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Mr. Pablo Rodriguez

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• (0910)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.)): We will begin this morning's session.

[English]

Welcome to all of you. Thanks for being here, once again.

[Translation]

This morning we have two witnesses, Mr. Rioux and Ms. Beaulieu, who represent the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada. I would like to welcome them to our committee.

Mr. Rioux and Ms. Beaulieu have asked me if they could go beyond their allotted time. I told them that it would be no problem, as long as they only took a few extra minutes.

We will then have three rounds of questioning, rather than four, since we have to discuss future business.

Without further ado, I will now turn to our witnesses.

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux (Vice-President, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We welcome this opportunity to speak to you today. Good afternoon everyone. I apologize on behalf of our president, Mr. Georges Arès, who could not be with us here today because he is on his way to the 10th Francophonie Summit in Ouagadougou. It's an extremely important event, because communities, including the New Brunswick community, are part of the Canadian delegation.

With me today is Ms. Beaulieu, who is the executive director of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada. She will take part in our discussions. With us as well is Mr. Robin Cantin, who is our communications' director.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to take part and appear after ministers Liza Frulla and Mauril Bélanger, who appeared here last week. These two people have a considerable impact on the development of our communities, as you well know.

I will try to be as brief as possible so that members will have time to ask questions. It is my feeling that questions provide an opportunity for clarification and allow us to better respond to the concerns and expectations of the people with whom we are speaking.

In view of the relatively complex nature of the subject matter, which is to be discussed in detail, we believe it is important, Mr. Chairman, that you grant us a few extra minutes.

We would also like to correct certain statements that were made last week, because we feel that our appearance here today is more than symbolic. This is an important event for us, as we have an opportunity to demonstrate that our requests are justified, and will have a considerable impact on the future of our communities.

The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada is the leading advocate for one million Francophones and Acadians who live as a minority, meaning outside Quebec, who help to strengthen Canada's position in terms of its linguistic duality. We represent all of the provincial and territorial community advocate groups, as well as eight national sectoral associations, for example, the French-speaking legal profession or youth, to name only two.

Among its accomplishments, the FCFA has played an important role in drafting the action plan for official languages. By bringing together all the francophone associations, our federation was able to submit to the Hon. Stéphane Dion, the minister responsible for the drafting of the plan, our list of priorities for action in nine separate areas; many of these were incorporated into the plan. This was submitted to Minister Dion three years ago, at our annual general meeting in Whitehorse. When we read the Dion plan, one year later, we realized that a number of the priorities that we had set out for the action plan had indeed been considered.

By providing resources that will allow us to act in areas of development such as health and immigration, the action plan also forces us to ensure that there will be a closer cooperation among the community development organizations, not only at the national level, but at the regional, provincial and territorial levels as well.

The large FCFA table is quickly becoming an indispensable tool to ensure that all community stakeholders will be involved in the issues that are of concern to them. We must not forget the importance of the Federation's issue table, which brings together a number of national and provincial organizations, to identify the main challenges that our communities must face.

Thanks to the action plan, we were able to target certain sectors for a specific development and provide financial support to the relevant departments. It is important to understand, as you are no doubt aware, that the action plan represents much more than the \$751 million over five years to be invested in these sectors and in education. It would be a mistake for us to consider only the amount. In fact, the FCFA insisted on including with the action plan an accountability framework to guide the entire federal government in its official languages policies.

Having annual consultations following the implementation of the accountability framework has allowed participating departments to outline what they intend to do in the area of official languages. The departments and communities come together twice a year, alternating between the ministers and the officials who explain to the communities what each of their respected departments has done. This is an indication of the importance of the action plan.

• (0915)

It also allows them to give the communities examples of actions that have been undertaken.

That said, the accountability framework itself does have some shortcomings. Mr. Bélanger told you last week that he was preparing a horizontal results-based management and accountability framework to guarantee that what the entire government does will lead to concrete results for our communities while helping people to live, to the greatest extent possible, in the official language of their choice. Communities know full well what results-based accountability means, since we have been doing that for the last four or five years. Our reports and development plans are results-based which makes them easy to assess.

The targeted departments and agencies must be able to demonstrate how their interventions contribute to meeting the development objectives for official language communities, as has been the case for development organizations in the past few years. They must also have the mechanisms that will help them to work together to reach common goals.

As the official languages commissioner said, the action plan must lead to a change of culture within the federal bureaucracy. We are aware that the work that is currently being done by the departments implies a change in attitude, a change of culture, in order to reflect the accountability that the action plan requires. In most cases, the cultural shift is still a work in progress. Most departments are still lacking a long-term vision to guide their investments, which often leads to a disconnect between the actions of the communities and those of the department.

The minister responsible for official languages must obviously have the authority to act within the horizontal accountability framework, since the minister is responsible for its implementation. The necessary tools must be provided to do the work that is required and ensure that the accountability framework is observed. We have been able to see the extent to which this type of authority is essential.

I will give you a concrete example. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs was recently granted \$90 million over five years for an economic development initiative that completely ignored the francophone populations in northern Canada.

Would you like me to slow down a little?

The Chair: We have a problem with the sound.

[*English*]

The technician will come, but if you don't mind, we'll keep going.

[*Translation*]

Would you prefer to wait?

[*English*]

Would you like to interrupt the meeting for now and wait for a technician? Okay.

[*Translation*]

The meeting is suspended for a few minutes. It should not take long.

• (0919)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (0935)

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Do you know if we must absolutely vacate this room at 11:00 a.m.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: That is why we have to end the meeting at exactly 11:00 a.m. Could we wait until next Thursday to discuss the future business of the committee?

The Chair: That would not be possible next Thursday, because Air Canada will probably require the entire two hours. If members agree, we can do it on November 30th.

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: We were discussing the accountability framework and the actions incumbent upon the minister responsible for official languages, Mr. Mauril Bélanger. We gave the example of a situation that proved how necessary it was to have this authority. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs was recently awarded \$90 million by Cabinet, over five years, for an economic development initiative. However, the francophone populations in Canada's north were not taken into account. As you can see, if there is no mechanism for this type of accountability, if there is no demand for it, we will be constantly having to play catch up.

