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Mr. Pablo Rodriguez

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• (0905)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.)):
Good morning, everyone.

As you know, we've decided to divide this meeting into two parts. First, we're going to discuss official languages at the Department of Health. Then we'll be hearing from the Commissioner of Official Languages to discuss estimates.

We welcome Marcel Nouvet, who represents the Department of Health. I propose that we limit questions to five minutes instead of seven in order to maximize our time. We'll have a one-minute break after this first part before going on to Ms. Adam's testimony. Does that suit you all?

Welcome, Mr. Nouvet. The floor is yours.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet (Assistant Deputy Minister, Information, Analysis and Connectivity Branch, Department of Health):
Thank you.

It's a pleasure for me to be here. I have a few remarks that will take about 10 minutes. Then I'll be pleased to answer your questions, which I hope won't be too hard, but we'll see.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to speak to you about implementation of the health component of the Government of Canada's Action Plan for Official Languages.

At this stage, in light of the momentum that the initiative has gained, we are confident that the anticipated outcomes will indeed occur and that the objectives of the initiative will be achieved.

The aim of the federal government's \$119 million investment in the health component is to reduce language barriers that interfere with the access and the quality of health care for official language minority communities. Of this amount, \$107.9 million has been allocated to the French- and English-speaking communities through contribution agreements.

Health Canada is pleased with the success of the governance model that we are using to implement the Action Plan. It is innovative because it encourages the communities for taking responsibility for their health. This has enabled us to invest more in the communities and less in our own administrative overhead.

Improving access to health services is being done through close collaboration among the key partners: provinces, territories, institutions and communities via networks, educators via the *Consortium national de formation en santé*, McGill University, and, of course,

we at Health Canada, who are providing some of the necessary funds and, we can assure you, strong leadership.

For a few years now, our department has been working in close collaboration with the consultative committees for the French-and-English-speaking minority communities to address the three interdependent priorities identified by the communities themselves—namely, community networking, training of health professionals and primary health care—which, as you know, are part of the health component of the Action Plan.

I want to talk to you about some achievements in relation to these three priorities. I'll start with the progress the Francophone communities have made.

For the networking initiative, seventeen French-language community health networks now cover all the provinces and territories and form a national collaboration model. The networks bring together health professionals, health services institutions, educational institutions, government authorities and community organizations.

The call for proposals launched by the *Société Santé en français* for improving access to health services in French made it possible to gather nearly 85 projects from all regions of the country in the space of just 18 months.

All the provinces and territories have confirmed their support for the French-language primary health care planning project called "*Préparer le terrain*".

With respect to the training of health professionals, more than 28 French-language health programs are offered at the university level, and 24 at the college level at the 10 member institutions of the national health consortium. In June 2004, the training project already accounted for 100 graduates from college programs and 40 graduates from university programs. The admissions rate rose from 115 students in 2003 to 315 as of March 31, 2004.

With respect to primary care, the achievements to date have been as follows. A central coordinating point has been established in Saskatchewan to improve access to health services in French and to put in place workshops, self-help groups and so on, from which children and seniors, among others, are benefiting.

A health guide has been developed that helps the public in British Columbia and the Yukon recognize and address nearly 200 common health problems. The guide looks at prevention, home care, emergencies, healthy lifestyles and so on.

A mobile team of health professionals has been created in Manitoba to better serve the French-speaking population of the various regions and three health centres have been established in that province. The French-language component of the provincial Health Links—*Info Santé* telephone line in Manitoba has been established and now enables French-speaking members of the public to obtain health information and advice.

• (0910)

I'll give you a few examples of what's being done for Quebec's Anglophone communities.

[*English*]

There is a provincial network and nine regional and local networks that are working together to build partnerships with both regional planning authorities and service providers. We assessed community needs last November and identified strategies to build durable links with the public health and social service system.

In connection with training and retention of health professionals, McGill University has begun to work with health regional planning authorities and communities across Quebec to identify training needs. The first language training programs will be delivered this year, with the goal of reaching 4,000 francophone health professions by 2007-08. These programs aim to improve the capacity of the professionals to serve the English-speaking clientele in all 16 regions in Quebec.

McGill University is also developing measures in partnership with regional planning authorities, educational institutions, English-speaking communities, and institutional employers to encourage young anglophone graduates in human services to return to their home regions to work and serve their population.

In terms of primary health care achievements, I have a couple of examples. The Community Health and Social Services Network, in partnership with Quebec's health and social services system, is implementing three broad measures to improve access to primary health care and first-level social services for English-speaking communities. These measures are: first, the promotion of the use of the Info-Santé line by English-speaking communities, who use it less than francophones do; second, the adaptation of locally delivered health services to better serve dispersed or isolated English-speaking communities; and third, the provision of linguistically adapted milieu for English-speaking residents in long-term health care centres.

In partnership with the *ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux*, the network has also approved \$3 million for seven projects that form part of a major reorganization of Quebec's Info-Santé helpline. Human resources training information campaigns and the use of new telecommunications technology will ensure that helpline resources are available in English in all regions of Quebec.

[*Translation*]

I want to talk a bit about the five-year accountability framework. How do we ultimately know whether everyone's investments and efforts are producing results?

What are the expected results? First, we want to improve access to health and social services for official language minority communities

in their official language. We want to ensure that access is genuinely improved.

We also want a greater number of health professionals serving minorities in their official language.

Third, we want to measure the extent to which clients have noticed changes, in order to determine whether citizens and health professionals are more satisfied.

[*English*]

Fourth is improved liaison and networking amongst communities to enhance their health and well-being.

[*Translation*]

We'll now assess results starting next year.

I would now like to spend a few minutes talking about challenges. Things look good and we expect to achieve the desired results, but there remain some challenges that must be met. The first is program sustainability and the strengthening of financial support for initiatives under way, especially the primary care initiative, the funding for which ends in September 2006.

Health Canada does not have a definitive answer, but I can assure you that we are exploring potential avenues for solutions to address this need. Health Canada is continuing to support and work in collaboration with the two consultative committees.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that the Government of Canada strongly supports Canada's linguistic duality, while respecting the provinces' and territories' areas of jurisdiction.

• (0915)

All these investments mark an important step toward respecting the Government of Canada's commitment to improve the vitality of the French-and-English-speaking minority communities, as well as to ensuring equitable access to health services for all Canadians.

That concludes my presentation. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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

We'll now move on to the discussion and question period. As I suggested, if you are agreeable, you could take five minutes each instead of seven, since we only have an hour.

Mr. Lauzon, please.

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

Official languages are a federal jurisdiction, while health is a provincial responsibility. Can you explain the cooperation that exists between the two levels of government? Is it working well? Do some provinces cooperate less than others?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: Some provinces were slower than others at first. We at Health Canada have always acknowledged that health care delivery was a provincial jurisdiction. We therefore had to ensure at all costs that we respected the wishes of the provinces and that any initiative we took could fit into the framework of the provincial or territorial health care delivery strategy.

