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Mr. Pablo Rodriguez

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• (0905)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone. Welcome to our meeting following the parliamentary break and our work in our respective ridings.

Today, the committee is continuing its study on the implementation of the Action Plan for Official Languages. To this effect, today we are hearing two members of the Réseau des cégeps et collèges francophones du Canada, Ms. Andrée Lortie and Mr. Yvon Saint-Jules. Our witnesses will be with us until 10:30 a.m. Following that we will continue our meeting in camera to discuss changes to our travel plans.

I would like to extend a welcome to our guests. You have a few introductory remarks to make. Following that we will move to a discussion period.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie (Member, Réseau des cégeps et collèges francophones du Canada):

Thank you for inviting us today. I'm very pleased to be here to talk to you about an issue that is very important to me, that of colleges outside of Quebec.

I want to talk to you briefly about two things. Firstly, I want to talk to you about the situation of colleges in Canada. What goes on in school boards and universities is generally well known. On the other hand, when it comes to colleges, they are relatively new creatures. For the most part, colleges were created during the 1960s. As you probably know, college training generally leads to access to the labour market. They provide one, two, or three-year post-secondary programs in areas such as health care, media, technology and administration.

I want to give you an overview of what is happening in French, because contrary to the CEGEP system, programs offered outside of Quebec are vocational training programs that lead directly to the labour market. Very few programs are conducive to pursuing university studies.

Across Canada, four provinces currently offer college programs in the French language. In Ontario, there is the Cité collégiale in Ottawa; in northern Ontario, there is the Collège Boréal and the Collège d'Alfred, which offers agricultural programs. In Manitoba, there is the Collège universitaire Saint-Boniface, which also provides college-level programs. In New Brunswick, there is an elaborate system of colleges. As you probably know, there's a college that has several campuses.

In the rest of Canada, there is very little activity going on at the college level. I should point out that in Nova Scotia, the Collège de l'Acadie was amalgamated with Université Sainte-Anne. Therefore, there is some college activity going on there. There's very little, but at least there is some.

Elsewhere, in the western provinces, we are in the embryonic stages. Certain programs, often vocational training programs developed in collaboration with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, are offered in the western provinces. Éducentre is doing things in British Columbia. In Alberta, there is a college program set up with NAIT, and other vocational training programs set up with organizations such as ÉDUK. Saskatchewan also has adult training programs provided through the Service francaskois d'éducation aux adultes.

With respect to Nova Scotia and the territories, there is absolutely nothing going on.

I shouldn't leave out Prince Edward Island, where there are programs set up in collaboration with Sainte-Anne University.

Therefore, outside of Quebec, there are four provinces where there are structured college-level programs. For the other provinces, we are still in the very preliminary stages, things are just getting started.

The challenges are absolutely enormous. You know that most provinces have been able to set up school boards. In this respect, there are things going on in almost all provinces. Nonetheless, when these students, or immersion students—the Canadian Parents for French Association has a well-developed network of immersion schools across Canada—finish their secondary studies, they have very few opportunities to pursue their studies in French, if any.

We know what the assimilation rate is. One only has to look at the worsening statistics which are only becoming more and more depressing, I believe, each time new statistics are produced. It is certain that francophones living outside of Quebec have few opportunities to continue their studies in French after high school. When they get to the post-secondary level, to the college level, they have no choice but to study in French, in all provinces except for the four provinces I mentioned earlier. That is the very dark side of the issue.

However, there's a positive side. For a number of years, through the federal government's incredible leadership under the federal-provincial agreements, we are beginning to see some positive results. For a few years now, approximately 7,000 students have been studying full time in colleges outside of Quebec. In addition, there are nearly 20,000 students enrolled in all sorts of vocational training programs. I'm talking about six or eight-month programs, and adult education programs across the country. We are slowly beginning to develop French language colleges, as demonstrated by Éducacentre's health care worker training program in Vancouver, or training programs to become an emergency worker in Nova Scotia. Contrary to the situation of universities, the situation of colleges affects a very large proportion of the population.

• (0910)

If you look at the figures for anglophones, there are a lot of people who choose to attend college after high school. I believe that we live in an age and economy where not having a post-secondary education leads almost inevitably to having a low-paying job or to unemployment.

What are the challenges for post-secondary education outside of Quebec? There are several.

Firstly, there's a very small critical mass spread over an immense territory. Ontario and New Brunswick are perhaps the two provinces where the most activity is going on. And even there—I am speaking to you in my capacity as head of the largest college outside of Quebec—the challenges are incredible, because students arrive at our college from all parts of Ontario. Among others, we encounter difficulties when we want to set up new programs.

Colleges often offer specialized training. For example, there are programs focused on television production, health care, respiratory therapy. These programs are nonetheless quite complex. The critical mass is simply non-existent. Therefore, if we want to start up activities, regardless of the province, there has to be a will and a decision to do so. There is only one way to go about it: we get the program up and running, because if we wait for the demand, before we act, there will never be a supply, never, never, never.

When provinces say that they are waiting for the demand to manifest, nothing is done and nothing happens. I'll give you an example. When the Cité collégiale was created, some people said that it would never work. Why? Because according to some, franco-Ontarians would never choose to continue studying in French, for fear of not getting a job in Ontario, where, as we know, the labour market is primarily anglophone. There was a whole discussion during the 1990s. The Cité collégiale was created, we started with 1,800 students and now have 3,500. Therefore, we cannot really wait for demand before providing a program. It must be offered, in order to recruit proactively.

Éducacentre serves a small community in Vancouver. There aren't a lot of francophones in that city. The same thing occurred there. They decided to set up health care programs to train health care workers to work in senior citizens' homes. There are a sufficient number of francophones living in British Columbia who need this type of service. They decided to move ahead, launch a program, and there were 15 students from all parts of British Columbia enrolled as well as a few distance education students from the Yukon territory.

There was a graduation ceremony for the first class of graduates, attended by the provincial Minister of Health, an anglophone.

I would say that that is the first major challenge.

The second challenge, obviously, when we talk about quality, is pedagogical material. There simply isn't any in French. We must develop training programs; yet there are none in French. Staff must be hired, staff must be bilingual because internships are often done in anglophone settings. That's also difficult. Therefore, the challenges are considerable at all levels. When working in an anglophone college, associations and partnerships can be made with other colleges. In Ontario, there is a network of 24 community colleges. In Saskatchewan and elsewhere, there are many colleges: NAIT, SAIT and the Grant MacEwan College. Therefore, economies of scale can be achieved easily, it is easy to collaborate and develop programs together.