Coordinating these actions must not be solely a federal responsibility, but must require the cooperation of provincial and territorial governments. Over the past decades, the two levels of government working together as partners along with the life forces in the communities have led to the greatest achievements within our communities. It is becoming increasingly apparent that certain initiatives are greatly improved when undertaken jointly by the federal and provincial governments, along with the communities.

That said, it is very important to understand that involving a larger number of departments, as well as other levels of government, in no way reduces the importance of Heritage Canada as the cornerstone for the funding that has been earmarked for community development. The commitment of a larger number of departments simply serve to demonstrate the responsibilities that are incumbent upon them under section 41.

The role of Heritage Canada in enforcing part VII of the Official Languages Act remains unchanged; it is even reaffirmed within the accountability framework. To see the action plan as an opportunity for Heritage Canada to off-load its obligations in this area would be an erroneous interpretation of the situation. In other words, the fact that we have an action plan does not mean that Heritage Canada can be relieved of its responsibilities.

Heritage Canada's support program for official language communities has greatly contributed to the progress made by our communities over the past years. The idea of having the communities take charge of their own development, which is the foundation for the Canada-community agreements, has achieved excellent results.

Our community development organizations have become part of the social market economy which contributes to the development of their individual regions. For example, in the Atlantic provinces, ACOA examined the economic spin-offs from contributions made to the cultural sector. They showed that, in many cases, there was a seven-to-one return on investment.

A national consultation is now under way to help Heritage Canada decide which cooperation mechanisms will be used to make investments by the department in our communities. We hope that the new cooperation frameworks that will result from these consultations will maintain the basic principles of the Canada-community agreements, not the least of which would be to allow the local organizations to take charge of community development.

We also hope that the next generation of Canada-community agreements will allow, as we have been requesting for a number of years, the development of a true partnership between Heritage Canada and our communities. That would give us the greatest bang for our buck. It has often been difficult to convince the department to become involved in leading edge community development, something that would allow us to make great strides towards true equality for linguistic groups.

In terms of community development, we can say that the greatest accomplishments have been the result of initiatives undertaken by our network of associations, for example, management of our schools, health care, immigration, or early childhood. These are the areas that brought these issues to the table, in order to involve the departments, including Heritage Canada.

Since then, successive governments have been more and more reluctant. The amounts directly allocated to the development of our communities and [Editor's note: inaudible] will have serious consequences, as demonstrated by the first document that you have before you.

● (0940)

Ms. Beaulieu will read it quickly. The funding has almost returned to 1991 level, if we account for inflation.

I would like to ask Ms. Beaulieu to explain the first document that you have.

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu (Executive Director, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): We want to set the record straight, since, last week, Ms. Frulla discussed the

official languages communities' support program. I believe there are also questions on the amounts allocated to the program.

This reference document, at the bottom of the page, gives you a program total without the \$19 million. The amount is exactly \$34.7 million. Last week, Ms. Frulla spoke of \$35 million. This \$34.7 million includes \$24.4 million for the Canada-community agreements. That is what is in the large rectangle. The agreements for the anglophone community in Quebec represent \$3 million. That is in the smaller box. Above that you have the strategic development fund which is a discretionary fund. It belongs to the minister. The amount is \$7.3 million.

That is the amount given to the communities within the department's program for support of official languages communities, over the past year. Ms. Frulla also discussed this last week. The \$19 million, the small circle with question marks, represents the amount earmarked for the action plan. We will come back to that in a few minutes.

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: As you can see, we are at the same amount we had in 1991. What other agency, department or company can operate with the same amount they had in 1991? They are being asked to work miracles, as we will see in the second document.

This situation causes a serious erosion of the ability of our organizations to implement development initiatives and causes employees and our many volunteers who are constantly asking for a little more of their time, to burn out quickly.

The funds available in the Official Language Communities Support Program have always been much too low to meet the needs of the francophone community in Canada. Based on their overall development plan, the various francophone and acadian communities think that their development will require that the portion of the Canada-communities agreements for francophones increase from \$24.4 million to at least \$42 million a year. We have first to deal with new challenges such as urbanization and rural exodus; second, to strengthen the leadership capabilities of our organizations; and third to take the tolerance to diversity into account, has become essential because of the demographic change within our communities. And heaven knows that we are now experiencing these issues in our communities every day.

I would like to emphasize that the investments we are claiming for our communities will be subject to very high auditing standards, as has been the case for a number of years. We can assure you that the accountability procedures required of our community development organizations by the Department of Canadian Heritage under the Canada-communities agreements guarantee that the public funds we receive will be used efficiently and transparently.

Historically, the Official Language Support Program cover three areas: First, the Canada-communities agreement for francophone communities representing \$24.4 million provided by [*Editor's note: Inaudible*]; second, for the anglophone community of Quebec, representing \$3 million dollars, and third, the strategic development fund which is spent at the discretion of the Minister of Canadian Heritage without consulting the communities. So the total funding of this program is \$35 million.

If you look at the second table, you will see why we say that the funding is the same as it was in 1991. Ms. Beaulieu gave you a table to illustrate that point.

• (0945)

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: I am referring to document 2. At the top of the page, you will see a table we prepared. We took our data from the annual reports of Canadian Heritage starting in 1991-92, and we transposed the figures into current and constant dollars.

As you can see, in constant dollars, the funding received under the OLSP was slightly less than \$30 million. As you can see as well, the figure was almost exactly the same in 2002-03. So there has been a slight increase in current dollars, but we are at exactly the same funding level in constant dollars.

The chart at the bottom of the page gives you the exact amounts spent each year under the OLSP. Once again, these figures are in current and constant dollars so that you can see the difference between the two.

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: As you can see, what the minister told you last week is not exactly what we are telling you today. Figures are the same, but the explanation is different. They do not necessarily mean the same thing.

As we said, this approach has raised a number of objections from our communities. First of all, the amounts are inadequate. Next, the \$19 million is spread over five years, because it is not yet known how this money will be spent. The Canada-communities agreements, which are in place for three years, given that the time remaining for the Action plan for official languages is now three years, do not allow us to increase the funding for developing our communities from \$24.4 million to a minimum of \$42 million a year.

There is also the problem of transparency. On March 31 next year, we will be starting the third year of the Action plan. Canadian Heritage has still not told us how it intends to use the \$19 million. As far as we are concerned, this money is still up in the air. Some say that they would like to be underneath when this money falls to the ground.