As a result of the networks that have been formed and that bring together provincial and territorial representatives and representatives of the institutions, a dialogue has been under way for at least a year, and even two years in some cases. There is close cooperation with all the provinces and territories.

With regard to Francophones, all the provinces and territories support the *Préparer le terrain* project, which is designed to establish ways of improving services. They also support certain initiatives. I cited a few examples here. Before investing in a primary care initiative, like the improvements that were made to *Info Santé* in Manitoba, we have to obtain written approval from the province. The province also recognizes that it supports the initiative, and if there are any ongoing expenses, the province undertakes to pay those costs. In Quebec, there has been an Order in Council approving the work that is being done.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: The budget provides \$75 million for manpower training. Can you explain to me how that \$75 million is spent?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: On the Francophone side, there's a consortium of 10 training institutions co-chaired by the University of Ottawa and the University of Moncton. Those 10 training institutions aren't located in all the provinces, but rather across the country. I think it goes as far as Alberta. Those institutions have given us an action plan providing that, within five years, there will be some 1,000 graduates at all levels of the health sector. All kinds of training are being given. I believe there are 24 disciplines. These institutions have given us a detailed action plan and have undertaken to turn out some 1,000 graduates and to do all they can to ensure that those people, who will be trained in French, will work with the minority communities in their regions. The training is provided in French, and the internships are being done, as far as possible, in the regions where minority populations live, in an attempt to attract people to this kind of work.

In Quebec, language training is mainly being given to Francophones to improve their English so they can serve the Anglophone population in remote regions. Anglophones are also being given language training so that they can, not necessarily serve clients in French, but survive more effectively in an essentially Francophone bureaucracy.

• (0920)

Mr. Guy Lauzon: At what level are they being trained? When their training is over, are they completely bilingual?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: Francophones feel more comfortable working with clients in English, and Anglophones are less lost in the system because they're more familiar with the administrative jargon.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Is my time up?

The Chair: Yes, five minutes goes quickly.

Mr. André, I don't want to disturb you, but it's your turn.

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

Good morning, sir. How are you?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: Fine.

Mr. Guy André: Do the Francophone communities in the other Canadian provinces have access to all health care in French? Are any health services less accessible for certain communities? Are they entitled to all services? Are there any other efforts that can be made? In Quebec, there are specialized hospitals, hospitals for Francophones, but that's not always the case in Francophone communities outside Quebec. Are there still any service deficiencies?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: There are deficiencies across Canada, including Quebec. We're looking at the official language minority communities. In my opinion, Anglophones in Montreal have fewer problems than Anglophones living in isolated regions, where it's harder to get access to care in the official language of one's choice.

Studies have enabled the communities to set their priorities: networking, training and primary care. It was interesting to see that both the Anglophone and Francophone communities have identified the same deficiencies. The studies have shown that services received by the official language minority communities living in isolated regions are far inferior to those received by people living in a province where the majority speaks their official language.

• (0925)

Mr. Guy André: The health services funding program includes significant investments in cooperation.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: In networking?

Mr. Guy André: In networking. How is this cooperation experienced in the provinces, and what are its objectives?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: I would emphasize that \$9 million of the \$119 million provided under the strategy over five years is allocated to networking for Francophones, and, if I remember correctly, nearly \$5 million is set aside for Anglophones. So we're talking about \$15 million out of \$120 million.

Mr. Guy André: What are your objectives until 2008? Are you well funded until 2008?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: Yes.

Mr. Guy André: For the moment. If you can, answer me as well for the period after 2008.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: The networks' main objective is to bring to the table all those people who can make a difference and improve services. So we're talking about the communities, health professionals, representatives of health institutions and provincial representatives, because it's important that those people be at the table in order to understand all the problems experienced by the communities and to identify potential solutions together.

Before the investment is made in primary care—we talked about things that were being done in Quebec and Manitoba, for example—it's at this table that people are made aware of the problems that exist and that the most valid solutions are identified. It's in those networks that we develop the projects that will secure the money to improve primary care and that's where it's approved.

Mr. Guy André: We often see resistance at these issue tables. What resistance are you currently encountering?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: I'm really not aware of any resistance. I'm told things are humming in the 17 Francophone networks and those in Quebec. I must say there was a discussion, last September, I believe. Minister Dosanjh met with his provincial and territorial counterparts. For the first time, in that kind of meeting, there was a discussion among health ministers about efforts that were being made to improve services. I observed what went on. It was the first time people had talked about those efforts enthusiastically. They expressed their support for Minister Dosanjh to continue funding that kind of effort and to go after the necessary funds to ensure the program continues.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. André.

We'll continue with Mr. Godin.

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

Mr. Nouvet, could you tell us a little more about the networks? You said there were 17. Is Acadie—Bathurst part of that?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: I can't tell you because I don't know them by heart.

I'm told it is.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm going to let off a bit of steam for five minutes.

It doesn't work. The network is supposed to be there to provide the community's viewpoint, but that's not what's happening. In my riding, they're closing the hospitals in Caraquet and Dalhousie. They closed the St. Quentin Hospital, and they're talking about closing another one near St. Léonard. They want to close Francophone hospitals, and they're building an Anglophone hospital in the south. That's what's happening with the networks in my region. The networks are working well!

Second, the provincial Health Minister has the upper hand because people are well paid. If they don't do what the minister wants, it's over, they're out of the network. Who runs these networks? Who pays them? We have a problem. They say we have networks that are close to the community, but they absolutely aren't.

Yesterday morning, schools on the Acadian Peninsula were closed, and children were in the street with their parents fighting to keep the hospitals open. If the Caraquet hospital was half empty, I could understand them closing it. But when patients are in the corridors and people are waiting outside to get into the hospitals and they close hospitals in Canada, we don't have a very good health system.

I want to emphasize that the network doesn't work, at least not back home, in the Francophone minority communities. The people in the community are tearing each other apart; they're not even talking to each other anymore. On Tuesday morning, ambulances went by

the Caraquet hospital because the last patient had been taken out. They went to Tracadie. It's incredible. This is a community that's tearing itself apart. Excuse me, but you don't see that in the Anglophone communities. We have a serious problem in the Francophone minority communities.

In my opinion, the real problem is trying to attract physicians to Francophone minority rural areas if there's no equipment at the hospital. A young doctor just out of university who wants to practise can't go to an unequipped hospital to work. Perhaps a promotional campaign should be conducted to attract physicians to our rural areas.

I don't know whether that sounds right to you. I've given you a fair bit of material in two or three minutes. I'd like to hear your reaction on the subject.

• (0930)

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: As regards the work being done...

Mr. Yvon Godin: Pardon me. I called Mr. Lord, but things aren't going any better in Quebec. There are people in the corridors there as well.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: I think the network is doing the necessary work to use the funds provided for in the five-year plan and to have some cooperation. The administration of hospitals is a provincial jurisdiction. Health is a provincial jurisdiction. Although there is a network, it was established, above all, to take action on the health component of the five-year plan. The purpose of that component is not to finance the maintenance or opening of hospitals in the region. It's aimed at training, networking and primary care initiatives. The decision to open or close a hospital is a provincial responsibility.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Excuse me, Mr. Chairman. What does networking mean?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: It means bringing together people who work together to deliver the goods under a five-year plan. The federal government's investment under that five-year plan is \$119 million. That's designed to increase the number of trained people.