For francophones outside of Quebec, we have to focus on networks. Le Réseau des cégeps et des collèges that I represent today is a network that groups all of these institutions which provide a college education, as well as Quebec CEGEPS. What this means is that we do not have to reinvent the wheel when it comes to programs or teaching material. It is certain that adjustments have to be made, but there are things that can be done.

When I look at the current situation of colleges in Canada, I would say that for the last 10 years, I have begun to see, outside of Quebec, the emergence of networking, of a synergy that has formed, allowing us to move ahead. Through collaborations that we were able to create because the federal government funds the Réseau des cégeps et des collèges francophones du Canada, for the first time, we were able to launch a paramedic program in Nova Scotia. It was a program that was necessary, a program for which there was a demand.

• (0915)

One of the reasons I wanted to meet with you today was to tell you that there is no federal-provincial agreement in education. You certainly know that current agreements have expired. The minister signed an agreement for the year 2004-2005, but for the upcoming years, absolutely nothing was signed. That is indicative of two things. Action plans have been submitted, there are communities that are ready and willing to do things, but there is a terrible level of instability.

It is easier for large colleges to survive certain things, but I can tell you that for small communities and in certain provinces, we run the risk of losing the fruits of our efforts and the gains we have made if there continues to be no agreement. The provinces often need the federal government to help them out. The federal government has played a very large role in the area of linguistic duality.

You cannot underestimate your role, it is a major one. Today I am going to ask you to play a very political role to make sure that there are new federal-provincial agreements in education, particularly for colleges.

Mr. Chairman, I will conclude on this note: we also need the support of the federal government to maintain a network such as ours, the Réseau des cégeps et des collèges du Canada. It cannot operate alone and this is one way of achieving results quickly and sharing resources that we so desperately need.

Those are the two points that I wanted to raise with you today. I will be pleased to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Lortie. We will move ahead with a round of questions, answers and comments between members of the committee and yourselves.

Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Lortie, Mr. Saint-Jules, welcome.

You talked about the agreement between the provincial governments and the federal government. There was an agreement signed two years ago, which has not been renewed.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: There are several levels of agreements. There are agreements between the Council of Ministers of Education, which are general agreements affecting school boards, colleges, and in some cases, university education.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I am talking specifically about official languages in the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: In this respect, there were no special agreements. In the case of colleges in Ontario, in addition to agreements with the Council of Ministers of Education, there are special agreements which date back five years, whereas framework agreements are usually renewable. Since the end of the year 2004, the agreements have lapsed. In some cases, there was an extension, but there are no agreements for the upcoming years.

Colleges have made requests, we have submitted projects and we are waiting for negotiations. We are told that negotiations will begin some time before the month of June, but I will not pretend that things are moving ahead, because we were told the same thing last spring.

• (0920)

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Can you tell us how that affects the operations of a college?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Take my own college, for example. Absolutely nothing is being developed right now at the Cité collégiale. The year 2005-2006 has begun and we have not launched any new training programs. The reason why an institution such as the Cité collégiale was created was because we wanted to increase francophones' access to post-secondary education in French. Nothing is being done in this respect. We cannot do long-term planning, because an action plan was submitted, but we do not know if it will be implemented. That also has an impact on the quality of programs. We provide 70 training programs. We should probably provide 40 of so, if we compare ourselves to an anglophone college of the same size. We do so because we want to make sure we are able to offer a very wide selection of programs. We are actually considering reducing the number of choices.

We have a campus in Hawkesbury. We are currently wondering if we should close it down or leave it open. The lack of an agreement leads to this type of situation.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: You have 3,500 students?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: We have 3,500 full-time students.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: How many students are enrolled at the campus in Hawkesbury?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: We would have approximately 400.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: And you think that the Cité collégiale will shut down its activities in Hawkesbury?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Yes, because 400 is a large enrolment number for vocational training programs in areas such as welding, electricity, automobile mechanics, etc. Therefore, these programs are generally shorter than programs offered in Ottawa.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Is it possible that it will not start in September?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: We may reduce the number of spots in some of our programs next year.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Are you talking about next September?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Yes, that would mean next September, you are right.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: You have not received any news. Have you communicated with the Department of Canadian Heritage?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: We are in regular contact with officials from the Department of Canadian Heritage. We have heard that agreements are currently being negotiated. I was told that the provinces were asked to come to an agreement before the end of March.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: That should be wrapped up by the end of March.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: If there is not a general agreement with the Council of ministers of Education, we will move to bilateral negotiations with the provinces as of April.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: What happens if there is not an agreement by June? If you sign the agreement in June, would that give you enough time to start?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: There has to be an agreement by the end of June.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: What happens if it is after the month of June?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: That becomes more problematic, more difficult.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: That will...

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: I received a letter from Mary Anne Chambers, Minister of Training and Colleges and Universities of Ontario, in which she told us that the provincial government wants to negotiate an agreement. Therefore, we are not a province that does not want to negotiate an agreement with the federal government.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: That may result in cutbacks.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Will they be made by September?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Absolutely. We have just drawn up a budget. I am going to the board meeting on April 26, with a shortfall on the order of \$3 million.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: When did you last speak with those responsible within the Department of Canadian Heritage?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Approximately two weeks ago. I speak with them regularly.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Did they give you a date?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: They say it will be by the end of June.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: All right.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. André, now has the floor.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Thank you, Ms. Lortie.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Good morning, Mr. André.

Mr. Guy André: Good morning, Mr. Saint-Jules.

You gave a very good presentation, Ms. Lortie. The energy that you have invested in your presentation is apparent. I imagine that is also reflected in your work and in your will to make sure that things runs smoothly.

I would like to talk to you a little bit about the Official Languages Action Plan, which is also known as the Dion plan. It was noticed that some of the goals of the plan, with respect to responsibility, were not specific. I would like to hear your opinion on this subject. I would like to hear about the effects of the action plan on francophone communities and on college institutions outside of Quebec, as well as the impact that this plan has had, or will have, on certain francophone communities.

As you mentioned, there were new agreements signed for 2004-2005, agreements which seem insufficient. That is what you seem to imply. You do not know what is in store for 2006, 2007, 2008. I get the impression that it must be difficult to make long-term forecasts when an action plan sets out limits and agreements are not always respected.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: The announcement of the Dion plan was made at the Cité collégiale at the time?

• (0925)

Mr. Guy André: Yes.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: At the time, everyone thought that it was a significant initiative which would last several years. Yet, the situation of communities outside of Quebec is often shaped by annual plans. There was an announcement for the current year, but what was done? In order to set up educational projects, we never talk in terms of one-year horizons. When a program is launched, it is for a period of one, two, or three years. Therefore we have to know what our situation is over a period of time.

