

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

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

Cat. No. SF31-44/2000
ISBN 0-662-64913-3

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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 British Columbia. 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, progresses were made in some area but the overall results are unsatisfactory. The overall two-language capability of the designated offices has increased by 18% to attain 80% of the offices visited. However, it is difficult to obtain quality service in French on a consistent basis by telephone. 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 55% to 75%. However, only seven of the 36 offices we visited offered a greeting in both languages in person. As for two-language greeting over the telephone, it was provided consistently in 50% of cases. The availability of service in French over the telephone has deteriorated compared to 1994: in only 64% of cases were the designated offices able to provide service consistently compared to 90% in 1994. On the other hand, service in person increased from 72% in 1994 to 89% in 1998. 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 British Columbia.

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, 199 federal offices out of 1,337 were designated to provide two-language service in British Columbia. 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 British Columbia. 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 British Columbia.

To evaluate the availability of service, our auditors chose the client approach; that is, they acted like French-speaking citizens of British Columbia 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 was consistent. When the greeting was sometimes in two languages and sometimes in only one, they indicated that two-language greeting was available occasionally. When, on each call, the greeting was in only one language, they indicated that there was no two-language greeting.

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 British Columbia 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 90 designated offices in British Columbia. In the follow-up, we audited 38. The audit exercise took place for the most part during the summer and autumn months of 1998.

The following pages present general observations on the offices of federal institutions which were included in the follow-up in British Columbia. 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, British Columbia had 1,550 federal offices, 264 of which were designated to provide services in both languages. In 1998, at the time of our follow-up, there were 1,337 offices, 199 of which were designated bilingual. Thus there has been an overall decrease of 14% in the number of federal offices. On the other hand, for offices designated to provide service in English and French, the decrease is far more extensive, at 25%. This out of proportion decline in the number of offices designated to provide service in English and French requires that each Federal Government Institution review the situation to ensure that its offices are able to provide French-speaking citizens living in British Columbia with adequate services.

1. Signs and documentation

Most of the physical elements associated with the provision of service in both official languages showed deterioration, except for the interior signage. For example, it was noted during the follow-up that exterior signage in both languages decreased from 94% in 1994 to 92% in the follow-up, while interior signage in both official languages increased from 61% to 75%.

Designated offices seem to experience some difficulty managing bilingual documentation and forms. Although documentation was available in both languages in 73% of the offices in 1994, that percentage had dropped to 61% in 1998. In 1994, forms were available in English and

French in 88% of the offices; in 1998, this percentage declined to 80%. 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>	94%	92%
<i>Interior sign</i>	61%	75%
<i>Documentation</i>	73%	61%
<i>Forms</i>	88%	80%

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 British Columbia were satisfactory or better in only 53% 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.

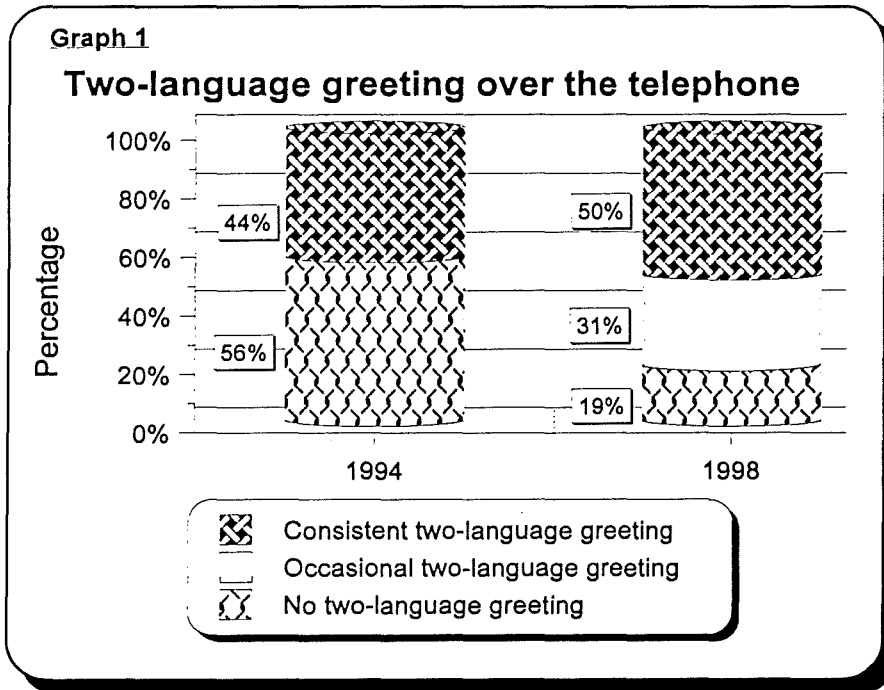


In 1994, 55% of designated offices in British Columbia displayed a sign (pictogram) indicating that service was available in English or French. At the time of the follow-up, 75% of the offices visited displayed the TBS pictogram or an equivalent symbol. This is a noteworthy improvement. However, we find it difficult to understand why nine of the designated offices visited still do not display an appropriate symbol, ten 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>	55%	75%
<i>Absent</i>	45%	25%

b) Greeting on the telephone and in person



In 1994, employees in federal institutions in British Columbia used a two-language greeting on the telephone in only 44% of cases. At the time of our 1998 visit, we noted an improvement, but also a certain inconsistency in the way employees of designated offices in British Columbia answered telephone calls.

Employees used a two-language greeting consistently on the telephone in 50% of cases; they used a two-language greeting occasionally in 31% of cases; they did not use a two-language greeting in 19% 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 4% of cases. During our recent survey, only seven of the 36 offices we visited (19%) provided a two-language greeting to our auditor. Federal institutions must take concrete measures to rectify this deficiency, which has persisted too long.

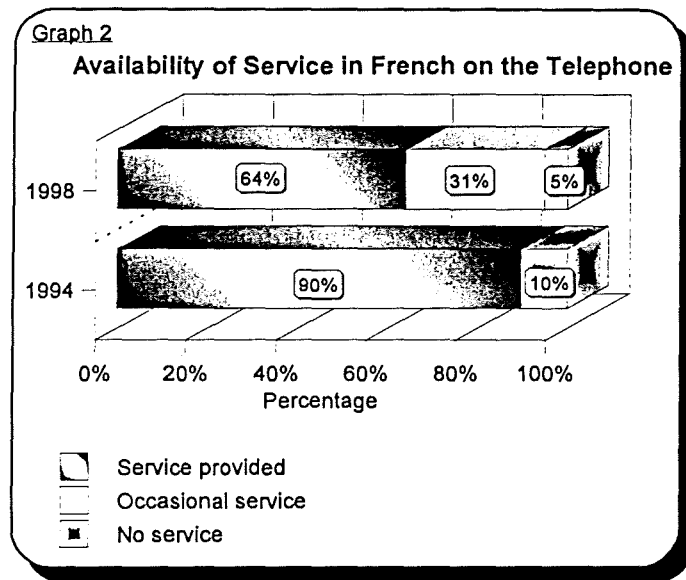
The absence of active offer by federal employees can only discourage French-speaking clients in British Columbia from exercising their language rights. In our experience, when members of the public are not clearly encouraged to choose the language of service, the level of demand in the minority language 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 need 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 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 British Columbia provided service in French in 90% 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 64% of cases; they did so occasionally in 31% of cases; and in 5% 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 British Columbia 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.

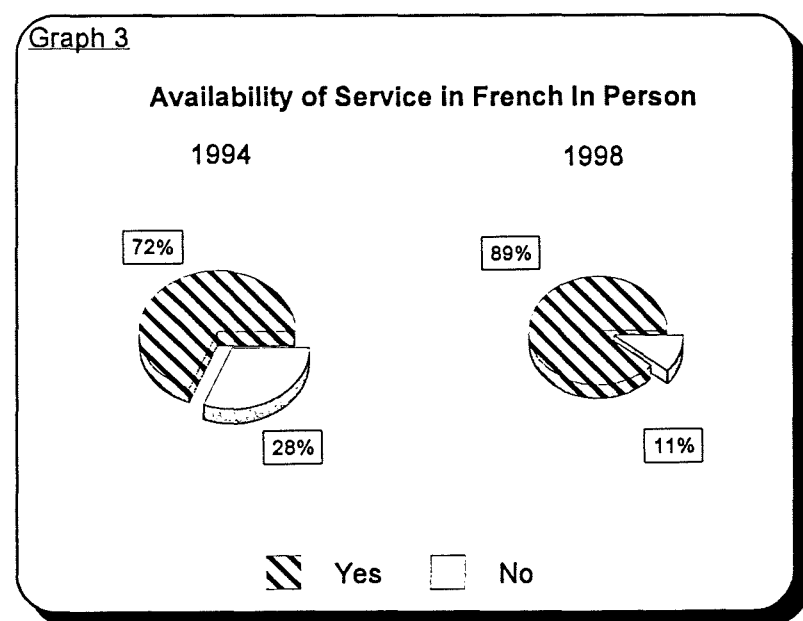
We also made calls to two dedicated telephone lines. In each case, we received good quality service in French.

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 British Columbia 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 British Columbia 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 showed a noteworthy improvement.



Service in French was obtained at 89% of the offices visited, compared to 72% at the time of the initial study. Such services in French should be available to the French-speaking community in British Columbia 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 British Columbia.