In New Brunswick, the rector of the University of Moncton is the co-chair of the existing consortium. I believe the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick-Campbellton also belongs to the consortium.

There are two new New Brunswick institutions receiving federal government funds, with the support of the province, to train people in French so that they can serve their communities. Primary care initiatives are also planned.

Mr. Yvon Godin: If I understand correctly, there's money for the networks. The federal government has given money to 17 networks in Canada. Is that correct? Then it washes its hands of them because the provinces are responsible for health.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: We spend more than \$100 billion a year in the health sector in this country. Our initiative has a budget of \$119 million. We're not going to manage the health sector with \$119 million.

We can make a difference by trying to respond to the priorities the communities have identified, through the consultations we've conducted with them. It's they that decided that an investment had to be made in networks and training. It was they that decided money had to be provided for primary care pilot projects that would become permanent. We're doing what the communities ask us to do.

The Chair: Thank you. We'll continue with Mr. Godbout.

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome.

There are definitely a lot of problems in the health network. I must nevertheless congratulate your department on its interdepartmental actions. It's probably one of the departments that has done most in this regard in the past five years. I remember there was virtually nothing seven or eight years ago. We've noticed an incredible difference in our communities.

However, I'm a bit disturbed that certain budgets—you raised this point—aren't consistent with the action plan, particularly as regards primary care. That terminates in 2006. I was told this aspect of the program should be renewed. From what I'm told, we're also, once again, dealing with the build-it-and-they-will-come concept: now that people are starting to get used to the service, requests are coming from everywhere.

How are you going to deal with that at your department? I realize you can't necessarily respond from the 2006 estimates, but, not only will primary care services be maintained, there will also be an expectation of additional services.

● (0935)

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: I agree. Thank you for your question. Funding for primary care was to end on March 31, 2006. For the moment, it's been extended by six months. It will terminate in September 2006. That gives us a little time to find a final solution.

I can tell you we're looking for solutions. We're working on it to ensure that funding continues at least until the end of the action plan, that is to say until 2008 and beyond. We're looking for solutions. We're doing it at the request of the minister, who recognizes that this is a major concern.

Mr. Marc Godbout: Mr. Chairman, we should support the department's efforts in this area in one of our reports.

Based on your analysis, which province has the best health services in the country?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: I'd say they're all in the top 10.

Mr. Marc Godbout: That doesn't answer my question.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: I don't think I have the necessary expertise to make that kind of judgment. When you compare the results of the provinces, you see that some are doing things better than others. Each has its strengths and weaknesses.

Mr. Marc Godbout: It seems to me that Quebec has provided its official language communities with very good health services in the past. Some examples of this have been cited.

We note that the budgets allocated in Quebec are quite high, in view of outside needs. In your budgets, do you allocate funds on a per capital basis or on the basis of unmet needs?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: First, I want to point out that the budgets don't meet all needs, although they do help reduce deficiencies in the delivery of services in the minority communities. They are allocated on the basis of what the communities have requested from us, generally in the context of their business plans. Here we're talking about cases where these communities have gotten all they wanted.

In training, for example, we provide only one-third of the funds that would be necessary if professionals served the communities. That's a known fact. We hope the next five years will bring us some success, so that we can say that the investment has produced results and that we now need additional funding in order to do even more.

Mr. Marc Godbout: That's not necessarily a function of needs that have already been met.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: It's the community that identify needs based on what exists.

Mr. Marc Godbout: Mr. Nouvet, by that I mean that the provinces didn't all start off at the same level.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godbout. That's a good final flourish.

We'll now proceed with a quick second round. You each have five minutes.

Mr. Poilievre.

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

I'd like more information on the \$14 million intended for cooperation between all health stakeholders, that is to say networking.

Could you explain in a little more detail what that amount will be used for?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: The purpose of the \$14 million is to enable all those networks to come and meet. That amount covers the costs and administrative support associated with those meetings. The purpose is to have all stakeholders talking to each other to acquire a common awareness of minority community problems and to determine potential solutions together.

Here we're talking about projects that those networks would like to sponsor to improve primary care. This means that people meet around a table and ask each what should be done in Manitoba, for example.

At some point, those people felt it would be necessary to improve the service provided to Francophones by the telephone centre that provides health care information. They designed a business plan, had it approved at the network level, then at the province level, and then submitted it to *Société santé en français*, which brings together representatives of all the networks and makes a final choice. If that organization agrees on the proposed project, it then requests funding from the federal government. In addition, those networks must make any necessary adjustments and report on results achieved.

● (0940)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: If all the action plan recommendations were implemented, do you think we could offer all the necessary services to the minority communities?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: No. I believe we could slightly close the gap between the level of service prevailing in the minority communities and that enjoyed by other Canadians. I cited the example of training. If we succeed, we'll only need one-third of the needs that must be met. That nevertheless enables us to learn, to determine whether this investment provides any value-added and to ask ourselves whether we should change the strategy rather than consider investing more.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Can we now offer minority Francophones and Anglophones basic services in their language?

Do you understand?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: Here's the problem: if you're unilingual and you don't speak your doctor's language, you'll never be sure the doctor understands you completely and you may not understand the prescriptions he gives you either. That causes a certain problem.

I'm a Franco-Ontarian, and I have four children who are bilingual. There's nothing more embarrassing for a Francophone trying to ensure that his children are bilingual than to take them to a hospital emergency ward and have to speak English. I haven't gone for a number of years because my children have long since grown up. You go to the hospital and you start speaking French. Ultimately, you realize you have to speak English if you want service. The children are there, with a father who has preached to them that they can live in both languages in Canada.

So we try to ensure that people can get services in their language, at least for immediate care. Ultimately, that would provide a higher quality of care, while enabling those minority communities to continue to develop.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Poilievre.

We'll continue with Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman .

Mr. Nouvet, I'd like to go back to the situation regarding primary care, which we discussed earlier. Are the funds allocated to primary care paid directly to the association or province, which then transfers them to the various groups?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: They're paid to the network, with the approval of the province or territory, because we wouldn't want to fund things the province doesn't support.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: So it's the health network that receives the money and decides how to manage it.

• (0945)

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: They tell us in advance because some criteria must be met. They therefore submit proposals that meet the criteria and also provide us with the approval from the province. Then the funds are forwarded to the networks.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: If that's the way it is, are...?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: The funds are forwarded on a quarterly basis because, every quarter, we receive progress reports that enable us to check whether the money has been spent and whether it has been for the right purposes. At that point, we make another payment to them.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: To have access to that money, must the networks absolutely meet certain conditions, follow certain rules?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: Yes.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: The money is given on the basis of particular expenditures. Is it possible to obtain a list of conditions that must be met, or that must be taken into account? Back home, there are two hospitals. Is it possible to know what their requests and objectives were? As in the region of my colleague opposite, one hospital back home officially closed on April 1, which involved 100 employees. On the other hand, another hospital was saved at the last moment, but it only has a few beds. I was blamed for it in the last election campaign because the provinces said that the federal government didn't spend enough money on health. So you see funds are granted to the same hospitals, but we can't keep those spaces available for people in the minority.