Moreover, the Department of Canadian Heritage has had this \$19 million available under the Action plan for almost two years now. The plan provides that culture, community radio and community centres are priority areas. So the very time when there is a great shortage of funding for cultural activities, the national network of community radio stations has closed its satellite link because of a great lack of funding, and a number of local communities are still waiting to build their community centre. And yet the money is there.

We have been unable to get any information about how Canadian Heritage is going to use the \$19 million or how the department plan

to invest it. The comments made by the minister last Thursday at your meeting did nothing to clarify the matter.

With respect to getting resources outside of the Official Languages Support Program, that is what we are doing increasingly in emerging areas. In fact, this is what is set out in the Action plan and in our overall development plans. Paradoxically, the other areas of Canadian Heritage, in particular multiculturalism, seem very uninterested in investing in the development of our communities.

The \$42 million a year that our communities have defined as a minimum do not include either new areas of activity or education. This amount is specifically for areas of activity which come under the responsibility of Canadian Heritage pursuant to the agreements.

It goes without saying that the Department of Health will not fund the introduction of new community radio stations and that Industry Canada is not interested in supporting these services offered by francophone communities centres. That is the responsibility of the Department of Canadian Heritage. These other departments will not take responsibility for that, even if we establish interdepartmental partnerships. In fact, it has often happened that such partnerships meant that the departments develop new expectations and new needs. Ultimately, more money was invested in the departments in question than in the communities.

Our third reference document gives some examples of the progress made and the challenges met in various areas in the last 10 years. The list is far from complete, but it does illustrate well some aspects of the development of our communities. I will now summarize this document. Providing financial support to francophone organizations to allow them to take charge of their own community development has been a fruitful initiative. A tremendous amount of work has been done in many areas. We will come back to this document later.

The nature of the development files managed by our community organizations makes their work increasingly complex and requires expertise in specialized fields. The achievement of recent years are still relatively slight and fragile. This fragility can be seen in particular in the difficulty we have retaining qualified staff and in the fact that our volunteers are exhausted.

An additional investment would lead to significant progress in a great variety of fields. Whether the funds come from programs other than those of Canadian Heritage or directly from Cabinet, the francophone portion of the Canada-communities agreements should be increased from \$24.4 million to \$42 million a year to allow francophone and the Acadian communities to contribute fully to Canada's social and economic development.

As you can see, our demands are in several levels. If, following your hearings, you decide to make some recommendations, we would welcome that. We would suggest two in particular.

First, we would suggest that you ask the Department of Canadian Heritage to increase to a minimum of \$42 million a year the annual funding for the francophone portion of the Canada-communities agreement.

Second, we would suggest that you recommend that Cabinet increase the leeway of the minister responsible for the official languages so that he can ensure that the Action plan for the official languages is implemented effectively and fully, including the accountability framework that goes with it.

Before concluding, I would like Ms. Beaulieu to speak a little about reference document 3, which gives you some examples of the achievements made by our communities.

• (0950)

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: To give you a better idea of the communities' achievements and development, reference document 3 shows you some of the major areas of activity: arts and culture, communications, community development, the political and representation activities; and opening up to cultural diversity. It shows the achievements that have been made in recent years. We are referring here to the left-hand column. In the center, we show the next stages for these areas, and at the end, the main challenges and issues. I would ask you to take into account the fact that the challenges and issues were defined by the sectoral organizations, not by us.

If you look a little more closely at the section on challenges and issues, you will see that in many respects, one of our current major challenges is the problem about which we have already spoken—namely the inadequacy and instability of our funding. The table shows quite well that while the communities have made a great deal of progress, they are currently being eroded and becoming more fragile. That, of course, is why we made these demands of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Rioux and myself would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

• (0955)

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: Thank you, Ms. Beaulieu. This completes our presentation. I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving us a few extra minutes. We thought it was very important and we thank you for your understanding.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Rioux and Ms. Beaulieu.

We will now begin the first round of questioning, which is for seven minutes for each speaker. We will start with Mr. Scheer.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Thank you.

Could I just ask for clarification? One of your recommendations is to increase the amount of funding from \$24 million to \$42 million. Is that correct? Are you basing that on 1991 dollars?

In your chart you're saying that you really haven't had a funding increase, because essentially you're still getting the same as you were in 1991. But in actual dollars you have gone up to \$34 million. Am I reading that correctly?

So you have been keeping up with inflation in that regard. You have received increases. You're getting 23% more than you were in 1991, if I'm reading this correctly.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: If I may, I will answer your question in French. I think the chart shows that there is a variation, depending on whether the calculation is in current dollars or in constant dollars. In current dollars, there has been a slight increase between 1991 and the present. However, in constant dollars, when inflation is taken into account, the amounts are very different. So if we look at the constant dollar scale, we see that there has not been any real increase, and that inflation has not been taken into account.

Our request for \$42 million is based on the \$24 million currently provided under the agreements with the francophone and Acadian communities. The \$24 million figure is in current dollars. That is what we are getting at the moment. The \$42 million figure would also be in current dollars. I hope I have answered your question correctly.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Scheer: So this is a separate request for an increase from the chart that you have in your package.

I guess basically anyone can say, if they've been working for a company, they haven't had a raise in 10 years because all they've been doing is keeping up with inflation, when in fact that's the whole point of cost of living increases, to make up for inflation.

I want to ask you about auditing. Is your group subject to public accounts audits? How often are they held? When was the last one?

[Translation]

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: Audits are done regularly. Each year, the Department of Canadian Heritage designates a number of organizations and programs for an audit. In addition, since 2001, the Department of Canadian Heritage, following a major audit, has implemented a policy of due diligence, as it was called at the time. This is a type of accountability involving results-based management.

The activities of the organizations are all subject to audits by the department which, for its part, follows the Treasury Board rules. Finally, there are yearly accounting reports on the organizations' activities. I can tell you that the requirements of the Department of Canadian Heritage are such that all community organizations comply in a very concrete and specific way with Treasury Board's requirements.

• (1000)

[English]

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Are these audits made public?

[Translation]

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: Yes.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Okay. In this briefing package there are some criticisms of the official languages community program. They talk about the approval in management processes being slow. There is an absence of clearly defined priorities and there is a lack of transparency in financial decisions—that's a key one.

