



Office of the
Commissioner of
Official Languages

Commissariat
aux langues
officielles



Audit

Bilingual Weather and Environmental Services
Provided on the Environment Canada
Automated Telephone Network

October 2008



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HIGHLIGHTS

The Meteorological Service of Canada (MSC) receives almost 30 million calls annually through its automated telephone network. Weather forecasts and environmental services directly contribute to the well-being of Canadians. Environmental phenomena, such as tornadoes, winter storms, floods, drought, smog, changes in lake levels, ice conditions, road conditions and air turbulence, all affect travellers and the Canadian public. Because these phenomena could have a serious impact on our daily activities and the economy, information on past, present and future environmental conditions are at the heart of operational decision making, especially in today's competitive global economy.

In addition, surveys show that the vast majority of Canadians consult weather forecasts every day. Forecasts are not only part of travel and leisure planning, but also part of strategic and operational decision making in sectors of our economy, such as transport and agriculture, that are particularly affected by atmospheric conditions. Moreover, the Canadian public, all levels of government and the private sector are seeking other types of environmental data, such as air quality and UV ray information.

Timely warnings of changing weather and environmental conditions that threaten the life and health of Canadians are the *raison d'être* of the MSC, which is one of the main operational sectors of Environment Canada (EC). Although the Department makes weather information available in various ways—for instance, by posting it on its Web site—our audit focused exclusively on the delivery of this information through the MSC automated telephone system. Data collection and spot-checks took place from June to October 2007.

We assessed the commitment of EC and MSC senior management to provide satisfactory weather services in the chosen official language of Canadians who use the automated telephone network, in compliance with EC's and MSC's obligations under Part IV of the *Official Languages Act*, which governs communications with and service to the public in both official languages. We also checked whether the institution effectively monitors the availability and quality of bilingual weather services.

Our examination revealed major deficiencies in the active offer of bilingual services and the availability of bilingual weather information on the MSC automated telephone network. In fact, our findings showed that an active offer of bilingual service was made only one quarter of the time, while service in the minority official language was available in barely half of all cases.

Conversely, our audit showed that EC has established an internal structure to manage the official languages program and has appointed two champions and one co-champion to this end. The champion responsible for Parts IV, V and VI of the *Official Languages Act* recently set up a network of official languages champions consisting of managers from the Department's various operational sectors, including the MSC. The Department has also adopted an accountability framework for official languages that defines the responsibilities of the various stakeholders in general terms. However, we believe that the framework should deal more specifically with matters of accountability regarding the delivery of weather information in both official languages.

With regards to the training and awareness of personnel, EC draws on the relevant policies of the Canada Public Service Agency. EC has also adopted departmental guidelines on service to the public in both official languages that include a short reference to the bilingual services offered on the automated telephone network. However, our audit showed that these guidelines are incomplete and do not successfully equip employees who play a major role in providing bilingual weather services on the MSC automated telephone network. We also noted that the MSC should more fully inform its employees about their linguistic obligations to provide service to the public in both official languages.

To improve the services available on its automated telephone network, the MSC has joined the Canada 511 Consortium, which is made up of government and private organizations. Although it continues to explore the possibility of introducing the 511 telephone system to provide standard weather information in both official languages across Canada, EC has not made any formal commitment to implement this system due to current financial constraints. Still, the MSC recognizes the difficulties posed by outdated technological equipment and is currently exploring solutions to ensure that its

automated telephone network is efficient, equitable and compliant with the requirements of Part IV of the *Official Languages Act*, and that it meets the needs of the Canadian public.

We also examined whether the MSC uses structured mechanisms to monitor the quality of the weather services provided in both official languages at designated bilingual points of service over its automated telephone network. Under ISO 9000, the MSC set up an electronic data management system that allows the public to provide feedback on overall MSC operations. Despite this system, the MSC has not adopted a structured mechanism to monitor the quality of bilingual weather services available on answering machines. The MSC tends to take a more reactive stance; it corrects the problems brought to its attention in complaints.

The Commissioner has made eight recommendations to EC for improving the availability of weather services in both official languages on its automated telephone network.

We are satisfied with EC's proposed measures and schedule to implement our recommendations. Their action plan is presented in Appendix B of this report.

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INTRODUCTION

In short, the mandate of Environment Canada (EC) consists of ensuring a high-quality environment for Canadians. This department is responsible for preserving and enhancing the quality of the natural environment, conserving Canada's renewable resources, conserving and protecting Canada's water resources, forecasting weather and environmental change, enforcing rules related to boundary waters and coordinating environmental policies and programs for the federal government.

The Meteorological Service of Canada (MSC), one of four EC programs, is Canada's prime source of meteorological information. The MSC provides the Canadian public with information, forecasts and world-class weather and environmental services to ensure the safety and sustainability of the ecosystem and improve economic activity. The MSC's operations are organized with a focus on two objectives:

- Obtaining better knowledge and timely information about weather and environmental conditions to influence decision making; and
- Reporting current weather forecasts and conditions to Canadians so they can act accordingly.

