

that in 80 per cent of the cases employees actually meet bilingual requirements at the time the positions are staffed. It is to take into account this improvement that the Government has undertaken a review of the over-all orientation of the language training program.

We are aiming at increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the program while permitting an over-all access to this very important resource. We believe that it is essential to maintain generous access to this program. We want to be sure that members of the Public Service can undertake second language courses at government expense and during working hours. That is part of the commitment which has been made by the Treasury Board.

From April 1, 1987, we have undertaken a massive program to verify the level of bilingualism of all employees who receive the bilingual bonus. We have a double objective in this respect. On the one hand we want to ensure that employees can offer services of a good quality in either of the official languages because we believe that Canadians have the right to communicate in either official language with their federal institution. On the other hand, we also want to ensure that the bilingual bonus is only paid to employees who deserve it and who can meet the bilingualism requirements of their positions.

At the present time some 55,800 employees receive the bonus. Of this number, about 7,800 have a level of bilingualism which is well beyond the language requirement of their position. It makes it costly and in fact useless to retest them. However, all other bonus recipients must take the new second language test over the next three years to confirm their linguistic proficiency. Those who fail obviously will no longer receive the bonus, and the manager must re-examine the position and the employees. The incumbent will then be offered additional training to reach the required level of competence.

We also examined Government scientific activities, an area where we wanted to improve the bilingual aspect. We established a committee of senior science managers from across the Government to review the success of Treasury Board strategies to ensure equitable participation of English and French-speaking Canadians.

The committee has been assembled and includes a senior official from the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and will also advise on further changes to policy should the need for these become apparent.

Let me stress that these efforts are in line with our commitment as expressed in Bill C-72. We are committed to ensuring equal access to appointment and advancement in federal institutions for English and French-speaking Canadians. We are also committed to ensuring that the composition of the workforce of federal institutions tends to reflect the presence of both official language communities of Canada, and takes into account the characteristics of individual institutions.

Supply

We have taken steps through Treasury Board in the field of information technology and office automation. Our officials are consulting with the industry on their ability to enhance the bilingual capability of the systems they supply to the federal Government.

We are also taking steps to ensure the implementation of our policies by all federal agencies.

We have a new management philosophy which involves an increase in the decision-making authority of Ministers as well as their accountability. In this respect, the annual plans are replaced with letters of understanding between the Departments and Treasury Board. The letter of understanding will be prepared after consultation between the Department and the Treasury Board. It will be an understanding of exactly how the Department will implement a better representation of both official languages in that particular Department. They will deal with specific areas, specific objectives and we will expect concrete results from those objectives.

[Translation]

At the end of each year, we will receive progress reports on objectives based on a comprehensive analysis of Ministers' strong and weak points.

[English]

Treasury Board will be able to review these plans, or even take additional measures such as inviting a Deputy Minister to discuss progress or lack of progress in his or her Department. That will take place every year.

We believe that the three-year planning system will strengthen our initiatives, facilitate the implementation of policies in federal institutions, given that letters of understanding will provide a framework for planning and accountability.

No letter of understanding will be signed if a Department or agency does not have in place an adequate system for information gathering, for assessment, for monitoring and auditing. It must also use the necessary measures to be able to report annually to the Treasury Board.

We have also undertaken many audit-related initiatives recently. In 1985, there was a management accountability review of departmental official languages implementation. It covered over 60 Departments and agencies. We examined the management of the program and made formal recommendations where necessary.

The Treasury Board has conducted and continues to conduct follow-ups in these organizations to ensure compliance with government policies.

We are undertaking consultations with other audit centres in Government, including the Comptroller General, the Commissioner of Official Languages, and the Public Service Commission to ensure that duplication is avoided while the official languages aspect is in one way or another covered adequately.