



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

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## OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

### AIR CANADA—BILINGUAL SERVICES

Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Wednesday, June 8, 2016

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[Translation]

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#### AIR CANADA—BILINGUAL SERVICES

**Hon. Claudette Tardif:** My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

For years now, Air Canada's customers have been criticizing the lack of service provided by its employees in both official languages. A good number of complaints have been filed since the early 1970s, and some people have even launched lawsuits against the Crown corporation. There have also been a number of investigations and recommendations.

The Commissioner of Official Languages published his special report yesterday. I would like to point out that only two special reports have been published since the act was passed in 1969. The commissioner deplored that after 45 years, the same problems persist. In light of this report from the Commissioner of Official Languages, how does the government plan to follow up to ensure that Air Canada meets its language obligations towards its employees and customers?

**Hon. Peter Harder (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for the question. The government commends the special report from the Commissioner of Official Languages regarding Air Canada, which is currently under review. The government is fully committed to protecting and promoting both official languages. We expect Air Canada to continue to take

measures to meet its bilingualism obligations under the Official Languages Act.

**Senator Tardif:** The Commissioner of Official Languages is calling for changes to the *Air Canada Public Participation Act*. What does the government plan to do to fill the legal void? Furthermore, does the government plan to amend the act in order to clarify some of that corporation's language obligations and strengthen the enforcement mechanisms?

**Senator Harder:** As I already said, the government is determined to protect official languages and is currently reviewing the commissioner's report. I'll transmit your recommendations to the government.

**Senator Tardif:** Thank you, leader. However, for the past 45 years, we've been receiving reports, studies and recommendations. Now is the time to take action. In response to the comments from my honourable colleague, Senator Joyal, about the report from the Commissioner of Official Languages and Bill C-10, does the government plan to strengthen Air Canada's official languages obligations during its discussions with the airline on this bill?

**Senator Harder:** The government has confirmed Air Canada's official languages obligations. I will ask the minister to follow up on your recommendations, in the spirit of this chamber. You are no doubt aware that Senator Pratt raised the issue of strengthening respect for official languages yesterday, and the government and this chamber are calling for this as well.