The good news is that the Dion plan was firstly, a sign that the federal government was committed to communities living in a minority situation. The second piece of good news was that it was a multi-year plan. The third piece of good news was that it set aside money to do something and that there was recognition of the additional challenges of setting up training and educational programs in French for francophones living in a minority setting. Those were the three pieces of good news. There was a lot of enthusiasm.

If we look at what has been going on for the past few years, the difficulty is that we do not seem to, with the exception of health care... The National Health Care Training Consortium was created by the federal government. The consortium brings together 10 post-

secondary institutions, and the agreement is good for five years. A lot of interesting things are happening in the area of health care. For the rest, it does not seem to be the case. There always seems to be a good reason.

Take Ontario for example...

Mr. Guy André: The agreements were not renewed.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: The agreements were not renewed. They expired in March 2004. We thought we would take the year to discuss amongst ourselves, but nothing has occurred, for all sorts of good reasons. Yet, 2005 is beginning—fiscal 2005 begins on April 1st—and there is still no agreement. We thought there would be an extension. Thank God, that allowed us to tread water, to answer Mr. Lauzon's question. But that does not allow for much more.

Mr. Guy André: That does not allow you to develop.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: We cannot develop, nor can we improve the quality of the education that we provide. I am very concerned. I often run the Cité collégiale as I would run 23 anglophone colleges. When I do that, we have too many programs. That is what happens. An English-language college must offer 40 or 45 programs, not 70. Why do we have 70? It is not because we are trying to run a deficit, but because, if these programs are not provided in French, then francophones will not have access to college level education. There are no programs in health and technology. We are providing them, but what are the consequences?

At this time, 48 per cent of our courses are taught by full-time staff. Those who are familiar with the CEGEP system will understand that if I was in the same situation there, I would be crucified. In Ontario, in the English-language system, the average is 62 per cent. It is not because I believe that full-time professors are not what is needed for college courses, it is because we do not have the luxury of hiring that many if we want to maintain our range of programs. The extra funding comes from the federal government, but it has not been confirmed for the coming year. I was asked what was going on. The budget that I am preparing does not take that funding into account. Our board of directors is dead set against any possible deficit at the Cité collégiale. The budget that I bring to the board in April must have no shortfall. In order to do that, while continuing to offer our wide range of programs, the proportion of courses taught by full-time instructors must remain at 48 per cent.

That is why the people at the Department of Canadian Heritage must sometimes think that I am rather excitable.

Mr. Guy André: So you will need an increase in your budget to maintain the college services in the provinces where they are currently available. You also have needs elsewhere—in British Columbia, for example—so that you can develop in other areas.

• (0930)

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Yes. Communities are beginning to provide services in British Columbia, in Saskatchewan and in Alberta. We have just signed an agreement with Saskatchewan to help develop programs in health. We are able to do this thanks to the CNFS, and not because more money would have been forthcoming from the entity that is responsible for official languages.

Mr. Guy André: That was done through some agreements with other...

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: That is right. We did the same thing with Éducacentre. Éducacentre, which is beginning to do some very interesting things, is a success. Because of the Vancouver Olympic Games, there is a greater need for bilingual staff. Things are starting to move. In what field? In health, because there are agreements with the CNFS. It is not because of federal-provincial education agreements. There are none being signed anywhere in Canada at this time, nothing is happening.

I probably should not be saying this, but when you live in a minority environment, and you see what is happening at the federal level, the possibility of an early election is cause for concern, since it would mean a lengthy period of down time. Once again, we would miss a cycle. The agreements must be signed before the end of June. It is crucial.

I told you about Ontario, but I also spoke with my colleagues in New Brunswick. Yves Chouinard is responsible for the colleges in New Brunswick. That includes Université Sainte-Anne, and the Collège de l'Acadie, and I can list all of them for you. The same applies for Manitoba. Agreements must be signed.

Mr. Guy André: You are very convincing.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: There is another very important element. The colleges are poor cousins. The school boards are operating and are still in need of resources. In most of the provinces, there is an infrastructure. Even when the provinces sign agreements, the colleges are often left out of the picture. I am telling the Department of Canadian Heritage to show some leadership. If we have a francophone college system in Ontario, it is because at one time, the federal government took the initiative and spoke to Ontario, where there was some reluctance. The baby, the poor cousin that is the college network is starting to grow up and needs the leadership of Canadian Heritage which, when it negotiates, should seek accountability for the content of the agreement at the college level and for the plan in general. If that is not done, then we will have problems.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: It was Mr. Bouchard who, with Ms. Lynn McLeod, signed the agreement that led to the creation of the Cité collégiale in Ontario.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lortie.

We continue with Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your presentation.

With respect to funding, you are waiting to see if the agreement will be signed. You mentioned the end of June, but what is the usual deadline for decisions on the funding of new programs that you will be introducing?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: It is usually on the day when we submit the budget to the board of directors. In my case, that would be April.

I discussed the matter with my board and we agreed that, for the first quarter, no decisions would be made to abolish programs or positions. We have cut our operating expenses at almost every level. I met with my unions early this week and I told them to forget about professional upgrading, travel expenses, and so on. I gave them my

list, and they were nice to me, so I explained that if we did not go this way, we would have to cut our staff and our programs. They accepted the situation.

I then told them two things: that the Ontario government would bring down its budget in May, and that Bob Rae had published an interesting report in Ontario in which he stated that the colleges and universities were grossly under-funded. We are awaiting the budget as well as the federal-provincial agreement.

I will take advantage of a three-month hiatus during which I will be able to forecast what will happen next fall.

Mr. Peter Julian: Could we say that you already find yourself in an exceptional situation?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Yes.

Mr. Peter Julian: It is almost a crisis?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Indeed.

Mr. Peter Julian: And all of the college programs in the country are in the same boat?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: I would say that in some cases, the situation is even worse, because of staff shortages.

Take the Éducacentre, for example, something with which I am quite familiar. The current administrator has been doing an absolutely marvellous job for many years. From time to time, her board of directors reduces her salary to the equivalent of a three-day week. Why? Because the board does not have enough money to keep her and does not want to cut its programs.

The administrator accepts the situation because she believes in the cause. When the organization has a little more money, her salary is increased to the equivalent of five days a week. These people want to develop something that will last. The director is excellent, but I am afraid that she will leave the organization. Eventually, she will be fed up and she will leave and go elsewhere.

