



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Official Languages

LANG • NUMBER 026 • 1st SESSION • 38th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

—
Chair

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez

All parliamentary publications are available on the
"Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire" at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Standing Committee on Official Languages

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

•(0910)

[Translation]

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

[English]

Welcome. It's a pleasure to see you all this morning.

[Translation]

This morning we are hearing from the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Honourable Liza Frulla. As you know, her evidence today will concern the work the committee is doing on the Action Plan for Official Languages. As mentioned, she will be here until 10:30 a.m.

[English]

Then we will follow with committee business for the last half hour.

[Translation]

We'll start with a brief presentation by the minister, then move on to the question and discussion period.

Please proceed.

Hon. Liza Frulla (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I am pleased to be here, more especially today. First, I want to announce to you that the education agreements were signed last night. I've previously said that the entire matter was completed on March 31, that the texts had been finalized and approved by Jean-Marc Fournier, the Quebec minister and Chair of the Council of Ministers of Education Canada, and by officials. As promised, it was done on March 31. Now we need only ratify the Protocol so that we can finally have a comprehensive framework. All the provinces and territories have signed it. Nunavut was the last to sign. I personally spoke to the representatives of the Northwest Territories. It's done. A news release will be issued this morning. This is a four-year agreement. It appears that the provinces and territories are very satisfied with it.

Now I'll move on to my official text because it also concerns accountability mechanisms. That's why the Protocol is so important. It also concerns the accountability mechanism and mandatory consultations with the community.

I'm particularly happy to be here today to speak to you about education and Canada's official languages in education agreements. I'm particularly happy to announce this first to the Standing

Committee on Official Languages. You're the first to know. Accountability is one of the main principles that guides us in this area. That is why I thank you for this opportunity to share the progress made in education since we last met.

[English]

As you know, the lion's share of the Government of Canada's action plan for official languages funding is dedicated to education. Education is the key to community development and to the community's ability to deal with the challenges that face it and those associated with our knowledge-based society. Learning a second official language in school is also an important way in which we support linguistic duality in Canada.

Education is a provincial-territorial jurisdiction, yet a remarkable partnership has existed in this regard between the two levels of government for the past 35 years.

[Translation]

At the multilateral level, the Minister of Canadian Heritage negotiates a Protocol of Agreement with the Council of Ministers of Education. That's what we've just completed.

I have already announced that elements of the next Protocol will be settled by March 31, 2005. As I told you, it's done. All of the provinces and territories have given their approval for the framework of the future Protocol.

Today, we are making an important step towards a strengthening of our collaboration with provinces and territories in order to provide young Canadians with a better access to minority language education and second-language learning. We are proud to count on the renewed commitment of provincial and territorial partners towards linguistic duality. With this agreement, we are making significant progress towards the objectives of Canada's Official Languages Action Plan. I'll come back to the significance of this very important step towards the pursuit of our objectives in education and official languages.

Let me explain in general terms what this Protocol consists of.

The Protocol is a document that covers four years. It outlines the general collaborative mechanisms for official languages education and establishes the amount of the federal contributions earmarked for each province and territory. Using the Protocol as a basis, the Minister of Canadian Heritage concludes bilateral cost-shared agreements with each of the provinces and territories. These agreements are matched with action plans describing provinces' and territories' specific projects and uses for the funding.

Over the last several years, significant progress has been accomplished with respect to minority-language education. Today, young Canadians, Anglophones or Francophones living in a minority situation, have the right to a quality education in their first official language. Thanks to court cases initiated as a result of section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and with federal-provincial support for education and official languages, today, there are Francophone school management structures in place in each province and territory. Francophones manage their own schools.

Post-secondary education has also made a considerable leap over the last years with, notably, the creation of a network of Francophone community colleges in Ontario. The Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne groups together 13 institutions in Atlantic Canada, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and in Alberta. The number of young Francophones in minority official-language communities who have a university-level degree can now be advantageously compared to the Canadian average.

With respect to second-language education, right now, 24 percent of young Canadians ages 15 to 19 know the other official language. In addition, 47 percent of the total school population is registered in second-language programs at the elementary and secondary levels. That's one out of two young people who have the chance to learn their second official language at school.

Obviously, progress made identifies what is left to be done. The witnesses that you have heard up until now have not hidden the amount of work yet to be done. I will mention some of the challenges.

It is a fact, for example, in comparing results of some reading tests, that the level of performance of Francophone schools in minority situations compared to the results of majority schools should be improved. We also realize that we must encourage the provinces and territories who wish to increase their efforts in the area of early childhood development and preparation for schooling. Other tasks await us at the elementary and secondary levels: promotion of access, upgrading linguistic skills, improving the quality of programs and cultural enrichment of the education milieu are all sectors for investment which require urgent intervention.