SCOPE OF THE AUDIT AND METHODOLOGY

Our audit aimed to determine whether EC, and more specifically the MSC, complies fully with its obligations under Part IV of the *Official Languages Act* where delivery of weather services in both official languages is concerned. During our audit, we focused exclusively on weather services offered to the Canadian public on the MSC automated telephone network. Thus, we chose to exclude from the scope of our audit other means of communicating weather information, such as Weatheradio and the MSC Web site. We also excluded specialized weather services available on 1-900 telephone lines, as well those intended for a specific clientele (National Defence, NAV CANADA, etc.).

We conducted our audit from June to October 2007. Our findings result from the following activities:

- An analysis of the Department's key documents, including its accountability framework, policies, directives and action plan for official languages;
- Some 20 interviews with senior managers, including the Official Languages Champion, managers and employees of EC and the MSC. These interviews were conducted face-to-face and on the telephone at the head office and the six MSC regional offices;
- Spot-checks of 35 answering machines installed at designated bilingual points of service in the various provinces and territories. Our monitoring took place in the minority official language of each region.

Legislative and administrative framework

The purpose of Canada's *Official Languages Act* is to ensure respect for English and French as the official languages of Canada as well as equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all federal institutions. The Act guarantees the public's right to communicate with federal institutions and receive services from them in either of the two official languages. This obligation is incumbent on the head office or central administration of federal institutions and offices where there is a significant demand for English or French. The Act covers all federal institutions, including EC.

Thus, the Department is responsible for taking the necessary measures to fulfill its obligations under the *Official Languages Act* and the Regulations, and to implement the relevant policies in the context of its own mandate. Under the Act and the Regulations, there are 133 designated bilingual MSC points of service that provide weather forecasts on automated answering machines across Canada.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The audit objectives and criteria appear in Appendix A of this report. Recommendations for each objective, EC's action plan and our comments are presented in Appendix B.

OBJECTIVE 1 – Ensure that Environment Canada senior management is committed to applying Part IV of the *Official Languages Act* by providing adequate bilingual services to the Canadian public, particularly weather and environmental services offered on the automated telephone network.

Accountability framework

EC adopted a new accountability framework for official languages in 2007. This document states, in general terms, the guiding principles for effective management of official languages issues and the responsibilities of senior managers, champions, managers and employees. The framework takes into account the various obligations incumbent on the Department under the *Official Languages Act*. The Human Resources Branch is responsible for its implementation, together with the operational sectors.

Drawing on the policies of the Canada Public Service Agency, the guiding principles provide the context and overall tone for each major departmental linguistic obligation. Our audit showed that the current framework encompasses all EC programs, but does not define the MSC's particular responsibilities, especially those pertaining to the delivery of bilingual weather and environmental services on its automated telephone network. Our analysis revealed that the Department did not appropriately describe the responsibilities associated with weather information in both official languages.

The Executive Management Council, chaired by the Deputy Minister, ensures a direction for official languages together with the Official Languages Champion (an assistant deputy minister), who is in turn assisted by a co-champion (a regional director general). The Champion's leadership applies to all files connected to Parts IV, V and VI of the *Official Languages Act*. Our interview with her led us to understand that her role is to direct, influence and provide advice during the preparation and implementation of the action plan for official languages, in order to improve the Department's performance. It is also worth noting that the champion recently set up an internal network of official languages champions, consisting of managers from the Department's various operational sectors. Moreover, EC has recently appointed

a champion (an associate assistant deputy minister) responsible for Part VII of the Act, which focuses on enhancing the vitality of official language minority communities and promoting linguistic duality.

In the MSC, two official languages co-champions are responsible for the implementation of a project charter on official languages, which the MSC management committee approved in July 2007. The project charter includes measures dealing primarily with obligations related to language of work. We believe the charter should be revised to encompass bilingual services, especially weather information transmitted over the automated telephone network. Moreover, we noted during our interviews that, short of a few exceptions, MSC employees are not aware of the roles of the champions and the network of official languages champions.

At the institutional level, the Department has an established structure for managing the official languages program. At head office, three people are responsible for the overall implementation of the official languages program. At the operational level, the Assistant Deputy Minister for Human Resources has appointed an MSC Human Resources Portfolio Director, who is also responsible for official languages activities. Finally, there is a network of official languages coordinators comprised of human resources administrators working at each of the six regional offices. These people participate in the complaint resolution process and provide the regional data needed for the Department's annual report on official languages, and for the report card prepared by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

EC also has a mechanism in place to manage complaints on official languages. Complaints are handled by the national coordinator for official languages and the managers responsible for various areas of activity. The most significant complaints may be brought to the attention of the Executive Management Council by the official languages champions who are sitting members.

Most MSC managers interviewed were unaware of the accountability framework for official languages, and we noted that awareness of official languages issues varied from one regional office to the other. In fact, during our interviews, a number of people mentioned that they thought the Executive Management Council was concerned about promotion for official languages in the Department, but that the preferred approach was generally reactive in that appropriate corrective steps were taken after complaints had been received.

