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FOREIGN AFFAIRS Respecting Linguistic Duality

Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, October 4, 2011

THE SENATE

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[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

RESPECTING LINGUISTIC DUALITY

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has a unique mandate to represent Canadians on the international stage. This also means that he represents both English-speaking Canadians and French-speaking Canadians.

For that reason, every government action and every government speech must appropriately reflect our linguistic duality. When we learned last week that the Minister of Foreign Affairs had gone to great lengths to bypass Treasury Board Secretariat rules by demanding that his business cards be unilingual — that is, solely in English — Canadians began to worry, and with good cause.

We could understand a careless mistake. However, it was a deliberate act by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who clearly demanded and went to great lengths to ensure that his business cards would be printed in English only. I must admit that I am at a loss. Is the minister ashamed of one of Canada's official languages? This is a question of principle that is of vital importance to Canadians. Does the Leader's government support the minister's actions in light of his responsibility to represent Canada and our linguistic duality both here and abroad?

[*English*]

Senator Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I will state again, as I have stated many times in this place, that the government is a strong supporter of the linguistic duality of this country and of the Official Languages Act. I am told that the new business card simply reduced the address, but that his title, Minister of Foreign Affairs, is in both of Canada's official languages. I may be misinformed. I will check.