What sorts of methods are you looking at in helping to address this so that some of these problems are cleared up?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: We have discussed these problems with the Department of Canadian Heritage on a number of occasions. We think there is a way to deal with them, namely to establish a genuine partnership between the department and the communities. Apparently, some people are having difficulty understanding that as far as our work goes, we are heading in the same direction. To that extent, we should be able to get much clearer directives from the Department of Canadian Heritage.

It has often happened that the rules are changed without our being consulted at all. Under the most recent agreement, more specifically, a national committee was struck to check the requests that were submitted. This was not provided for in the agreement, but we nevertheless agreed to go along with this. Work remains to be done to develop a genuine partnership. Since Ms. Beaulieu works in this field every day, she can give you further clarification.

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: If I may, I would like to talk about the department's strategic development fund.

As has been the case for other areas, the department has requested an overall evaluation of its program. The results of the evaluation were published last year. One of the findings was that the strategic development fund should be based on some very clear priorities. The report also stated that the criteria for the funding provided under the strategic development agreement should also be very clear. In other words, as regards the \$7 million in discretionary spending, the audit highlighted some difficulties, and a definite lack of clarity. We have always been very much of this view ourselves. We have always asked the department to clarify its funding parameters with respect to this fund, because it is discretionary in nature.

In terms of managing these funds, the problems facing the Canadian heritage department are not the same as ours, of course. We are prepared, as Mr. Rioux said, to work to develop a better partnership so that we can deal more effectively with the communities' priorities and organize them better with the department's priorities. We have always maintained that clear parameters and criteria would help us do our job better.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sheer.

Monsieur Bergeron.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have two questions.

First, as I understand it, and correct me if I am wrong—one of the provisions of the Canada-communities agreements provides for the creation of a joint committee with representatives from the communities and from the department. One of its objectives is to evaluate the possibilities or the needs for increased funding.

A few weeks ago, you thought it advisable to travel here to meet with parliamentarians to highlight the importance of increasing the funding provided under the Canada-communities agreements. You are here today repeating the same message and stressing the importance of increasing the funding provided under these agreements. That leads me to ask you what happened with this

internal committee that is supposed to be making recommendations of this type in accordance with the Canada-communities agreements.

Does that mean that the mechanism is so dysfunctional that you will have to come all the way here to request increased funding, meet with parliamentarians for a full day and appear before the Official Languages Committee to get parliamentarians to understand how important this increased funding is? So what will really happen with this mechanism? Is it dysfunctional? How should it be modified so that you do not have to undertake your tedious mission periodically in order to get a significant increase in your funding?

• (1005)

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: I would say that that is an accurate reading of the situation. However, this process didn't start with the meetings we attended in early November; there were communications practically every day between the FCFA office and the departmental officials.

Ms. Beaulieu might be able to provide you with more details about that.

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: With regard to the distribution of funds, departmental officials are limited to a certain envelope. There is a general envelope from which funds are obtained for the agreements of each of the communities. That general envelope is therefore divided into more regional envelopes—to use the federal government's term—which means more specific envelopes for each community. The communities correspond to the provinces or territories. The officials work with the envelope they have.

We are currently in the midst of this onerous task—we acknowledge that it is burdensome and that it requires a lot of energy—because as long as this envelope is increased, the funding for the provincial and territorial communities won't be either. That's why we're here today.

We did what we had to do to make the Government of Canada understand that the communities play an extremely important role. Linguistic duality is something that the people experience in our communities. That needs to be said. Without greater financial support, the communities have a lot of trouble carrying that banner in our country.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I would like to close with another question. I would also like to comment on the answer we just heard.

Given that the human and financial resources are that limited, I think it is ludicrous that the francophone and Acadian communities have to use up such a significant portion of these resources to explain the fact that they need additional resources. These people should be in the field working for the development and dissemination of their culture in their own communities. That was my comment.

Mr. Rioux, in your presentation, you briefly alluded to the IPOLC program. As a parliamentarian who is concerned about the sound management of public funds, I was quite intrigued by what you had to say. If I understood you correctly, this program should have provided structuring investments in the communities. But according to what you said, the departments took advantage of this to create new needs for themselves and spend more of the funds from this program internally rather than investing in structuring expenditures in the communities. As we know, the machine is generally self-sufficient.

Could you give me more details on the effects of the IPOLC program which you briefly described a few moments ago? That would enable us to understand the nature or the magnitude of the problem you have raised.

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: I think that things went well in some respects and with some departments. However, the situation was quite different when the communities requested a program from Health Canada, for example. Health Canada and Heritage Canada worked together, and it was discovered that the money that should have come back to the communities had been shared. That is not new money that was invested, but existing money. The partnership that was supposed to help the communities did not meet our expectations. In fact, the genuine partnership we expected did not happen. At the end of the day, certain funds were not transferred from one department to the other, as should have been the case.

There were other examples. Ms. Beaulieu could tell you about them.

• (1010)

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: Allow me to clarify a few points. The IPOLC is a program that enables Heritage Canada to use funds to help other departments implement initiatives for the communities. As Mr. Rioux said, this program should have enabled us to achieve certain objectives or meet major expectations. It must be pointed out that in some cases the IPOLC allowed us to do excellent work. However, the program concentrates more on initiatives that are national in scope. There is relatively little work done with the communities and the provinces and territories.

For our part, we would like to see the IPOLC become more widespread. We would also like the program to involve departments that are not affected by the Action Plan for Official Languages. In other words, as we speak, the IPOLC is still being used to support departments that receive assistance under the Action Plan. I think that this program should be gradually broadened and better pegged to the community level. Often, these IPOLC agreements are signed unbeknownst to the communities.

In short, this is an interesting program. However, its impact should be maximized by establishing a better partnership with the communities and by opening it up to new departments.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to our committee. Francophone communities are asking that their funding be increased from \$24 million to \$42 million. Apart from the fact that the cost of living has increased, were calculations done within the framework of an action plan? Have certain initiatives, as well as a forecast of the outcomes of these initiatives, been planned?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: Indeed, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne has asked all communities to set out their needs and to indicate their priorities in that regard. As co-chairman, I sit on the committee that evaluates funding applications. There are six of us representing the communities, and three who represent Heritage Canada. The director from Heritage Canada and I alternate chairmanship of this committee. We evaluate funding applications. Whether these applications are for projects or programming, they are sent to the Heritage Canada office. We evaluate applications that we receive twice a year.

