Maritime Forces for communicating with the public in both official languages in this region.

Since it values the quality of its service, Maritime Forces Atlantic has taken measures to alleviate any inconvenience in cases where visitors present themselves at security checkpoints without having made an appointment beforehand. In such cases, commissionaires will now have recourse to the following resources:

- reach by telephone a bilingual colleague at the base's office of the *Chief Petty Officer, 1st class* situated just beside the security post;
- obtain the services of a bilingual military patrol officer;
- provide the visitor with a two-language guidebook containing a description of the buildings and the main offices visited.

Maritime Forces Atlantic would also like to point out that the over-the-counter service at the Admiralty and the commissionaires' administrative office is already available in both official languages. Moreover, the official languages symbol has been prominently displayed at the security post.

Commissioner's comment

The COL notes the measures taken for providing service in both official languages at security checkpoints. He wishes to point out that any services provided to the public at security checkpoints must at all times be of comparable quality in both official languages.

Natural Resources

Explosives Branch Atlantic Regional Office (11263A)

1801 Hollis Street
Suite 1540
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3K8
(902) 426-3599

We did not examine service in French at this office in our 1994 study. The 1998 audit shows that it is unable to provide the service, as it has no two-language capability on-site. The Department must take immediate action to correct the situation.

Exterior signage on the ground level of the building was in English only, as was most interior signage. The TBS pictogram was not displayed and documentation was available in English only. Overall the office did not project the image of a place designated to provide service in English and French.

We made two telephone calls to the local number of this office which is listed in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual. The greeting was in English only and no service in French was available. Our auditor was asked to speak English. According to the employee, calls are only transferred to Ottawa or Quebec City when callers tell her they do not speak English.

On our visit, the auditor was greeted in English and was unable to be served in French since neither of the two employees speaks French. This office has only two employees, the director and his assistant. Neither of the two positions requires knowledge of both languages. It is therefore impossible for this office to provide service in French.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Department of Natural Resources:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that exterior and interior signage is in both official languages;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the TBS pictogram is displayed in full view of the public;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone and who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
4. ensure, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, that this office has a sufficient two-language capability to provide service over the telephone and in person in both official languages at all times;
5. immediately put in place, pending improvement of the office's two-language capability, an effective temporary administrative measure so that members of the public wishing to communicate in French can receive service in that language;
6. immediately inform office staff of their linguistic obligations.

Department's response

The following actions have been taken to address the recommendations:

- the exterior signs are now in both official languages as will be the interior signs within the specified time frame;
- the TBS pictograms will be displayed in full view of the public within a few weeks;
- the policy on the use of a two-language greeting when answering the telephone and meeting clients has been reviewed with all Halifax staff so as to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in the language of their choice;
- the ability to deliver sufficient two-language capability from the Halifax office within three months for providing service over the telephone will be accomplished through the

introduction of a call routing system which will transfer, at no additional cost, callers desiring service in French to the Department's office in Varennes, Quebec. As for providing service in person, the administrative assistant will receive French-language training to attain the level of proficiency required to respond to basic requests for information in French and, when necessary, obtain assistance from fully bilingual staff in Varennes or Ottawa for more complex matters;

- office staff have been reminded of their obligation to ensure that clients receive efficient and punctual service in the official language of their choice;
- when the administrative assistant position becomes vacant, the department will ensure that the position is staffed bilingual.

The Department considers that the current practice of providing service in French through Varennes or Ottawa for the two to three clients per year who request service in French has been efficient and acceptable to all parties concerned over the past 18 years and as such satisfies recommendation 5. The communications upgrades described above are being implemented.

Commissioner's comment

The COL cautions that the real demand for service in French may in fact exceed two or three clients per year. It is only by extending an active offer of service in both languages, through the consistent use of a two-language greeting, that the Department can truly ascertain the demand for service in French. Moreover, the Department has an obligation to ensure that the services provided by the Halifax office, as well as through the call routing system, are of comparable quality both in English and in French.

Public Service Commission

(11369)

Ralston Building, 3rd Floor
1557 Hollis Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3V3
(902) 426-4698

At the time of our 1994 study, service provided in French at this office was very good, the only deficiency being the absence of active offer in both official languages. The 1998 follow-up shows that it has maintained the same quality of service.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Documentation was available to the public in both official languages, with French and English versions of all PSC documentation being alternately displayed. The TBS pictogram and new poster let the public know that this office provides service in both official languages.

Two telephone calls were made to the local number of this office, which is listed in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual. In each case, a two-language greeting was used and service provided in French was very good.

On our visit, the auditor was greeted in English only. However, as soon as he expressed his language preference, he received very good quality service in French.

At the time of the follow-up, this office had 13 employees, four of whom filled bilingual positions at the intermediate or superior level. All the incumbents met or exceeded the language requirements of their position. Employees have been informed of their linguistic obligations by means of directives. This office has no regular contact with representatives of the French-speaking community in the province.

Following our visit, office management took corrective measures to ensure that employees who meet the public actively offer service in both official languages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Public Service Commission:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. establish regular contact with the French-speaking community in the province in order to identify its needs and keep it informed of the services the office provides.

Commission's response

Since our auditor's visit, new term employees have joined the Halifax office. Management has ensured that they are familiar with official languages obligations generally and, more specifically, with the active offer of service in both official languages when meeting the public.

