

Canadian airports: bilingualism has lead in the wing

Description

This article highlights the struggle to fill bilingual positions. It's very difficult to hire bilingual in areas where the majority population speaks one language or the other.

This results in the necessity to hire outside of local to meet bilingual mandates, and results in the forced alteration of local demographics... a problem that NB has been faced with many times.

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(Ottawa) The rate of bilingual employees has declined in almost all Canadian airport checkpoints since 2010, including in Montreal, reveals new information obtained by La Presse . The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages has just investigated this matter and will publish a series of recommendations tomorrow.

Between 2010 and 2015, the proportion of bilingual agents has dropped from 8% to 6% in Toronto, from 13% to 11% in Vancouver, from 14% to 9% in Winnipeg, and from 99% to 94% Of documents obtained under the Access to Information Act. The Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA), responsible for airport controls, recognizes that there is "room for improvement" in this file.

" Recruiting bilingual officers in some parts of the country is clearly a challenge. – Mathieu Larocque, CATSA Spokesperson

"We are trying to improve continuously to offer better bilingual service, we support our suppliers in their recruitment efforts, but surely it is not easy," adds. Mr. Larocque.

"SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS"

CATSA, which has 6,000 officers at Canadian airports, has been criticized by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages for several years. In its most recent annual report, the organization highlighted the existence of "recurring complaints, which reflect systemic problems".

Nelson Kalil, spokesperson for the Commissariat, was unable to comment on the details of La Presse's figures . The organization will unveil the results of its long-standing investigation into CATSA tomorrow, as well as a series of recommendations. Mr. Kalil, however, confirms that the bilingualism rates observed in 2016 are very similar to those of 2015. "There is a shortage of bilingual agents at airports, that's clear. "

CATSA outsources the hiring of its agents to three private security firms across the country: G4S in the West, GardaWorld in the Prairies and Ontario, and Securitas in Quebec and the Maritimes. Financial incentives are available to these companies for the recruitment of bilingual staff, a measure that is not sufficient in several cities.

Isabelle Panelli, GardaWorld spokesperson, confirmed some hiring difficulties. The Montreal group, which employs 4,300 agents at 28 airports, says making bilingualism “a top priority” and investing “every effort to recruit bilingual agents”.

“Of course, in bilingual markets, bilingualism adds an additional challenge to predominantly English-speaking cities, but we promote positions in both official languages, as well as deploy recruitment campaigns at universities where courses are offered French language as well as with local Francophone organizations in remote areas, “argued M me Panelli.

LITTLE COMPLAINTS

Despite the declining bilingualism rates at most major airports, CATSA believes it respects Canada’s official language laws for the vast majority of the time.

The regulations do not require bilingualism at the excavation points, but rather an “active offer” to make passengers understand that services are available in their language.

Basically, it comes down to a “hello, hi”, says Mathieu Larocque.

However, CATSA is required to have staff available in both languages at all times at major airports in the country. “If the hosting agent is not bilingual, he or she must find a colleague who speaks the client’s language,” the spokesman said.

The low number of complaints made relative to official languages shows a “relatively high” level of satisfaction, the federal agency said. CATSA received 48 complaints last year, compared with 22 complaints in 2012.

“We are constantly trying to improve our offer of bilingual service at airports,” argued Mathieu Larocque. A complaint is a complaint too. We also have to keep in mind that we control more than 60 million passengers a year. The number of complaints is, on the whole, very limited. ”

Of the eight largest airports in the country, only those in Halifax and Ottawa have improved their bilingualism rates at search points over the past five years.

– With William Leclerc

“Proportion of bilingual agents at excavation points

City 2010 2015

Toronto 8.1% 6.3%

Calgary 8.1% 7.3%

Edmonton 9.5% 7.3%

Winnipeg 13.9% 9.3%

Vancouver 13.0% 11.1%

Halifax 11.6% 17.0%

Ottawa 29.0% 30.5%

Montreal 98.9% 94.1% »

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