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 94% 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, all of the offices visited (100%) and almost all of the offices (97%) our auditors have communicated with by telephone have provided courteous service.

d) Comparability

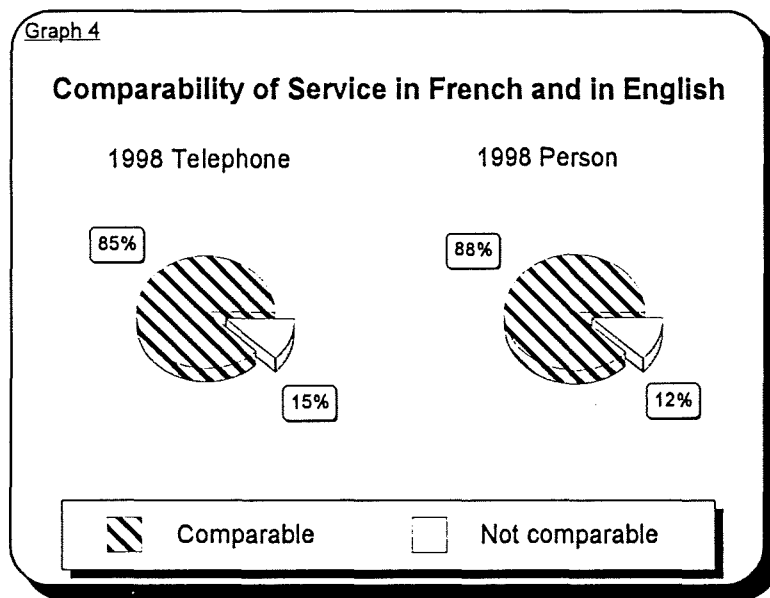
The degree of comparability between service provided in French and that offered in English was judged “very good” when the employee immediately provided our auditor with the service requested in French. An office was rated “satisfactory” when the employee, perhaps after asking our auditor to speak more 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 89% of the designated offices that they visited in British Columbia. They consistently obtained service in French on the telephone in 64% of cases and occasionally in 31% 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 85% of cases by telephone and 88% in person. The offices of federal institutions in British Columbia 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

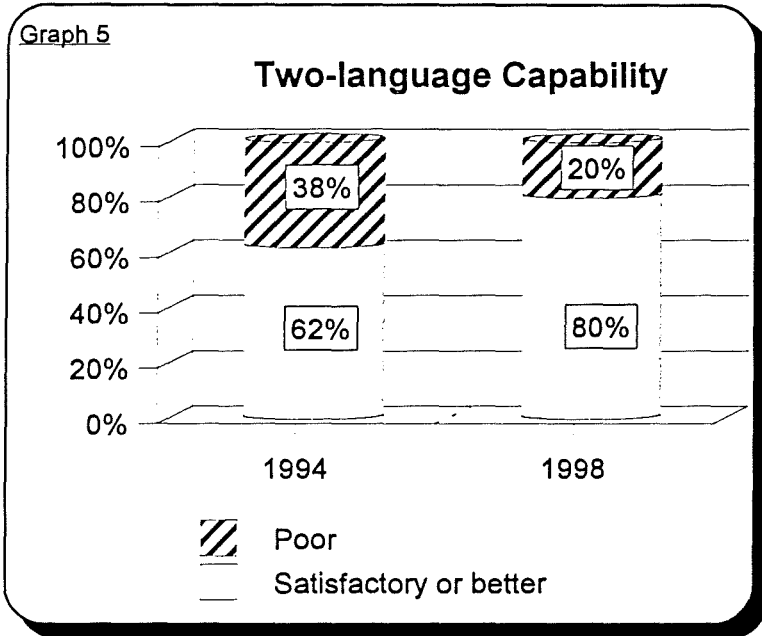
conditions. When an office provides service in person in English, it is also required to provide service in French. The profiles of each office that are found in Part C of this report give details of the various reasons why the auditors judged that service was or was not comparable. The institutions 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.

The follow-up showed that designated federal offices in the province had increased their capability to provide service in both official languages. In 1994, the capability to provide service in English and French was rated satisfactory or better at 62% of the offices designated in British Columbia; in 1998, this percentage had increased to 80%. However, two of the offices visited



(6%) had no two-language capability, while five (14%) 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. Four other offices (11%) 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 British Columbia, this situation is still cause for 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 British Columbia, two 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 British Columbia'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 77% of the managers and 70% of the employees of designated offices in British Columbia 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 82% of the personnel of designated offices were well informed of their linguistic obligations. This constitutes slight 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 British Columbia'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 British Columbia of the availability of services in French. The measures taken to inform them were rated very good or satisfactory in only 67% of cases. The follow-up shows that the situation has clearly improved in this regard.

We found that 88% 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 British Columbia, English-speaking members of the public need only to consult the 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 telephone directories 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 some of the information in the TBS directory for offices in British Columbia was inaccurate. Some telephone numbers in the directory did not match those found in the 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. The CPC also lists on the

Internet offices that provide services in both official languages. However, not all Canadians have access to the Internet, far from it. The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages 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 (18%) 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 British Columbia. 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 British Columbia 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 British Columbia provide quality service in both official languages.

Considering the out-of-proportion decline in the number of offices designated to provide service in English and French, it is incumbent on each institution to review the situation to ensure that its offices are able to provide French-speaking citizens living in British Columbia with adequate services.

C) AUDIT OF OFFICES

This part contains the observations we made concerning each of the 38 offices we audited in British Columbia 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.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

(88018)

Commercial Building
28 - 176th Street
Surrey, British Columbia
V4P 2K1
(604) 541-3376

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.

At the number listed in the Vancouver blue pages directory, (604) 541-3376, the greeting is in English only.

Both exterior and interior signage was in English only. Following are a few examples of unilingual signage: "When this office is closed, please utilize our office at 207 PCB Bldg." and "Stables available in Washington." Documentation intended for the public was not available in both official languages. Furthermore the office did not display the TBS pictogram so that members of the public know that it provides service in both official languages.

On his visit, the auditor was greeted in English only and service could not be provided in French. The office has three employees, but none of the positions requires knowledge of both official languages. Staff did not seem to fully understand the requirements of the OLA nor their obligations in matters of services in both English and French.

We have learned during our visit, that this office will be amalgamated with services at Vancouver International Airport, which has a bilingual complement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada:

1. immediately put in place, until the office's two-language capability is increased, effective temporary administrative arrangements to provide French-speaking clients with services in French;

2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
3. 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 in both official languages at all times;
4. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all exterior and interior signage at the office is in both official languages;
5. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the TBS pictogram is displayed in full view of the public;
6. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all documentation intended for the public is available in both official languages;
7. 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;
8. ensure, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, that this office is able to provide services in person in both official languages, at all times;
9. 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;
10. officially inform employees, within two months after the publication of this report, of their obligation to serve the public in both official languages.

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

Business Development Bank of Canada

(15302)

One Bental Centre
Room 204
505 Burrard Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
V7X 1V3
(888) 463-6232

This office was not included in our 1994 study. The 1998 review shows that it provides adequate service in French, except for the greeting in person, which is not in both official languages.

We made two telephone calls to (888) 463-6232, 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. A recorded message, in both official languages, invited callers to leave their name and telephone number.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Not all documentation intended for the public was available in both official languages. For example, the documentation related to the following project: "Working capital for growth & Young Entrepreneurs financing program" was in English only. However, forms were in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public.

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

The office has 23 employees, but none of the positions requires knowledge of both official languages. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations. This office does not have regular contact with representatives of 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all documentation intended for the public is available 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. 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;
4. ensure, within three months after the publication of this report, that the office contacts the local French-speaking community to identify its needs and inform its members of the services provided by the office.

Bank's response

The Vice President and Area Manager of our Vancouver branch has reminded his staff of the importance of using a greeting formula in both official languages at all times, and this practice has already been put in place.

All documentation intended for the public is now available in both official languages.

The Vice President and Area Manager is perfectly bilingual and can therefore provide equal quality service in French and English on the telephone and in person. In addition, he has already undertaken business development initiatives with the local Francophone community.

Canada Customs and Revenue Agency

Burnaby-Fraser Tax Services

(93161)

4664 Lougheed Highway
Suite 201
Burnaby, British Columbia
V5C 6C2
(604) 669-3362

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

We made two telephone calls to this office. A two-language greeting was used on both calls and service provided in French over the phone and in-person was of very good quality.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as were documentation and forms. The TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public.

This office has 17 bilingual positions. All incumbents of bilingual positions meet the linguistic requirements. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations.

This office is complying fully with its linguistic obligations.

Canada Customs and Revenue Agency

Customs Border Services

(15464)

333 Dunsmuir Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6B 5R4
(604) 666-0547

When we audited this office in 1994, we determined that service provided in French was satisfactory. The 1998 audit shows that it offers very good service in French over the telephone, but the service in person is barely adequate.

Two telephone calls were made to (604) 666-0547, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual. The number listed in the local telephone directory is (604) 666-0545. A two-language greeting was given on the first call, but the greeting was in English only on the second call. Our auditor subsequently received very good service in French on both occasions.

Although exterior signage was in both official languages, inside, there were a few home-made signs in English only. Documentation and forms available to the public were in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public.

During his on-site visit, the auditor was greeted in English only and adequate service could not be provided in French.

This office has ten positions, three of which require the basic level of language proficiency in both official languages. All incumbents of bilingual positions exceed the linguistic requirements. Staff have been informed of the office's linguistic obligations by means of written directives and reminders issued at meetings. This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

Following our visit, the Chief of Client Services issued a detailed report on the findings of our audit to her superior and the Regional Director of Customs Border Services circulated a memorandum to all employees to remind them of their official languages obligations, including requirements for signage and publications in both official languages. Employees in contact with the public were reminded of the obligation to greet members of the public with a two-language greeting and to 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 the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency:

1. ensure that the next issue of the local telephone book lists numbers where services in French are available;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone 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 all signage at the office is in both official languages, including home-made signs;
4. 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;
5. ensure, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, that this office is able to provide services in person in both official languages, at all times;
6. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office follow established procedures for transferring (in French) calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues.