Our audit shows that the EC organizational culture has an increasingly positive view of official languages issues, especially since the new management structure was introduced. However, we believe that the Department must do more in terms of the accountability and awareness of MSC staff. It must ensure that employees from this operational sector take full responsibility for providing bilingual services to the public on the automated telephone network.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada make the necessary changes to its accountability framework for official languages in order to establish more specific responsibilities regarding various linguistic obligations, including those related to the delivery of bilingual weather information on the automated telephone network, and to communicate the framework's content to the employees concerned.

Policy on official languages or guidelines for service to the public

To support its accountability framework, EC has adopted a departmental directive for service to the public in both official languages that includes a brief reference to services offered to the public on answering machines. Other than this reference, the directive does not specifically address the delivery of weather and environmental services on the MSC automated telephone network. Given the importance of these services to the Canadian public, and the extent to which they are used, we believe the MSC should adopt clear, specific guidelines on the linguistic obligations related to active offer and the delivery of bilingual services on its automated telephone network to ensure the proper training of employees in all its offices.

The Department has also adopted guidelines on second-language learning for professional development purposes and on non-imperative staffing of bilingual positions. It also prepared memoranda, forms and practical tools to help guide employees and managers whose work deals with official languages. For example, a reminder of minimum linguistic obligations was recently sent to all human resources managers in regional offices, including those in the National Capital Region.

During the audit, the Department informed us that it intended to review its guidelines in consideration of its new management structure. We encourage the Department to make the most of this opportunity to develop and implement an official languages policy that is appropriate to its mandate and that covers all of its linguistic obligations under the *Official Languages Act*.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada adopt clear guidelines on the linguistic obligations related to active offer and the delivery of bilingual services provided on its automated telephone network, in order to ensure effective training of employees in all its offices.

Action plan for official languages

EC prepared an action plan for official languages, which was approved by the Executive Management Committee. This plan was in effect from 2004 to 2007. Our analysis of the plan shows that it addresses several major issues, such as bilingual capacity and language of work, but does not include specific steps to improve the availability of weather services in both official languages on the MSC automated telephone network.

Moreover, we noted that the action plan for official languages does not reflect the new departmental governance structure; due to numerous organizational changes, the plan has not been revised since it was first drafted in 2004. Finally, the action plan was not officially communicated to managers or employees, nor does it appear on the MSC intranet or on the Department's *Infolane* Web site.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada quickly proceed with the preparation of a new action plan for official languages, to define the measures it intends to take to meet its various obligations under the *Official Languages Act*. Among other things, the plan should include steps to ensure that adequate bilingual weather services are provided on the answering machines installed at all designated bilingual points of service.

New 511 telephone service

For several years, the MSC has been exploring the possibility of setting up a new cross-Canada 511 telephone service to make weather and environmental information available to Canadians. In 2006, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission assigned this telephone number to the Canada 511 Consortium, a group of government and private organizations that includes EC, Transport Canada, provincial and territorial governments, the Canadian Urban Transit Association and the Intelligent Transportation Systems Society of Canada, which is responsible for Consortium operations. The MSC works with the Consortium to provide a range of weather information.

Our interviews revealed that MSC managers and employees strongly support the implementation of a new universal telephone service, which would help improve the delivery of weather and environmental services in both official languages. Furthermore, the new 511 number—both easy to remember and available across Canada—would provide free access for all Canadians. In fact, in some rural areas, members of the public currently pay long-distance rates when they use the MSC automated telephone network to obtain weather information in the official language of their choice.

Nevertheless, over the course of our interviews, we learned that the implementation of the new system has been delayed for financial reasons. A report was recently submitted to the Deputy Minister to request the funding needed to establish the service. In the meantime, the MSC continues to explore other options that would allow it to provide weather and environmental information in both official languages through its automated telephone network, in compliance with its linguistic obligations.

The MSC has shown considerable delay in acting to improve the delivery of weather services on answering machines, and has not performed satisfactorily during the annual observations conducted for the report card issued by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. We therefore believe the MSC should act quickly to resolve this situation and improve the delivery of services in both official languages.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada determine and adopt, as quickly as possible, the measures needed for the Meteorological Service of Canada to provide weather and environmental information equitably and in compliance with the *Official Languages Act* on its automated telephone network.

Performance evaluations

As mentioned previously, managing of the official languages program and meeting departmental objectives for official languages fall under the purview of the Assistant Deputy Minister for Human Resources. Our audit has allowed us to ascertain that the performance evaluations of MSC senior managers, managers, and employees whose responsibilities involve the delivery of bilingual weather and environmental services do not specifically take into account linguistic obligations derived from Part IV of the *Official Languages Act*. Indeed, the goals mentioned in the 2007–2008 performance evaluations of senior managers include only a general statement on the implementation of official languages policies, bilingualism and the use of both official languages in the workplace. We believe all levels of management involved should be made accountable, through their performance evaluations, for providing weather services in both official languages.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada include specific objectives for official languages in its performance evaluation process for senior managers, managers and employees of the Meteorological Service of Canada whose responsibilities involve the delivery of weather services in both official languages on its automated telephone network.

