



OCT 05 2018

Senator Sabi Marwah
Chair
Standing Committee on Internal Economy,
Budgets and Administration
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A4

Dear Senator:

I am pleased to respond, on behalf of the Government of Canada, to the 27th report of the Senate Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration (the Committee) on Parliamentary Translation Services. Our government welcomes the Committee's recommendations, and I can say with confidence that each recommendation was reviewed carefully.

I would like to thank the Advisory Working Group on Parliamentary Translation Services for the work it accomplished on this matter. I would specifically like to recognize its openness to collaborate with the Translation Bureau (the Bureau) so that it may effectively fulfil its mandate to the Senate.

In addition to referring to the Senate's legal and constitutional obligations regarding Official Languages, the report stresses the importance of having the Senate and the Translation Bureau maintain close ties and the need to implement a mechanism to easily provide feedback to the Translation Bureau. The Bureau and the Senate Administration have subsequently worked together to install an easy-to-use feedback button on all Senate workstations.

For our government, the Translation Bureau is an essential component in the application of the *Official Languages Act*, which supports the Government of Canada in its efforts to provide services to and communicate with Canadians in the official language of their choice. The *Translation Bureau Act* also sets out that the Bureau has a duty to serve both houses of Parliament in all matters related to the making and revising of translations from one official language to the other of documents, and to the delivery of interpretation, sign-language interpretation, closed captioning and terminology services.

.../2

Conscious of the quality of its services, the Translation Bureau proactively offered to support the work of the Advisory Working Group on Parliamentary Translation Services. Among other things, an exercise to evaluate the quality of translations and interpretation recordings delivered to the Senate was held. The results of the evaluation revealed that 76% of translations sampled and 85% of interpretation recordings sampled were of good or very good quality. A report on this exercise, along with a detailed action plan was submitted to the Advisory Working Group on April 5, 2018. This plan included a series of measures to improve the quality of services provided by the Translation Bureau.

Our government agrees with the Committee's recommendations to strengthen ties between Translation Bureau officials and those of the Senate Administration. Specifically, we are committed to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the service agreement and that the Translation Bureau's services meet the Senate's expectations. The Bureau's Chief Executive Officer initiated a series of meetings with Senators. As a result, the Bureau leads are continuing their efforts to strengthen ties with key Senate stakeholders at all levels.

In its report, the Committee reiterated the importance for the Translation Bureau to have the resources necessary to meet the needs of the Senate. Our government agrees with the Committee in this regard. This is why recurring additional funds of \$7.5 million per year were allocated in the 2017 Budget to the Translation Bureau so that it could continue to offer services of the highest quality to Parliament. The allocated funds included the hiring of 29 additional employees. Hiring processes are underway to recruit the remainder of the additional resources by the end of the 2018–2019 fiscal year.

Customized service is at the core of the Translation Bureau's priorities. Comprehensive knowledge of the topics discussed in committees or in the Senate Chamber is required to deliver high-quality translation and interpretation services. This is why the Translation Bureau is making a resource interpreter available to each Parliamentary committee to attend every meeting. Two resource interpreters are currently assigned to the Senate Chamber, and additional interpreters will be added to formally establish a dedicated team for the Senate. A documentation officer will join them in the fall. The Translation Bureau will continue to collaborate with the Senate and the Library of Parliament to test a similar approach for translation services.

Senator Marwah, I assure you that our government is of the same view as the Committee with regard to the need to provide interpreters with workspaces equipped with better technology. Sound quality is essential to the delivery of high-quality interpretation services. The Translation Bureau is collaborating

with Parliamentary Multimedia Services, suppliers, and international counterparts to identify best practices to support interpretation. The Translation Bureau also worked with the Senate Administration to identify its space requirements for the new Senate Chamber in the Government Conference Centre.

On February 13, 2017, my predecessor, the Honourable Judy Foote, announced to the Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages the cancellation of the planned standing offer for freelance interpreters, as the methods for attribution of contracts based solely on lowest price raised concerns. I am pleased to report that the Translation Bureau is currently developing a new procurement tool that will ensure bidders are selected primarily based on technical merit, instead of solely on the lowest price. To do so, the Bureau established an advisory committee on conference interpretation composed of representatives of the interpreter community. This new procurement tool, developed with the support of freelance interpreters, will be implemented by the end of 2018.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm our government's commitment to Canada's two Official Languages. The Translation Bureau embodies the concrete application of the *Official Languages Act* by providing world-class and high-quality translation, terminology, closed captioning and interpretation services to Parliament, the judiciary, and federal departments and agencies. The renewal of its mandate as a centre of excellence keen on innovating, adopting best practices and recruiting the best talent is at the core of our priorities.

I am committed to collaborating with your committee, my Cabinet colleagues, as well as all those eager to support the Translation Bureau in effectively fulfilling its mandate.

I would like to thank you, as well as the members of the Senate Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, for your work.

Sincerely,



The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, P.C., M.P.