Department's response

The office has ensured that the correct number for obtaining information in French will be listed in the next edition of the local telephone directory. The office has also had the appropriate changes to the Treasury Board's directory of federal offices (Burolis) made by the Official Languages Division.

We have reminded employees who answer the telephone and meet the public always to make active offer of service by sending them a memorandum to that effect. In addition, the employees were individually informed of their linguistic obligations.

The office immediately replaced the signs that did not meet official languages requirements.

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To ensure service of comparable quality in both English and French, the Customs Border Services office has ensured that staff with adequate linguistic capability are present on each work shift. In addition, we provide customs officers with courses to maintain and improve their knowledge of French.

Unilingual employees have been reminded of the procedures for directing French-speaking clients to bilingual colleagues and telephone calls are monitored regularly.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

(92004)

Granville Island Office
1661 Duranleau Street, 2nd Floor
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6H 3S3
(604) 666-6655

When we visited this office in 1994, we found that service in French was satisfactory. Our 1998 follow-up shows that the quality of the service has improved somewhat.

Our auditor placed two telephone calls to (604) 666-6655. A two-language greeting was used on only one of the two calls. Both times the service in French was of very good quality.

During our on-site the exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. With the exception of the "Granville Island Suggestions and Comments" form, documentation and forms produced by the corporation were available in both official languages. However, the TBS pictogram indicating that the office provides services in both languages was not displayed at the office on the second floor.

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

Of the 17 positions in the office, four (one receptionist and three information officers positions) are designated bilingual at the intermediate level of proficiency. All incumbents meet the language requirements of their position and there is one additional bilingual employee. Staff are aware of their linguistic obligations.

Following our visit, the manager ensured that the "Granville Island Suggestions and Comments" form was translated into French and that future brochures produced in separate language versions would contain a mention of its availability in the other official language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone 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;
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.

Corporation's response

The recommendations concerning the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation have been implemented.

We are pleased to confirm that the receptionist, the employees assigned to reception on the telephone and in person and the information officers at the Granville Island office use a greeting in both official languages. In addition, the pictogram is clearly visible to members of the public.

Canada Post Corporation

(642398)

Kicking Horse Avenue
Field, British Columbia
V0A 1G0

When we conducted our study in 1994, this office was unable to provide service in French. The follow-up shows that the situation has improved considerably.

No telephone number is listed for this post office.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Documentation intended for the public was available in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public.

During his on-site visit, the auditor was greeted in both official languages and service in French was of very good quality. This office has one employee and she is bilingual. She is also aware of her linguistic obligations.

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

Canada Post Corporation

(647365)

349 West Georgia Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6B 3A0
(604) 662-1300

During our 1994 study, we found that service provided in French at this office was satisfactory. The 1998 follow-up shows that service on the telephone has improved, but service in person has declined.

We made two telephone calls to this office. A two-language greeting was used on both calls and service provided in French was of very good quality.

Our visit revealed that exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as were documentation and forms. The TBS pictogram indicating that the office provides services in both languages was displayed at one of the counters.

During his on-site visit, the auditor was greeted in English only and service could not be provided in French. Furthermore, the employee did not seek assistance from a bilingual colleague to provide services in French.

This office has 17 employees posted at this location and 13 employees in a relief pool, who work throughout the Vancouver area. There are only two designated bilingual positions requiring a minimal level of proficiency in oral interaction. Both employees surpass this level. Staff have been informed of the office's linguistic obligations by means of written directives and reminders issued at meetings. This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

We should like to point out that our auditor was adequately referred to this postal station when he asked for service in French in the postal station located at 595 Burrard Street (station which is not designated to provide service 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. ensure, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, that this office is able to provide services in person in both official languages, at all times;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office follow established procedures for referring (in French) French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
4. ensure, within three months after the publication of this report, that the number of bilingual positions and employees at this office is sufficient to ensure that French-speaking citizens receive quality services in their language in just as timely a fashion as English-speaking citizens.

Corporation's response

With respect to the corporate office located at 349 West Georgia Street in Vancouver, all employees and relief personnel working at Vancouver Main have been instructed to use the two-language greeting at all times when serving customers. Unilingual employees have also been reminded of the proper procedures to follow for referring minority-language customers to a bilingual colleague.

As noted in your report, the incumbents of the two designated bilingual counter positions meet the language requirements. Two other employees are currently enrolled in language training. Because Vancouver Main is a large postal station, it is felt that with a potential of four bilingual employees to respond to customers, the office will have sufficient resources to respond to customers in their language at all times.

Commissioner's comments

The COL is pleased that the Corporation has decided that four bilingual employees would respond to customers. However, she believes that the number of designated bilingual positions should be increased from two to four to reflect this objective and to ensure that French-speaking citizens receive quality services in their language in just as timely a fashion as English-speaking citizens.

Canada Post Corporation

(067776)

714 Yates Street
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 1L0
(250) 953-1351

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.

Two telephone calls were made to this office. A two-language greeting was used on both calls and service provided in French was of very good quality. A message recorded in both official languages greets callers at this number. It is also possible to speak with an employee providing service from a national centre.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as were documentation and forms. However, the office did not display the TBS pictogram so that members of the public know that it provides service in both official languages.

During his on-site visit, our auditor was greeted in English only. However, he received adequate service in French.

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;
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.

Corporation's response

In regard to the office located at 714 Yates Street in Victoria, the responsible manager was reminded of the importance of ensuring that his staff provide an active offer of services at all times. As well, the active offer pictogram is being ordered and should be in place shortly.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Food Production and Inspection Branch

(15014)

620 Royal Avenue
Suite 202
P.O. Box 2523
New Westminster, British Columbia
V3L 5A8
(604) 666-6513

During our study in 1994, we received very good service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has deteriorated slightly.

Our auditors made three telephone calls to this office. A two-language greeting was used on two of the three calls. Service in French was available only once -- however, it was of very good quality.

Both exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Documentation intended for the public was not available in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public. During his on-site visit, the auditor received very good quality service in French.

The office has 95 employees and only two fill positions requiring knowledge of both official languages. Staff were not officially informed of the requirements of the OLA and their obligations in matters of services in both English and French. Furthermore, this office does not have regular contact with representatives of 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.

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 answer the telephone 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 service over the telephone in both official languages at all times;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all documentation intended for the public is available 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 office 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. officially inform employees, within two months after the publication of this report, of their obligation to serve the public in both official languages;
6. ensure, within three months after the publication of this report, that the office contacts the local French-speaking community to identify its needs and inform its members of the services provided by the office.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

District Office

(15021)

118-816 Government Street
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 1W9
(250) 363-3421

When we conducted our 1994 study, this office was unable to provide service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has improved.

We made two telephone calls to this office. A two-language greeting was used only once. In both cases, the call transfer was in English only. We finally received, on each occasion, service in French which was of very good quality.

Exterior signage was in both official languages. Documentation intended for the public was not available in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public.

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

Staff did not seem to fully understand the requirements of the OLA nor their obligations in matters of services in both English and French. This office does not have regular contact with representatives of 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.

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 answer the telephone 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 follow established procedures for transferring (in French) calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all documentation intended for the public is available in both official languages;
4. 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;
5. officially inform employees, within two months after the publication of this report, of their obligation to serve the public in both official languages;
6. ensure, within three months after the publication of this report, that the office contacts the local French-speaking community to identify its needs and inform its members of the services provided by the office.

Agency's response

All staff answering the main office number have been instructed in the use of official greetings and have been supplied with instructions on how to graciously redirect/transfer clients to bilingual colleagues.

Employees were officially advised of their Official Language responsibilities in Victoria and New Westminster.

The Regional Director has an active membership with the local Francophone association, Alliance Française. More specifically for the Victoria community, local management will request that an information item concerning CFIA contacts be included in the Alliance's newsletter.

Regarding the number of bilingual positions at the Westminster office, additional bilingual candidates will be sought as vacancies become available. As well, language training is fully utilized and ways and means of upgrading employees' understanding and support of the bilingual community is being looked at.

We will follow-up on the above to ensure our clients are greeted and served in the official language of their choice.

Commissioner's comments

The COL notes the measures taken for providing service in both official languages. However, she is of the opinion that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency should undertake specifically to address Recommendation 3 within the prescribed time frames.

Canadian Heritage

Yoho National Park

(15266)

317 Stephen Avenue
P.O. Box 99
Field, British Columbia
V0A 1G0
(250) 343-6783

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

Our auditor made four telephone calls to this office. Each time, a two-language greeting was used and service in French was available on three of the calls. The recorded message was also in both official languages.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Documentation and forms intended for the public were available in English and in French. However, the office did not display the TBS pictogram at the West toll booth nor at the Information Centre so that members of the public know that it provides service in both official languages. Bilingual employees were wearing buttons stating: "Bonjour ! Oui, je parle français."

During his on-site visit, our auditor was greeted in English only at the West toll booth. However, as soon as he expressed his language preference, he received very good quality service in French. At the Information Centre, he was greeted in both official languages and service in French was also of very good quality.

This point of service has 11 employees, three of whom are bilingual. Staff have been informed of the office's linguistic obligations by means of written directives and reminders issued at meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Canadian Heritage:

1. ensure, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, that this park is able to provide service over the telephone in both official languages at all times;

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 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

Since the audit was conducted, training sessions have been held for employees who answer the telephone or meet the public to ensure that they provide service in both official languages, provide active offer of service and understand the needs of the French-speaking community. These training sessions will also be held this year, and the park management frequently reminds its staff of their official languages obligations.

The Treasury Board Secretariat's pictogram is now placed so as to be clearly visible to the public in all the public buildings at Yoho National Park.