Local management will endeavour to establish more regular contact with representatives of the French-speaking community in Nova Scotia to respond to needs which could be identified by this community. In an effort to reach out to the French-speaking student population, the PSC Nova Scotia District Office recently participated in a career fair held at Université Ste Anne where the PSC's bilingual staff offered information on post-secondary recruitment and on employment opportunities available in the federal Public Service.

Public Works and Government Services Canada

Communications Directorate Atlantic Branch (86013)

1713 Bedford Row
P.O. Box 2247
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3C9
(902) 496-5475

When we conducted our 1994 study, service provided in French at this office was adequate. The 1998 follow-up shows that it has made progress, as the quality of the service offered has improved.

We made two telephone calls to (902) 496-5475, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. A two-language greeting was used on both calls and the service provided in French was very good.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as were documentation and forms available to the public. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public. Commissionaires at the entrance to the building greeted the public in both official languages and directed clients to whatever service unit they were seeking in the language of their choice. At the office of the Director of Communications, the service provided in French was very good.

Only one of the three positions at the Communications Directorate requires knowledge of both official languages, but the director intends to send one of his officers on language training shortly. The incumbent of the bilingual position exceeds the required level of language proficiency. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations.

This office is complying fully with its linguistic obligations.

Commissioner's comment

The COL is of the opinion that, if the bilingual designation of the Sydney office is maintained, steps should be taken to ensure the provision at this office of services of comparable quality in both official languages at all times. The COL views the option currently being examined by the Department as a temporary measure pending the adoption of a more satisfactory and permanent one.

Revenue Canada
Customs Border Services
Ferry Terminal
(11393)

58 Water Street
P.O. Box 430
Yarmouth, Nova Scotia
B5A 4B3
(902) 742-0880

At the time of our 1994 study, service in French at this office was very good. The only deficiency was the lack of a two-language greeting. The 1998 follow-up shows that although it is still providing good service, some problems remain.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. We noted that some documentation in display racks was only available in English. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public.

Our audits of service in French over the telephone allowed us to determine that a two-language greeting is used and that good service is provided in that language.

On our visit, the auditor was greeted in English only. He nevertheless received very good service in French as soon as he expressed his language preference. At the time of our visit, this office had five employees, all of whom filled bilingual positions requiring the intermediate level of proficiency for oral interaction. All incumbents exceeded the language requirements of their position. Staff are informed of their linguistic obligations when they take up their duties and subsequently by means of directives issued by the Human Resources Directorate.

The Customs Border Services have little contact with the French-speaking community. It provides seasonal services and its clientele is composed primarily of fishers and of tourists, mainly Americans, who travel by ferry.

When the Acting Director of the Tax Services Office in Sydney was informed of our findings, he immediately issued a reminder to all office staff regarding the importance of actively offering service in both official languages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Revenue Canada:

1. ask Public Works and Government Services Canada, as soon as possible and within two months after the publication of this report, to include in its service contract with the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, who are responsible for security, the requirement that employees assigned to the building that houses the Tax Services Office be able to serve the public in English and in French;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that office employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
3. ensure, within three months after the publication of this report, that the Appeals Directorate has an adequate two-language capability to provide service in both official languages.

Department's response

The Department will make the necessary arrangements to ensure that security personnel assigned to the building which houses the Tax Services Office are able to serve the public in the official language of its choice.

Employees who meet the public have been reminded of the requirement to provide an active offer of service. This requirement will be reinforced on a regular basis.

The Department will examine the two-language capability of this work unit and take appropriate measures to ensure that it is adequate.

Commissioner's comment

The COL would like to be informed of the outcome of the review and of the corrective measures taken, within three months after the publication of this report.

Revenue Canada
Customs Border Services
Halifax International Airport
(89005)

P.O. Box 520
Elmsdale, Nova Scotia
B3J 2R7
(902) 873-1330

When we conducted our study in 1994, service in French at this office was satisfactory. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has deteriorated. The Department must act promptly to correct certain deficiencies and thereby improve service delivery in both official languages.

We made two telephone calls to (902) 873-1330, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. A two-language greeting was used on only one of the two calls. Service provided in French was very good in the first case, but poor in the second.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as were the documentation and forms available to the public. The customs officer greeted our auditor in English only; and when the latter presented his customs declaration in French, the officer asked him if he would agree to speak English. He did not seek the assistance of a bilingual colleague.

Although six of the 14 customs officer positions require knowledge of both official languages, only three bilingual positions were filled at the time of our visit. These positions require the intermediate level of proficiency and all three incumbents meet that requirement. Staff at this point of service are aware of their linguistic obligations.

When he was informed of our findings, the manager undertook to fill the three bilingual positions with staff borrowed from other offices on a temporary basis. Also, two unilingual employees will be sent on language training so that they can reach the required level of proficiency. He also had plans to hold a competition with a view to establishing a list of eligible bilingual customs officer candidates so as to fill the vacant positions eventually. In order to increase employees' awareness of their linguistic obligations, the manager also undertook to present a departmental video on the procedure for serving the public in both official languages and to issue periodic reminders in that regard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Revenue Canada:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone and who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. take the necessary steps, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, to improve the quality of service in French over the telephone;
3. take the necessary steps, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, to ensure that service in person is provided in French without travellers being asked to speak English;
4. ensure, within three months after the publication of this report, that there is an adequate number of bilingual positions and employees on each work shift to ensure that the public can be served in both official languages at all times.