I did not talk about retention in the regions. If we want to keep our francophones in their communities, then we must create an environment that will encourage them to stay. Otherwise, they will move to Montreal, to Ottawa or maybe to Toronto, since that is where the salaries are higher. We will only be able to keep these people if we provide certain resources and access to longer tenure. The situation becomes disastrous when there is no agreement that will allow us to remain stable for a given period of time. That is what allows us, for example, to pay the salary of Paulette Bouffard in Vancouver for a while.

● (0935)

Mr. Peter Julian: So there's already a crisis, but if I understand this correctly, funding, in constant dollars, has already been going down over the past few years. Under the agreements, the same amount of funds were to be provided as were provided previously.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Yes.

Mr. Peter Julian: Would that be part of the problem?

You mentioned the Collège de l'Acadie. I come from British Columbia but I was in Nova Scotia a few years ago. I was very impressed by the network of colleges, which were meeting the needs of the province's small Acadian communities.

Of course, this college did not have enough funding. Is that in part because the whole network was losing money, in constant dollars, each year, because the federal government was not providing new funds, even those needed to maintain the same level of service?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: You are right about that. It should also be pointed out that most provinces calculate their funding based on the number of students. In a minority community, the critical mass required simply does not exist. The province's funding formula is the same for everyone and it does not allow enough for communities to survive.

That is exactly what happened with the Collège de l'Acadie: it was merged with the Université Sainte-Anne. I think that eventually some interesting things will happen. However, the rector of the Université Sainte Anne, André Roberge, told me that for now he wanted to make the university level the priority. The college level will come second, because of insufficient resources.

You are right: there hasn't necessarily been indexation. Therefore, once again, the college level, even though it would be serving a greater number of people, will be second on the list, for lack of funding, whereas the Université Sainte-Anne, which is an older institution, will have the opportunity to develop.

Mr. Peter Julian: You mentioned British Columbia. I come from that province. The francophone community has grown over the past several years. Immersion schools are bursting at the seams. In my riding, parents line up for a whole weekend in order to register their children. They bring their sleeping bags simply so that they can register their children in immersion schools.

We have tens of thousands of children in immersion programs. We have a network of schools that was established by the New Democratic government. However, despite all these services, there is absolutely nothing at the high school level, except for a small program called Éducacentre which is a good one but which does not come anywhere near meeting our needs. People have to leave the province if they want to find French education.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: The Réseau des cégeps et des collèges francophones du Canada drafted a proposal for a national plan that would look at the issue of immersion and find ways of attracting students to immersion programs at the college level in the various provinces.

That currently is not happening but it should. There is a need and a demand for this in all provinces. This proposal was submitted to the Department of Canadian Heritage. We haven't yet received a reply.

Mr. Peter Julian: Was it submitted last year?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: No, approximately two months ago. Canadian Parents for French are supporting this project.

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes. And of course the francophone community also supports it. It's extremely important that these networks exist. I'm quite concerned about the fact that we're going backwards in this area. Because of a lack of funding, the network is currently in a crisis. Because of insufficient funding, we're losing programs and the autonomy of some...

● (0940)

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: First, there are now the beginnings of the structure in the western provinces. People are starting to do things. In order for this to happen, an enormous amount of support is required.

Second, in provinces such as New Brunswick and Ontario, things are also happening. What took 15 or 20 years to develop is now being questioned. That is dangerous because those provinces that have college programs can help others. If those provinces are in a crisis... That can't happen because people will turn inwards. They will decide that they can solve their own problems locally rather than going to see what is happening elsewhere.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will continue with Mr. Simard.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to our guests. I simply wanted to clarify something.

First, I absolutely agree with you on the importance of federal funding for colleges. In my riding we have the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface. I'm very familiar with the challenges that they face.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage was in my riding last weekend. On Sunday we held a community meeting, along with the rector of the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface. The minister announced on CBC radio that the agreements were moving ahead very nicely and that a large majority of provinces were even impressed with the agreements that had been presented to them.

I think the government's position is to not sign bilateral agreements. It's much easier to sign an agreement with all of the provinces. We're told that things are moving very nicely, to the extent that an agreement may be signed this week or next week. I thought it was important to clarify that.

Just to illustrate what I have pointed out, yesterday in the *Free Press* the Minister of Education stated that he was very satisfied with the proposed agreement and did not see any problems with it. I think it's important that you read this. I just wanted to clarify that. Everything seems to be moving ahead nicely with this. We had the privilege of hearing this in our riding last weekend.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: I'm very happy to hear that things are moving. However I would like to repeat one thing. When one is talking about agreements in education, for the ministers in the various provinces that means agreements with school boards. If you were to ask the question as to what is happening at the level of the colleges, then you would realize that it amounts to peanuts, that nothing is really happening. In some cases there's nothing at all. That is the question that needs to be asked, because this case involves the school boards.

I have looked at the Dion plan and I listened to Mr. André's question. I figured there was additional funding. That would mean that the school boards would get their money. The additional funding would maybe go to colleges or universities, which are applying in Ontario for the first time.

I was told that Heritage Canada had crafted budgets for two years for framework agreements with school boards, but that for 2004-2005, there was no longer any funding. They therefore took the money that had been assigned to official languages. That means that nobody received any additional funding, neither the school boards, the colleges, nor the universities. Therefore official languages money was used to replace the money that had previously been assigned by Canadian Heritage. Therefore there was no more money at all for the communities.

That leads to two questions: what is happening with real increases for education? What is happening for colleges? I would be very interested in knowing that.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Then we'll have to see what is in the agreements.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: I think it often happens that such matters are not in any agreement. That happens for two reasons. First, because the college network is not well organized and does not have the same infrastructure. Second, because this often is not a priority for the provinces: they have not gone that far.

Hon. Raymond Simard: I would like to move on to my questions.

Like Mr. Julian, I want to talk about immersion programs. I am going to discuss the situation in Saint-Boniface, because that is what I know best. In our region, 37 per cent of young students have come out of immersion programs. So the system is working very well.

I wanted to ask whether the same is true elsewhere, but I think you said that it is not, that this is a market you want to seek out, but that you have not had much success elsewhere.

Mr. Yvon Saint-Jules (Member, Réseau des cégeps et collèges francophones du Canada): Immersion programs are working very well at the elementary and secondary levels, but there is no counterpart at all at the college level. Students coming out of immersion programs go into the English stream, because there are no programs in French. They might want to continue in French, but there is nothing available.

Hon. Raymond Simard: That is not true in our area. The system is working well. The fact that 37 per cent of college students have come from immersion programs...