Canadian Heritage

Kootenay National Park

(15270)

P.O. Box 220
Radium Hot Springs, British Columbia
VOA 1M0
(250) 347-9485 (Radium Hot Springs)
(250) 347-9505 (Information Centre)

These sites were not part of the 1994 study. The 1997 review shows that the situation leaves a lot to be desired and that improvements are needed.

On his way to the park West toll booth (on route 93), our auditor saw the following English-only sign, painted in Park Canada colours: "Administration office 400 m - Redstreak Road Kootenay National Park 800m."

At the West toll booth, a two-language greeting was used. However, service in French was not available. The auditor was also handed a receipt printed in English only.

Information Centre - Kootenay National Park

We made two telephone calls to this point of service. A two-language greeting was used on each call. In both cases, however, service in French was not available.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Documentation intended for the public was also available in English and French. The site displayed the TBS pictogram, but not in full view of the public. *The manager corrected this anomaly while we were there.*

During his on-site visit, the auditor was greeted in English only. However, he was provided with service in French of very good quality. During his interview with the manager, the auditor was told that this point of service has three employees, of whom only one is bilingual. The manager stated that employees are aware of their linguistic obligations.

Radium Hot Springs

It should be noted that the hot springs counter is only a few metres away from the Kootenay Park Information Centre.

Our telephone calls and on-site visit identified a number of problems at this point of service.

On his first call, our auditor was greeted in English only and he had to wait a while before the employee decides to seek assistance from a bilingual colleague to provide service in French. On his second call, a two-language greeting was used and service in French was of good quality.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages and the point of service displayed the TBS pictogram in full view of the public. On his visit, the auditor was greeted in English only and service could not be provided in French. Furthermore, the employee did not seek assistance from a bilingual colleague, stationed only a few metres away, to provide services in French.

The point of service has 25 employees, working on two shifts, and only three fill positions requiring knowledge of both official languages. Staff did not seem to fully understand the requirements of the OLA nor their obligations in matters of services in both English and French.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Canadian Heritage:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone 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 park is able to provide service over the telephone in both official languages at all times;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the TBS pictogram is displayed in full view of the public;
4. 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;
5. ensure, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, that this park is able to provide services in person in both official languages, at all times;
6. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this park follow established procedures for transferring (in French) calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;

7. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this park follow established procedures for referring (in French) French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
8. ensure, within three months after the publication of this report, that the number of bilingual positions and employees at this park is sufficient to ensure that French-speaking citizens receive quality services in their language in just as timely a fashion as English-speaking citizens;
9. officially inform employees, within two months after the publication of this report, of their obligation to serve the public in both official languages;
10. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the following English-only sign: "Administration office 400 m - Redstreak Road Kootenay National Park 800m" is in both official languages;
11. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the receipt handed out at the West toll booth is in both official languages.

Department's response

Since the audit was conducted, the following measures have been taken in response to the recommendations.

Training sessions have been held for employees who answer the telephone or meet the public to ensure that they provide service in both official languages, provide active offer of service and understand the needs of the French-speaking community. The purpose of these training sessions is to ensure that employees follow established procedures for transferring calls (in French) and referring clients (in French) to bilingual colleagues. The training sessions will also be held this year, and park management frequently reminds staff of their official languages obligations.

The Treasury Board Secretariat's pictogram is now placed so as to be clearly visible to the public in all the public buildings at Kootenay National Park.

Kootenay National Park is continuing to ensure that an adequate number of positions are designated bilingual. It is also continuing to recruit bilingual employees to fill these positions. Active offer of service in French is ensured through the optimum use of bilingual staff in visitor reception zones.

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The sign indicating "Administration office 400 m - Redstreak Road Kootenay National Park 800 m" is not located in the Park, but on the outskirts of the urban perimeter of Radium Hot Springs. Since it is not in the National Park, it is under provincial jurisdiction. Parks Canada will try to have the province approve the installation of bilingual road signs this summer.

The receipts distributed at the west booth are now issued in both official languages.

Citizenship and Immigration

Canada Immigration Centre

(15194)

210 Deas Throughway
(Port of Entry Via White Rock)
Douglas, British Columbia
V4B 5A8
(604) 535-5450

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.

Our auditors made three telephone calls to this office. A two-language greeting was used only once. Service in French was never available. Clients are provided, in English only, with a Vancouver telephone number.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, except for a home-made sign (which was taped to the window) detailing the hours the office was open. The office displayed the TBS pictogram, but not in full view of the public.

There was no active offer of service at the counter. The auditor was eventually served in French, but not immediately. The employee at the reception area spoke to him in English, before calling a bilingual colleague and having him talk to that person on the phone. At that point, the service in French was quite good. This office has six bilingual employees -- two per shift.

The management did not seem to be familiar with the requirements of the OLA. The employees were informed of their official languages responsibilities, but there was some confusion as to what this entailed. One employee was of the opinion that active offer was necessary on the phone, but not when greeting clients in person.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Citizenship and Immigration:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone 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 service over the telephone in both official languages at all times;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all signage at the office is in both official languages, including home-made signs;
4. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the TBS pictogram is displayed in full view of the public;
5. 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;
6. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office follow established procedures for transferring (in French) calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
7. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office follow established procedures for referring (in French) French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
8. officially inform employees, within two months after the publication of this report, of their obligation to serve the public in both official languages.

Department's comments

The manager has informed all employees in the office, during staff meetings, that greetings must be in English and French. The manager will be reminding employees of this requirement on a regular basis during staff meetings.

The Douglas office was made aware of the requirement to provide service over the telephone in both official languages. (There are six employees per shift and, of the six employees, two are bilingual. Thus, 33 % of the employees in the Douglas office can provide bilingual service to the public).

The Douglas office has made the appropriate changes to their signage to meet the requirements of the *Official Languages Act*.

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

Employees have been reminded at staff meetings of their obligations when greeting the general public, to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or French.

Bilingual staff are well-known in the Douglas office. Staff are being reminded to transfer calls from French-speaking clients, in French, to their bilingual colleagues.

The office is currently developing formal procedures for referring French-speaking clients to bilingual colleagues. Staff will be reminded regularly of these procedures and of the need to follow them scrupulously.

Employees are regularly informed of their obligation to serve the public in both official languages.

Environment Canada
Pacific and Yukon Regional Office
(15226)

Airport Square
1200 West 73rd Avenue
Suite 700
Vancouver, British Columbia
V7M 3H7
(604) 664-9100

When we audited this office in 1994, we received satisfactory service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that service in French over the telephone has improved somewhat and service in person remains satisfactory.

We made two telephone calls to this office. A two-language greeting was used on both calls and service provided in French was of very good quality.

The office address is different from the one listed in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages. Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. However, not all documentation intended for the public was available in both official languages. Forms were in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public.

During his on-site, our auditor was greeted in English only. However, he received adequate service in French.

This office has 17 positions which require the superior or the intermediate level of language proficiency in both official languages. All incumbents of bilingual positions meet or exceed the linguistic requirements. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations. This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Environment Canada:

1. inform TBS immediately of the appropriate address to enter in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all documentation intended for the public is available 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.

Department's response

The following actions have been taken to address the recommendations:

- The appropriate office address was communicated to the TBS on November 5th 1999.
- Publications are now clearly displayed side by side in both official languages at the reception area.
- Frontline receptionists have been trained to greet visitors in both official languages. Written instructions have been posted by the phone as a reference guide.

Environment Canada

Weather Office

(15237)

1640 Electra Boulevard
Suite 202
Victoria, British Columbia
V8L 5V4
(250) 363-8728

There are a number of phone numbers in the phone book under Environment Canada that offer recorded messages detailing the weather forecast. Only the first listing is bilingual, and that is the designated bilingual phone number. The recorded message offers the weather in both official languages.

When he visited the office, the auditor was told that the office no longer served the public: the office provides weather services only to the airport's control office. Another office had been designated bilingual elsewhere in Victoria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Environment Canada:

1. inform TBS immediately of the appropriate address and telephone numbers to enter in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages in Victoria;
2. to review the office's mandate to determine if its registration in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages is still relevant.

Department's response

The following actions have been taken to address the recommendations:

- The information related to the appropriate address and telephone numbers of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages in Victoria was communicated to the TBS on November 5th 1999.

- There is no longer an office directly serving the public in Victoria. There are however ATAD (automated telephone answering device) numbers providing recorded weather services to the public in both official languages.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

(91074)

Pacific Biological Station
Hammond Bay Road
Nanaimo, British Columbia
V9R 5K6
(250) 756-7000

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

Two telephone calls were made to this office. On each call, the greeting was in English only. On only one occasion it was possible to be served in French and that was with great difficulty. For example, our auditor was told, in French, "Je ne parle pas français." When he asked in French whether anyone else spoke French, the person replied "Non."

Both exterior and interior signage was in English only. The TBS pictogram and poster were clearly visible, but there was no verbal active offer. When the auditor spoke in French to the commissioner on duty, the commissioner replied that he did not speak French. The auditor had to ask in English for someone who spoke French, before the commissioner called a bilingual employee.

This office has four bilingual employees. The bilingual positions require a superior level of proficiency in both languages and the incumbents meet the linguistic requirements. The manager informed the auditor that the commissioners have been informed of the standard procedures to follow when answering the phone or greeting clients. A bilingual employee, though she is not herself a specialist in all fields of marine biology, will direct any calls that involve a detailed knowledge of the research being done to a competent French-speaking expert. Also, the director stated that he insisted that their new website be bilingual.

Staff did not seem to fully understand the requirements of the OLA nor their obligations in matters of services in both English and French.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Fisheries and Oceans Canada:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone 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 service over the telephone in both official languages at all times;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all exterior and interior signage at the office is in both official languages;
4. 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;
5. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office follow established procedures for transferring (in French) calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
6. 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 (in French) French-speaking clients to bilingual staff;
7. officially inform employees, within two months after the publication of this report, of their obligation to serve the public in both official languages.