Every year, we lack funds. Quite frequently we receive twice as many applications as our budget permits. For instance, we might have \$2 million to distribute, whether for core funding or projects. When an application totals \$60,000, we grant \$30,000, that is half the funds. These people do what they can with \$30,000, but quite often they cannot meet their objectives.

The \$18 million increase that we are asking for is well below the needs identified by the communities. That amount could be multiplied by five or six. We attempted to determine what the priorities were and what could increase support for communities. As Ms. Beaulieu was telling you when she was discussing the graphs, there are volunteers. There are community development workers who could only be guaranteed eight months of work per year. As you can well understand, these people's main priority is to find work elsewhere. We don't even know whether we will be able to rehire them from one year to the next. In short, we are not in a position to establish permanent structures. I don't mean by that that all the associations should have such structures. One thing is for sure, they are very far from that point.

That was rather a long answer to tell you that the needs have been explained and that the sum of \$18 million is not exaggerated.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We hear about the Dion plan, which provides for \$751 million over five years, and you are talking about \$19 million. According to your comments, it is as though nothing were moving. Personally, I really think something is moving. They want to cut the satellite link for community radio. Things are moving, but they are moving backwards. When the food inspectors won their case before the court, government money was used to appeal. It's moving alright. It's moving backwards. We have just elected a new government, and many deputy ministers are unilingual anglophones. It's going just fine.

I would like to know whether you think the government is really serious when it comes to Canada's two official languages and their enhancement in minority communities.

• (1015)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: You're asking him to play politics.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's not politics; that's reality. Everybody is talking about it.

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: I will answer you in other way. Right now, the Government of Canada is taking part in the Sommet de la Francophonie in Ouagadougou. To maintain the francophone and Acadian communities outside Quebec, the Government of Canada will have to take a closer look at what it's doing with that minority. Its participation in the francophone summit will soon no longer be very legitimate if it continues to act the way it is acting.

Mr. Yvon Godin: With regard to the Dion plan, it's already almost two years behind. There are three years left. Do you think it will achieve its goal? There are three years left, and almost nothing has been done. On the contrary, we are losing ground. I don't want to be a pessimist, but my feeling is that we are losing ground. Do you think the plan will achieve its goal? What difference will it really make? It's all very well to discuss it here in Ottawa, but is there actual work being done with people in the communities or are these just words that look good in the media? The Dion plan was announced a year and a half ago. Do you see any difference in the communities? I talked about the negative side of things. Can you tell me about the positive aspects of the Dion plan, apart from the announcements? There was a meeting of the SAANB in Bathurst. Stéphane, you were there and the Commissioner of Official Languages was there too. We have been talking about this for a long time. I have been a member of the Official Languages Committee for many years. This \$751 million plan was launched. You are telling us that an announcement is all very nice, but there is no money trickling down. I would like to be underneath it when it does.

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: We are talking about \$19 million but we don't even know what it is going to be used for. In the case of the Dion plan, some departments certainly achieved some worthy goals.

Mr. Yvon Godin: What exactly?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: For example, for Justice Canada and Health Canada, the Dion plan was truly implemented and we did benefit from that. That is why we're asking that more powers be given to the minister responsible for its implementation and application, namely Mr. Mauril Bélanger, so that he can push some of the departments that have not done anything yet.

Mr. Yvon Godin: How can you say that things have moved in the health sector when three francophone hospitals have been closed in northeastern New Brunswick?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: Things have moved on the national front in the sense that...

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's at the national level.

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: At the national level, the Société Santé en français is starting to bear fruit. Within Justice Canada as well as the Department of Immigration, concrete action has been taken.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Time flies.

The Chair: That's because it was interesting.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I will be asking you questions about immigration later. Be prepared.

The Chair: Ms. Boivin.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): Thank you.

I will tell you how I see the situation, and you can correct me if I am wrong.

I would first like to thank you for being here. I find these presentations most interesting. I met some of your colleagues who came to see me when they were doing the rounds of members' offices. I met as well with representatives of the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française who also expressed some concerns. I hope that you will be open to their requests.

That said, I am hearing different stories. On one side, there are some Conservative friends who, obviously, want a justification for every single dollar that is spent on the francophonie. To a certain extent, they may be right, but in some ways they illustrate the current attitude of Canadians. The issue of official languages is quite controversial. We say that we live in a bilingual country, but, dear Lord, it is often easier said than done! On the other side, we have the eternal pessimists. There are some good things. I have been knocking myself out saying that when it comes to official languages, if we want to sell our product, we have to convince those who are most against it by using arguments that are relevant to them, in other words, by showing them, as I constantly strive to do, that being bilingual represents an asset. It is extremely valuable for Canada to be able to say that it has a francophone component and an anglophone component.

That said, as we are used to being closer to the centre than our colleagues opposite, I think people still have quite a ways to go. However, some good things have been done, and even the Official Languages Commissioner has said it, even though we do not often see it said in the media, which tends to dwell on the more extremist positions, on either side of the issue.

I would like to ask you a question arising from my meeting with the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française. You asked for a budget increase to \$42 million, and the youth are asking for 15 per cent of that. Do you support them? Are you aware that they want 15 per cent of the budget? Can you tell me whether or not you agree with that?

A concern has been expressed by those who are opposed to or have questions about your budget demands; they are wondering about the 350 organizations that will be sharing in it. We sometimes get the feeling that you are all over the map. It is hard to see what you have accomplished. Can something be done about that? Will the extra funding be used for human resources, for new projects that will benefit the francophone community?

Those are my questions.

• (1020)

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: I will try to answer each of your questions, starting with the one on the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française.

I would first tell you that the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française has always been a very active member of the FCFA, at least as far as I know. Of course, youth represents a priority for communities. We are clearly interested in developing what we call our identity, and that is one of the main reasons why we are asking for more funding.