• (0945)

Mr. Yvon Saint-Jules: Yes, but there are 200 students.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Yes, there are 200.

Mr. Yvon Saint-Jules: There are about 200 students enrolled in eight programs at the technical and professional school of the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface. It is true that a certain percentage of students do come from immersion programs, but there are nevertheless only 200 students in all at the college level. There are 800 students at the university level.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: And your potential is much greater. How can we go about targeting all of them? That is our challenge. That is what we want to look into. That would help insure the survival of your programs for francophones as well. Some programs are having some difficulties.

Hon. Raymond Simard: No doubt. The other point that should be made is that under the official languages program the intention is

to invest significantly in immersion programs. So if we are not offering any options after grade twelve, we are wasting our money. Everyone agrees on that.

I have one final question. I missed the beginning of your presentation; so you may have discussed this then. Once again, college enrolment has gone up. It has gone from 700 to 1,200 students in the last six years. I am talking about the college as a whole, the university and the vocational program. So there are students enrolling in French programs in our region.

My question again is whether this is happening in your area as well. Do university and college graduates all get jobs, and generally good jobs? Is that happening?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Yes. The Cité collégiale d'Ottawa has one of the best job placement rates in Ontario. Why? Because the graduates are bilingual and that is what employers want and need. They have no trouble finding jobs. So the placement rate is good, and when a program is offered, they enrol in it.

We have started a four-year program in biotechnology. Applied BAs are not working well in English-language colleges in Ontario. I can tell you that in French, we managed to introduce a program of this type with 35 students; that is quite a few people. This takes advanced preparation. Employers are delighted, because these students are mobile. Once the employers hire them, they can use them in many locations. Increasingly, our companies are working abroad.

Hon. Raymond Simard: So we have to convince young people that they will get extra value by coming to our institutions.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Absolutely.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simard.

We will now begin the second round, with five minutes for questions and answers.

Mr. Scheer.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Thank you very much for coming and speaking with us today. I just have a couple of simple questions about your recommendation for a pan-Canadian system of French-language college institutions. Maybe you could just explain how you see that being developed, because we've had other presentations from other groups who have suggested a similar thing for the secondary school level.

I feel one of the hurdles you would encounter is obviously the separation of powers, and the fact that provinces have jurisdiction over this, and the difficulty you would have in creating a nationwide standard when we've got 10 very diverse provinces. Public education in provinces is quite different from Quebec to Saskatchewan and B. C. They all treat their post-secondary institutions differently, and to have a separate school board just for the French language would be something you would have to explain to me.

If you could explain that element to me, it would be appreciated.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: I wouldn't even try, and I don't think it's the desire of the Réseau des cégeps et des collèges, to get into the constitutional issues. I think we recognize that as a hurdle we wouldn't even want to tackle.

When we talk about a national network, we're talking about making sure there are infrastructures in various provinces where there's a recognition of the post-secondary, college-level education in French, and that we create a network via an association that is a national association that does regroup Quebec in our case, because there's such a richness of didactic material and of resources in Quebec that can be shared nationally.

We're talking about making sure that in each province—and all provinces are not at the same level—we start college-level education in French. You won't do the same thing in Newfoundland as you're going to do in Ontario or New Brunswick, but there's an evolution that must occur. At the federal level, Heritage Canada is well placed to make sure there's a plan for each province to develop college-level education in French and that the subsidies and the amount of funding are in relation to where the province is and where the francophone community is, because the needs are not the same. Then, making sure one funds the Réseau des cégeps and the *collèges communautaires* appropriately, make sure we're able to work together and share programs that are already in existence and, yes, need to be adapted.

Presently, I'm working a lot in the health area. As you know, with health, like education, we're talking about provincial standards and very different realities. Regardless of those standards, we've been able to launch programs in *secours ambulancier* in Nova Scotia that don't have the same standards as Ontario, and launch programs for *préposés en soins de santé* in B.C. without the same standards, and we're going to do that in Saskatchewan also.

So what we've done is take a basic program and ask how we adapt it. You need to do two things. You need to say you have to plan nationally for the development of colleges, but it won't be the same plan in each province. Secondly, you need to fund a network to make sure all these people work together, so that you're not replicating and duplicating and reinventing a wheel that's been invented somewhere else.

• (0950)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Thank you. I would like to ask a question.

[English]

The federal government unveiled its action plan in 2003. Under education, it included a commitment for \$381.5 million spread over five years. If you look at page 27 of the plan—I'm not sure if you have it here, but it's not necessary to open it—the plan says that the new investment will enable government to “expand the range of French-language programs in Francophone or bilingual colleges and universities.” To date, has the Action Plan for Official Languages made it possible to expand the range of French-language programs to the francophone community?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Very little. I would say almost nil. Some things have been done. You couldn't say nothing has been done at

all, because there has been some funding. In health, you're right, health is a real success.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: We are talking about education.

[English]

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: I think I said in my presentation previously that the Consortium national de formation en santé is a real success. It's an area in which seven universities and three colleges nationally, outside of Quebec, have gotten together in a consortium and have been able to...

My answer is too long, isn't it? I need to be disciplined.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Poilievre.

The next speaker is Mr. Godbout.

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Once again, Mr. Chairman, I must extend greetings to some former colleagues. I have worked in quite a few places in Ontario in the course of my previous lives.

You spoke about the agreements of course, Ms. Lortie, about what was going on in the area of health care. I would like to know a little more about Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, because, since you work in the area of vocational training, theoretically you should have a fairly close link with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Can you tell me what success you have had and what problems you have encountered as well?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: I will answer your question quickly, Mr. Godbout. The next political issue I would like to deal with is vocational training. As far as government officials go, I do not think the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development is part of the Canadian government. As someone explained to me, they are not responsible for official languages. We have to deal with the Department of Canadian Heritage. Health Canada does not react in this way! When we talk to people such as Marcel Nouvet, at Health Canada, he sees this as his issue, he thinks he must do something to help minority communities. That is not true of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. It is so huge and complicated and there are so many reasons and excuses for doing nothing.

Just look at the situation in Ontario. Do you remember when the act was amended so that purchasing would no longer be done in bulk, but rather individually. That is not the case in Quebec, which is privileged in this regard. The idea was that individuals had the money and were supposed to purchase their training. About 400 francophones were trained. At the moment, between 17 and 20 are being trained.

At some point, I would like to be able to discuss the issue of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada again, because this may be the worst scandal there is.