Department's response

Employees have been made aware of their official languages obligations through discussions at staff meetings and video presentations on the procedures for providing service to the public in both official languages. Halifax Airport staff have been reminded of their obligations on several occasions since the time of the study.

Two employees scheduled for French language training at the time of the study completed their training successfully and have been assigned to the Halifax Airport. Two additional bilingual customs inspectors have also been deployed to the airport.

A competition to fill "bilingual imperative" positions has been held. The eligibility list established for this purpose will also be used to fill "term" positions as required. Pending completion of the staffing actions, management has hired three bilingual employees on a casual basis.

Airport management will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that there is adequate staff on shift at all times to provide service in both official languages.

Revenue Canada
Customs Border Services
Nova Scotia District
Atlantic Region
(92048)

1557 Hollis Street
P.O. Box 520
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2R7
(902) 426-2911

This office was not included in our 1994 study. The 1998 audit shows that it has difficulty in providing service in French consistently over the telephone and that it is unable to offer this service in person. The Department must act immediately to correct these deficiencies.

We made two telephone calls to (902) 426-2911, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. A two-language greeting was used on each of these calls, in one case via a recorded message inviting callers to select the desired service from a variety of options, and the second time by an officer. The officer who eventually took the first call inquired twice as to whether our auditor really wanted to receive service in French. In the second case, very good service was immediately provided in French.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as were the documentation and forms. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public. However, the greeting was in English only and the receptionist did not seek assistance from a bilingual colleague.

At the time of our visit, only one bilingual incumbent was on site, although three of the nine positions at the office require knowledge of both English and French. The two other bilingual employees were on assignment. The three incumbents either meet or exceed the language requirements of their positions. One of the positions requires knowledge of both official languages at the superior level of proficiency, while the other two require only intermediate level skills. Normally the two-language capability of the office should allow it to provide services in both official languages at all times. With only one bilingual employee on duty, however, the situation is quite different, as our visit demonstrated. Staff at this point of service are aware of their linguistic obligations.

Following our visit, the manager informed us that the Department is considering various options that would allow them to direct telephone calls based on the client's language of preference. Also, she issued a reminder to office employees with respect to their obligations to greet the public in both official languages. As part of that process, staff also viewed a departmental video dealing with official languages. Employees will be receiving training regarding the procedure to follow for offering and providing service to the public in both official languages. Management will also be following up regularly to determine progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Revenue Canada:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. ensure, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, that this office is able to provide services over the telephone and in person in both official languages at all times;
3. increase, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, the office's two-language capability so that services can be provided in English and in French in person at all times.

Department's response

The receptionist has been reminded of her obligation to use a two-language greeting and has been informed as to how she can obtain the assistance of a bilingual colleague when required.

All employees have viewed the video on their obligation to provide service to the public in both official languages and have been reminded of this obligation at staff meetings.

An additional bilingual employee has been hired to ensure that services can be provided at all times in both official languages.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Baddeck Detachment (11399)

16 Hillcrest Street
P.O. Box 400
Baddeck, Nova Scotia
B0E 1B0
(902) 295-2350

At the time of our 1994 study, this detachment was unable to provide service in French on the telephone. As for service in person, it was offered by means of an administrative measure. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has not significantly changed. This detachment is not really complying with its linguistic obligations.

Two telephone calls were made to (902) 295-2350, the number listed for the detachment in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. On each call, a two-language greeting was used. In the first case, following the greeting in both languages, the call was transferred in English to an employee who was able to offer very good service in French. In the second case, the employee asked our auditor if he could speak English before providing him, in French, with a number to call to obtain service in that language. The service received in French was very good.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public. Documentation and forms were available in both official languages. The greeting in person was in English only. Because no bilingual member was available at the Baddeck Detachment, the telephone reception clerk invited our auditor to dial (902) 564-7735 in Sydney to obtain service in French. The service provided in French over the telephone was satisfactory, but it was not of comparable quality to that offered to English-speaking citizens who come to the detachment.

This detachment has nine employees, only one of whom fills a bilingual position requiring the intermediate level of language proficiency. The incumbent exceeds those requirements. Because members work on shifts, the detachment is not able to ensure that at least one bilingual member is available on each shift. The detachment's two-language capability is therefore inadequate. Staff have been informed of the detachment's linguistic obligations by means of written directives and awareness-raising efforts on the part of the RCMP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone and who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. increase, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, the office's two-language capability to provide service over the telephone and in person of equivalent quality in both English and in French at all times;
3. ensure in the meantime, pending progress in that area, that office employees follow established procedures for providing service in French, including directing French-speaking clients in French to bilingual colleagues.

RCMP's response

During the next few months, the Official Languages Coordinator of the Atlantic Region will remind the commanders of all designated service points in Nova Scotia that they must take appropriate measures to ensure that their staff greet members of the public in both official languages, over the telephone and in person.

Where required, clerical staff will be provided with instructions on the procedures to be followed in greeting members of the public in the two official languages and in transferring calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues.