Communication of requirements for providing services in both official languages

Although some relevant information is published on EC's national human resources intranet, the results of our interviews with MSC managers and employees show that they are not sufficiently aware of their responsibility and their obligation to actively offer and to provide services in both official languages. Indeed, most people interviewed said they had not been informed about the accountability framework, policies and departmental guidelines, nor of the action plan for official languages. What is more, most MSC managers and employees we spoke to were under the impression that weather information was always offered in both official languages simultaneously, which is contradictory to what we noted.

Given the need to raise employee awareness, we encourage EC to prepare information kits and other tools, and provide information sessions to MSC employees. The Department could use the Canada Public Service Agency official languages information tools as a model.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada take concrete steps to foster awareness in its entire staff, including that of the Meteorological Service of Canada, of the responsibilities and obligations related to active offer and the delivery of bilingual services, which both derive from an effective application of the *Official Languages Act*.

OBJECTIVE 2 - Ensure that the Meteorological Service of Canada's designated bilingual points of service make an active offer and provide adequate weather services in the official language chosen by the public on the automated telephone network.

Active offer of bilingual services and delivery of weather services in both official languages on the automated telephone network.

Although more people use the EC Weatheroffice site and Weatheradio than the automated telephone system, the MSC still receives almost 30 million calls on its automated telephone network each year.

The MSC has 133 designated bilingual points of service listed in Burolis, a Government of Canada computerized directory that lists federal government offices and points of service as well as their bilingual or unilingual designation. MSC managers and employees sharing the responsibility for the effective operation of the automated telephone network in both official languages are unaware of or unfamiliar with Burolis.

In fact, although these individuals regularly check to ensure that the equipment is working properly, they do not have to verify that weather information is provided in both official languages. The MSC employees interviewed informed us that one does not have to be bilingual

to perform this task because weather information is automatically forwarded to the answering machines in both official languages.

More specifically, the transmission of information is as follows: meteorologists produce text bulletins in both official languages, and then software converts these bulletins into voice files. The data is converted automatically and continuously, almost in real time. Communications software then sorts the sound files and transmits them to the audio storage device, where the public has access to them through the answering machines. Weather forecasts are updated three times a day, weather conditions are updated every hour and weather warnings are announced immediately.

Each region manages its own network of answering machines, which are updated from a central system. However, not all the machines are configured in the same way. Some answering machines provide bilingual weather forecasts, while others are connected to unilingual English or French telephone lines. Our audit allowed us to determine that weather information initially produced in both languages is not necessarily available in both languages where it should be. It is also important to note that although Burolis indicates the availability of bilingual weather forecasts, the service is not always available in the language of the linguistic minority. Furthermore, our audit showed considerable deficiencies in the active offer of bilingual services.

The following table presents the results of our monitoring of answering machines. Monitoring was undertaken from June to September 2007 and covered 35 MSC designated bilingual points of service listed in Burolis.

TABLE OF OBSERVATIONS

City	Burolis Code	Answering Machine	Language of Service	Active Offer	Language Choice Respected
Whitehorse (Y.T.)	10985	867-633-8424	French	n/a*	yes
Kelowna (B.C.)	15231	250-470-5155	Bilingual	yes	no
Prince George (B.C.)	15235	250-561-5525	French	n/a*	yes
Kamloops (B.C.)	94077	250-785-7669	Bilingual	no	no
Nelson (B.C.)	94080	250-352-1858	Bilingual	no	no
Terrace (B.C.)	94087	250-635-4192	Bilingual	no	no
Vernon (B.C.)	94122	250-542-8000	Bilingual	no	no
Vancouver (B.C.)	94129	604-734-4146	Bilingual	no	yes
Fort McMurray (Alta.)	93463	780-743-3868	Bilingual	no	no
Jasper (Alta.)	93653	780-852-3185	Bilingual	no	no
Edmonton (Alta.)	94076	780-495-2145	French	n/a*	yes
Calgary (Alta.)	94572	403-299-7837	French	n/a*	yes
Lanigan (Sask.)	93454	306-365-3011	Bilingual	no	no
Broadview (Sask.)	93651	306-696-2229	Bilingual	no	no
Brandon (Man.)	93648	204-727-0011	French	n/a*	yes
Thompson (Man.)	93650	204-677-6900	Bilingual	no	no
Yellowknife (N.W.T.)	11053A	867-669-9067	French	n/a*	yes
North Bay (Ont.)	16122	705-472-1167	French	n/a*	yes
Thunder Bay (Ont.)	16129	1-800-837-7157	French	n/a*	yes
North York (Ont.)	16131	416-661-0086	French	n/a*	yes
Mont-Joli (Que.)	93352	418-722-3081	Bilingual	no	no
Alma (Que.)	93745	418-669-5055	Bilingual	no	no
Chibougamau (Que.)	93747	418-748-4962	Bilingual	no	yes
Sherbrooke (Que.)	93757	819-564-5702	Bilingual	yes	yes
Ville-Marie (Que.)	93761	819-622-1113	Bilingual	no	no
Mingan (Que.)	94576	418-949-2912	Bilingual	no	yes
Mont-Laurier (Que.)	94844	819-623-5037	Bilingual	no	yes
Bathurst (N.B.)	93643	506-548-3220	Bilingual	yes	yes
Sydney (N.S.)	93740	902-564-7788	Bilingual	yes	yes
Greenwood (N.S.)	95079	902-765-5040	Bilingual	yes	yes
Charlottetown (P.E.I.)	93640	902-566-7041	Bilingual	yes	yes
Souris (P.E.I.)	93743	902-687-2434	Bilingual	yes	yes
Gander (N.L.)	10798	709-256-6868	Bilingual	no	no
Corner Brook (N.L.)	93737	709-637-4570	Bilingual	no	yes
Wabush-Labrador (N.L.)	93738	709-944-7723	Bilingual	no	no