Mr. Marc Godbout: If you had to make a recommendation about HRSDC, would you be inclined to say that we need specific programs and criteria for the francophone minority communities?

• (0955)

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Absolutely. We need specific criteria and programs for minority communities that take their situation into account. When we talk about apprenticeship programs for welders, electricians, and so on, and we talk about accelerated programs to enable people to get back into the labour market, the challenges are just as significant as those at the post-secondary level. So yes, we need some very specific programs. They must be targeted and there must be accountability regarding the results achieved.

Why are things working so well in the area of health care? Because we had an action plan and we said that we had to train over 5,000 health care workers within a specific length of time. We are asked how much progress we have made in the colleges and universities, and I promise you that we will have achieved our results by the end of the time period. The same thing must be done at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Mr. Marc Godbout: If the Chair is not looking at me, that must mean that I still have some time.

The Chair: You have 5 minutes and 30 seconds left.

Mr. Marc Godbout: I am getting better.

You obviously are quite an expert here, in Ottawa. Do you think that the federal government is making the most of the language services that you provide?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: You are asking all of the right questions. Once again, the answer is no, unfortunately. That said, some good things are being done; it is not all negative.

Because of the policies, for example, we must deal with businesses that have offices nation-wide. Obviously, if we are able to provide language training but we are in a city, even if we say that we will join with our colleagues in other provinces... In Manitoba, they can provide language training. Éducacentre, in Vancouver, can do the same thing; New Brunswick as well. It would be great if we could form consortiums and bid on language-training contracts with the federal government, but the rules prevent us from doing that; it has to be a private company.

Mr. Marc Godbout: We should perhaps come back to that, Mr. Chairman. Your college is a \$120 million operation which is not being used because it does not have a satellite in each of the provinces. That is one thing, when it comes to language training, that...

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: It would give us additional revenue that could be reinvested in our programs. It would also allow the francophones in other provinces to do the same thing.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godbout.

Your turn, Mr. Desrochers.

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

Good morning, Ms. Lortie and Mr. Saint-Jules.

Ms. Lortie, I understand that Mr. Simard said that we were expecting good news. With that in mind, Mr. Chairman, it might be a good idea to invite Ms. Liza Frulla to return to appear before us. We will deal with that when we discuss the future work of the committee. There are delays everywhere, we are still waiting. I know that some wonderful things were said in Manitoba, but that does not give you any more money to operate.

To your knowledge, is it always the same story when it comes to your dealings with the federal government? I know that you need to plan. Planning takes money. Is it always the same story? Do you constantly have to run after the money that has been promised?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: That was not the case for the first special agreement. That agreement gave us time to prepare an action plan. It was submitted, and negotiated. We did not get everything that we had asked for, but we got a reasonable amount of money. The agreement provided for some \$40 million over five years for all of the colleges that we had in Ontario at that time: le Collège Boréal, le Collège des Grands Lacs, and us. It was wonderful. We had a big problem with the quality of the teaching and we were able to predict the results that we would achieve. We were able to tell Ms. Copps, who was the minister who was responsible at the end, what results we had achieved. It was a great experience.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: I would like to come back to your current problem: as of March 31, 2005, no more money will be coming in.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: That is a problem.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Usually, the government gives envelopes or subsidies or something, but in your case, there will really be a shortfall.

Can you tell me what the shortfall will be?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: About \$3.2 million.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: And what is Ontario's contribution?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: I have an annual budget which ranges between 48 million and \$50 million. Ontario's contribution covers regular operations, as if we were an anglophone college. We need help with additional costs, which are never covered. Our current request is for about \$6 million, which represents approximately twice as much as what we asked for last year, because we have more programs and more students. When I say \$3.2 million, this takes into account the cuts we have already made. We will have to bring back things we cut last year due to a lack of money.

• (1000)

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Is it fair to say that you tried to streamline your costs, that you cut back, for instance, on travel expenses for employees? If the federal government does not sign soon, could this impede planning for your fall 2005 session?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: That was Mr. Lauzon's question; the answer is yes. In fact, I'm concerned that this would affect planning for next fall. What will we do with areas which need more resources?

I'll give you the example of our technology programs. You're aware of what happened more or less throughout the Ottawa area in the areas of computers and electronics, including what happened at Nortel and so on. This means that enrolment has dropped in every college and university; programs are struggling. Algonquin College, which operates in English, has cut back on certain programs. Instead of having ten, they decided to only retain four or five. The Cité collégiale still has three-year programs. But in July, I will have to decide whether to keep or suspend them. I'm going to wait until the last minute. Things are not going well in that sector.

Last year, since we had an extension, I decided to maintain the two and three-year programs in electronics and computers. But this year, if we don't get the resources, we will have to eliminate those programs. This means that we would not be in the business of teaching electronics or computers anymore, and we would have to tell our students that they could not register in a French-language college anymore because the programs would be suspended. We would refer them to Algonquin College; the students are all bilingual.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: How many years would the agreement you want to sign cover? Do you have to come back and request more funding every time?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: I hope it will be a five-year agreement, but since this issue has been dragging on for two years now, they may offer a three or four-year agreement. We would like to have five years. This would allow us to prepare a plan with projected outcomes. I don't have any problem with accountability, but we need to have enough time to organize things. You don't get results in one or two years in a college. We would like to have a five-year agreement.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desrochers.

We'll move on to Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much.

I just wanted to come back to the situation in Canada. Whatever happened to the Collège des Grands Lacs?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: It was closed because it wasn't working. As it now stands, in Ontario, the Collège Boréal took over some of those programs, but the Ontario ministry is holding discussions in order to find ways to get the most out of both institutions, the Cité collégiale and the Collège Boréal, to meet the needs of all Ontarians.

Mr. Peter Julian: If I understand correctly, there's no program in southern Ontario today.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: There are some programs. I'd say about 60 students are registered.

Mr. Peter Julian: Fine, but are these programs offered on campuses which are linked to the Collège Boréal?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Yes.

Mr. Peter Julian: Was the closing of the Collège des Grands Lacs due to the loss of funding?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: In all honesty, I would say it was for two reasons. First, the idea of a virtual college for francophones did not

work, given the double mandate of a college, which is to attract more students and support community development. That is one reason.

Second, the challenges were huge, because francophones were widely spread out throughout southern and southwestern Ontario. Perhaps we should have done things differently. I think there are real needs out there because of the presence of ethnocultural communities and francophone immigrants. But we did not approach the situation by asking ourselves how we could help multicultural communities wanting to study in French. Perhaps we did not take the right approach, because we were still learning and because the challenges were bigger than those facing the Collège Boréal and the Cité collégiale, which already had an infrastructure and school boards supporting these institutions, since both the community and the school boards had been around for a long time.