I'd like to get those documents and check to see whether that's really the case and whether it couldn't be done otherwise, so that we can keep our beds and our hospitals.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: Aldean Andersen is the Director of the Official Language Community Development Bureau, OLCDB. We can definitely send you the project funding eligibility criteria.

I believe we can also send you all the New Brunswick projects that were submitted and that are currently being funded.

I don't know whether we're aware of all the projects that are discussed on the networks, some of which were rejected by them because they had to make choices as well: we don't have enough money to stop all the gaps. However, if we can, we'll get the list through the Société santé en français.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. D'Amours.

We'll continue with Mr. André. I believe you're going to share your time with Mr. Simard.

Mr. Guy André: Yes.

From what I understand, these issue and networking tables are funded in part by the federal government, and their mandate is to ensure that health services are accessible in the minority communities.

I was recently in Fredericton, and I heard some things about the situation in Caraquet. I met some people who told me that the Francophone minority communities will have a problem with access to health services, since those services will be provided far away from their homes. What is the position of the issue and networking tables on this situation, and what measures are they going to take so that those minorities, which will have access to remote services, can have access to health services near their homes?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: I don't have the details on the discussions that took place on that network or on the New Brunswick networks with regard to what's going on in New Brunswick.

• (0950)

Mr. Guy André: It would be interesting for us to have more details.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: We'll try to get them.

Mr. Guy André: We'd like to have details on the work done and so on.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: You want to know what their discussions were about. In theory, their discussions are about what they can do to improve access with the budgets they have. The purpose of the program is not to keep hospitals open and so on, and they don't have the necessary budget to do that. The restructuring decisions are made at the provincial level.

Mr. Guy André: They seemed quiet to me.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Many thanks to my Bloc colleagues. I very much appreciate this opportunity.

Mr. Nouvet, we have a \$751 million action plan, under which \$119 million will go to health, which is working very well. It seems to me we're moving more slowly on the other components. What's the arrangement?

One of the things we see at the department is the involvement of the communities. That's being done less in the other components. What role has the involvement of the people who created the network played? What effect has it had on the success of your component?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: As regards governance, we at Health Canada decided to trust the communities we had been working with for a number of years and, as far as possible, to give them control over the budgets allocated to them, within a framework, of course, since we nevertheless have to ensure that those public funds are properly spent and spent for the purposes for which they were provided. Ultimately, we have to ensure that the results for which we provided those funds have been achieved.

I believe that's the key to success. Despite the things that are going on in New Brunswick and that you referred to, if the networks are humming, if things are being done in Quebec in cooperation with the Government of Quebec, it's because people have taken charge of their destiny and are controlling their budget. I think it's easier for people in the field to identify initiatives that will produce results. They'll be much more involved in them than if the initiative was designed somewhere in a big tower in Ottawa.

Hon. Raymond Simard: You referred to accountability. Do you review the annual figures on the medical professionals, the nurses that we train? Do you believe that the objectives these people have set will be reached?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: We receive progress reports every three months. For example, we compare the number of people who are admitted to these courses in the business plan that has been submitted to us. Of course, we also monitor the number of graduates. That's why I was able to say there were roughly 100 graduates in June 2004. We don't foresee any problems. We think the consortium will keep its promise.

For me, the challenge will be to ensure that the vast majority of those graduates work in the regions where the minority communities live. The consortium is also making efforts in this area.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Simard.

Mr. Godin will speak last.

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

Let's go back to this network again. If I understood Mr. Simard correctly, the community elects its representatives to the network. Is that correct, or does the province name the chair?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: No. The community creates the network.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Who is the community?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: I don't know who the head of the network you referred to is, but you probably know. It's they who decide: they had money to...

Mr. Yvon Godin: But who put "them" there? Was it the community or the premier of New Brunswick?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: It was the community that decided. The networks reach each other through the Société santé en français, which brings together representatives from each network. First it's the community that decides that a network will be created.

• (0955)

Mr. Yvon Godin: I don't understand. Pardon me, but this isn't clear. Was it the people from the region, ordinary people, those who are sick and who go to hospital, who decided who their head was, or was it someone in a tower somewhere who decided people should follow his orders?

Could you please send us details on the federal-provincial agreement on the network, because there is \$119 million...

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: There's no federal-provincial agreement for the networks.

Mr. Yvon Godin: But money is spent by the federal government.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: There's an agreement between Health Canada and Société santé en français, which brings together the representatives of the minority communities. The society was responsible for establishing 17 networks across the country, and it did it.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Who does this society report to? Health Canada?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: To itself. It's a not-for-profit organization.

Mr. Yvon Godin: But to whom does it report? There's money coming from the federal government.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: To itself.

Mr. Yvon Godin: To itself? We're giving this organization millions of dollars and we don't ask any more questions.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: No. I explained that we received quarterly reports, progress reports, on the basis of which we pay additional funds for the delivery of the business plan. The President of the Société santé en français...

Mr. Yvon Godin: The business plan is one of the best for closing...

I know I don't have a lot of time and I'll try to be brief. We have a health network that is supposed to improve the health system. You said it wasn't up to the network to decide whether to keep the hospitals open, but, at the same time, it recommends that they be closed. Does it have responsibility for closing them?

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: No, I don't think the network recommended that any hospital whatever be closed because that's not its mandate.

Mr. Yvon Godin: But it supports hospital closings. Things are getting complicated back home because the Chaleurs network... Oh yes, it's taken a position.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: We'll give you a list of all the networks in New Brunswick and their presidents.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Also tell us what the network's mandate is.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: Absolutely.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I want the committee to know what the network's mandate is, what its responsibility is and what the responsibility of the province is relative to the network.

Mr. Marcel Nouvet: The presidents of the networks are not appointed by the federal government, or, to my knowledge, by the provincial government either.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'd like to have all the details on that, please.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are you finished? Thank you very much, Mr. Godin.

Thank you for your explanations, Mr. Nouvet. Thank you for answering all the questions. Thank you, committee members.

We'll now have a two-minute break, so that Ms. Adam can get set up, then we'll begin the second part of the meeting.

• (1000)

The Chair: Welcome to the second part of this meeting. It is our pleasure to receive a regular visitor to the Standing Committee on Official Languages, Ms. Dyane Adam. She is, as you know, the Commissioner of Official Languages.

I'd like to welcome Ms. Adam and the people here with her. This morning, we're going to discuss the Main Estimates of the Office of the Commissioner for about an hour. I suggest that, to start with, we limit ourselves to five minutes per speaker rather than seven. I'll hand over to you, Ms. Adam.

Ms. Dyane Adam (Commissioner of Official Languages, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I won't need to introduce my colleagues here with me today, since you already know them as regular visitors to this committee.