In addition, the bilingual complement will be increased at a number of points of service visited by OCOL auditors to improve that personnel's capability to provide service in both languages.

Commissioner's comment

The COL considers that, where required, not only clerical but all staff should be provided with procedures for use in greeting members of the public in both official languages and in referring French-speaking clients. Moreover, care must be taken in increasing two-language capability to ensure services of comparable quality in both official languages.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Cheticamp Detachment (11405)

P.O. Box 45
Cheticamp, Nova Scotia
B0E 1H0
(902) 224-2050

When we conducted our 1994 study, this detachment provided very good service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that it has maintained the same quality of service.

Two telephone calls were made to (902) 224-2050, the number listed for the detachment in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. On each call, a two-language greeting was used and service provided in French was very good.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public. Documentation and forms were available in both official languages. When our auditor visited the office, only the corporal in charge of the detachment was present. He greeted our auditor in English only, pointing out that a two-language greeting is normally used. Our previous study had shown the reverse. However, service provided in French was very good.

This detachment has five positions, all of which are designated bilingual at the intermediate level of proficiency. All the incumbents exceed the language requirements of their position. Staff are aware of the detachment's linguistic obligations.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

- I. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French.

Although the detachment's overall two-language capability is very good, because of the availability of significant additional bilingual staff, it should consider increasing the number of constable positions that require knowledge of both official languages, so that it is able to provide services in both English and French on all work shifts at all times.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone and who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. increase, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, the number of bilingual constable positions, so that this detachment is able to provide services in both official languages on all work shifts at all times.

RCMP's response

During the next few months, the Official Languages Coordinator of the Atlantic Region will remind the commanders of all designated service points in Nova Scotia that they must take appropriate measures to ensure that their staff greet members of the public in both official languages, over the telephone and in person.

Where required, clerical staff will be provided with instructions on the procedures to be followed in greeting members of the public in the two official languages and in transferring calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues.

In addition, the bilingual complement will be increased at a number of points of service visited by OCOL auditors to improve that personnel's capability to provide service in both languages.

Commissioner's comment

The COL considers that, where required, not only clerical but all staff should be provided with procedures for use in greeting members of the public in both official languages and in referring French-speaking clients.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Ingonish Beach Detachment (11411)

P.O. Box 40
Ingonish Beach, Nova Scotia
B0C 1L0
(902) 285-2021

At the time of our 1994 study, this detachment was not able to provide service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that it is now able to do so, although it frequently makes use of administrative measures as there is only one bilingual officer available. Improvements are therefore needed.

Two telephone calls were made to (902) 285-2021, the number listed for the detachment in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. In each case, a two-language greeting was used and the call was immediately transferred to Sydney, where the service provided in French was of very good quality. The local telephone directory also lists a toll-free number to call to receive service in French via Halifax.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was displayed, indicating that this detachment offers services in English and in French. Documentation and forms were available in both official languages. When our auditor visited the office, the greeting was in English only and service was provided by means of an administrative measure. The employee at the Ingonish Beach Detachment got in touch with another member at the communications TeleCentre in Sydney, who first asked our auditor if he could speak English before providing adequate service in French. Service in French at this detachment is therefore not of comparable quality to that received by English-speaking citizens who visit the office.

This detachment has six employees, one of whom fills a bilingual position requiring the intermediate level of proficiency. The incumbent exceeds those requirements. Because detachment members work on shifts, it is not possible for this detachment, with only one bilingual officer, to provide service in French at all times. Staff have been informed of their linguistic obligations by means of written directives and reminders concerning RCMP policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. increase, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, the detachment's two-language capability to provide service over the telephone and in person of equivalent quality in both English and French;
3. ensure immediately, until this detachment has an adequate two-language capability, that staff follow established procedures for providing service in French, including directing French-speaking clients in French to their bilingual colleagues.

RCMP's response

During the next few months, the Official Languages Coordinator of the Atlantic Region will remind the commanders of all designated service points in Nova Scotia that they must take appropriate measures to ensure that their staff greet members of the public in both official languages, over the telephone and in person.

Where required, clerical staff will be provided with instructions on the procedures to be followed in greeting members of the public in the two official languages and in transferring calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues.

In addition, the bilingual complement will be increased at a number of points of service visited by OCOL auditors to improve that personnel's capability to provide service in both languages.

Commissioner's comment

The COL considers that, where required, not only clerical but all staff should be provided with procedures for use in greeting members of the public in both official languages and in referring French-speaking clients. Moreover, care must be taken in increasing two-language capability to ensure services of comparable quality in both official languages.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Meteghan Detachment (11416)

P.O. Box 178
Meteghan, Nova Scotia
B0W 2J0
(902) 645-2326

At the time of our 1994 study, this detachment provided very good service in French, even though a two-language greeting was not used. The 1998 follow-up shows that this deficiency remains.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public at the entrance to the detachment. Documentation in display racks was not always available in both official languages; in fact, most of the literature was in English, and only some brochures were presented in a bilingual format.

When we made two telephone calls to the number listed for the detachment in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory, we received adequate to very good service in French. A two-language greeting was used in each case.

On our visit, the auditor was greeted in English only. When he addressed the receptionist in French, she responded easily in that language. Two constables also joined the conversation in French.

