

Private Members' Business

official language from one predominantly unilingual region to another.

The third element of the program, the equal representation of French speaking and English speaking Canadians, bears witness to the commitment of the government and Parliament to official languages.

• (1350)

This commitment means that federal institutions must ensure that their workforce reflects the presence of both linguistic communities in the Canadian population. Under the terms of this commitment, federal institutions must see to it that French and English speaking Canadians alike have equal employment and promotion opportunities.

[English]

It is the responsibility of treasury board to see to it that federal institutions effectively fulfil their legal obligations under parts IV, V and VI of the act and to report to Parliament annually on the status of official languages within the federal institutions covered by its mandate.

To this end, treasury board has been given the authority to recommend regulations and to give effect to the provisions of the act. It is also empowered to issue directives, to monitor and to audit the general compliance of federal institutions with official languages policies, directives and regulations. Treasury board may also evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programs of federal institutions and provide the public and federal employees with information on these policies and programs.

[Translation]

These are powers that the Treasury Board exercises every day in one way or another. These powers enable the Treasury Board to ensure not only that federal institutions fulfil their obligations but also that Canadians receive the services they need in the official language of their choice where prescribed by law and that they have equal employment and promotion opportunities in federal institutions.

The third federal department given specific responsibilities in terms of official languages, which I mentioned earlier, is the Department of Canadian Heritage. This department is responsible for encouraging and promoting a co-ordinated approach to the implementation by federal institutions of the government's commitment to enhance the vitality of official language minorities and to promote both French and English in Canadian society.

I had so many things to say, but I am coming to the end of my 10 minutes. I would simply want to add that I have not yet mentioned the fourth major player, the Commissioner of Official Languages, who also plays a key role in this matter. The

Commissioner of Official Languages has the duty to ensure recognition of the status of each of the official languages and compliance with the spirit and intent of the act, in particular as regards the advancement of French and English in Canadian society.

Unfortunately, I must conclude my presentation. I had so many things to say, but if some of my colleagues are interested in my speech, I am ready to share it with them.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let me start by restating the motion before us today, for the benefit of those who are watching us: As the Official Languages Act is 26 years old, it deem it important that the government thoroughly assess the way the act is applied in the country by appointing someone to carry out a detailed and balanced review of the work done so far and reaffirm Parliament's commitment to a just and adequate policy on official languages.

The Bloc Québécois will have no difficulty voting for this motion. In fact, I requested almost exactly the same thing in a speech I made in this House on October 3. Let us look at where the need for this assessment comes from.

The Official Languages Act stems from the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism set up by Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson in 1963. The act was ultimately passed in 1969 by the Trudeau government in response to the sense of urgency felt at the time.

We will recall that the early 1960s were marked by the first manifestations of the FLQ, which were symptoms of profound discontent within Canada.

• (1355)

In fact, in a preliminary report issued in February 1965, the B and B Commission, as it was nicknamed in those days, stated that measures were urgently required as Canada was undergoing a major crisis.

According to a booklet published by the federal government and entitled *Official Languages Act in Brief*, the objectives of the act are as follows: first, to ensure respect for English and French as the official languages of Canada, and equal status, rights and privileges for these languages in federal institutions. Second, to support the development of English and French language minority communities and to encourage the acceptance and use of both English and French in Canadian society. Third, to set out the powers and duties of federal institutions in the area of official languages.

The document also points out that the provisions of the Official Languages Act stem from the linguistic rights guaranteed by the Constitution. So, the Official Languages Act provides that Parliament and the federal courts must work in both official languages; that the federal government must provide its