I thank you, once again, for inviting me to appear for the review of our 2005-2006 Estimates. This affords me the opportunity to provide you with a short overview of our objectives for the coming year. These are also detailed in the Report on Plans and Priorities of the Office of the Commission, tabled in the House on March 24.

As you know, I am an officer of Parliament appointed for seven years. Because I was appointed in August 1999, I am therefore beginning my last full year in office. As in the past, I intend to devote all my energies in the months ahead to my core mandate of ensuring that the status and use of the two official languages are

recognized and that the spirit of the Official Languages Act is respected by the machinery of government.

My statement today will demonstrate how, through our activities for 2005-2006, we will take action with federal institutions and have them focus on the following policy lines: delivery of quality services in both official languages and full integration of the official languages in Public Service culture; greater economic and social support for official language minority communities; and promotion of linguistic duality in Canadian society.

I would also like to say a few words about our efforts to make OCOL an exemplary workplace and about the recent endeavours to review the governance of officers of Parliament.

• (1005)

[English]

First is improving bilingual services by transforming the organizational culture.

The activities planned for 2005-06 naturally address the concerns I expressed when I appeared before you on February 24, particularly with respect to the implementation of the action plan for official languages. We will also be closely monitoring the implementation of the 11 recommendations made in my latest annual report, especially the need to clarify, through legislation or regulation, the legal scope of part VII of the Official Languages Act. The important thing is for the government to take quick action and get tangible results, particularly by strengthening accountability. This is going to require strong, cohesive leadership and accountability at all levels.

Over the next year, we will also keep a watchful eye on the repercussions the budget cuts might have on services to the public and on official languages programs. As we have noticed on many occasions, the official languages program and, consequently, the official languages minority communities are particularly vulnerable in the context of spending cutbacks.

As you are aware, investigating complaints made against different federal institutions is an important part of our mandate, and the improvement of our investigation process has allowed us to reduce delays, notably because we set in place a faster process for certain types of complaints. It seems also essential for us to make federal institutions more accountable by encouraging them to develop an organizational culture focused on achieving measurable results in accountability in the field of official languages. For instance, OCOL will urge the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada to conduct more audits and require federal institutions to carry out their own internal audits on implementation of the act.

We will also examine the reliability of the official language performance indicators developed by the central agencies for federal institutions. We will encourage Public Works and Government Services Canada, and participating organizations, to increase the volume of French content offered online. We will also follow up on a previous study on the use of both official languages on federal government Internet sites. We will continue to conduct audits and spot checks this year at National Defence, border crossings, designated airports, and selected flights by Air Canada and its partners, as well as at other institutions. We will continue our research on the equitable use of French and English at work in the federal administration, particularly in crown corporations and the federal public service in Quebec. This research will be complemented by a review of the situation in New Brunswick.

We will also be examining retention of French language skills acquired in French as a second language programs, to identify the factors that contribute to second language retention.

Finally, we will publish, for the first time, performance report cards in our next annual report, which should be tabled May 31. These performance report cards evaluate the degree to which 29 departments and agencies of the Government of Canada conform to official language policies. I plan on making this exercise an annual one and will include more organizations in the next year's evaluation.

[*Translation*]

As regards the second strategic axis, which is supporting official language minority communities, OCOL will evaluate the outcome of the mid-mandate review of the Action Plan, particularly as regards the federal-provincial-territorial agreements in education and other key sectors such as health and immigration.

On the subject of education, the objective of the Action Plan is to provide French-language education to 80 percent of the target student population by 2013. However, we are impatiently awaiting the signing of the memorandum of understanding with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, as well as certain bilateral agreements.

● (1010)

I know I'm repeating myself again, but the Department of Canadian Heritage must take action in this case.

Whether in health, in early childhood or in any other strategic field for the development of official language minority communities, the federal government must include linguistic arrangements in its federal-provincial-territorial agreements. Progress resulting from these agreements has to benefit every citizen regardless of which official language they prefer.

In its Ninth Report, this Committee asked me to closely monitor the status of official languages in the federal-provincial-territorial health agreements. This investigation will take place in 2005. It also raised the issue of organizing a national forum on ways of strengthening the legal foundations for health services provided to linguistic minorities. We examined this issue at a round table on Canada's language framework held in April 2004.

On immigration, we will continue our efforts to create a national policy framework to facilitate integration of immigrants in official language minority communities.

Our regional representatives will continue to carry out our mission in the field. They will continue to encourage the communities as well as departments and agencies of the federal, provincial and territorial governments to network, share best practices and collaborate on the most effective development strategies.

When I began my mandate, I conducted a broad consultation of many Canadian communities, both majority and minority. That initiative concerned the national and regional stakes in official languages, the promotion of duality and ways of strengthening official language minority communities. With the aim of drawing up an assessment and identifying new avenues of action, I intend to come full circle at the end of my mandate and launch another consultation of the same nature, probably less ambitious, but which will nevertheless take me to all the provinces and most of the territories.

[*English*]

The third and last axis is strengthening the bilingual identity of Canada. There is no question now that the majority of Canadians recognize the importance of linguistic duality as one of the core values of Canadian identity. We will ask Canadian Heritage to actively pursue its official languages mandate, particularly by requiring the federal institutions concerned to include activities to promote linguistic duality in their part VII plans and to measure their progress.

Despite our rather modest resources, OCOL intends to develop a communication approach to highlight the importance and unifying character of linguistic duality. Canada's bilingual identity is a tremendous advantage in a society increasingly characterized by its growing diversity. As Canada is about to redefine its relations with other countries of the world, we have to remind ourselves that our nation's linguistic duality offers opportunities we should fully exploit, particularly regarding our governance model, our cultural diversity, and its impact on our economy.

[*Translation*]

Lastly, as regards my office, OCOL views itself as a work environment that is grounded in leadership, knowledge and respect.

Over the past year, we have continued to develop our Management Accountability Framework by identifying a first level of performance indicators and by analyzing different methods of evaluating and auditing OCOL's activities. This work will continue in 2005-2006.

As an officer of Parliament, I attach great importance to the integrity and transparency of our actions and to our obligation to be accountable to parliamentarians. That is why I have asked the Office of the Auditor General to audit our financial statements on an annual basis.

● (1015)

The OAG has given us an unqualified opinion for 2003-2004, which is to say, an excellent performance rating.

Since we are discussing the Estimates today, I would like to mention in passing that the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics is presently examining various models of funding officers of Parliament that were proposed by the Treasury Board Secretariat. In our view, it is important that the approaches adopted take due account of the specific characteristics and very different mandates of each of the officers of Parliament.

For example, the Official Languages Act stipulates that Parliament shall designate a committee responsible for monitoring implementation of the Act. Therefore, pending a possible amendment to the legislation, I have proposed to the committee in question that OCOL's budget forecasts be prepared in consultation with the parliamentary committees on official languages. Those committees would then relay them to the speakers of the House and the Senate for transmission to the government and inclusion in the Estimates. On the strength of the experience of such a pilot project, it would be possible to better plan the transition while at the same time making the necessary adjustments.