According to the sergeant in charge, personnel are aware of the detachment's linguistic obligations. While discussing the problem of documentation not being available in both languages, we were informed that all provincially-generated documentation is sent out to the detachments in English only. For example, information from the provincial firearms office is in English only. It should be noted that these deficiencies do not constitute a violation of the OLA as the provinces are not subject to it.

At the time of our follow-up, this detachment had six RCMP members and one civilian employee. All six constable positions require the intermediate level of proficiency. All the incumbents meet or exceed that level. The receptionist position requires the same level of proficiency in oral interaction. The incumbent exceeds that requirement. This detachment therefore has an excellent two-language capability.

It should be noted in this regard that the Meteghan detachment is located in the Municipality of Clare, the only French-speaking municipality in Nova Scotia. Detachment members maintain regular contact with representatives of the French-speaking community, particularly with the Town Council and with regional representatives of the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all RCMP documentation intended for the public is available in display racks in both official languages.

RCMP's response

During the next few months, the Official Languages Coordinator of the Atlantic Region will remind the commanders of all designated service points in Nova Scotia that they must take appropriate measures to ensure that their staff greet members of the public in both official languages, over the telephone and in person.

Where required, clerical staff will be provided with instructions on the procedures to be followed in greeting members of the public in the two official languages and in transferring calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues.

Commissioner's comment

The COL is of the opinion that, where required, not only clerical but all staff should be provided with procedures for use in greeting members of the public in both official languages and in referring French-speaking clients. Moreover, she considers that the RCMP should undertake specifically to address Recommendation 2 within the prescribed time frame.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

St. Peter's Detachment (11422)

P.O. Box 188
St. Peter's, Nova Scotia
B0E 3B0
(902) 535-2002

At the time of our 1994 study, service provided in French at this detachment was very good. The 1998 follow-up shows that the service is now only satisfactory.

Two telephone calls were made to (902) 535-2002, the number listed in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual. This number also appears in the local telephone directory, although the listing does not specify that service is provided in both official languages at that number. According to the telephone directory, service in French for the RCMP is available from Halifax via a toll-free number. A two-language greeting was used on one of the two calls. In both cases, the call was transferred in English only. Service offered in French subsequently was satisfactory.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public. Documentation and forms were available in English and in French. The greeting was in English only and service provided in French was adequate.

This detachment has seven employees, five members and two civilians. Two members fill bilingual positions requiring the intermediate level of proficiency. Both meet that requirement. However, since members work on shifts, this detachment cannot provide service in French at all times. The detachment's two-language capability should be increased to that end.

Staff are aware of the detachment's linguistic obligations, as a result of RCMP efforts to promote service to the public in both official languages, among other means. This detachment also maintains close contact with representatives of the French-speaking community, particularly in Louisdale, as well as with a group of volunteers that includes ten bilingual citizens which was put in place to better serve residents. The RCMP hopes to be able to appoint a bilingual member over the course of the next year in order to better serve this community.

When the sergeant of the detachment was made aware of our findings, particularly problems associated with the absence of active offer and with call transfer, he undertook to suggest that staff be given the necessary training with respect to greeting the public in both official languages and transferring calls in the official language of the client.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone and who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that staff at this detachment follow established procedures for providing services in French, including transferring calls from French-speaking clients in French to their bilingual colleagues;
3. increase, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, the detachment's two-language capability to provide service in both official languages over the telephone and in person at all times.

RCMP's response

During the next few months, the Official Languages Coordinator of the Atlantic Region will remind the commanders of all designated service points in Nova Scotia that they must take appropriate measures to ensure that their staff greet members of the public in both official languages, over the telephone and in person.

Where required, clerical staff will be provided with instructions on the procedures to be followed in greeting members of the public in the two official languages and in transferring calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues.

In addition, the bilingual complement will be increased at a number of points of service visited by OCOL auditors to improve that personnel's capability to provide service in both languages.

Commissioner's comment

The COL considers that, where required, not only clerical but all staff should be provided with procedures for use in greeting members of the public in both official languages and in referring French-speaking clients. Moreover, care must be taken in increasing two-language capability to ensure services of comparable quality in both official languages.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Yarmouth Sub-Division Headquarters (11431)

156 Starrs Road
P.O. Box 5050
Yarmouth, Nova Scotia
B5A 4K6
(902) 742-9289

At the time of our 1994 study, service provided in French at Headquarters left something to be desired, particularly regarding active offer and service over the telephone. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has improved.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public at the entrance. Although RCMP documentation on display racks was available in both official languages, only the English covers of certain bilingual publications (tumble format) were displayed. Also, many of the brochures and pamphlets dealing with a variety of topics (crime stoppers, small claims court, separation and divorce) produced by community organizations or provincial departments were available either in English or in French, but rarely in both official languages. Thus the physical presentation of the documentation did not help to project the image of an institution that provides services in both official languages.

As regards telephone service, a two-language greeting was used on both of the calls made, which is clearly an improvement over what was observed in 1994. Service in French was very good in each case.

On our visit, the auditor was greeted in English only. Since he spoke French, the employee tried to provide service in that language, but without much success. She therefore sought assistance from a bilingual colleague.