Department's response

Employees will be reminded of the obligation to offer service to the public in both official languages. Staff will be provided with a list of designated bilingual employees and asked to provide a two-language greeting when responding to calls from the public. Staff will also be instructed on the proper protocol for transferring calls to designated bilingual employees. In addition, commissionaires will be asked to respond to inquiries outside of normal working hours in a similar fashion. Exterior and interior signage will be replaced with bilingual signage as facilities are updated.

Commissioner's comments

The COL is of the opinion that the signage issue should be addressed as soon as possible. Accordingly, the COL would like to receive, within two months after the publication of this report, a copy of the action plan and timetable required to rectify exterior and interior signage.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Canadian Coast Guard Canada

(1213)

Pacific Region
Navigable Waters Protection Division
350 - 555 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6B 5G3
(604) 775-8867

This office was not included in our 1994 study. The 1998 review shows that it has difficulty in providing service in French consistently over the telephone.

Our auditor placed two telephone calls to (604) 775-8867, the number listed in the local telephone directory and received a two-language greeting both times. Service in French was barely satisfactory on the first call and poor on the second call. We have also noted that the office telephone number is different from the one listed in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Documentation and forms intended for the public were not available in both official languages. For example, in the Navigable Waters Protection Act Information Package, only the Act and the Regulations are available in both official languages for the public. The application form in this package was available in English only. The office did not display the TBS pictogram so that members of the public know that it provides service in both official languages.

During his on-site 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.

The office has eight employees, but none of the positions requires knowledge of both official languages. Staff did not seem to fully understand the requirements of the OLA nor their obligations in matters of services in both English and French. Staff were unaware that the office is designated bilingual. This office does not have regular contact with representatives of 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Fisheries and Oceans Canada:

1. inform TBS immediately of the appropriate telephone numbers to enter in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages;
2. 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 in both official languages at all times;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the TBS pictogram is displayed in full view of the public;
4. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all documentation intended for the public, including forms, is available in both official languages;
5. 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;
6. 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;
7. officially inform employees, within two months after the publication of this report, of their obligation to serve the public in both official languages;
8. ensure, within three months after the publication of this report, that the office contacts the local French-speaking community to identify its needs and inform its members of the services provided by the office.

Department's response

The appropriate telephone number to enter in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages is (604) 775-8867. By referring callers to a designated bilingual employee in the Department, this office is able to provide quality bilingual service over the telephone.

The TBS pictogram is displayed in full view of the public at the front desk reception. All employees of this Department who meet the public use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate in the official language of their choice. All staff have attended a one-day training course to assist them in their obligation to providing members of the public with service in both official languages.

The Internet will be used to identify the needs of the French-speaking community and inform them of Navigable Water Protection Act requirements. The French-speaking client base is less than 1 % of all clients. All documentation intended for the public has been translated and is now available in both official languages.

Commissioner's comments

By using the Internet to identify the needs of the French-speaking community and inform them of Navigable Water Protection Act requirements, Fisheries and Oceans Canada will only reach the French-speaking community members subscribing to the Internet. For this reason, the COL wishes to receive, no later than three months after publication of this report, additional information on the measures the office plans to take in order to reach members of the French-speaking community who are not wired to the Internet.

Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Passport Office Regional Office

(15277)

Sinclair Centre, Suite 240
757 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6C 1A1
(604) 666-0942

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

Three telephone calls were made to (604) 666-0942, the number listed in the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual. A two-language greeting was used on only one of the two calls. Twice, service in French was available and it was of very good quality. The following numbers, which are listed in local telephone directories, should also be included in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages: (604) 586-2500, (604) 775-6250 and 1 800 567-6868.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as was documentation available to the public. The TBS pictogram was clearly visible to the public. The numbering system and wickets are also clearly marked to indicate to the public where two-language service is available.

During his on-site visit, our auditor was greeted in both official languages and service in French was adequate.

This office has 25 positions, five of which require the intermediate level of proficiency in both languages. All incumbents of bilingual positions meet the linguistic requirements. Staff have been informed of the office's linguistic obligations by means of written directives and reminders issued at meetings. This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Passport Office:

1. inform TBS immediately of the appropriate telephone numbers to enter in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages; (*Following our visit, management had the appropriate telephone numbers listed in the directory.*)
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
3. 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 in both official languages at all times.

Department's response

The following actions have been taken to address the recommendations:

- Managers have made sure that the appropriate telephone numbers were listed in the directory and the TBS has been informed.
- Employees have been using a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate in the language of their choice. In addition, prompt cards with basic sentences in both official languages have been prepared and distributed to all Passport Offices in order to assist unilingual examiners in greeting the public in both official languages.
- Managers have ensured that all telephone numbers listed in the TBS directory would be answered in both official languages as well as sufficient bilingual staff provide appropriate service to its clientele at all times.

Health Canada

Health Protection Branch

(15347)

3155 Willingdon Green
Burnaby, British Columbia
V5G 4P2
(604) 666-2729, 666-3350, 666-2083

This office was not part of the 1994 study. The 1998 review shows the service is of good quality, both over the telephone and in person.

We made two telephone calls to this office. A two-language greeting was used on both calls and service provided in French was adequate. The only number listed for Health Canada in the Vancouver telephone directory is (604) 666-2083, the general information number. The TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual lists different numbers for this office: (604) 666-3350 and (604) 666-2729.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as were documentation and forms. The office displayed the TBS pictogram, but was not displayed in full view of the public.

When our auditor visited the office, he was greeted in English only but obtained very good service in French once he indicated his language preference.

This office has 45 employees, three of whom are bilingual, including the director. Bilingual positions require the superior or the intermediate level of language proficiency in both official languages. All incumbents of bilingual positions meet or exceed the linguistic requirements. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Health Canada:

1. inform TBS immediately of the appropriate telephone numbers to enter in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services 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 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, Health Canada had not provided us with its comments.

Human Resources Development

Income Security Programs

(92313)

235 Landsdowne Street
Kamloops, British Columbia
V2C 2E7
1-800-277-9914; 1-800-277-9915

The office moved from 243 Seymour Street to 235 Landsdowne Street, in 1998.

During our 1994 study, we received good service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has deteriorated.

This office provides telephone service in both official languages by means of a 1-800 number.

Exterior signage was in both official languages. However, interior signage was in English only, for example: "The application, job listing, SIN applications - Report here: Old age security, CPP, Veterans, Please wait for service at wicket, Closed." Forms intended for the public were available in English and French. However, documentation intended for the public was not available in both official languages. Furthermore, the office did not display the TBS pictogram so that members of the public know that it provides service in both official languages.

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

This office has 78 employees, four of whom are bilingual. Bilingual positions require the superior or the intermediate level of language proficiency in both official languages. All incumbents of bilingual positions meet or exceed the linguistic requirements. However, the quality of service in French would be increased if a bilingual employee was posted in each sector of operations, for example in Old Age Security. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Department of Human Resources Development:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all interior signage at the office 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 all documentation intended for the public is available in both official languages;
4. 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;
5. inform TBS immediately of the appropriate address to enter in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages.

Department's response

Since the auditor last visit, the number of TBS pictograms has been increased and displayed in full view of the public in all the offices visited. All interior signage, forms, publications and documentation for the public are now in both official languages and the TBS directory of federal offices has been updated.

Reminders on the importance of actively offering service to indicate that services are available in either language have been sent to all employees. As well, a reception station has been established to greet clients in both official languages and to refer French-speaking clients to bilingual staff.

Human Resources Development

Human Resources Centre of Canada

(15132)

60 Front Street
Room 201
Nanaimo, British Columbia
V9R 5H7
(250) 754-0222

When we conducted our study in 1994, this office provided good service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has considerably deteriorated.

At this number a recorded message greets callers. The message has only two words in French: "bonjour" and "merci." All information is in English only, including the instruction to press the appropriate number to speak with the receptionist. Two telephone calls were made and in both cases, service in French was not available.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, except for a few home-made signs, for example: "Please use the North entrance." Documentation and forms intended for the public were not available in both official languages. Furthermore, the office did not display the TBS pictogram so that members of the public know that it provides service in both official languages.

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

The office has seven bilingual employees and that it can offer two-language services in all sectors of operations. Management and staff did not seem to fully understand all the requirements of the OLA in matters of service to the public.

The manager told the auditor that the front end was being revamped and that the signs were to be in both official languages. He was surprised that some of the documentation was not available in both official languages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Department of Human Resources Development:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the recorded message at (250) 754-0222 is in both official languages;

2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;
3. 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 in both official languages at all times;
4. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all signage at the office is in both official languages, including home-made signs;
5. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the TBS pictogram is displayed in full view of the public;
6. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all documentation intended for the public, including forms, is available in both official languages;
7. 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;
8. inform, managers and employees, within two months after the publication of this report, of their obligation to serve the public in both official languages.

Department's response

Since the auditor last visit, the number of TBS pictograms has been increased and displayed in full view of the public in all the offices visited. All interior signage, forms, publications and documentation for the public are now in both official languages and the TBS directory of federal offices has been updated.

Front-line employees are greeting members of the public in both official languages and our recorded message is now in both official languages. Training sessions on bilingual greetings will be organized and offered to familiarize employees providing service to the public with how to make an appropriate active offer over the phone.

Human Resources Development

Human Resources Centre of Canada

(15138)

1190 Second Avenue
Prince George, British Columbia
V2L 3B2
(250) 561-5200

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.