[English]

In conclusion, you will have noted in listening to my presentation that we have a great deal on our plate. In addition to our planned work, we are frequently called out by unexpected events. For instance, let us just mention the recent announcement of the Canadian Tourism Commission's moving to Vancouver, a region not designated bilingual for language of work.

In this case, we have to react promptly and accurately to make sure that the government will take the necessary measures to protect the linguistic rights of the commission's employees. Particularly in this case we're talking about French-speaking employees, who represent about 50% of the employees here in Ottawa. Indeed, if the Canadian Tourism Commission's headquarters keep the obligation of offering services to the public in both official languages in Vancouver, the fact that it will be operating in a region not designated bilingual for language of work will compromise the right of its employees to work in the official language of their choice.

You will also have understood that our fields of interest intersect with many sectors of activity of the federal government and, by extension, of Canadian society. By making the most of the different tools that the Official Languages Act empowers me to use, I can intervene effectively to ensure continuous progress towards a society that is more tolerant, more open to the world, and more respectful of its official language communities.

Thank you for your attention. I will be pleased to receive comments and answer questions, as will my colleagues.

Merci.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Adam.

We have time to do two quick rounds if we're disciplined.

[Translation]

We'll be disciplined, as always.

I'd simply like to draw your attention to the following fact: on page 3 of the document developed by Mr. Ménard, Table 1 contains a minor error. On the first line, entitled "Investigations", in the box

reserved for spending for 2007-2008, the figure includes a "2", which should be an "8".

We'll start with Mr. Poilievre.

• (1020)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Thank you once again for coming.

With regard to investigations, can you tell us generally what that costs and how many people work there?

Ms. Dyane Adam: I'll be pleased to let my directors general answer that kind of question, based on their responsibilities. This is, in a way, their air time. It gives them the opportunity to talk about the work they do with their employees and to promote their employees' work.

Mr. Michel Robichaud (Director General, Investigations Branch, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages): On average, we process 1,200 complaints a year, approximately 65 percent of which are handled within six months of their date of receipt. The average cost of an investigation can vary from \$1,500 to \$5,000, depending on the complexity of the investigation. Every investigator has an average of 40 investigations under way at any time.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: How many complaints prove to be founded?

Mr. Michel Robichaud: We're talking about 50 to 60 percent here.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: What are the percentages of complaints filed by Anglophones and Francophones respectively?

Mr. Michel Robichaud: Francophones file 80 percent of complaints.

[English]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Okay. Merci.

Secondly, I'd like to ask you a question about the Treasury Board's policy on travel. It says "The norm for travel should be comfortable and convenient but not excessive." There are a number of principles enumerated by the Treasury Board in its policy on travel for government employees. I could list them for you, but I'm sure you're probably already familiar with them all.

Are the commissioner and her employees respecting the Treasury Board's policies with respect to travel?

Ms. Dyane Adam: Yes, we are. As I said, we have been audited by the Auditor General. This aspect of our operations was also audited, and it has been deemed by an external body that we follow all of Treasury Board's policies. My staff, the DGs, and all the directors who have delegated authority are following that.

We have a director general here who may want to add something, but I can tell you she's tough on that.

Louise.

Mrs. Louise Guertin (Director General, Corporate Services Branch, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages): I don't have anything to add, except that we do follow the policy.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: How much time do I have?

•(1025)

The Chair: You have a minute and ten seconds.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: My next question pertains to executive compensation and the lump sum performance awards that are provided in addition to basic salaries.

Before they can receive their lump sum performance awards, executives must first demonstrate through an assessment that the award is justifiable. How many executives at the EX-1, EX-2, EX-3, and EX-4 levels received the lump sum performance awards in 2004-05?

Ms. Dyane Adam: I will let Louise answer on the specifics, but I can tell you my office is quite proud on this front.

All of our employees had a written evaluation last year, which is not necessarily the case all over the federal apparatus. This is an area to which I give a lot of attention, because as we know, human resources are really what we are about. Besides the EX there's another group that has performance—excluded managers. So we will respond to that group, the EX, but also the excluded managers, who can receive

[Translation]

a performance bonus.

[English]

Mrs. Louise Guertin: In the last two years we have been sure to give training to all of our managers, but also as an executive group we have done a lot of work ensuring that the objectives given at the beginning of the year are in line with the operation plan and the strategic objectives.

As Madame Adam said, as a group—I've been working in the public service for a long time, and I know it's quite exceptional—this year 100% of our evaluations were filled in, which is extremely rare. So we've been following this very closely.

In terms of EXs, there are 11 EXs, and for that reason it's difficult to cut it into different slices and not give the names of people.

[Translation]

The Chair: Pardon me for interrupting you. We can continue that later on. We have to be very disciplined.

Mrs. Louise Guertin: I'm taking too much time?

The Chair: No, but we only have an hour, and everyone has to have a chance to answer. We can come back to this question.

Mr. Desrochers.

[English]

Mrs. Louise Guertin: Among the 11, there are three people who didn't receive any bonus at all. Eight people received the at-risk pay and four people received the bonus you're referring to.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Desrochers.

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Ms. Adam, I'm going to address the budget from a more

comprehensive perspective. My question is also for the people here with you.

When you took up your duties in 1999, what was the operating budget?

Ms. Dyane Adam: If my memory serves me, it was around \$12 million.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: If I rely on the figures, it's increased to \$21 million. Is that correct?

Ms. Dyane Adam: It's \$18 million.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: And your staff has increased from 121 to 164 employees?

Ms. Dyane Adam: Yes.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Now that it's increased from \$12 million to \$18 million, does the budget of your office meet your needs?

Ms. Dyane Adam: Last year, we discussed the Office's additional needs in this committee, and my answer was clear. We received an increase, and I'm going to tell you why.

I believe we're going through a consolidation phase. When I entered the Office, we reviewed our operation and activities. It was clear to us, in planning and evaluation, that we had to reinforce certain aspects of the Office. So, among other things, we restarted the audit function, which had been set aside for a number of years. That explains part of the increase.

We also attached greater importance to the communications component. Before taking up my duties at the Office, I was at a university where we worked exclusively with the Internet and where students were partners. When I arrived at the Office, I saw that the Internet culture wasn't really integrated. We had work to do with regard to the platform, the tools we had to acquire and so on.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Does the present budget meet your expectations?

Ms. Dyane Adam: As regards the objectives we set for ourselves, let's say that we could do more audit work. The federal government is enormous, and we don't have eyes and ears everywhere; so we can't do observations in the field.

An officer of Parliament can conduct more audits: he or she then devotes less time to investigations and so on. If you tell me you want me to conduct investigations and write investigation reports every six months or that investigations should last three months, I'll answer that I can't do that with the resources I have right now.

•(1030)

Mr. Odina Desrochers: What would be the ideal budget?

Ms. Dyane Adam: That's a good question!

A voice: Much more.