With respect to a percentage and a specific amount, the Fédération de la jeunesse has not suggested an exact figure. So I will refrain from responding to that question for the time being. These people will be discussing the whole issue, not only with us, but also with the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Your second question is related to a totally different aspect, namely, the number of organizations in the communities, the investment, etc. This is something that we have explored over the past years. The Department of Canadian Heritage often raises this issue of the large number of organizations and possible overlap. Of course, this is not something that applies only to us. We work with communities and organizations. In each of the communities, there has been extensive development over the past 10 years. This development has not always necessarily been very structured.

In general, in communities, at some point, there are volunteers who are interested in doing something to make up for the lack of cultural activities, for example. Over the past 10 years, very often, when such a lack was noticed, an organization would spring up. This is something that was heavily supported by the Department of Canadian Heritage which itself created new organizations to serve specific purposes.

So today we find ourselves with a large number of organizations and there is an attempt to rationalize them, according to what the department has said. So there are questions being asked about the investment capacity. This problem is not particular to us alone. There has, of course, been some growth, but in spite of this growth, there remain communities where no cultural activities are available, where francophones cannot live in French. There are always gaps and shortcomings.

I think the time has come for us to take a look at ourselves and ask how we can make the most of what is available to our communities. But this should not be done by the communities alone. There has been a great deal of development, and we have to take the time to make the necessary adjustments.

• (1025)

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Where will the money be going?

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: I was getting to that. As we say in the documents, we obviously have some catching up to do.

Now, there are a few new items that have to be implemented quickly. Over the past three or four years, we have managed to do a wonderful job with the provincial and territorial governments. We have to step up this work so that the governments will take charge of services in French. Moreover, we will have to work with the municipalities which, because of the devolution of powers, are taking on more importance as government authorities.

Then there is the new reality of cultural diversity and demographic change. We agree that we must invest more in that sector.

Finally, we started by talking about youth and the development of an identity. That is another priority for investment.

The Chair: Thank you.

We are beginning the second round. This time, the interventions will be five minutes long and we will change the order: Conservative Party, Liberal Party, Bloc Québécois, and NDP.

Mr. Poilievre.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would first like to tell Ms. Boivin that I am disappointed. My party supports accountability and wants to know where our money is being spent. I hate to say it, but that is how I am starting off today.

My friends, you are asking for a budget increase to \$42 million. Would this increase be going to the francophone part of the Canada-communities agreements, or to the entire program?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: It is only for the francophone part.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: My figures are changing. Is it true that the total budget would be \$52 million with this increase?

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: The current budget for the francophone side is \$24.7 million.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Yes, but the total.

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: In total, the increase that we are requesting, that is, \$18 million, would give us \$42 million for the francophone part.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: What will be the total program budget with the increase in funding?

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: Just over \$50 million. You've done the math.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: I wanted to know what the real numbers were.

The Martin government told us that there would be an expenditure review within departments, but you still want to receive a massive increase. You haven't proposed any real measures demonstrating that the money will be well spent. In my opinion, that's a legitimate criticism. How can you justify such a huge increase when departments and other organizations will be facing cutbacks?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: There are two or three parts to your question. Ms. Beaulieu will complete my answer.

First, you're talking about a huge investment. However, when you divide \$18 million by one million, there's not much left over for investment in light of current needs.

• (1030)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: However, the percentage is enormous. In terms of percentage, it's a huge increase.

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: Yes, but it may still not be enough. If we ask for an increase of \$100 million, cabinet would approve it more easily than an increase of \$18 million. When we ask for \$18 million, we are told to get the money from the department we are accountable to. It's possible that the amount may not be high enough. It's not such a high percentage when you look at how much was invested in 1991. If you take away inflation, it does not represent an increase.

[English]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: That's the real world. People's budgets generally increase with the cost of living, and yours clearly has. Your increases have kept up with the cost of living. Your increases have followed inflation, and there's no reason, in my view, that they ought to be larger than the increases in cost of living when other departments, which gets back to my question, are seeing a likely reduction this year.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: We understand what you're saying. Every department has been ask to reduce its expenses and to find money. But we feel that development must continue. At the current rate, development will not progress as much as we'd like. That's the first point.

Second, as regards accountability, it seems that when organizations ask for money, be it for basic programs or for projects, their requests include the outcomes they are expected to deliver. So it's very easy to assess whether these outcomes have been attained the following year.

[English]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Does your organization retain advertising agencies at all to promote your work?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: No.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Never?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: No.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Okay. The committee recommends that the government pursue an interdepartmental analysis of its scientific capacity and, after it has done so, report back to the committee. Further to this, the committee recommends that after its analysis the government apportion in a coordinated manner significantly increased resources to freshwater research.

Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Boivin.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: My colleague, who unfortunately had to leave, is very interested in the issue of community radio stations. It would therefore be my pleasure to ask you a question on that subject on his behalf.

Mr. D'Amours was wondering whether it was a good idea to create new community radio stations rather than consolidating those which already exist.

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: I think that's a very good question. I feel that, at the moment, if we want to conserve the current network of community radio stations which operates within smaller markets, we have to do both. On the one hand, we have to consolidate what is already there, because some of them are having a lot of trouble surviving. On the other hand, as you no doubt know, Ms. Boivin, these stations don't reach everyone in outlying areas. This prevents us from turning towards other models or alternative solutions, but we need to do both.

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: When the community realizes it needs a local radio station, it cannot wait, because the radio station is a development tool. This has been proven. Some of these smaller stations have a hard time surviving, but others are extremely successful and have become development tools. For instance, there is a local radio station in southeastern New Brunswick called CJSE. Before the station came on the air, people were not listening to Radio-Canada, but to English stations. Over the last five years, the situation has changed completely. Whereas before 80% of people listened to English radio stations, now 80% of them listen to French community radio.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I will come back to the issues I raised a little earlier.

Let's talk about real life. What is your position with regard to the 350 organizations? Do you find there are too many? What is the federation's position on that subject? Don't you think it's a matter of divide and conquer which sometimes gives the impression that no one is concentrating on anything in particular?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: If you look at how society evolves, you'll see that what has happened in the last few years is what happens. Right now, these organizations are being streamlined. People are realizing this is happening and the federation is pushing the organizations to work together more efficiently. At a certain point, they have to realize that they cannot each work in a vacuum anymore, but that they have to get together with others to maximize the things they do. So some organizations are partnering with others to get things done, which did not necessarily happen at the start.