The auditor made two telephone calls to this office. A two-language greeting was used on both calls and service provided in French was of very good quality.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, with the exception of a few home-made signs, for examples: "Restricted areas do not enter" (outside) and "Please report to reception at last wickets" (inside). Documentation and forms intended for the public were available in both official languages. However, the office did not display the TBS pictogram so that members of the public know that it provides service in both official languages and announcements intended for the public were in English only.

During his on-site 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.

This office has 89 employees, four of whom are bilingual. Bilingual positions require the intermediate level of proficiency in both languages. All incumbents of bilingual positions meet or exceed the linguistic requirements. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations. This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Department of Human Resources Development:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all signage at the office is in both official languages, including home-made signs;
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 announcements intended for clients are in both official languages;

4. 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

Since the auditor last visit, the number of TBS pictograms has been increased and displayed in full view of the public in all the offices visited.

At the HRCC in Prince George, staff now greet clients in both official languages to encourage the members of the public to communicate in the official language of their choice. All announcements intended for clients are now in both official languages, and all signage, including home-made signs, are in both official languages. The office is also committed to continue a strong relationship with the French-speaking community.

Human Resources Development

Human Resources Centre of Canada

(15166)

125 Tenth Avenue East
Vancouver, British Columbia
V5T 1Z3
(604) 872-7431

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

The office address and telephone number are different from those listed in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages.

We called this office twice. A two-language greeting was used on both calls and service provided in French was of very good quality.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as were documentation and forms. The TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public.

During his on-site visit, our auditor was greeted in both official languages and service in French was of very good quality.

This office has 146 positions, 23 of which require the superior or the intermediate level of language proficiency in both official languages. All incumbents of bilingual positions meet or exceed the linguistic requirements. Staff have been informed of the office's linguistic obligations by means of written directives and reminders issued at meetings. This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

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

RECOMMENDATION

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Department of Human Resources Development:

1. inform TBS immediately of the appropriate address and telephone numbers to enter in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services in both official languages.

Department's response

The TBS directory of federal offices has been updated.

Human Resources Development

Human Resources Centre of Canada

(15169)

1260 Government Road
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 3M4
(250) 363-3481

During our study in 1994, we received good service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has deteriorated.

At (250) 363-3481, there is a recorded message which gives its entire communiqué in English, before playing the message in French. The message lists a series of numbers to call for different services. When the auditor called one of these numbers, there was no active offer of service in both official languages. When he started speaking French, the employee asked him: "Do you speak any English?" After insisting to be served in French, the auditor was then given another number to call. Overall, it is quite difficult to be served in French on the phone, since many barriers are in place that might discourage a French-speaking client from choosing to be served in French.

Exterior and interior signage as well as forms intended for the public were in both official languages. Documentation intended for the public was not available in both official languages. Announcements intended for the public were in English only. Furthermore, the office did not display the TBS pictogram so that members of the public know that it provides service in both official languages.

The commissionaire would often make announcements to those waiting to be served, and these were only in English. When the auditor approached the reception desk, there was no active offer of service in both official languages. When he started speaking French, he was asked in English if he wanted to be served in French. The employee had to call several bilingual staff members before finding one who was free. It was finally possible to be served in French, and that service was quite good, though many French-speaking clients placed in such a situation would likely have felt compelled to switch to English in order to obtain their services.

This office has 55 employees, seven of whom are bilingual. However, it has no bilingual receptionist to greet and refer French-speaking clients to bilingual staff and there is no bilingual employee in the employment area to offer counselling. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations.

This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Department of Human Resources Development:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone 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 service over the telephone in both official languages at all times;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the TBS pictogram is displayed in full view of the public;
4. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all documentation intended for the public is available in both official languages;
5. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that announcements intended for clients are in both official languages;
6. 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;
7. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office follow established procedures for transferring (in French) calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
8. 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 (in French) French-speaking clients to bilingual staff.

Department's response

Since the auditor last visit, the number of TBS pictograms has been increased and displayed in full view of the public in all the offices visited. All interior signage, forms, publications and documentation for the public are now in both official languages and the TBS directory of federal offices has been updated.

At the HRCC in Victoria, all announcements intended for clients are now in both official languages. A reception station has been established to greet in-person clients in both official languages. The staff now greet the clients in both official languages over the phone to encourage the members of the public to communicate in the official language of their choice. Our employees have also been reminded of their obligation to refer French-speaking clients to bilingual staff in the official language of the clients' choice. The office is also committed to continue a strong relationship with the French-speaking community.

Industry Canada
Pacific Regional Office
(15079)

300 West Georgia Street
Room 2000
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6B 6E1
(604) 666-5032 / (604) 666-5000

We did not audit the delivery of services in French at this office in 1994. The 1998 review shows the service is of very good quality, both over the telephone and in person.

We made two telephone calls to this office. A two-language greeting was used on both calls and service provided in French was of very good quality.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Documentation and forms intended for the public were available in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public.

During his on-site visit, our auditor was greeted in both official languages and service in French was of very good quality.

This office has 100 employees, 21 of whom are in bilingual positions. All incumbents of bilingual positions meet or exceed the linguistic requirements. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations. This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

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

Justice Canada

(15396)

Regional Office
840 Howe Street
Suite 900
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6Z 2S9
(604) 666-2061

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

Our auditor made two telephone calls to (604) 666-2061, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. The greeting was in both official languages for the second call and in English only for the first call. Our auditor subsequently received very good service in French, on each call.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, as were documentation and forms. The TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public.

During his on-site visit, our auditor was greeted in English only. In answer to a question asked in French by our auditor, the employee immediately called upon her bilingual colleague to provide assistance. He received very good quality service in French.

This office has 265 positions, 14 of which require the superior or the intermediate level of language proficiency in both official languages. All incumbents of bilingual positions meet or exceed the linguistic requirements. In addition, there is at least one lawyer in each of the six key legal sectors who can provide two-language services. Staff have been informed of the office's linguistic obligations by means of written directives and reminders issued at meetings.

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 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 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 Department will, within the stipulated timeframe, initiate communication with officials of the Vancouver office to congratulate them on the improvements and successes noted in the report, and shall address issues related to the active offer of service in both official languages. This will be done by drawing attention to Part IV of the *Official Languages Act* and in particular the Section (28) that deals with active offer of service. We are confident that dialogue on this matter will secure a high quality of active offer of service in the Department Vancouver office.

National Defence

Emergency Preparedness Canada

(15103)

4220 Commerce Circle
Suite 104
Victoria, British Columbia
V8Z 6N6
(250) 363-3621

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

We made two telephone calls to this office. A two-language greeting was used on each call and service in French was of good quality. In both cases, the call transfer was in French. Unfortunately, the quality of the French can be poor if the director general, who is fluently bilingual, is away from the office. However, when this occurs, the employee will take the caller's phone number in French and will have either the director general or a more fluent employee from their Central Office call the client. Our call was returned in a few minutes.

The office's phone number is listed in the French section of the Government of Canada blue pages. However, this office is not listed in *L'Annuaire 1998/1999, La Colombie-Britannique à votre service en français*.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Documentation intended for the public was also available in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public.

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

One of the three employees of this office is bilingual. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations. This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Department of National Defence:

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

You are correct in claiming that the office staff who meet the public should use a bilingual greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French. The Director of Official Languages has already been in contact with the British Columbia Regional Director of Emergency Preparedness Canada who has taken appropriate measures to rectify the situation.

Public Service Commission

(15423)

Sinclair Centre, 2nd Floor
757 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6C 3M2
(604) 666-4829
(604) 666-0350

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

Our telephone audits revealed that the wrong number, (604) 666-3762, had been listed in the TBS directory. The numbers listed in the Vancouver telephone book are (604) 666-4829 for general inquiries and (604) 666-0350 for the 24-hours job information line. When our auditor called (604) 666-4829, she received a two-language greeting and very good service in French. Her call to the latter number showed that it is an automated system with greeting and messages in both languages. The client is then given a choice of language of service. After choosing French, our auditor had no difficulty being served.

The exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. Documentation and forms intended for the public were also available in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public.

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

This office has 37 positions, 15 of which require the superior or the intermediate level of language proficiency in both official languages. This includes five French-language teachers. All incumbents of bilingual positions meet the linguistic requirements. Also, two employees whose positions require knowledge of English only have skills in French. Staff have been informed of the office's linguistic obligations by means of written directives and reminders issued at meetings. This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Public Service Commission:

1. inform TBS immediately of the appropriate telephone numbers to enter in the directory of federal offices designated to provide services 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.

Commission's response

We have contacted the Treasury Board Secretariat to have the erroneous telephone number that was listed in the directory of federal offices designated to provide service in both official languages corrected.

All staff members who deal with the public have also been reminded to use a bilingual greeting in order to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in the official language of their choice. This requirement has also been included in a procedure for everyone who provides reception service.

Public Works and Government Services

(3428)

1230 Government Street
4th Floor
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 3X4
(250) 363-8000

This office was not included in our 1994 study. The 1998 review shows the service is of very good quality, both over the telephone and in person.

Auditors made three telephone calls to this office. A two-language greeting was used twice. On one occasion, the employee who answered the phone did not actively offer services in both official languages and she told the auditor in English that someone would call him back in a few minutes. Service in French was, however, of very good quality on each occasion.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages and the TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public. On the other hand, documentation and forms intended for the public were not available in both official languages.

During his on-site visit, our auditor was greeted in both official languages and service in French was of very good quality.

The receptionist is the only bilingual employee. However, there is a bilingual placement officer in Vancouver, and calls are transferred to him when the bilingual receptionist in Victoria is unavailable to answer a client. Following an administrative arrangement, the Public Service Commission staff answer any incoming calls when the bilingual officer is away (for lunch or on holiday). The office should increase its two-language capability as the administrative arrangements are inadequate to offer two-language services on a regular basis.