Ms. Dyane Adam: We're currently looking at promotion and communications, a component we're going to improve this year. As I mentioned, we'll be doing some ground work in this regard. However, if we or other federal government partners had to enhance this aspect of our act any further, we definitely wouldn't be able to do it with the resources we now have.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: What would be the required amount?

Ms. Dyane Adam: I prefer not to advance a figure, so as not to scare people.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Could you express it as a percentage?

Ms. Dyane Adam: My colleagues would probably like to hear me say we need several million dollars more. I'm in favour of tight management. I'd like to say there's work to be done and that we're doing things well right now.

In addition, I want to prepare the way for my successor, the next commissioner. At this stage of my mandate, I believe it's more appropriate to broaden and deepen the scope of our activities.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: That means that, when you leave next year, you'll provide details on the financial resources your replacement should have. We'll have to be patient.

Ms. Dyane Adam: That's correct.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Thank you very much, Ms. Adam.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desrochers.

We'll continue with Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ms. Adam, for being here with your team. You are our minority language guardians. You're doing good work, even though there's still work left to do.

We note in Table 1 that planned spending on investigations totals \$8,502,000 for 2004-2005. However, in 2005-2006, the figure falls to \$8,420,000. So you anticipate a reduction. Does that mean you're going to conduct fewer investigations? How can you calculate in advance that the budget will decline?

Mme Louise Guertin: We filed a submission with Treasury Board, and we got a budget increase. One annual amount was adjusted because of a transfer of duties from the investigations group to the policy and communications group. The work will still be done, but in a different branch.

Mr. Yvon Godin: But we also see a loss in Policy and Communications.

Mrs. Louise Guertin: That's attributable to the way we receive the money. One year we received a little more, and the amount was restored the following year. As you can see, the amount subsequently remained stable.

Ms. Dyane Adam: I don't know whether that's clear.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes. One year, you didn't receive any money...

Ms. Dyane Adam: No, that's not the case. The increase we obtained was spread over a three-year period. Sometimes, as a result of the way the funds are paid, there's an additional amount in a given year. The basic amount, if I understand correctly, is slightly lower. However, there is no reduction.

Let's say we were entitled to an increase of \$3 or \$4 million. Last year, the Treasury Board may have given us more money because it hadn't paid us the equivalent amount in the previous year. Subsequently, we returned to the base amount, which is \$4 million.

Mrs. Louise Guertin: I might add a detail. We've presented the tables in a different manner from previous years. Corporate services expenditures are allocated between the two programs, at Treasury

Board's request. In fact, the budget that was cut is mine. Consequently, we're more efficient.

• (1035)

Mr. Yvon Godin: I want to thank the officers of Parliament.

I know that, in the case of Air Canada, you took part in the investigations and all the battles we waged. Mr. Sauvageau wanted that card to be available on board the aircraft, and that's now the case. I have a copy of it, and I'm going to hand it over to him in Parliament this afternoon. I have another one for myself.

Unfortunately, the President of Air Canada, Mr. Milton, withdrew his brief message on official languages from the letter he includes in the *enRoute* magazine. That message would still be welcomed, as would the card. You can see that something has been done. Moreover, I'm going to publicize the fact that the card is finally available on board Air Canada's aircraft and that people can now file complaints.

The Chair: That's as a result of Mr. Sauvageau's excellent work.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Indeed, I believe we should congratulate him on his success. Now people who aren't satisfied have recourse. It's unfortunate that we don't have a copy of that card for the Commissioner of Official Languages. I still have five minutes.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, you only have three minutes, two, one... Too bad, you're out of time!

We'll move on to Mr. Simard.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to our committee.

You said earlier that the Auditor General was responsible for audit at your Office. I wanted to know whether her responsibility was limited to the financial aspect, or whether she also covered your mandate and the results you achieve.

Mrs. Louise Guertin: Her responsibility is mainly for finance and information systems. Among other things, her job is to verify whether we're complying with Treasury Board policies and processes.

Hon. Raymond Simard: How has your role evolved over the past four or five years? It seems to me it's much broader today. There's talk about Services Canada implementing a system to provide services in both official languages across the country. Before that's done, do you intend to determine whether it would be possible for you to contribute to that and to ensure that Francophones outside Quebec and Anglophones in Quebec are well represented?

Ms. Dyane Adam: You might say our role is constantly evolving. April 1 of this year was the Office's thirty-fifth anniversary. Our next annual report will address the progress that has been achieved on official languages within Canada's federal institutions. Of course, it will also talk a bit about the Office. As I mentioned earlier, we have restarted the audit function in the past five years and reinforced our relations with Parliament. OCOL is invited quite often to this committee and others. Next week, we'll be appearing before the Industry Committee to talk about moving the Office.

As regards government decisions of this kind, we have adopted a much more proactive role. We try to anticipate rather than wait for the Canadian public to file complaints or for employees to say that they've lost their rights. We try to raise red flags when we learn about problems that arise. We're also more active in all legislative and regulatory matters. We review bills that concern various issues, such as immigration. There are also cases like Air Canada. We try to have an influence upstream rather than downstream, so there are no losses or erosion.

As regards Services Canada, that situation could be an excellent opportunity for us to reinforce linguistic duality, just as it might be risky, depending on how things are planned. I've already met with Ms. Robillard and we've discussed the issue. I know the government intends to carry out pilot projects. Ms. Robillard, who has played an important role, is entirely aware of other initiatives across the country, including the single window in Manitoba. We've conducted studies on the subject. We've also stated in some of our reports that it's a promising model that it might be useful to adopt.

Our team and the people in the regions, who are our representatives, of course, are mobilized on this issue. They're going to ensure that the government gets the best advice and recommendations possible in the context of the process.

•(1040)

Hon. Raymond Simard: With regard to Mr. Poilievre's question and my first comment on the Auditor General, I imagine that, if the Auditor General has audited your books, that means you've met standards relating to travel. So that's confirmed.

I'd like to know whether your role is also to analyze the progress made by all the departments every year.

Ms. Dyane Adam: Yes, and we're anxious to publish the data on that subject. Our next report will include report cards. This is a first. The team of my colleague Michel is in charge of that. Twenty-nine federal institutions will be evaluated on all aspects of the act. The cards will include little emoticons. I shouldn't reveal things prematurely, but this will equip us and the deputy heads of the institutions. I think they'll be able to determine where their strengths and weaknesses lie. We'll repeat the operation next year, and they'll have the opportunity at that time to prove they've made progress. The problem with investigations is that they're focused: they only concern one subject. In this case, however, the commitment is perceptible.

The Chair: We'll move on to the second round. We're going to have to limit ourselves to four minutes each in order to be fair. Is everyone in agreement?

We'll continue with Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I'm going to share my time with Mr. Scheer.

Good morning and welcome.

I note that, in 2004, the number of full-time employees at your Office increased by 32, 25 percent. Do you think that increase has improved the efficiency of your Office and, if so, in what area?

•(1045)

Mrs. Louise Guertin: What period are we talking about?

Mr. Guy Lauzon: From 2003 and 2004.

