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## HERITAGE

### Funding For Linguistic Minorities Programs

Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Wednesday, February 2, 2011

## THE SENATE

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[Translation]

### HERITAGE

#### FUNDING FOR LINGUISTIC MINORITIES PROGRAMS

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Yesterday, we learned that the Department of Canadian Heritage deprived linguistic minorities of much-needed funds because of a backlog of unprocessed funding requests.

The Commissioner of Official Languages has confirmed that these delays in renewing funding are having a negative impact on the development and vitality of a number of official language minority communities, which leads him to believe that the department has failed to meet its obligations under Part VII of the Official Languages Act.

These delays have had a severe impact on the operation and activities of many organizations that provide services to linguistic minorities. How does the Department of Canadian Heritage explain this unequal treatment of Canada's linguistic minorities?

[English]

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government):** I thank the honourable senator for her question. First, the report to which Senator Tardif refers is a report as to what transpired in the past. The Commissioner of Official Languages, himself, stated in that very same report that he is satisfied with the measures our government has taken to improve the situation.

Honourable senators, we have already taken steps. Community groups are receiving more stability and encountering less red tape. For example, for 2010-11, 90 per cent of the official languages groups received confirmation of funding before the fiscal year began on April 1. For 2010-11, approximately one half of official languages groups are receiving funding through multi-year grants, and a 24-week service standard has been implemented, as well as shorter processing times and a single application deadline for all groups.

If honourable senators read the report, they will find that the Commissioner of Official Languages, himself, stated that he is well satisfied with the measures we have taken to address these concerns.

**Senator Tardif:** Honourable senators, for a number of years, the Commissioner of Official Languages has noted the delays at

Canadian Heritage. These delays affect English- and French-language minority communities alike. For example, the Quebec Community Groups Network has expressed its disappointment and frustration for experiencing delays in signing accords, as well as other francophone minority groups across the country.

The Commissioner of Official Languages has recommended that Canadian Heritage report by March 31, 2011 the measures it will take under its action plan to speed up the signing and implementation of financing for organizations representing official language minorities.

Will Canadian Heritage accept these recommendations and execute them?

• (1420)

**Senator LeBreton:** I thank the senator for the question, but I think I answered it in my first response when I said that the Commissioner of Official Languages expressed satisfaction with the measures that the government has taken in order to ensure that community groups are receiving more stable funding.

To repeat, for 2010-11, 90 per cent of official language groups received confirmation of funding before the fiscal year began on April 1. For 2010-11, approximately one half of official languages groups are receiving funding through multi-year grants. One of the complaints in the past was that they would have to reapply each year. In addition, a 24-week service standard has been implemented as well as shorter processing times and a single application deadline for all groups, which reduces red tape and ensures fairness across the board.

As the Commissioner of Official Languages stated in that same report, he is satisfied that the government is taking measures to improve the situation.

**Senator Tardif:** The Leader of the Government in the Senate indicated that 90 per cent of the groups have received notification. However, I think that is different from the recommendation of the Official Languages Commissioner, who asks that the department indicate what action it will take. That is quite different from saying that some people will be notified. What actions will the government take to ensure that this does not occur in the future? What is the plan?

**Senator LeBreton:** I thank Senator Tardif for the question. I will seek further clarification from my colleague, the Honourable James Moore, the Minister of Canadian Heritage.