At the very beginning, each organization had its seat and was glad of it and surely did not want to share it. That was a growing trend. Also, not everyone of the 350 organizations is seeking money for their basic programming. They need money for specific projects.

For instance, take a cultural organization which serves 40,000 people and which receives \$25,000 a year to complete a project. That's not going to keep the organization alive, but the money will be used to fund a very specific project. So there is a mix with regard to development. As Ms. Beaulieu was saying, it used to be that as soon as a need was identified, an association was created. But today, people realize that they can achieve a lot more if they work together. People are realizing that some organizations should partner with others to get some things done, all the while maintaining a certain autonomy, or, in other circumstances, one organization may disappear completely when it merges with another.

• (1035)

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Many cultural communities come to Canada, which makes us a richer country. I remember seeing a report on newly arrived francophones in Ontario, who were feeling rather excluded. Are you working on that issue?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: Three years ago, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne created a project called *Dialogue des cultures*. The aim of the project is to be open to other communities, to welcome them or to help those who are already here feel at home. We want a system to welcome those arriving here and to help them integrate themselves into our community. In other words, we want these people to feel at home as quickly as possible. So there's a lot of work that is being done in our communities in that regard.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Boivin.

Mr. Desrochers.

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rioux and Ms. Beaulieu, I would like to begin by making a brief comment. We try not to be pessimistic on this committee, but rather realistic. The reality is that there is only one member for the Liberal Party of Canada here to listen to your concerns. The chairman really does not ask any questions. So you will have to ask questions, Ms. Boivin. I'd be curious to see how many Liberals will be here on Thursday, when Air Canada will come before the committee. This situation is completely unacceptable. It's all very well and good to have an action plan and \$750 million in funding, but if you don't have the political support of those in power, I can understand why you would be worried.

There is a global action plan managed by the Department of Canadian Heritage. Can you tell us which departments have been called upon to help implement the overall plan of action tabled by Minister Dion and which Ms. Frulla and Mr. Bélanger are continually boasting about?

Did most federal departments not jump on board or are there typical examples of departments behaving that way?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: It is hard for me to give you a direct answer, because we also work with those departments. It comes down to what we were already saying: the departments have to change their culture. They're not used to this. They're not used to working with communities. As long as they don't receive direction or as long as there's no mechanism whereby a person will receive the authority to force them to change, some departments will only change gradually or not at all.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: What percentage of departments are cooperating, and what percentage is not?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: Of those which are subject to section 41...

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: You realize that the action plan clearly identifies amounts of funding and departments. I would say that over half of all departments are cooperating very well. We named some of them earlier. For instance, the Department of Justice has made huge progress, as well as Health Canada. Things are going fairly well with Immigration Canada. Some departments are coming about more slowly. Mr. Bélanger has worked very hard to move the issue forward.

We're almost half way through the action plan. Two years out of five have almost gone by. We expect that, in the very short term, the departments which haven't changed much will do so quickly. There is some money left. A little earlier, we talked about the money which

was earmarked for communities within the Department of Heritage. We hope that we will soon be able to follow through and clearly identify where the money which is earmarked for communities will be spent.

• (1040)

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Who manages the satellite signal for community radio stations? Is it Industry Canada?

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: It's the Department of Canadian Heritage, dear sir. In fact, Mr. Desrochers, that is included in the \$19 million targeted by the Department of Heritage. Community radio stations were one aspect within communities which was very clearly identified.

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: You also have to realize that, under the accountability framework, the departments involved have to meet with communities twice a year to account for the work they have accomplished. Some departments are a little embarrassed when they present their report because they realize nothing much has been done. That's why the accountability framework is very important. We're beginning to realize that things are moving within departments because they have no choice. When the time comes for them to present a report, they have to deliver the goods.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Have you received feedback from the communities with regard to these measures? When? Twice a year?

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: We consulted widely. I would say that in grassroots communities, some issues are moving forward, but it's still at a snail's pace. That's why the accountability framework is very important and why it is also very important to work with provincial and territorial governments. In some cases, including the departments of Health and Immigration, there are tangible results within communities. I would also add, Mr. Desrochers, that the Department of Social Development has accomplished excellent work and is making good progress under the plan of action.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desrochers.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Do you know what the definition of centre is? If you run in an election on the NDP's platform and then you implement the Conservative Party's platform, you call that the centre.

Let's talk about the Réseau francophone d'Amérique and community radio stations. I think that we are going to lose an important tool for francophone communities. The network is pan-Canadian. For example, in my riding, we can listen to the news from Ottawa on CKRO. That comes from the Réseau francophone d'Amérique. People are very worried. You are sharing your concerns with us, and we are going to make recommendations, but do you also plan to share your concerns with the minister?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: ARCC, the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada, has made the necessary representations. It has informed the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne of the work that has been done. So the work has been done.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You are talking about the association of community radio stations, which has informed you of the work that it has done. On your side, as an organization representing francophones, have you prepared anything to show the minister just how important the matter is and to show your support?

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: We raised the matter with the minister in the discussions that we had about two and half or three weeks ago. Moreover, I have worked personally with the people from the department who are responsible for the matter to ensure that the requests made by ARCC and community radio stations are taken into consideration quickly.

• (1045)

Mr. Yvon Godin: You said that you could assign the \$19 million that was promised to that, but that you have not yet seen the money. Mr. Chairman, we should make a recommendation to that effect in our report, because it is very important. I do not want to be pessimistic, but that is the reality.

The Chair: I have taken note of that, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you very much.

In the area of immigration, it is not simply a matter of being able to welcome people, but also being able to integrate them. Do you think that the government is doing enough so that we can welcome francophone immigrants outside Quebec?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: I think that the program is currently being put in place. There is also a lot of work to do with the provinces. When we work with Canadian Heritage, we have expectations of the department, but we also tell it that it must have expectations of the provinces. When it earmarks money for implementing agreements with the provinces, it must make sure that the provinces have consulted the communities on the projects that affect them.

As regards immigration, I am going to give you an example. Next Sunday, on November 28, I am going with Citizenship and Immigration Canada on a tour of two African countries, Tunisia and Cameroon, to provide information on francophone and Acadian communities outside Quebec. People from other regions in Canada and someone from New Brunswick who is looking after immigration will accompany me to ensure that there is some continuity.