At the time of our visit to the Headquarters, only one of the four positions there required knowledge of both official languages. Because the Headquarters' mandate is to provide administrative services, it is only open during regular office hours. As regards the findings of our follow-up study, we understand that the person who greets visitors is not the same one who answered our two telephone calls. However, it is important to ensure that adequate service is available in both official languages at all times, by seeing to it that the office has an adequate two-language capability.

According to the inspector in charge at the Headquarters, employees are made aware of their linguistic obligations by means of reminders issued once a year at division meetings. The Headquarters also maintains regular contact with the French-speaking community, and particularly with members of the Clare Town Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
2. ensure, as soon as possible and within two months after the publication of this report, that all RCMP documentation on display racks is available in both official languages and displayed in such a way as to project the image of an institution that provides services in both official languages;
3. ensure, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, that this office has an adequate number of bilingual employees to provide service to the public in both official languages at all times.

RCMP's response

During the next few months, the Official Languages Coordinator of the Atlantic Region will remind the commanders of all designated service points in Nova Scotia that they must take appropriate measures to ensure that their staff greet members of the public in both official languages, over the telephone and in person.

Where required, clerical staff will be provided with instructions on the procedures to be followed in greeting members of the public in the two official languages and in transferring calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues.

In addition, the bilingual complement will be increased at a number of points of service visited by OCOL auditors to improve that personnel's capability to provide service in both languages.

Commissioner's comment

The COL is of the opinion that, where required, not only clerical but all staff should be provided with procedures for use in greeting members of the public in both official languages and in referring French-speaking clients. Moreover, she considers that the RCMP should undertake specifically to address Recommendation 2 within the prescribed time frame.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

North Sydney Detachment (2134)

P.O. Box 309
Mapleview Drive
North Sydney, Nova Scotia
B2A 3M4
(902) 794-5800

When we conducted our study in 1994, this detachment provided very good service in French in person but was unable to do so over the telephone. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation is now completely the reverse: service in French is available over the telephone but not in person.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. The TBS pictogram indicating that this detachment provides services in English and in French was clearly visible to the public. Documentation and forms were available in both official languages. The greeting was in English only and service was provided in English, as no bilingual member was present at the time of our visit.

Two telephone calls were made to (902) 794-5800, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. In each case, the greeting and the call transfer were in English only. Service provided in French subsequently was very good.

This detachment has 16 employees, two of whom fill bilingual positions requiring the intermediate level of proficiency. The two bilingual members meet these requirements. Because members work on shifts, this detachment is not able to provide service in French at all times. Staff are informed of the detachment's linguistic obligations by means of RCMP information bulletins.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone and who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;

2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that RCMP members and other employees working at the detachment follow established procedures for providing service in French, including transferring calls from French-speaking clients in French to their bilingual colleagues;
3. increase, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, the detachment's two-language capability to provide service over the telephone and in person of equivalent quality in both English and French at all times;
4. take the necessary steps, pending improvement of the detachment's two-language capability, to ensure that service in person is provided in French at all times.

RCMP's response

During the next few months, the Official Languages Coordinator of the Atlantic Region will remind the commanders of all designated service points in Nova Scotia that they must take appropriate measures to ensure that their staff greet members of the public in both official languages, over the telephone and in person.

Where required, clerical staff will be provided with instructions on the procedures to be followed in greeting members of the public in the two official languages and in transferring calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues.

In addition, the bilingual complement will be increased at a number of points of service visited by OCOL auditors to improve that personnel's capability to provide service in both languages.

Commissioner's comment

The COL considers that, where required, not only clerical but all staff should be provided with procedures for use in greeting members of the public in both official languages and in referring French-speaking clients. Moreover, care must be taken in increasing two-language capability to ensure services of comparable quality in both official languages.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

New Minas Detachment (86024)

18 Jones Road
New Minas, Nova Scotia
B4N 3N1
(902) 679-5555

At the time of our 1994 study, service in French at this detachment was rather poor. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has improved. However, additional improvements will be needed if effective service is to be offered at all times.

Exterior RCMP signage was in both official languages. The TBS pictogram indicating that this office provides service in both official languages was clearly displayed. However, on the entrance door to the detachment, a poster promoting the Nova Scotia Crime Stoppers program was in English only. Interior signage did not fully comply with the provisions of the OLA, since a number of in-house notices were in English only. For example, a notice indicated the availability of telephone service via a toll-free number: two numbers were listed, one for service in English and the other for service in French, but the notice itself was written in English only.

RCMP documentation was available in both languages, but few items were displayed, compared to the substantial material produced by regional community organizations, available in English only. We suggested to the person in charge at the detachment that he contact French-speaking community associations able to provide the RCMP with documentation in French to complement the community information already available in English.

We made two telephone calls to the local number listed for the detachment, which is also the number listed in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual. We also noted that the local telephone directory lists a toll-free number for service in French. These calls are routed to Halifax. On both calls to the detachment, our auditor was greeted in both official languages. In the first case, the call was transferred in French by the receptionist to a constable who provided very good service in French. In the second case, a bilingual officer answered the call directly.

On our visit, the auditor was greeted in English only. As soon as he expressed his language preference, the receptionist directed him in French to a constable who provided very good service in French.

According to the person in charge at the detachment, employees are aware of their linguistic obligations. Reminders are issued at detachment meetings and when spot checks are carried out by the OCOL or the Official Languages Directorate of the RCMP.