Staff are aware of their linguistic obligations. This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Department of Public Works and Government Services:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone 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 documentation intended for the public, including forms, is available in both official languages;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office follow established procedures for transferring (in French) calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
4. Ensure, three months after the publication of this report, that the office has an adequate number of bilingual employees in order to offer satisfactory service in French on a regular basis.

Department's response

The following actions have been taken to address the recommendations:

- Employees who answer the telephone have been advised of their obligations of providing a bilingual active offer to the public.
- Documentation which is displayed in the reception area for the public is now either printed in both official languages or there are separate French and English copies displayed together. Where there are documents in only one language, these have been removed from the display cabinet until they are available in the other official language.
- All employees responsible for answering the Reception Desk telephone were given a copy of the "Active Offer of Services" card and the regional procedures. The names and numbers of the contacts have also been reviewed and brought up to date.
- This office is now in a work force adjustment situation as a result of change in the organization, with no hiring taking place at this time. Due to the low contact, it is not reasonable to send an employee on full time language training when they will be unable to fully utilize and maintain their level. A review was recently made of the bilingual contacts in the Vancouver office. At the present time the best solution would be for the call to be transferred to a bilingual contact in the Vancouver office.

Commissioner's comments

The COL does not believe that transferring calls to a bilingual contact in the Vancouver office is sufficient to provide at all times a service of equal quality to French-speaking citizens as that offered to English-speaking ones. She would like to be informed, within three months after the publication of this report, of additional measures the Department will take to address this issue.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Kamloops Sub-Division HQ

(3007)

1280 Trans-Canada Highway West
Kamloops, British Columbia
V2C 5Y5
828-3130

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 much.

Two telephone calls were made to this office. On each call, the greeting was in English only. In both cases, service in French was not available. We have also noted that the number where services in French are available is not listed in the local telephone book.

Exterior signage was in both official languages and the TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public. During his on-site visit, our auditor was greeted in English only. However, as soon as he expressed his language preference, he received adequate service in French. Appointments are required to meet with staff members. The subject matter of the meeting and the client's linguistic preference are known before the meeting -- thus, enabling the office to make any linguistic arrangements needed.

This office has 110 employees, six of whom are bilingual. Bilingual positions require the intermediate level of proficiency in both languages and all incumbents meet or exceed the linguistic requirements. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations. This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

1. ensure that the next issue of the local telephone book lists numbers where services in French are available;
2. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone use a two-language greeting to encourage members of the public to communicate with them in English or in French;

3. 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 in both official languages at all times;
4. 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.

RCMP's response

During the next few months, the Officer in charge of Human Resources for British Columbia will be directing the commanders of designated points of service in the division that they must take the appropriate measures to ensure that their staff greet members of the public in both official languages on the telephone and in person. These initiatives, and other activities currently under way, will help us achieve a corporate culture where the objective of service to the public is fully implemented at all points of service designated under the Official Languages Regulations.

Commissioner's comments

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 and 3 within the prescribed time frames:

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Nanaimo Municipal Detachment

(30382)

303 Prideaux Street
Nanaimo, British Columbia
V9R 2N3
(250) 754-2345

When we audited this detachment in 1994, we received good service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has deteriorated slightly.

We made three telephone calls to this detachment. Each time, the greeting and the call transfer were in English only. However, on each call our auditor received service in French of very good quality.

Exterior signage was in both official languages. However, some interior signs, home-made signs printed on paper, were only in English. The TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public.

During his on-site visit, our auditor was greeted in English only. After he expressed his language preference, he received very good quality service in French. However, the auditor had to wait for several minutes to obtain service in French.

This office has 120 employees, 20 of whom are bilingual. Four of these bilingual officers share the watches to ensure that service is available in both official languages at all times. Staff have been informed of the office's linguistic obligations by means of written directives and reminders issued at meetings. This office does not have regular contact with representatives of 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.

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 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 interior signage at the office is 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. ensure, as soon as possible and within two months after the publication of this report, that this office is able to provide services in person of equivalent quality in both official languages and in just as timely a fashion in English as in French;
5. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office follow established procedures for transferring (in French) calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
6. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office, including municipal employees, follow established procedures for referring (in French) French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
7. ensure, within three months after the publication of this report, that the office contacts the local French-speaking community to identify its needs and inform its members of the services provided by the office.

RCMP's response

During the next few months, the Officer in charge of Human Resources for British Columbia will be directing the commanders of designated points of service in the division that they must take the appropriate measures to ensure that their staff greet members of the public in both official languages on the telephone and in person. These initiatives, and other activities currently under way, will help us achieve a corporate culture where the objective of service to the public is fully implemented at all points of service designated under the Official Languages Regulations.

Commissioner's comments

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 2, 4 and 7 within the prescribed time frames.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Prince George Sub-Division HQ

(3009)

213 - 1323 Fifth Avenue
Prince George, British Columbia
V2L 3L6
(250) 561-3155

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 much. This office has little or no contact with the general public.

Two telephone calls were made to this office. On each call, the greeting was in English only. In both cases, service in French was not available. At (250) 561-3155, the automated system was in English only and it instructed callers to press "5" to speak with the receptionist. Our auditor chose this option. He was told that no one spoke French. The auditor also noted that the telephone number is not listed in the local telephone book.

Exterior signage was in both official languages and, inside, the TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public. During his on-site visit, our auditor was greeted in English only. However, once he indicated his language preference, he received adequate service in French. Appointments are required to meet with staff members. The subject matter of the meeting and the client's linguistic preference are known before the meeting which enables the office to make any linguistic arrangements needed.

This office has 111 positions, seven of which require the intermediate level of proficiency in both languages. All incumbents of bilingual positions meet or exceed the linguistic requirements. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations. This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that recorded message at (250) 561-3155 is in both official languages;
2. ensure that the next issue of the local telephone book lists numbers where services in French are available;

3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone 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 is able to provide service over the telephone in both official languages at all times;
5. 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;
6. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office follow established procedures for transferring (in French) calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues.

RCMP's response

During the next few months, the Officer in charge of Human Resources for British Columbia will be directing the commanders of designated points of service in the division that they must take the appropriate measures to ensure that their staff greet members of the public in both official languages on the telephone and in person. These initiatives, and other activities currently under way, will help us achieve a corporate culture where the objective of service to the public is fully implemented at all points of service designated under the Official Languages Regulations.

Commissioner's comments

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 4 within the prescribed time frames.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Surrey Municipal Detachment

(30378)

14355 - 57th Avenue
Surrey, British Columbia
V3X 1A9
(604) 599-0502

When we conducted our study in 1994, we received very good service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has deteriorated slightly.

Auditors placed two telephone calls to this detachment. A two-language greeting was used on one of the two calls. Service in French was available only once however, it was of very good quality.

A large part of exterior and interior signage was in English only. Following are a few examples of exterior signs: "Please use intercom for attendance when front door is locked," "Hours for civil fingerprinting." Inside, unilingual signs such as these greeted visitors: "General Inquiries," "Crime Prevention," "You will be served faster if you wait for service." However, documentation and forms intended for the public were available in both official languages and the TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public.

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

This detachment has eight bilingual positions out of 490. These bilingual positions require the intermediate level of proficiency in both languages. All incumbents of bilingual positions meet or exceed the linguistic requirements. Office staff are aware of their linguistic obligations. This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

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 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 service over the telephone in both official languages at all times;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all exterior and interior signage at the office is in both official languages;
4. 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.

RCMP's response

During the next few months, the Officer in charge of Human Resources for British Columbia will be directing the commanders of designated points of service in the division that they must take the appropriate measures to ensure that their staff greet members of the public in both official languages on the telephone and in person. These initiatives, and other activities currently under way, will help us achieve a corporate culture where the objective of service to the public is fully implemented at all points of service designated under the Official Languages Regulations.

Commissioner's comments

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 2 and 3 within the prescribed time frames.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Victoria Sub-Division HQ

(86285)

2881 Nanaimo Street
Victoria, British Columbia
V8T 4Z8
(250) 380-6161

When we visited this office in 1994, we received good service in French. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has deteriorated and that improvements are needed.

Auditors made four telephone calls to this detachment. A two-language greeting was never used. Service in French was available only once.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages, except for home-made displays that were only in English. For examples, "Northwest Mounted Police" and "Royal Canadian Mounted Police" were listed under photos. Documentation intended for the public was available in both official languages. The TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public.

There was no active offer when on the part of the commissionaire at the reception desk. When the auditor spoke in French, the commissionaire told him "in French", that he did not speak French. The auditor had to insist in order to be served in French, and it took well over ten minutes -- this delay is unacceptable -- to obtain service in French. Once a bilingual staff member was found, the quality of service in French was excellent.

This office has 50 employees, ten of whom are bilingual. Bilingual positions require the intermediate level of proficiency in both languages and all incumbents meet the linguistic requirements.

Staff did not seem to fully understand the requirements of the OLA nor their obligations in matters of services in both English and French. This office does not have regular contact with representatives of 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.

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 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 service over the telephone in both official languages at all times;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all signage at the office is in both official languages, including home-made signs;
4. 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;
5. ensure, as soon as possible and within two months after the publication of this report, that this office is able to provide services in person of equivalent quality in both official languages and in just as timely a fashion in French as in English;
6. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office follow established procedures for transferring (in French) calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
7. 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 (in French) French-speaking clients to bilingual staff;
8. officially inform employees, within two months after the publication of this report, of their obligation to serve the public in both official languages;
9. ensure, within three months after the publication of this report, that the office contacts the local French-speaking community to identify its needs and inform its members of the services provided by the office.

