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**Linguistic Duality at 2010 Olympic Games
and Vancouver International Airport**

Questions by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Wednesday, December 9, 2009

THE SENATE

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[Translation]

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LINGUISTIC DUALITY AT 2010 OLYMPIC GAMES AND VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. The Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages has been studying the respect for and promotion of linguistic duality at the 2010 Olympic Games for over two years now. In report after report, the committee has expressed concern about preparations for the games. Commissioner Graham Fraser has also expressed concern.

Yesterday, with just 65 days to go until the games, Graham Fraser indicated that linguistic duality might not be fully respected. Plans for roving bilingual teams have not yet been announced, the agreement between VANOC and the Translation Bureau has not yet been signed, and the Vancouver airport cannot yet adequately meet the need for services in French.

Can the government leader tell us when the plans will be announced, when the agreement will be signed, and when the airport will be able to provide appropriate service to francophone visitors?

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)): I noticed in the honourable senator's question that she stated the Commissioner of Official Languages said, "might." I disagree with that. Although he has not indicated that the scenario the honourable senator paints will come to pass, obviously the Commissioner of Official Languages does not necessarily support that scenario when he uses the word "might."

• (1510)

I have answered this question before, honourable senators, and this is an issue that the government takes seriously. Minister Moore has worked on this issue and consulted with the Commissioner of Official Languages. I wish to assure Senator Tardif, and all honourable senators and parliamentarians, that Canada's 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be bilingual and will respect both official languages of this country. This includes the opening and closing ceremonies, the Cultural Olympiad, the torch relay and every Olympic site.

We expect the organizing committee, VANOC, to deliver on this, and it is working to ensure that this will happen.

In September, Minister Moore announced \$7.7 million in funding to VANOC to provide translation services for the games. That was over and above monies that had been expended before.

We have invested over \$30 million to ensure the success of the Richmond Oval and other Olympic sites. Each venue will have bilingual signs and the Richmond Oval will be no different.

At all levels of the games, whether it is the bilingual component or the security services, all the people involved in the games will truly respect Canada's linguistic duality. The government has made that commitment and I believe it will be living up to it.

[Translation]

Senator Tardif: Honourable senators, the Vancouver airport officials have proposed the following approach to providing services to francophone visitors: distributing cards with pictograms to airport employees.

According to the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, a pictogram is defined as:

A pictorial symbol or sign.

Pictograms are stylized figurative drawings that represent written language but do not transcribe spoken language. Has French in Canada been reduced to a written language that can be expressed through pictograms with no active spoken offer?

When will Vancouver airport employees receive language training so they can actually speak to francophone visitors?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: The Vancouver International Airport is a privately run organization. Having said that, Minister Moore has had countless meetings with officials at the airport. He has walked through the airport. He has made note of many areas in the airport that are not bilingual. He has gone back to the airport. He is doing everything humanly possible that a government can do, and is working with VANOC — because VANOC has an interest in this — to ensure when people arrive in Vancouver at the airport, that Canada's linguistic duality is front and centre.

As honourable senators know, when one arrives at Vancouver Airport, there are many other languages as well. However, we are an officially bilingual country and the government, in cooperation with VANOC and the Vancouver Airport Authority, is taking every step possible to ensure that the signage and directions at Vancouver Airport are bilingual so that people arriving will be serviced in one or other of Canada's official languages.