Finally, support for the development of the French-language post-secondary education network remains a priority as well. Moreover, in order for more Canadians to have the chance to master their second official language, we must improve core and immersion programs and increase the number of qualified teachers while at the same time providing young people with more possibilities to use their linguistic skills.

All of these questions are at the top of our list of funding priorities in terms of our discussions with the provincial and territorial governments.

• (0915)

[English]

All of these challenges are at the heart of the Government of Canada's action plan for official languages, which was announced two years ago. Why is this plan so important? In fact, the action plan is innovative in three ways.

First, the plan encompasses our work plan over 10 years. With respect to education, there are no miracle solutions. Results take time to achieve, especially when they are dependent on the concerted effort of a number of players.

Secondly, the action plan establishes targets that are national, clear, and measurable. For second language instruction, the plan is to raise the proportion of bilingual francophones and anglophones in the 15-year-old to 19-year-old age group to 50% by 2013. For minority education, 80% of eligible students should be registered at French schools. These objectives allow us to change the way we do things. They pave the way to more rigorous accountability measures, which are important to the Canadian population and which have been requested by the communities.

Finally, the action plan adds targeted funds in amounts well above regular funding for maintenance and improvement of programs. For minority official language education, this means \$209 million over five years, as well as a separate envelope of \$137 million over five years for second language instruction. In addition, \$35 million over five years will be used to increase participation in the very popular summer language bursary and official language monitor programs.

[Translation]

A 10-year vision does not come to life with ad hoc measures. That is why the Action Plan for Official Languages, which mobilizes significant resources and renews collaboration between all of the partners, was created. We want to encourage the provinces and territories to work together more on common projects. The CMEC has the mandate to facilitate horizontal collaboration between the provinces and territories.

Through the CMEC, pan-Canadian programs such as the Summer Language Bursary Program and the Official Language Monitor Program have become exemplary successes. This horizontal collaboration seems promising.

A concerted effort by several governments will be necessary to create pedagogical tools which are better adapted to the challenges found in the minority official-language community milieu, to promote research on official languages questions and to arm ourselves with adequate tools to measure results. The CMEC could become a very important forum with which to meet these challenges.

I know that many organizations that you have met have been upset by the delays in the negotiations. Real progress has been accomplished over the last few months and I would like to tell you about it.

[English]

With respect to what is happening on the ground in the current school year of 2004-05, 38 bilateral agreements were conducted by March 31 by provinces and territories. These include core funding agreements, targeted fund agreements, and auxiliary agreements for special projects such as infrastructure. It must also be remembered that the provinces and territories have until June 30 to spend these funds.

As I mentioned earlier, we have been negotiating with the Council of Ministers of Education Canada to renew our protocol. The protocol is the multi-year umbrella agreement with the provinces and territories on official languages in education. It provides a common framework of collaboration to meet the ultimate goals of Canada's action plan for official languages and paves the way for the negotiation of bilateral agreements where the specific concerns and challenges of each province and territory are taken into consideration.

[*Translation*]

As I mentioned earlier, it gives me pleasure to confirm that we have obtained consensus from all of the provinces and territories on the framework of the next Protocol.

It includes details on all of the questions that the Protocol should cover, including the following: implementation of the objectives of Canada's Action Plan; transparent, fair and equitable distribution of available budgetary envelopes among the provinces and territories; collaborative mechanisms that enhance the achievement of pan-Canadian initiatives; reinforcement of an accountability framework; consultation methods of groups and associations interested in minority official-language education and second official-language instruction.

[*English*]

This framework will serve as a basis for the next multi-year protocol, which governs the federal government's collaboration with the provinces and territories for the next cycle of bilateral agreements. We have given ourselves 90 days to complete and sign the protocol and the bilateral agreements.

• (0920)

[*Translation*]

Considering the progress made on the principles of a future Protocol, the consensus on the allocation of funds, and the fact that within the 2004-2005 bilateral agreements there are already many projects which are to be undertaken over the next few years, the road is paved towards advancing the objectives of the federal Action Plan for Official Languages in the area of education.

[*English*]

In short, we're working very hard to deliver on all our obligations and all our promises with respect to our official languages. Our commitment is strong, and much progress has been made.

[*Translation*]

Since my nomination as Minister of Canadian Heritage, I met with several ministers of education across the country, several community organizations including the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, representatives of post-secondary organizations and school boards. I discussed education with the Commissioner of Official Languages on two occasions. I met the President of the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones who spoke to me about their Strategy to complete the French language education system in Canada, a remarkable initiative.