So I would say that we should take another look at the situation in southern Ontario to see how we can better serve the multicultural communities.

Mr. Peter Julian: We face the same challenge in British Columbia. A large percentage of the increase in the francophone population is due to immigration from Africa, Asia and francophone countries.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: One of the challenges facing all colleges in Canada is to attract members of cultural communities, to make them feel welcome and to get them to stay, so that we can avoid the fiasco which occurred when the Vietnamese community was assimilated into the anglophone community because we missed the boat.

The Cité collégiale has 3,500 students, of which 32 per cent come from Africa and other countries. It is a fact that francophone immigrants would rather study in French, so we have to tackle the issue head on.

•(1005)

Mr. Peter Julian: In New Brunswick, the network of colleges is facing the same problems as elsewhere in Canada. There is a lack of funding and commitment on the part of the federal government, and as a result the campuses of the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick are now facing the situation you have described.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: They are currently being completely restructured.

Mr. Peter Julian: I would like to know what the potential number of students is? You said there were 7,000 full-time students throughout the country. This includes the 3,500 students who currently attend la Cité collégiale and there are 20,000 others who are either taking vocational training or are studying on a part-time basis.

Does that amount include the 7,000 full-time students?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: No, they are not included. In fact, there are 27,000 students.

Mr. Peter Julian: All right. So there are 27,000 students in all of Canada. There are a million francophones in Quebec. There are also hundreds of thousands of young people, mostly anglophones, as well as people from elsewhere who were educated in French in immersion schools.

How many students could study in French if the French school system were well funded across the country and if the federal government truly committed to this cause?

Mr. Yvon Saint-Jules: As far as French immersion is concerned, there are 3,500 students in immersion programs. This represents a pool of students who could then go on to study in francophone institutions. As you mentioned, about a million francophones live outside Quebec, there are about 500,000 in Ontario, between 250,000 and 300,000 in New Brunswick, and 200,000 in the rest of the country. So there is a large enough pool out there. On top of that, you have got francophone immigrants, which create both a need and a pool. Of course, there are fewer francophones than anglophones, who go on to study in anglophone colleges, but it remains that there is an as yet undeveloped potential.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: That is a good question. When we talk about an action plan for each province, that is the kind of question that is raised. This happened with the Consortium national de formation en santé. The federal government asked how many professionals it was possible to train over and above what was needed for retention in the regions. It is also the kind of question that could certainly be asked with respect to federal-provincial agreements on college-level education. We might be asked how many students New Brunswick and Manitoba can train within five years.

For the moment, we cannot answer that question. All the provinces really need to look at this together. I could respond on behalf of Ontario but not the other provinces. But the question needs to be asked in the context of federal-provincial agreements. We are talking here about the results we want to achieve. We want to be able to determine the payback on the federal government's investment.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lortie. Thank you very much, Mr. Julian.

We will go to a final round.

[English]

Monsieur Poilievre and Monsieur Scheer are going to split their time, right?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: We do not have any questions.

The Chair: So you shared your non-question.

We will move to Mr. André.

Mr. Guy André: As we know, the deadline for renewing the Canada-community agreements was March 31, 2004. It is now 2005. How do you explain the fact that these agreements have not yet been signed, given the current situation? I do not think that the government is in a deficit position, we have a surplus, and the department and the structures are ready. So how do you explain the situation?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: I would not dare to try to answer that.

Mr. Guy André: It is hard to understand. Is there a lack of political will? Yet the main thrusts and the guidelines for the action plan have been established.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: I sometimes have a tendency to put the blame on ourselves and to say that we may not have raised our voices loudly enough to convince them how important it was for this to get settled. I wonder if we got our message through as well as we could have. I know that there are political issues and that you deal with this kind of thing every day. The communities do not represent a lot of people. And then there have been a lot of changes, elections and new ministers. In the public service as well—

Mr. Guy André: This is not a new initiative. It is not a new project. These are colleges across Canada that provide services to students. It is not a new project.

• (1010)

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: There is a need for political leadership right now. That leadership should not come from the public service. The politicians have to say that this needs to be done because it is important. They have to ask what is going on in the Réseau des cégeps et collèges francophones du Canada, ask what is happening at the college level. They have to ask how much money we have at our disposal. That is what has to happen. I cannot not even tell you why.

Some very good things have been done, and we now need to move ahead. I was thrilled that you agreed to have me appear here, because I felt that this was a great opportunity to make you aware of our challenges and to tell you about the good things that are happening outside Quebec, at the national level. A number of communities want to do things, but they have to wait. There are opportunities, but people cannot capitalize on them because, not only is there too little money, but there is no financial commitment.

Mr. Guy André: What do the officials tell you when you call and you tell them that the agreements have not been renewed?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: They say that it will happen soon. When we talk to the provincial representatives, we are told that the problem is with the federal government, and when we talk to the federal officials, we hear that it is the provinces. It is a blame game.

Mr. Guy André: Do I have a tiny bit of time left?

The Chair: Yes, just a tiny bit!

Mr. Guy André: I know that you want to develop the college network in other provinces, such as British Columbia. Are there provinces right now that are less supportive of that idea?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Yes, the provinces in which less is happening, because this is new territory and a new idea. In the west, Manitoba is the exception, but it is true for Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, although B.C. has signed an agreement, which is a positive thing. In the two other provinces, it is not that people object to the idea, but it is something new. The idea practically has to come from those involved in official languages issues, that is, the federal people.

Mr. Guy André: The provinces do not want to come on board.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: They need to be pushed a little bit and they need incentives.

Mr. Guy André: In short, the federal government must assume leadership, push the provinces and get everyone to move forward together.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: There is nothing in Newfoundland. There is nothing in the Northwest Territories because the population is so small. There are also small communities on Prince Edward Island. New Brunswick, Ontario and Manitoba are doing things, of course. The smaller provinces need support from the provinces where things are happening.

The Chair: Your tiny bit of time is up.

Ms. Boivin, you have the floor.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): Good morning. I will not talk about funding, because I have no doubts at all as to the merit of your case. I cannot understand how you manage to operate. I do not even know how you managed last year, given the funding you had.

I would like to ask you brief questions about the Réseau des cégeps et collèges francophones du Canada.