* n.a.: Active offer is not evaluated on unilingual lines. The public usually expects a welcome message in the language announced.

Of the 35 telephone numbers we audited, 26 were designated bilingual in Burolis, while the remaining 9 were classified as unilingual French and located mostly in Ontario. The results of our audit showed that, at all designated bilingual points of service, an active offer of bilingual service was made approximately one quarter of the time. Service in the official language of the minority was available in just over half of all cases.

In the Pacific and Yukon region, weather information was available in the minority official language at only three of the eight points of service audited. An active offer of bilingual services was made only in one of the six situations where it was required.

In the Prairie and Northern regions, weather information was available in the minority official language at four of the nine points of service audited. An active offer of bilingual services was nonetheless lacking at the five points of service where it was required.

Our observations in Ontario revealed that service in the minority language was available at the three points of service we evaluated. As these points of service used answering machines connected to unilingual French telephone lines, active offer was not assessed.

In Quebec, our observations showed that service was provided in the minority language at four of the seven points of service audited. However, an active offer of bilingual service was made at only one of these designated bilingual points of service.

Finally, in the Atlantic region, we observed that weather information was provided in the minority language at six of the eight points of service audited. An active offer of bilingual service was made at five of the eight designated bilingual points of service.

In summary, our audit allows us to conclude that in the areas of active offer and delivery of weather services in both official languages on answering machines, MSC's performance requires a great deal of improvement.

In anticipation of the 2010 Olympic Games to be held in Vancouver, we used our audit as an opportunity to ask whether the MSC was planning specific actions for the provision of weather information in both official languages. We were informed that the MSC will continue with normal operations of its automated network and will not issue specific weather information for the Games; the International Olympic Committee will in fact be responsible for issuing weather information during the Games. Three teams of bilingual meteorologists have been assigned to the Games for this purpose.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada adopt, as quickly as possible, the appropriate measures to ensure the active offer and the delivery of weather services in both official languages on the automated telephone network of the Meteorological Service of Canada at all designated bilingual points of service.

OBJECTIVE 3 - Ensure that the Meteorological Service of Canada effectively monitors the quality of weather services offered in both official languages on its automated telephone network.

Monitoring mechanisms and quality service management

Throughout our audit, we examined the monitoring mechanisms the MSC set up to ensure that weather services provided on answering machines were offered in the minority language at all designated bilingual points of service. We noted that, in 2002, the MSC conducted a nationwide public opinion survey to assess Canadians' needs, use, satisfaction and expectations regarding its products and services. The survey covered weather forecasts for the media, issuance of weather warnings, and other services, such as Weatheradio and the Internet. However, the survey did not cover the services offered on the automated telephone network or the MSC's linguistic obligations.

Our interviews revealed that the MSC recognizes it does not fully meet its obligations related to the delivery of bilingual weather and environmental services on the current automated telephone network. According to the information we gathered, the MSC has taken a number of steps to monitor its overall operations.

In 2006, it set up an electronic data management system enabling members of the public to communicate with the Department and to file complaints about weather services. The implementation of this system is part of the ISO 9000 standardization program, under which the MSC is certified. The program describes the standards governing the process of transmitting weather and environmental information to the Canadian public. Although there is a reference to the *Official Languages Act* in the description of Government of Canada's responsibilities regarding the process of providing and standardizing internal Web sites, there is no mention of official languages in descriptions of the various stages of this process. Furthermore, the MSC has not yet prepared a process description concerning the delivery of weather and environmental services on its automated telephone network in the context of the ISO 9000 program. We therefore encourage the MSC to mention and emphasize official languages in its standards, to ensure compliance with the *Official Languages Act*.

Finally, the national public request response team received 94 complaints regarding the service provided on answering machines, six of which involved official languages. In response to these complaints, the MSC has taken the necessary measures to correct the situations by changing the answering machines.

Our audit also allowed us to confirm that official languages issues do not appear in the Department's current internal audit plan, since this item was not on its risks grid. Furthermore, there is no mechanism in place to make managers and employees accountable for the linguistic obligation to provide weather services on the automated telephone network in both official languages.