From all corners of the country and from all those I met, the same message was heard: our children's education is a priority; the

challenges are huge, but we are ready to face them. I intend to work closely with all who wish to advance minority official-language education throughout Canada with me. I invite you to share your vision and ideas with me. Thank you again for inviting me to appear before you. I am now ready to take your questions.

I want to point out that Hubert Lussier and Eileen Sarkar are here with me. They are the two individuals who negotiated the Protocol in the field. At the same time, as I mentioned, I met with all the ministers of education. We're talking about some intense negotiations. I'm very pleased with the result today.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Minister. We'll now move on to the period of questions, comments and reactions. I turn the floor over to Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Ms. Frulla, and welcome.

According to the witnesses who have spoken on education and the Action Plan for Official Languages, the delays relating to the Protocol with the Council of Ministers of Education are long. The Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones says it's paralyzed.

[*English*]

The Canadians preparing for French are very worried.

[*Translation*]

The Commissioner of Official Languages told us about the frustration of the provinces. The Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne is awaiting funding, and, according to the Réseau des cégeps et des collèges francophones du Canada, the instability is terrible.

In view of these facts, why didn't the Department of Canadian Heritage sign the Protocols with the Council of Ministers of Education before yesterday? Why aren't the Canada-community agreements also signed?

Hon. Liza Frulla: You shouldn't confuse matters. There's education on the one hand and the Canada-community agreements on the other. First of all, we were negotiating the Protocol when you met with the school boards and all those whom you met. Obviously, in that kind of context, messages come from everywhere. They're obviously waiting for the matter to be resolved upstream.

That's why I'm announcing that the Protocols were signed with the Council of Ministers of Education for four years rather than three. I'm convinced those organizations would react quite differently today, tomorrow or the next day. The Protocol was signed for four years, from 2006-2007 until 2010. Consequently, the money will be paid in accordance with the mechanisms I referred to. I believe the situation is resolved. Furthermore, there will be a meeting of all stakeholders every two years to see whether adjustments are necessary.

It was long because it involved 34 agreements. As of today and for the next four years, there will be 28 agreements. In the case of four-year agreements, they have to be significant. The agreements have to be such that the provinces, for example, have their own flexibility and are satisfied. In a field like this, I'm deeply convinced that the important thing is not force, but, to a much greater degree, collaborative work. All stakeholders must be convinced that the right thing is being done and that minority language education and second-language instruction are an important value for Canada.

• (0925)

Mr. Guy Lauzon: So the Canada-community agreement remains...

Hon. Liza Frulla: You have to distinguish between the Canada-community agreement and the education agreement. The education agreement, as I told you, is a major agreement and represents an enormous amount of work. The Protocol has been accepted by all the provinces. There now remain bilateral negotiations with the provinces to adapt that Protocol specifically to each of them.

In the case of the agreement with the communities, there's already a base. The communities told us at one point that we should add \$18 million to what Canada's Action Plan for Official Languages was offering. I admit that funding is necessary and that the communities are the watchdogs for the action plan as a whole, but, as I explained to the communities and Mr. Arès, before requesting \$18 million from the Department of Finance because we think we need it, we have to prepare a file, and that's what we're doing. We've signed education agreements, and I said we would work with the communities and prepare a substantial file that's specific to them.

In the meantime, this year, there's possibility of a 10 percent increase, which would represent from \$2.5 million to \$3 million.

[English]

Mr. Guy Lauzon: When can we expect that agreement to be signed then?

Hon. Liza Frulla: The agreement will be signed when we sit down with the communities.

First of all, the communities could sign the agreements now, but the communities are saying, well, we're going to sign for a year because we need more money for next year. My argument was to say no, sign; we'll ensure the base and then we'll—and we will—make a case for an added budget.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I'm sure you can appreciate in both cases, Minister Frulla, that you can't do any planning. This is not the way to do business. If you were in private industry, you wouldn't be doing business like this.

Hon. Liza Frulla: First of all, I come from private industry, sir, so no, I'm sorry—

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I don't think you waited until the new year before you did your strategic planning.

Hon. Liza Frulla: No. The strategic planning is done. I don't think you understand. What we're talking about—

Mr. Guy Lauzon: It takes money for these organizations to do strategic planning. They have to know what their funds are going to be, don't they?

Hon. Liza Frulla: They know what their funds are going to be right now. I'm sorry.

First of all, for education that's what we're doing. We concluded a four-year agreement exactly because of what you're saying, exactly because they needed money for strategic planning. That's the whole thing in education. We're talking about \$1 billion.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: That's well and good for next year. They'll know what they're going to have in place next year.