At the time of the follow-up, this detachment had 38 RCMP members, 21 of whom come into contact with members of the public when carrying out highway patrols and investigations. The others are special investigators. Only two constable positions require knowledge of both languages at the intermediate level of proficiency. One constable is a patroller and the other works at the detachment itself. Both meet the linguistic requirements of their position. The receptionist position only requires knowledge of English. We believe this detachment should increase its two-language capability so that it can serve the public in both official languages at all times, something that it was unable to do at the time of our visit.

The New Minas detachment does not maintain regular contact with the French-speaking community, claiming that there is no significant Francophone group in the region. We believe the detachment should consider contacting management at the Grand Pré National Historic Site. This would allow the RCMP to get to know groups in the region that represent Francophones.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all interior signage at the detachment is in both official languages;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all RCMP documentation intended for the public is available in display racks in both official languages;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
4. take the necessary steps, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, to ensure that service in person in French is available at all times;
5. increase, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, the detachment's two-language capability to provide service in both official languages all times;
6. establish regular contact with the local French-speaking community in order to identify its needs and keep it informed of services the detachment provides.

RCMP's response

During the next few months, the Official Languages Coordinator of the Atlantic Region will remind the commanders of all designated service points in Nova Scotia that they must take appropriate measures to ensure that their staff greet members of the public in both official languages, over the telephone and in person.

Where required, clerical staff will be provided with instructions on the procedures to be followed in greeting members of the public in the two official languages and in transferring calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues.

In addition, the bilingual complement will be increased at a number of points of service visited by OCOL auditors to improve that personnel's capability to provide service in both languages.

Commissioner's comment

The COL is of the opinion that, where required, not only clerical but all staff should be provided with procedures for use in greeting members of the public in both official languages and in referring French-speaking clients. Moreover, she considers that the RCMP should undertake specifically to address Recommendations 1, 2 and 6 within the prescribed time frames.

Statistics Canada

Atlantic Region (11436)

P.O. Box 11, 2nd Floor
1741 Brunswick Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3X8
(902) 426-5331

At the time of our 1994 study, service in French at this office was very good, except for the greeting which was in English only. The 1998 follow-up shows that it has maintained the same quality of service.

Exterior signage was in both official languages. We saw no interior signage, as this office recently moved to new premises and signs have not yet been installed. Documentation intended for the public was available in both official languages, and both English and French versions of all Statistics Canada information bulletins or pamphlets were equally displayed. The TBS pictogram indicating that the office provides service in English and French was clearly visible to the public, both at the reception and the reference centre.

We made two telephone calls to this office's local number. A two-language greeting was used and service in French was very good in each case.

On our visit, the auditor was greeted in English only. As soon as he expressed his language preference, he received very good service in French.

Employees are aware of their linguistic obligations and are made aware of them by means of written directives and reminders issued at meetings. At the time of the follow-up, this office had 16 employees, twelve of whom fill positions requiring knowledge of both languages at the intermediate or superior levels of proficiency. All the incumbents meet or exceed those requirements. This office has a very good two-language capability that allows it to serve both language communities well.

This office maintains steady contact with representatives of the French-speaking community in the four Atlantic provinces. It regularly takes part in consultations held as part of the implementation of the provisions of Part VII of the OLA and it works closely with the community.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Statistics Canada:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French.

Department's response

The omission of a two-language greeting occurred in an area which does not offer service to the public and where staff are therefore not required to use such a greeting. Nonetheless, the observation made in the report has provided the Halifax Office with the opportunity to review procedures concerning the active offer of services in person and to provide employees with some re-training.

Commissioner's comment

Given that our auditor upon arrival at the Halifax office was referred to the area in question, the COL considers that a review of the procedures for referring persons wishing to be served in French may be indicated.

Veterans Affairs

District Office (11473)

90 Esplanade Street, 1st Floor
Sydney, Nova Scotia
B1P 1A1
(902) 564-7028

At the time of our 1994 study, this office was unable to provide service in French. It is still unable to offer that service in person. As for service over the telephone, it was available one time out of three. Thus, a number of deficiencies remain and require corrective action.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Documentation and forms were also available in both languages. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public. Our auditor was greeted in English only. The receptionist sought assistance from a colleague who was unable to express herself well enough in French to answer our auditor's question. She then provided a toll-free number where service in French was supposed to be available.

Three telephone calls were made to (902) 564-7028, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. In each case, a two-language greeting was used. On the first call, the receptionist indicated that she spoke no French and did not transfer the call to a bilingual employee. In the second case, the person who answered apologized for not being able to speak French and provided our auditor with a toll-free number. The third time, the call was transferred in English and good service was offered in French. It should be noted, however, that although the employee spoke French, he was unable to provide the information requested as he did not have sufficient information about the Sydney office. Service was offered in French one time out of three.

This office has 18 employees, but none of the positions there requires knowledge of both official languages. Staff have, however, been informed that they are required to actively offer service in both official languages on the telephone. This office has no contact with the local French-speaking community.