In the meantime, back home in our communities, for example at the level of the SAANB, we have set up a consultation committee to make the various stakeholders aware of the need to put reception structures into place to help people who arrive here to integrate into our communities. I am not talking necessarily about their cultural integration. They can maintain their culture, which is enriching for us. We have targeted immigrants who will be able to come into our communities and contribute to their development.

Mr. Yvon Godin: If this centrist government were to support Bill S-3, which would make section 41 of part VII of the act binding, would that resolve many of the problems that are making me so pessimistic?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: You are not the only one. If the work done by your predecessors in the House of Commons or the Senate, people who believe that part VII should be binding, results in something concrete, I think that will settle a large number of problems. As a matter of fact, in New-Brunswick there is a case relating to part VII of the act that will probably end up before the

Supreme Court. It is a case involving the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Is it the money from the Dion plan that will be paying for this case?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: No, it is from the Court Challenges Program.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

I would like to suggest a last two minutes round in conclusion. Is that satisfactory?

Mr. Poilievre.

[*English*]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Earlier on, in response to one of the questions—I think it was from Mr. Godin, but I'm not sure—one of our two witnesses mentioned that a component of the work they do involves lobbying, representing the interests of the various communities to the government, whether it is on questions of health, immigration, or other issues.

What percentage of your budget would you say is dedicated to the lobbying effort—roughly?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: Mr. Poilievre, representing the communities is a very important function of the FCFA. I would say that between 15 and 20 p. 100 of the federation budget is devoted to representation activities.

[*English*]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Okay, so we're talking in the neighbourhood of well over \$5 million, then.

I'm sorry, but what budget are you talking about?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: The federation manages a budget of approximately \$2 million a year, one million dollars of which is devoted to specific projects, in the immigration sector, among others, as well as health for a number of years now, and in various sectors of the francophonie. The actual budget of the federation for its activities and operations is only one million dollars. Fifteen to twenty percent of that would be \$150,000 or \$2,000,000.

• (1050)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Lastly, I would like to ask some questions about the French-speaking minorities in the country, particularly in English-speaking regions. Are they satisfied with the services they are receiving from the federal government in matters of health and immigration? What is the general degree of satisfaction of the francophone minorities in Canada?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: I think that that is a pertinent question. There are two aspects to my answer.

First of all, whenever there is a devolution of powers by the federal government, we keep a very close watch over the situation to ensure that the agencies to whom the powers are delegated are subject to the same linguistic requirements as the government. This week you will be meeting one of these agencies, Air Canada, that says it would cost too much to hire bilingual staff for flights to western Canada. I think that the problem could easily be solved by staffing these flights with one bilingual person rather than an anglophone and a francophone.

As for community satisfaction, there is still some room for progress in the provision of services by the federal government to minority communities.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rioux.

Mr. Desrochers.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Thank you.

You said that a certain amount of progress was achieved with respect to justice. Concerning access to justice, are the judges appointed by the federal court to sit in New-Brunswick bilingual or unilingual?

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: In New-Brunswick, the judges are bilingual.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Are they bilingual? That is not the case in other provinces?

Let me come back to the question of community radio. How many community radio stations are operating at the present time?

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: Eighteen.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Serving how many people?

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: These figures are rather difficult for us to obtain, but if I may, I will ask Mr. Cantin to give you an answer.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: He can give it to me afterwards.

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: Fine.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: How many community radio stations would you require to respond to the demands of the francophone population in the province?

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: In the provinces and in the territories. How many would be necessary? I can give you an answer later. I would like to check the situation with Mr. Cantin but I think that we will almost have to double the present number.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Is the budget provided to you now by Heritage Canada not sufficient to allow you to set up an authentic network?

Mrs. Marielle Beaulieu: Unless we make you use of the money for the action plan, that is the 19 million dollars. I think that we could probably do quite a good job but we still do not know where the department wants to spend this money.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desrochers.

Ms. Boivin.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Do you still think that the Canada-communities agreements are the best mechanisms to support the

associations active in a minority environment? In view of all that I have been hearing, I sometimes have doubts.

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: I think that this is a very good mechanism but it does require improvement and updating because of the evolution taking place. We have to consider what is working well and what is not working. We have to take into account these particularities but we do need an agreement between the communities and the federal government. Without it, we have nothing. The provinces are not willing to take up the slack in this respect.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: In your communities, do you hear the point of view of those who are opposed to the francophonie? We know that the media give a great deal of attention to this point of view. Is it something that is heard in your communities or is it more of a media creation? For example, whenever the commissioner makes a presentation, there are requests to have the budget for francophonie and official languages remain at the present level. There was quite an uproar in Ottawa, where some fairly extremist movements opposed official languages in all sorts of ways. When your communities make a request, do you observe this kind of reaction? Has the situation improved in 2004?

● (1055)

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: In certain communities, the majority is so strong that it does not even react. In others, for example in our area in New-Brunswick, there are still reactions but... The provincial government was very apprehensive about adopting a new Official Languages Act but there was not any negative reaction. There may be a small group that opposed it, but it is not important enough to merit any discussion.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Excellent. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Boivin. Thank you, Mr. Rioux.

Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to conclude by personally thanking the witnesses. Keep up your good work. I am not a pessimist but I know that the work is not yet over. You are making a great contribution to the development of our communities whether they are francophone or anglophone. I am sure that the anglophones living in a minority situation experience the same problems. Working together we will be able to improve the situation and bring about a greater acceptance of our two languages, English and French. As Antonine Maillet said, we do not want to turn all anglophones into francophones or vice versa, we simply want to have services provided in both languages.

Thank you.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Quebec anglophones may have some problems, but certainly not the same ones.

The Chair: I would also like to thank you, Mr. Rioux and Ms. Beaulieu. Thank you for coming here. We can end on that note. We certainly intend to come back to certain matters that we discussed here today.

I would like to remind the committee members that next Thursday we will be hearing from representatives of Air Canada and from the Public Service Commission the following week on the 30th. The appearance of the Public Service Commission will last half an hour and the following half-hour will be devoted to our future business. Thank you.

Mr. Jean-Guy Rioux: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank all the members of the committee. We enjoyed talking to you

about our experience. If you require any further details, Ms. Beaulieu and the office staff will be happy to provide them to you. Thank you once again.

The Chair: Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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