We have already mentioned the initiative of the Official Languages Champion to establish an internal network of official languages champions. We believe this network could play a major preventive role, and give special attention to the obligation to make an active offer and to provide weather announcements in both official languages on the MSC automated telephone network at designated bilingual points of service.

Finally, the audit allows us to conclude that the Department is not in a position to control the quality of its automated telephone services because it has not established the appropriate structured monitoring mechanisms.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada establish effective structured monitoring mechanisms in order to ensure the availability and quality of weather services in both official languages on the automated telephone network of the Meteorological Service of Canada at designated bilingual points of service, in compliance with the *Official Languages Act*.

CONCLUSION

During our audit, we assessed the commitment of senior management at EC and the MSC to provide satisfactory weather services in both official languages on the automated telephone network, in compliance with Part IV of the *Official Languages Act*, which regulates communications with and service to the public in both official languages. We also checked whether the institution effectively monitors the availability and quality of bilingual weather services.

Our audit allows us to conclude that the Department is on the right track. EC has implemented an accountability framework and a structure for managing the official languages program. EC also appointed a champion, supported by a co-champion, who is responsible for the application of Parts IV, V and VI of the *Official Languages Act*, as well as a champion responsible for Part VII of the Act. In addition, an internal network of official languages champions was set up and could play a major role in the effective management of this program. For its part, the MSC also appointed two co-champions responsible for the implementation of a project charter for official languages.

The Department also adopted guidelines on service to the public in both official languages, which include a short reference to bilingual services provided on answering machines. Furthermore, the MSC set up an electronic data management system to monitor overall operations following the implementation of the ISO 9000 program.

Nevertheless, the results of our audit highlight major weaknesses in the bilingual weather services provided on the MSC automated telephone network. For example, our spot-checks of 35 answering machines showed that active offer was only made one quarter of all cases, while service

in the minority official language was available in just over half of all cases. The situation is especially problematic in the Quebec, Prairie and Pacific regions. In light of our findings, we believe that the Department should quickly put concrete, appropriate measures in place to ensure that Canadians can obtain weather and environmental information in the official language of their choice at all designated bilingual points of service on the automated telephone network.

Moreover, to improve performance, the Department should update its accountability framework, action plan, policies and directives for official languages so that these documents provide the MSC and other operational sectors with the necessary framework, guidance and responsibilities. EC should then take the appropriate measures to effectively communicate this information to its entire staff.

Finally, we must underscore the significant lack of structured mechanisms that would enable the Department and the MSC to conduct timely periodic monitoring of how well its automated telephone network complies with the *Official Languages Act*. The institution should not delay further in implementing the necessary mechanisms to correct this situation and thus ensure the availability and quality of weather services in both official languages at all designated bilingual points of service.

Given the importance of the MSC's mandate to the Canadian public, EC should quickly take steps to comply with Part IV of the *Official Languages Act*. We believe that the full implementation of all the recommendations in this report will enable the Department to fully meet the linguistic obligations involved in providing weather and environmental services on the MSC automated telephone network.

APPENDIX A

Audit objectives and criteria

OBJECTIVES	CRITERIA
<p>1. Ensure that Environment Canada senior management is committed to applying Part IV of the <i>Official Languages Act</i> by providing adequate bilingual services to the Canadian public, particularly weather and environmental services offered on the automated telephone network.</p>	<p>(a) Environment Canada (EC) has set up a satisfactory accountability framework for official languages.</p> <p>(b) EC has a policy on official languages or guidelines for service to the public approved by senior management and compliant with the <i>Official Languages Act</i> and the Regulations, in particular regarding the weather services provided on the automated telephone network.</p> <p>(c) EC's action plan ensures effective application of Part IV of the <i>Official Languages Act</i> in terms of the weather services provided on the automated telephone network.</p> <p>(d) The introduction of the new 511 telephone service will contribute to improving the delivery of weather services in the official language of the client's choice.</p> <p>(e) EC takes into account official languages issues in the performance evaluations of its senior managers and managers responsible for weather services.</p> <p>(f) The Meteorological Service of Canada (MSC) effectively communicates the requirements related to service in both official languages to employees working with the automated weather service system.</p>
<p>2. Ensure that the Meteorological Service of Canada's designated bilingual points of service make an active offer and provide adequate weather services in the official language chosen by the public on the automated telephone network.</p>	<p>(a) The MSC designated bilingual points of service in the Burolis directory actively offer and provide weather services in both official languages on the automated telephone network.</p> <p>(b) The MSC has set up an effective mechanism to ensure timely updated weather forecasts on the automated telephone network in both official languages.</p>
<p>3. Ensure that the Meteorological Service of Canada effectively monitors the quality of weather services offered in both official languages on its automated telephone network.</p>	<p>a) The MSC has effective control mechanisms in place (including internal auditing) to monitor the quality of bilingual services offered on the automated telephone network.</p> <p>(b) Monitoring results are used in managing the quality of services in an attempt to continuously improve them.</p>

APPENDIX B

List of recommendations for each objective, Environment Canada's action plan and our response