RCMP's response

During the next few months, the Officer in charge of Human Resources for British Columbia will be directing the commanders of designated points of service in the division that they must take the appropriate measures to ensure that their staff greet members of the public in both official languages on the telephone and in person. These initiatives, and other activities currently under way, will help us achieve a corporate culture where the objective of service to the public is fully implemented at all points of service designated under the Official Languages Regulations.

Commissioner's comments

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 2, 3, 5 and 9 within the prescribed time frames.

Statistics Canada

(1396A)

Toll-free telephone service
1 800 263-1136

When we conducted our study in 1994, good service in French was provided on this toll-free telephone line. The 1998 follow-up shows that the quality of the service remains the same.

Our auditor placed two telephone calls to 1 800 263-1136, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and telephone directories outside the Greater Vancouver area. This number provides a series of prerecorded messages, which are all available in both official languages. The quality of the messages is equally good in English and in French.

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

Statistics Canada

Pacific Region

(15596)

Library Square Tower
300 West Georgia Street, Suite 600
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6B 6C7
(604) 666-3691

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

Two telephone calls were made to (604) 666-3691, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. On both occasions, there was a two-language greeting and our auditor subsequently received very good service in French.

Exterior and interior signage was in both official languages. The TBS pictogram and a TBS poster indicating that the office provides services in both languages were clearly displayed at the receptionist's counter. Documentation and forms were also available in both official languages with the exception of the sign-in sheet for visitors at the front counter.

During his on-site visit, our auditor was greeted in both official languages. The employee at the front counter led the auditor to the computers for public use, explained in French that she could not respond fully to all the questions, and immediately sought the assistance of a bilingual colleague who provided very good service in French.

This office has 50 positions, six of which require knowledge of both official languages at the intermediate or superior level of proficiency. All incumbents meet or exceed the language requirements of their position. Office staff are apprised of their linguistic obligations to serve the public in both official languages through constant reminders issued to them by management and from several E-mail messages sent from Head Office in Ottawa. This office maintains contact with representatives of the French-speaking community.

Following our visit, management ensured that the visitors sign-in sheet was available in both official languages.

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

Veterans Affairs

District Office

(15645)

816 Government Street
Room 232
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 3B3
(250) 363-3836

At the time of our 1994 study, service provided in French at this office left something to be desired. The 1998 follow-up shows that the situation has not improved.

We made two telephone calls to this office. A two-language greeting was used twice. In both cases, the call transfer was in English only. Service in French was, however, of good quality on each occasion.

Exterior signage was in both official languages. All documentation in display racks was available in both official languages, but only the English version was featured. The TBS pictogram was displayed in full view of the public.

During his on-site, the auditor was greeted in English only and service could not be provided in French. Furthermore, the employee did not seek assistance from a bilingual colleague to provide services in French.

None of the positions at this office requires knowledge of both official languages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Department of Veterans Affairs:

1. 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;
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, as soon as possible and within three months after the publication of this report, that this office is able to provide services in person in both official languages, at all times;

4. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office follow established procedures for transferring (in French) calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
5. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office follow established procedures for referring (in French) French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
6. 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.

Department's response

As to the three aspects of the active offer, the Department will:

- ensure immediately that brochures, posters and other documentation provided for public display in the Victoria District Office are displayed with both official languages in evidence;
- by the end of the calendar year 1999 review the established procedures for answering and transferring phone calls from French-speaking clients, and invite a bilingual speaker to staff meetings periodically in order that unilingual reception staff may practice the appropriate phraseology; and
- by the end of the calendar year 1999 review with unilingual reception staff the established procedures for greeting French-speaking clients in person and for referring them appropriately (in French) to their bilingual colleagues.

With respect to the office's two-language capacity to provide services in person at all times, the Veterans Affairs Official Languages Office will:

- examine and report on the language requirements of the positions in Victoria, with the assistance of local management and staff, by the end of March 2000;
- make recommendations with respect to options available for increasing the linguistic capacity in the Victoria Office, by means such as amending the language requirements of positions, exploring language training possibilities for existing staff, considering resourcing options at the first reasonable opportunity as key positions become vacant, or sharing bilingual human resources with other Federal departments in the same building; and

- seek a decision regarding corrective action that will resolve the two-language capacity issue in Victoria by June 2000.

Commissioner's comments

The COL would like to obtain, within six months after the publication of this report, a copy of the human resources plan developed to increase the two-language complement of positions within the office. She would also like to be informed, within two months after the publication of this report, of the temporary measures put in place to provide services in both official languages pending improvement of the office's two-language capability.

Western Economic Diversification Canada

Business Service Centre

(93585)

601 West Cordova Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6B 1G1
(604) 775-5525

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 in person, but is unable to provide the same service over the telephone.

Our auditor placed two telephone calls to (604) 775-5525, the number listed in both the TBS directory of federal offices designated bilingual and the local telephone directory. On the first call, the auditor heard a recorded message in both official languages before the receptionist greeted him in English only. In response to his question in French, the employee immediately transferred him to a bilingual officer who provided very good service in French. On the second call, our auditor was greeted in English only he could not obtain service in French.

Exterior and interior signage was not fully bilingual, nor were documentation and forms available to the public. The TBS pictogram indicating that this office is designated to provide two-language service was also missing.

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

The Centre has 22 employees, four of whom are bilingual. There is, however, only one designated bilingual position. Staff members (80% are provincial government employees and 20% federal government employees) did not seem to fully understand the requirements of the nor their obligations in matters of services in both English and French. This office does not have regular contact with representatives of 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner therefore recommends that Western Economic Diversification Canada:

1. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that employees who answer the telephone 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 service over the telephone in both official languages at all times;
3. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all exterior and interior signage at the office is in both official languages;
4. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that the TBS pictogram is displayed in full view of the public;
5. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that all documentation intended for the public, including forms, is available in both official languages;
6. 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;
7. ensure, within two months after the publication of this report, that non-bilingual employees of this office follow established procedures for transferring (in French) calls from French-speaking clients to their bilingual colleagues;
8. officially inform employees, within two months after the publication of this report, of their obligation to serve the public in both official languages;
9. ensure, within three months after the publication of this report, that the office contacts the local French-speaking community to identify its needs and inform its members of the services provided by the office.

Department's response

Western Economic Diversification (WD) is proud of the excellent service provided by its Canada business service centres in Western Canada and we are always pleased to be able to improve still further the provision of service to our clients, SMBs. I was therefore particularly pleased to learn that your auditors appreciated the "very good" service in French that they received on their visit to the Canada Business Service Centre - British Columbia. We are aware, however, that it is important to respect the provisions of the federal government's Official Languages Act in all our various initiatives.

In response to your letter, I wish to take up the various issues raised by the nine recommendations made in your preliminary report and explain the measures we have already taken to deal with these issues, as well as the concerns expressed about the telephone service provided by the Centre to French-speaking clients.

WD works in close co-operation with the Government of British Columbia to adapt its services to the needs of the Centre's French-speaking clients. While it is often difficult, under this partnership, to find practical solutions that respect the linguistic priorities of both parties, we are continuing to seek and find mutually acceptable solutions, including responses to the various questions raised in your preliminary report.

Recommendation 1 refers to the need to answer the telephone by greeting clients in both languages. Federal employees do meet this requirement, while many of the provincial employees who work at the Centre (being governed by a different collective agreement) are only encouraged to do so. We will continue to draw the attention of the Centre's federal employees to the importance of bilingual greetings. We will also encourage the provincial employees to voluntarily greet clients in both languages, although it is difficult for us to guarantee anything in this regard.

Recommendation 2 asks that telephone service be fully provided in both official languages. Two bilingual officers currently share these duties. It sometimes happens that a client calling the Centre for the first time and speaking to a unilingual employee is transferred, after an initial unilingual telephone contact, to one of the bilingual federal employees. This method seems to work well, since, to my knowledge, we have never received complaints from clients in British Columbia.

Recommendation 3 deals with the bilingualism of the Centre's interior and exterior signs. I can assure you that, at present, all the signs meet official languages requirements.

Recommendation 4 asks that the TBS pictogram be made fully visible. The pictogram is, in fact, clearly visible, on the Centre's reception counter. However, it is sometimes hidden by publications or circulars inadvertently placed on the counter. Because of the concern you raised, we will move the pictogram to a location where it will be clearly visible to the public.

Recommendation 5 asks that all documents provided to the public by the Centre be in both official languages. All documents except those relating exclusively to provincial programs and services and certain private sector reference documents (e.g., magazines) are available in both official languages. We will continue to ensure that clients can obtain all documents concerning federal government programs, regulations and other initiatives in either official language.

Recommendations 6 and 7 concern greetings to the public in both languages and the transfer of calls to a bilingual officer. These points have been dealt with in my response to recommendation 2.

Recommendation 8, concerning the need to inform employees of their obligation to serve the public in both official languages, has been brought to the attention of the federal and provincial employees, and they have been encouraged to comply with it.

With regard to **recommendation 9**, I am pleased to inform you that the Centre is in regular contact with French-speaking business people and will continue to encourage such contacts. In addition, our bilingual officer meets periodically with the Franco-Canadian Chambre de commerce and the Vancouver office of the Chambre de commerce française. The Centre also

advertizes its services on the back of the cover page of the annual directories of the Chambre, in both official languages.

Commissioner's comments

The COL is pleased to note that the Department of Western Economic Diversification is working in close co-operation with the Government of British Columbia to adapt its services to the needs of the Centre's French-speaking clients. She also believes that the Department should ensure, under this partnership, that practical measures are put in place to increase the Centre's capacity to provide service of comparable quality in both English and French, particularly with regard to greeting members of the public in both official languages and transferring calls from French-speaking clients.

1994 Recommendations

In the report entitled “A Study of Federal Offices Designated to Respond to the Public in Both English and French,” the COL 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 British Columbia.

- **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).