Is it accurate to say that this extends to the college network in general? Do you have the impression that you are the poor cousin in the education field, caught between the school boards, the secondary, primary and university levels? I have the impression that you work even harder for recognition. I imagine that the situation is even more difficult for francophones in minority communities.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: The Réseau des cégeps et collèges francophones du Canada is terribly underfunded. We asked for around \$500,000, but we only got \$250,000. Moreover, the school board network is well organized, so it is better funded. The universities are big institutions. When the University of Ottawa gets involved, people know that the file is making headway and they can fund more infrastructure.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: It seems that the provinces do not recognize the importance of college-level education. How do you explain that?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: I would explain it this way. For many years now, we have had legislation and constitutional obligations. Furthermore, in some provinces, school boards went to court and won. There is a constitutional reality.

Most of the time, elected officials and other members of the elite went to university. People know each other, they move in the same circles, there is an amazing networking and lobbying works well. Colleges were created in Canada in the 1960s in almost every province. It was something new, they are a new creature, even on the anglophone side. Francophone colleges were created later on.

More students are enrolled in Canadian colleges than in Canadian universities, but the fact remains that they are a fairly recent phenomenon and that they have to raise their profile, they have to sell themselves and explain the value of the education they provide. This is even more true for francophone colleges.

So there is a constitutional reality and a well-established network, and there is also the fact that colleges are still fairly "young" institutions.

●(1015)

Ms. Françoise Boivin: The Cité collégiale is probably the college I know best. Many people from my riding in Gatineau are enrolled there and are indeed happy with the training they receive. On a practical level, what percentage of your students come from Quebec? What is the percentage of Franco-Ontarian students at the Cité collégiale, and how many are there in Algonquin College's English programs or in other programs?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: The number of students from Quebec at our school has always stood between 30 per cent and 40 per cent. Why? Because the Outaouais is one region. People will not undertake media studies in Jonquière; they will go to the Cité collégiale. They will not move. Thank God for that, because it allowed us to create programs which otherwise would not have seen the light of day. Otherwise, our Franco-Ontarian students would not be in media studies.

Ten years ago, we did not have any Franco-Ontarians. But today, many of our programs are filled with Franco-Ontarian students.

As for the proportion of francophones, I cannot really say. Today, we have about 800 Franco-Ontario students at Algonquin College. If you look at the central admissions registry for provincial colleges, you will see that about 48 per cent of francophones go to French colleges and 52 per cent go to English colleges.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Could we attract these students?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Oh yes, we surely could.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Why do they not come here then?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Because we often do not have the program they want. About 400 programs are offered in English and about 52 in French. So it is not the same level of choice. That is the first reason.

Second, we did not always create opportunities for distance learning or alternative service delivery. So we just did not reach into smaller communities. If I compare our college to an anglophone one, we get a fair number of high school students. But we do not get any adult students, because they are not as mobile. So we have to reach into communities, offer different types of education services, provide co-op programs so students can also work in a hospital, for instance. We still have not developed the necessary tools to attract students for whom this type of learning would be more appropriate.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: There is also the vocational aspect.

The Chair: Time flies.

Mr. Julian, you will have the last word.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

It is a known fact that francophones, particularly those outside Quebec, earn less than anglophones. This is attributable to a number of factors, but particularly to the fact that education is not available for them. This is a well-known fact; there is this gap and a shortage of funding for the education system outside Quebec, even though it is known that francophones earn less than anglophones.

I have two questions for you. First, in your opinion, is there a lack of will on the part of the federal government? Next, when you look at the Action Plan for Official Languages and all of the directives regarding official languages, do you think francophones outside Quebec will be able to catch up to francophones in Quebec as regards wages, access to education, and so on?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: When I saw the Action Plan for Official Languages, my answer would have been yes. I had a vision. I thought there was a commitment and a vision there. And this was a first. This was something very desirable and it was good news. The problem is that we have to move from the vision to its implementation. As far as I am concerned, the vision exists. The Action Plan for Official Languages exists. It seeks to do some significant things for the communities, and we have to remember that it does exist. Something must be done.

As to whether francophones can reach the national wage level, we must remember that the francophone community is unique. It generally seeks employment in soft sectors and is not very familiar with electronics and computer science. The models do not exist. Parents do not work in biotechnology, electronics or computer science. They work in softer sectors, often in areas related to education, services for children, in areas where workers tend to be less well paid. We have a great deal to do to introduce francophones to these more specialized technical areas, which offer more promises, and where there are careers and money, because for the moment, there simply are no models. There are far more in the anglophone community.

I hope that answers your questions.

• (1020)

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, but only in part. We come back to the question of will. How can we explain the discrepancy between the action plan, which does show the vision to which you have referred, and the fact that for over a year now, there has been no financial guarantees for the college network? In addition, there is now a crisis, a situation in which the programs to be offered next year have to be reviewed. As you pointed out, probably all the networks, CEGEPS and francophone colleges throughout the country are reviewing their programs, without knowing whether they will have the funding they require.

Mr. Yvon Saint-Jules: When the Dion plan was introduced, we thought that the political problem had been settled. We found that it was a good five-year plan and that we could move forward. However, there is a problem with the implementation of the plan. If

all the intentions set out in the Dion plan were to be carried out now, I think that the situation would be improved. However, this is not the case, for a host of reasons that I cannot always understand.

Mr. Peter Julian: Neither can I.

Mr. Yvon Saint-Jules: The plan is not being translated into concrete action. Funding was announced, but it is being carried forward from year to year, because it has not been spent and because the programs are not being used.

So it is as though the politicians decided they had dealt with the program by bringing forward a good plan and then it was up to the officials or some other level of authority to carry it out, while they went on to other concerns. They then turned to the political issue of health care. It is true that action has been taken in this area. However, I think we have to bring education back to the political forefront, to make it a priority once again and to deal with colleges in a more specific way, because this is the only network that does not have official institutions in all the provinces at the moment.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: I would like to make one other point: small decisions have a tremendous impact on us. When Minister Scherrer wrote to Mr. Reid to say that in future, under the agreements, the amount to be paid to the Council of Ministers of Education would be increased, this traumatized the colleges, because they are non-existent in many provinces and the provinces are simply not concerned about this fact. So we need some leadership from the federal government as regards the college level of education, to show what must be done.

This had an impact on all our communities. The reaction was negative. We wondered what was going to happen to us, because we were no longer involved.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lortie.

Thank you, Mr. Julian.

This completes our question and answer period. I think this has been a most interesting discussion for all committee members present. We will continue it with other witnesses in the future, including the minister.

I would like to thank you for coming, Ms. Lortie and Mr. Saint-Jules. It was very good of you to come and explain your views and share your expertise with us.

[The meeting continues in camera]

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