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## NATIONAL DEFENCE

### Official Languages Strategic Plan— Reduction of Targets

Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, February 20, 2007

## THE SENATE

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### NATIONAL DEFENCE

#### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES STRATEGIC PLAN— REDUCTION OF TARGETS

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Claudette Tardif:** Honourable senators, I was disappointed to learn that in its new strategic plan, the Department of National Defence has reduced its official languages requirements. The plan indicates that the Canadian Forces will divide units along linguistic lines, with 277 English-speaking units, 55 French-speaking units and 222 bilingual units.

This is a definite step backward for linguistic duality in this country. Creating unilingual units and forcing people to work in their second official language in certain situations violate the principle of linguistic duality and the spirit of the Official Languages Act, as it ought to apply in our federal institutions.

Can the minister tell us why the Department of National Defence has been unable to meet its obligations?

[*English*]

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Secretary of State (Seniors)):** I thank the honourable senator for her question and appreciate her concerns with regard to this

matter. The honourable senator has expressed some concerns, which have been expressed by others.

I will simply take the question as notice in order to provide her with the proper response of the Department of National Defence. The department will need time to tell us how it will address this very important issue.

[*Translation*]

**Senator Tardif:** I thank the Leader of the Government for her answer. I would like to ask a supplementary question. Will a francophone soldier from Edmonton be able to work in French in his province, or will he have to move to Quebec to be able to work in French?

[*English*]

**Senator LeBreton:** Honourable senators, my answer to this question is the same as my previous answer. I am not aware of a situation where someone who speaks either one or the other official language would be prevented from working in their own language, no matter where they reside in this country.

I will make the honourable senator's views known to the minister and ask the Department of National Defence if it can provide an answer to address her concerns.