

*Official Languages Act*

Clause 35 goes on to provide that in those regions of Canada which are not so prescribed the treatment of both languages in the work environments of the institutions in regions where one official language predominates is reasonably comparable to the treatment of both languages in regions where the other official language predominates.

The prescribed language-of-work regions are those which have been recognized for the purposes by Treasury Board policy since 1977. In these regions federal institutions must ensure that personnel and central services and regularly and widely used work instruments and, after 1991, newly acquired data processing systems, are available to employees in both languages; that where it is appropriate or necessary in order to create a work environment conducive to the use of both official languages supervisors are able to communicate with their employees in both official languages; and that corporate management groups have a functionally bilingual capacity.

These are institutional duties, not individual obligations. It is not, I emphasize, an individual requirement imposed on each supervisory position in the Public Service of Canada, as has been erroneously suggested by some.

Outside the prescribed language-of-work regions the right to use either official language will be more limited because the obligations on federal institutions are less onerous, but this does not mean that there will be no opportunities to use the other language or that there will be no services to government employees or work instruments, for example, that will be made available through the system in both languages. The Governor in Council may make regulations in this regard and may prescribe the manner in which any of the duties of this Part are carried out.

If fairness and flexibility in the application of the language-of-work and services to the public duties are to be maintained, regulations will be necessary. However, the Government has been sensitive and responsive to the concerns of Members of this House by ensuring that the Bill provides appropriate mechanisms for parliamentary oversight and review. One defect in the 1969 official languages legislation raised by the Hon. Robert Stanfield was that it provides inadequate opportunities for Parliament to examine and criticize the manner in which the Bill is administered and the practices adopted under it.

Up until now Treasury Board has had responsibility for the development and administration of government policy in this area with very little direct accountability to Parliament. Henceforth, under the new legislation, Treasury Board's powers and responsibilities are clearly set out. The President of the Treasury Board will make an annual report to Parliament on the programs relating to official languages in respect of which it has responsibility.

The Commissioner of Official Languages may initiate a review of any regulations or directives on official languages and make a report to Parliament. Consultations with minorities and the members of the public will be held on proposed regulations, and all regulations made under the Bill will now be made by the Governor in Council and not by Treasury Board.

A draft of proposed regulations must be tabled in the House at least 30 sitting days before prepublication. Regulations shall be prepublished in the *Canada Gazette* at least 30 days before coming into force, and a reasonable opportunity will be given to interested persons to make representations to the President of the Treasury Board.

Where a regulation is proposed that would add to or delete from the list of prescribed language-of-work regions, it must be laid before each House of Parliament and a motion to disapprove the proposed regulation may be put forward by Members of Parliament.

Finally, the administration of the Act, any regulations or directives made thereunder, and the reports of the Commissioner, the President of the Treasury Board, and the Secretary of State shall be reviewed on a permanent basis by the parliamentary committee.

• (1140)

These measures are consistent with the reform of the regulatory process undertaken by this Government and our philosophy of openness, accessibility and accountability. This was the result of the work of the committee. It was this accountability to Members of Parliament and the co-operation demonstrated through the committee that allowed us to make these amendments to enhance, strengthen and make more open the whole process, which I think is a distinct improvement to the legislation. Again, I commend members of the committee for their help.

[*Translation*]

The Bill restates a goal that has long been part of the Government's official languages policy: full participation in federal institutions by all Canadians, be they English-speaking or French-speaking, regardless of mother tongue or ethnic origin. It is a goal, not an executory duty.

We made a commitment that federal institutions would be staffed with anglophones and francophones in the same proportions as the national population, with due regard for the nature of each institution.

Far from making irrational commitments, we opted for a policy that was acceptable in that it provided equal employment opportunities for all Canadians, without discriminating against English-speaking Canadians or in favour of French-speaking Canadians, that is, in a completely equitable manner.

[*English*]

If we consider that 88 per cent of all bilingual federal Public Service positions are held within the National Capital area and the Province of Québec and that 96 per cent of all unilingual French positions are held in Québec, Hon. Members will quickly realize that there is no basis to the rumours that Francophones are somehow taking over the federal Public Service. In the Province of British Columbia, for example, 99 per cent of the positions are unilingual English, in Alberta it is 98 per cent, in Saskatchewan 97 per cent, in Manitoba 94 per cent and in Ontario 92 per cent. There is no reason to believe that these figures would change unless the make-up of the population in these regions changed substantially.