



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

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PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

Commitment to Bilingualism

Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, September 25, 2012

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[*Translation*]

### PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

#### COMMITMENT TO BILINGUALISM

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, last August, the government posted two notices for senior government positions within federal agencies without requiring the candidates to be bilingual. The two notices issued by the Privy Council Office state that proficiency in both official languages is preferred but not mandatory.

The two job postings were for the position of Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the positions of President, Vice-President and member of the future Social Security Tribunal. The salaries for these senior positions range from \$139,000 to \$262,000.

Honourable senators, Canada's linguistic duality is one of the fundamental and defining characteristics of our country. Why is the government once again abandoning its commitment to official bilingualism?

[*English*]

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I take issue with Senator Tardif's last comment. The fact is that the government has not and will not give up on Canada's commitment to both of our official languages.

With regard to the two positions that the honourable senator has cited, I am not aware of all of the provisions with regard to the posting of these positions. However, I would be happy to seek

information to provide in this chamber. Again, I believe, especially for senior positions and offices of Parliament — the desire and the necessity for someone in such a position to have fluency in both official languages is something that the government supports.

[*Translation*]

**Senator Tardif:** Honourable senators, I have a supplementary question. I would like to thank the leader for promising to find out about these positions. Unfortunately, as you know, these job postings come on the heels of the appointment of a unilingual Auditor General. The government has once again missed an opportunity to show its commitment to protecting official bilingualism within the public service.

Why does the government remain indifferent to the perception — which is alive and well, and growing — that the spirit of Canada's Official Languages Act is being eroded?

[*English*]

**Senator LeBreton:** Again, I take issue with the statement about the erosion of the Official Languages Act. This chamber, in every which way, has been through the circumstances involving the Auditor General and his commitment. He appeared before the Committee of the Whole in this place.

I take issue with the honourable senator's statement, which happens not to be true, that the government is not fully committed. As a matter of fact, for those of us who have been watching the political process over the summer, there was a series of announcements all across the country with regard to Canada's Official Languages Act and the ongoing progress of the Roadmap. This was done in communities all across Canada.

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