When the manager of the regional office was made aware of the findings of our follow-up, she admitted that she was aware of the lack of a two-language capability at the Sydney office. Because the Department has a limited client base, she intended to carry out a study in the fall of 1998 to determine the level of demand for services in French. If there is significant demand, she will undertake to fill an adequate number of bilingual positions. If demand is not significant, she will inform TBS in order that the office's linguistic designation may be changed.

Commissioner's comment

The Commissioner recognizes that the Department generally serves a limited clientele whose needs and language preferences are well known to it. However, she wishes to point out that the Sydney office is identified as having to provide service in both languages, not by virtue of a restricted and identifiable clientele but rather by virtue of its service area, which has a minority of at least 5,000 persons. In such circumstances, the Department does not have to measure demand for service since it is considered significant under subparagraph 5(1)(h)(ii) of the Regulations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Department of Veterans Affairs:

1. ensure, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, that the Sydney office has an adequate two-language capability to provide service to the public in both official languages both over the telephone and in person;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone and who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
3. immediately put in place, until the office itself is able to provide service in French, an effective administrative measure to provide service in French;
4. inform the management and staff of the office, as soon as possible and no later than two months after publication of this report, of their obligation to provide service to members of the public in both official languages.

Department's response

Given the current lack of bilingual capability in the Sydney District Office, it would take considerably longer than three months for the necessary capacity to be reached, as there has traditionally been very little turn-over in staff in Sydney, and language training is a long term proposition.

Procedures for actively offering service in both official languages have recently been reviewed with staff. As well, employees responsible for reception services and their back-up resources have received the PSC course on the basics of bilingual reception.

Management in Atlantic Regional Office will ensure that an effective administrative arrangement is put in place, as an interim measure, until a more permanent capability to provide service in both official languages from the Sydney office is achieved.

The managers and staff of the Sydney office have been reminded of their obligation to provide service to members of the public in both official languages.

Commissioner's comment

The COL would like to be informed, within two months after publication of this report, of the interim measures taken by the Department to provide service in both official languages pending the establishment of a permanent capability. The COL would also like to be informed within the same time frame of the Department's longer-range plan for achieving such capability.

Appendix A

1994 Recommendations

In the report entitled "A Study of Federal Offices Designated to Respond to the Public in Both English and French," the Commissioner recommended that:

- Federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages review the language of signs posted inside their premises to ensure that all signs are in both official languages.
- Designated offices post signs, preferably the standard TBS pictogram, indicating that service is available in English and French.
- Federal institutions review the number and the deployment of bilingual staff in offices which are designated to provide services in both official languages to ensure that they have adequate human resources to provide good quality service.
- Institutions and central agencies develop and adopt effective means of informing members of the public that they have a choice of language when communicating with or receiving services from federal institutions.
- Institutions which designate toll-free telephone numbers to provide service to the public in both languages ensure that an adequate number of bilingual staff are on hand at all times to guarantee service in both official languages.
- Federal institutions review the deployment of their bilingual staff, particularly those working in offices which are not required by the regulations to provide services in both official languages.
- Where appropriate, federal institutions establish in offices which have no official languages obligations an effective system to refer clients who require services in the other official language to designated offices.
- The TBS establish a process to periodically review and update the list of designated points of service to ensure that all information is current.
- The TBS ensure that the public is informed of the location of designated offices.
- Institutions ensure that all managers of designated offices and front-line staff are informed of their responsibilities.

Glossary

- **significant demand**

After conducting a widespread consultation of institutions and the public, TBS published the Official Languages (Communications with and Services to the Public) Regulations (the Regulations) on December 16, 1991. The Regulations define the expression “significant demand” and establish the rules for its application.

The general rules relating to **significant demand** are based on the demographic data from census units: the size of the linguistic minority (above a certain threshold) served by an office or a point of service, the characteristics of that population and the proportion of the region’s population that it represents.

- **weighting**

When a probability sample survey is used (as was the case for the 1994 study), each unit chosen represents a certain number of other units within the population; in order to express this representation, each unit of the sample is weighted. For example, if we choose five points of service at random out of a total population of 30 points of service, each of the five units chosen thus receives a weight of six, and we assume that it represents six points in the population.

For the purposes of this follow-up to the study on the points of service, all the offices chosen have the same weight: a weight of one. Consequently, the results of the survey represent all the audited points of service and not all the designated two-language points of service in Nova Scotia.

- **key services**

The Regulations established that certain federal institutions provide services deemed essential to the minority population. In census metropolitan areas where the English or French linguistic minority population has fewer than 5,000 persons and in census subdivisions where the minority population is at least 500 persons and represents less than 5% of the population of the subdivision, these institutions must offer services in both official languages if they are the only office of the federal institution within the region or subdivision to offer any of the following services:

- services related to income security programs
- services of a post office
- services of an employment centre (now called a human resources centre)
- services of an office of the Department of Revenue Canada (Taxation)

- services of an office of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada (now called Canadian Heritage)
- services of an office of the PSC

- **nature of the office**

After conducting a widespread consultation of institutions and the public, TBS published the Official Languages (Communications with and Services to the Public) Regulations (the Regulations) on December 16, 1991. The Regulations define the expression “nature of the office” and establish the rules for its application.

The rules on the nature of the office relate to the services that affect public health or safety or that, as a result of the office’s location or mandate, require services in both languages. These include offices of federal institutions located in national parks and national historic parks (including one post office in each park).

