

Adjournment Debate

[*Translation*]

Mr. Irénée Pelletier (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I must pinch hit for a colleague, and give the answer that comes from the department. But following that answer I will have a word to say to the hon. member who asked the question.

[*English*]

There is no schedule in existence at this time for introducing bilingual services into airports in other provinces of Canada, other than the possibility of such services being provided in the national capital region. Of course one compelling reason for this is that at the present time there are not sufficient bilingual controllers in the air traffic control service to provide such services outside the province of Quebec.

It is also essential that this entry into the provision of bilingual service in the air traffic control service in the province of Quebec, which it must be remembered is a new experience for both the pilots flying in this area and for the controllers providing the service in this area, must be certified to ensure that there is no decrease in safety. With regard to the question as to whether the bilingual or unilingual French pilots will in due course request bilingual service in other provinces, as the minister indicated earlier in reply to a question, this is a hypothetical question and I can only reiterate that at the present time we do not have any intention to provide bilingual services in other provinces.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker—and that does not form part of the answer I have to give the hon. member—I travelled pretty well all over the world, and in most African countries, the French language is used, it is used in France, in Switzerland, in at least 32 countries, and I do not understand at all that the hon. member who lives 3,000 miles away from the place where that is going to apply should come and say that it is a nonsensical reason.

To say that it is a matter of safety rather than a constitutional matter is not really the answer. I travelled across this country. There are pilots who use French, and it is not because one uses that language that one is a less competent pilot than someone who uses the English language.

When you go to Russia you land in the Russian language; when you go to Spain, Italy or some other country of the world you land in the language of that country. I find it absolutely inconceivable that one would come up with questions regarding safety to try to justify a position that one would like to see respected.

The government of Canada already agreed to make it possible, not in the other provinces of this country but in Quebec, for pilots leaving an area of Quebec for another to be able to converse in their language. One would have to be unrealistic to try to take away that entirely legitimate right from people who live in a province and always speak the language of that province.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10:33 p.m.