Mrs. Louise Guertin: I believe the number increased from 146...

Mr. Guy Lauzon: It increased from 130 to 162.

Mrs. Louise Guertin: There was a change, but I don't have the exact figures. We could find them.

With regard to efficiency, functions were added, including relations with parliamentarians and audit. Audit was abolished in the cutbacks of 1990.

Ms. Dyane Adam: We added staff in the regions, the equivalent of five persons. We had no one in British Columbia. As you know, there are major developments in that community as regards official languages and the two communities. We now have someone in Saskatchewan, in Sudbury, Ontario, in Quebec and, of course, in the Maritimes.

I believe we're more efficient and that we can prove that. We keep our institutions in view, much more than we did before. We work on a proactive or reactive basis, depending on the needs of citizens and the situations they refer to us. My team is very active in promoting education. I make approximately 30 speeches and public appearances a year and give some 200 media interviews. That's a lot for the Office, which wasn't performing at the same level at all five years ago. That means that more communications people accompany me and help me to my job.

Over the past five years, we've invested resources in communications. The report cards I referred to also involve expenses. For each card we do, we have to review the documents submitted to us by the institutions and go and audit the services in the field.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I'm going to share my time with Mr. Scheer.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): I have a very quick question, and I understand that fits in with the timeframe.

Government regulations regarding contracting have very specific guidelines for sole-source contracting, and I wanted to get a feel for whether it is a common practice that the office engages in sole-source contracting. I understand it's very rare. How would you measure yourself against other departments or commissions?

Ms. Dyane Adam: I believe for a couple of months now we've asked all the chief executive officers of the different ministries, departments, and agencies to post this on the web. So it's there. I don't think there's a problem there, but I'll let the expert on this and the watchdog of the commissioner's office tell you more about it.

Mrs. Louise Guertin: No, we are very much aware of the legislation and the policy, and we have also been training our staff, making sure everybody understands.

Yes, it has happened, but not on a regular basis, and you always have a justification. I will add that when the Auditor General came in, this is one of the things they looked at. Again, I have in my office the letter from the Auditor General saying we came out with flying colours.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Godbout, you have four minutes.

Mr. Marc Godbout: I want to offer you my best wishes on the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Office and wish you many more years as well. I get the impression we're going to need them. Much remains to be done.

If I understood correctly, a special report on National Defence will be published next year. Is that correct?

Ms. Dyane Adam: There's going to be an audit.

Mr. Marc Godbout: Is that the only department where you'll have occasion to conduct audits? I have other suggestions to make in that regard, and I'm starting to consider granting you additional funding.

Ms. Dyane Adam: We're going to make that information public very soon. It will concern the Canadian Tourism Commission, more specifically regarding Part VII of the act, which deals with support for the minority communities and the advancement of English and French. There's also Industry Canada and, in particular, the regional development agencies: WD, FedNOR, ACOA and the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec.

Mr. Marc Godbout: That's very good.

Ms. Dyane Adam: What other ones are scheduled?

Mr. Michel Robichaud: There's also the Canada Border Services Agency.

Mr. Marc Godbout: And what about Human Resources and Skills Development?

Mr. Michel Robichaud: That's scheduled for 2006-2007.

Ms. Dyane Adam: My colleagues have given me the audit plan for the next few years, and it's become my bedside reading. So I can confirm that it's scheduled for 2006-2007.

Mr. Marc Godbout: That's very good, even though things are being done a bit slowly. I would have liked that to be done sooner. If we granted you additional funding...

Ms. Dyane Adam: We could go faster! However, auditors are becoming a scarce commodity in town. That's going to be a problem.

• (1050)

Mr. Marc Godbout: In one of my other lives, you had started a quite interesting study on the French-language school boards responsible for implementing section 23, which concerns school governance. It was mentioned at the time that it would be a good idea to monitor the progress of rightsholders, in particular, from early childhood until they entered the labour market.

Have there been any developments in that area? Will your Office be taking part in that project? Since education is a provincial jurisdiction, few agencies can make a connection between the provinces, particularly so that we can get a fairly accurate picture of the situation regarding investment and progress achieved. To reduce the gap you've previously referred to, and that was mentioned again

in the action plan, more rightsholders have to have school governance.

Ms. Dyane Adam: That's a very relevant question. When the federal government set the objective of doubling the number of rightsholders under the Action Plan for Official Languages, we immediately asked it to develop performance indicators. Responsibility for conducting that follow-up falls to the government. You'll be seeing a mid-mandate review of the action plan this fall.

In anticipation of that review, we asked them to develop their performance indicators. I admit I haven't seen them yet, but I'm told they should be made public very soon. I expect the federal government, which wants to double the number of rightsholders over the next 10 years, to acquire the necessary resources to conduct the analysis and be accountable to the Canadian public and to the communities, of course. Studies may already be under way. I'm going to check that with my colleagues.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Adam. I'm sorry I have to interrupt you.

Mr. André.

Mr. Guy André: Good morning, Ms. Adam. Good morning to your team.

I want to go back briefly to the report cards, the new initiative you're introducing in the coming months. Do you have any indicators that will enable you to measure the performance of the departments? Are some departments reluctant? How are things going in the field?

Ms. Dyane Adam: Before handing over to my colleague, I'd simply like to say that there's always something disturbing for the federal institutions about undergoing an evaluation that is to be made public. I believe all of us feel that way a little. For that reason, we've conducted the entire process with representatives of those institutions. I believe the result will be very positive, since the criteria were developed together with those people.

I'll hand over to you, Michel.

Mr. Michel Robichaud: We're studying five major areas: first, the performance indicators you referred to; program management, that is to say how the people who are required to ensure that services are provided manage the programs; service to the public as such; observations on the number of bilingual positions, but also observations that are made in the field on service rendered; language of work, that is to say how employees are able to use both official languages at the department; and participation by Anglophones and Francophones: to what extent both language groups are represented within the institution; lastly, the seventh part is advancement and development of the communities.

Those are the main criteria. We assign marks for each one, and the result is a small emoticon, smiling or sad depending on the mark we assign. Ultimately, that will provide a picture of the 29 institutions and show where they stand in relation to one another.

Mr. Guy André: When will we have the initial results of those studies?

Mr. Michel Robichaud: As Ms. Adam said, they'll be tabled with the annual report. They'll also be on our Web site. The details on each evaluation, each report card will be posted on the Web site at the same time.

Mr. Guy André: That's a great initiative, and it will be interesting to see the results.

That's all, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: That's all? Thank you very much, Mr. André.

We'll close on that, since Mr. Godin has left us to go to another meeting. I want to inform you that, at the committee's request,

Ms. Frulla will be here next week to discuss the signing of the education agreements between the federal and provincial governments. That promises to be very interesting. So that will be Tuesday morning, until 10:30, when she'll have to leave us. We'll take the opportunity at that time to debate the supply motion and pass it.

Ms. Adam, thank you very much, both you and your team. Once again, we were very pleased to see you here again.

Thank you, committee members, and we'll see you next week.

The meeting is adjourned.

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