We are satisfied with the measures and timelines proposed by Environment Canada (EC) to implement our recommendations. We understand the challenges faced by the institution in terms of following up on recommendations 4 and 7, which deal with active offer and broadcasting weather and environmental information in both official languages on the automated telephone network. However, we believe that if the Meteorological Service of Canada (MSC) opts to maintain and update the existing automated telephone system, it will have to be creative to improve this system and identify a permanent solution to providing service in both official languages at all designated bilingual points of service throughout Canada, as stipulated in the *Official Languages Act*. Moreover, we believe that a good communications strategy, as set out in the Department's action plan, is necessary in order to inform all employees of the Department's official languages activities, accountability framework, guidelines and action plan, and thus ensure that everyone understands EC's and MSC's responsibilities and obligations.

OBJECTIVE 1 – Ensure that Environment Canada senior management is committed to applying Part IV of the *Official Languages Act* by providing adequate bilingual services to the Canadian public, particularly weather and environmental services offered on the automated telephone network.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada make the necessary changes to its accountability framework for official languages in order to establish more specific responsibilities regarding various linguistic obligations, including those related to the delivery of bilingual weather information on the automated telephone network, and to communicate the framework's content to the employees concerned.

EC's action plan

EC CONCURS WITH THIS RECOMMENDATION.

The Human Resources Branch, in consultation with the official languages champions, will review and update the accountability framework for official languages by September 2008, in order to clearly establish the roles and responsibilities under Parts IV, V, VI and VII of the *Official Languages Act*. This document will be revised and updated as required. In October 2008, the revised framework will be communicated to senior management through a note to the Leadership Council, and to all EC employees through the Department's intranet. The main indicator of progress would be an improvement in the Department's rating on the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages report card. A decrease in the number of founded complaints on service to the public would also be a good indication of improvement.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada adopt clear guidelines on the linguistic obligations related to active offer and the delivery of bilingual services provided on its automated telephone network, in order to ensure effective training of employees in all its offices.

EC's action plan

EC CONCURS WITH THE RECOMMENDATION.

The Human Resources Branch will review and update the current departmental guidelines on service to the public to more clearly address active offer and the delivery of bilingual services. The new guidelines will be sent to all employees in October 2008. The Human Resources Branch will also communicate these guidelines through management meetings in each branch that delivers services to the public. The main indicator of progress would be an improvement in the Department's rating on the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages report card. A decrease in the number of founded complaints on service to the public would also be a good indication of improvement.

The MSC will take two actions to address this issue. First, by August 31, 2008, the management of the automated telephone network will be consolidated on a national level so that employees who maintain the network become more specialized and thus gain a better knowledge of operational procedures. Second, the MSC will prepare clear operational guidelines by October 2008.

These guidelines will include the following:

- the identification of the designated bilingual points of service;
- the manner in which to make an active offer and to deliver adequate bilingual services.

By December 2008, the guidelines will be provided to all staff directly involved in the day-to-day management of the service's operations, and to their managers. As part of the MSC ISO 9001 quality management system, the guidelines will become an ISO-controlled document as part of the ISO dissemination processes.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada quickly proceed with the preparation of a new action plan for official languages, to define the measures it intends to take to meet its various obligations under the *Official Languages Act*. Among other things, the plan should include steps to ensure that adequate bilingual weather services are provided on the answering machines installed at all designated bilingual points of service.

EC's action plan

EC CONCURS WITH THE RECOMMENDATION.

The Human Resources Branch and the official languages champions are working on a new action plan for official languages. The action plan will include the measures planned to meet EC's various obligations under the *Official Languages Act*, including specific measures related to bilingual weather services. The finalized plan will be communicated to employees, most likely through the Department's intranet, in July 2008. The Human Resources Branch will monitor the actions taken by those designated in charge of implementing the plan, and will report to the Executive Management Committee on a regular basis.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada determine and adopt, as quickly as possible, the measures needed for the Meteorological Service of Canada to provide weather and environmental information equitably and in compliance with the *Official Languages Act* on its automated telephone network.

EC's action plan

EC CONCURS WITH THIS RECOMMENDATION, WHICH IS CLOSELY CONNECTED TO RECOMMENDATION 7, ACCORDING TO WHICH IT MUST ADOPT MEASURES TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE *OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT* IN THE OPERATION OF ITS AUTOMATED TELEPHONE NETWORK.

In providing a weather and environmental information service to Canadians on an automated telephone network, there are two issues related to equity that must be considered: linguistic equity and equity related to service. In regards to this recommendation and to Recommendation 7, a distinction must be made between linguistic equity and equal access to services. When fully compliant bilingual services are provided, these services are not necessarily accessible to everyone on a national scale.

The MSC is currently evaluating the feasibility and cost of replacing the automated telephone network with a 511 telephone service. The 511 service has the potential to resolve the issues of equal access and linguistic equity. The Department plans to make a final decision on the matter by the end of 2008. If the implementation of a 511 service proves to be technically or financially unfeasible, the MSC will rebuild the existing automated telephone network with new equipment and software that will enable it to provide an active offer of bilingual service on all telephone lines on the system. If a 511 service is implemented or the existing system is rebuilt, full delivery of bilingual services, where this service is provided, will be achieved by the end of fiscal year 2009–2010.

However, providing equal access to the automated telephone service to all Canadians would be a more complicated matter if the 511 telephone service were not implemented. The current automated telephone network is accessible as a toll-free service only where EC has installed a system within a caller's local calling area, or

in regions where a toll-free number has been established to facilitate the delivery of services in the minority language of the region. In some parts of the country, Canadians must pay long-distance fees to access the automated telephone network in either official language. Equal access, meaning toll-free access from anywhere in Canada, would have a significant financial impact, and while necessary from a service policy perspective, equal access is not a requirement under the *Official Languages Act*. Therefore, if the solution adopted by the end of fiscal year 2009–2010 is that of refurbishing the existing automated telephone service, equity will be achieved in the sense that toll-free calling will be available in both official languages in most regions of Canada.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada include specific objectives for official languages in its performance evaluation process for senior managers, managers and employees of the Meteorological Service of Canada whose responsibilities involve the delivery of weather services in both official languages on its automated telephone network.

EC's action plan

EC CONCURS WITH THE RECOMMENDATION.

The MSC will ensure that specific objectives for official languages related to service delivery in general and the automated telephone network in particular are incorporated into the performance objectives and commitments of executives, senior managers, managers and employees for the 2008–2009 period by September 2008, and that these objectives constitute an ongoing element of such assessment instruments in the future.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada take concrete steps to foster awareness in its entire staff, including that of the Meteorological Service of Canada, of the responsibilities and obligations related to the active offer and the delivery of bilingual services, which both derive from an effective application of the *Official Languages Act*.

EC's action plan

EC CONCURS WITH THE RECOMMENDATION.

A communications strategy to increase employees' and managers' awareness of their responsibilities and obligations under the *Official Languages Act* will be developed by the Human Resources Branch in consultation with employees from Communications, and implemented in September 2008. The strategy will include the communications tools associated with the accountability framework and the guidelines addressed in recommendations 1 and 2, to help departmental staff at all levels understand the requirements and obligations under the *Official Languages Act*. These tools could include brochures and information sheets from the Canada Public Service Agency. The success of the communications strategy will be measured by the level of awareness in employees and managers, which would lead to a decrease in the number of founded complaints on service to the public.

As for the MSC, it will ensure that the responsibilities and obligations are fully described as part of the ISO 9001 quality management system, in an ISO-controlled document.

OBJECTIVE 2 - Ensure that the Meteorological Service of Canada's designated bilingual points of service make an active offer and provide adequate weather services in the official language chosen by the public on the automated telephone network.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada adopt, as quickly as possible, the appropriate measures to ensure the active offer and the delivery of weather services in both official languages on the automated telephone network of the Meteorological Service of Canada at all designated bilingual points of service.

EC's action plan

EC CONCURS WITH THE RECOMMENDATION, WHICH IS CLOSELY CONNECTED TO RECOMMENDATION 4.

Using the guidelines developed in response to Recommendation 2, EC will carry out an assessment of the changes required at each point of service to ensure that an active offer and bilingual services are provided. This assessment will be completed by December 2008 and will include an estimate of the amount of equipment that will have to be replaced to meet the requirement. Based on the assessment, an implementation plan and schedule will be developed and, provided the Department has the financial capacity to purchase the required equipment, implementation may be completed by July 2009.

At the end of this process, all designated bilingual points of service will provide an active offer and adequate bilingual services.

In addition, in order to minimize the problems as quickly as possible, EC intends to take corrective action on a casual basis before the aforementioned dates and at specific points of service, where and when feasible. Further, through the actions to be taken as described in the response to Recommendation 4, bilingual services will be made available at all locations where service is offered by the end of fiscal year 2009–2010.

OBJECTIVE 3 - Ensure that the Meteorological Service of Canada effectively monitors the quality of weather services offered in both official languages on its automated telephone network.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Commissioner recommends that Environment Canada establish effective structured monitoring mechanisms in order to ensure the availability and quality of weather services in both official languages on the automated telephone network of the Meteorological Service of Canada at designated bilingual points of service, in compliance with the *Official Languages Act*.

EC's action plan

EC CONCURS WITH THE RECOMMENDATION THAT EFFECTIVE MONITORING MECHANISMS ARE REQUIRED.

Because the MSC adheres to a formal quality management system, well-documented procedures are being implemented to ensure that the automated system functions properly. Because it is a fully automated system, procedures and mechanisms will alert the responsible staff members if any message is not successfully loaded on the equipment, and action can be then be taken in order to intervene and reload the system. Regular and routine spot-checks are necessary in an effective quality management approach, and the MSC will implement such audits as part of the procedures developed in response to Recommendation 2. Furthermore, as was noted in the report, if a user detects a problem with the service and then contacts us, procedures are in place to quickly rectify the situation.