Hon. Liza Frulla: No. This is education. Education is not for next year. Education is for four years, and it's \$1 billion we're putting into education for four years.

As far as communities are concerned, they have their budget now. They know what their budget actually is. Because of the action plan, they know it could have an added value of 4%. They know that; they can plan on that; it's there. The only thing is, now they really want an increase in their funding for next year, so what we're saying is that we are going to build a case for them.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

We'll continue with Mr. André.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Good morning, Ms. Frulla, Ms. Sarkar and Mr. Lussier.

I want to go back to the Protocol of Agreement on education that you signed yesterday. Will the funds be paid soon? Are there any terms and conditions for the payment of those amounts?

• (0930)

Hon. Liza Frulla: I'm going to tell you about the Protocol of Agreement and Hubert will talk about the terms of payment. An individual agreement was signed with the provinces for this year, 2004-2005; funds can therefore be paid until June. Most of the provinces customarily do the cash management, but the money is there for this year.

Our challenge was to sign a long-term agreement with all the provinces on education, which is a provincial jurisdiction. All the terms and conditions had to be met. We weren't talking about the long term for this year. When I arrived, we could only talk about one year, since the long-term agreements were being prepared. Today, the Protocol guarantees our long-term participation, for the next four years. The funds for this year are consolidated; next year and in the following three years, there will be an automatic payment based on the Protocol.

Mr. Guy André: How do you explain the dissatisfaction, uncertainty and insecurity experienced by people? Last week, for example, the representative of the colleges said that their budget was so small they couldn't even pay employees' travelling expenses. She said there had been cuts and that people didn't know where they were going, that they couldn't plan for the long term. There's no planning or direction.

Do you attribute that to a problem of communication between your department and the colleges?

Hon. Liza Frulla: No. Between the province and...? No.

Mr. Guy André: People didn't have any news. Why? They told me they didn't really know how... There was a lot of insecurity.

Hon. Liza Frulla: The people responsible for the colleges said they had money for this year, but that they didn't know what would happen next year and thereafter. All that definitely depended on the signing of the Protocol.

The long term — because you have to ensure the long term — also depended on signing and on the agreement we had with the Council of Ministers of Education. That's obviously our first stakeholder, since education is a provincial jurisdiction.

So we had to negotiate. Those negotiations were extremely intense. I had to talk to the ministers of education on a number of occasions. We talked about the Protocol and all the bilateral negotiations. But today...

Mr. Guy André: Should any improvements be made to make it more transparent?

Hon. Liza Frulla: Yes. Today I can tell you that the Protocol has been accepted. The long-term, four-year plan has been accepted. Every two years, we sit down with our main partners, that is to say the provinces, to determine whether there are any adjustments to be made.

The communities are pleased. The provinces have accepted. Honestly, it's normal for it to be intense because we negotiate with the 10 partners, plus the territories. You'll also have to agree on terms and conditions. Our partners agreed at the outset to consult their groups, that is to say the school boards, the colleges and so on. They agreed to make sure there was a dialogue with their groups. That's in the Protocol of Agreement. They also agreed to report to the public on progress made each year with regard to minority language education and second-language instruction.

Mr. Guy André: All right. Do I still have some time?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. Guy André: The Canada-community agreements come under the OLS program. You know that ACFA is seeking \$42 million. During your last visit, we discussed that component. Mr. Lussier answered that there was a process for evaluating the groups. I asked him what the criteria were for evaluating the actions of groups in Canada, Francophone community groups. Your criteria weren't precise. You'll remember we talked about that. I wondered how the groups could be evaluated. We have to agree on certain criteria.

Did you do a tour to evaluate the groups? Where are you now with their requests for budget increases? As you know, there have been no budget increases since 1992 or 1994.

A voice: There have been.

Mr. Guy André: They have requests. There is the Action Plan for Official Languages.

• (0935)

Hon. Liza Frulla: There are two things for the communities. They have an increase under the action plan. The communities are telling us now — you heard them, as I did — that they are the watchdogs in the community and that they need more. They say the needs are growing, perhaps because, in a way, they are the victims of

their own success. Needs are increasing. More and more minority Francophones are joining the groups.

We've made this...

Mr. Guy André: You think their needs are justified.

Hon. Liza Frulla: I think so. We've done a tour. I was in Manitoba last week. I think their needs are justified.

Do they amount to \$10, \$18 or \$20 million? That's what we have to know. The Action Plan for Official Languages currently provides for a 10 percent increase, which amounts to roughly \$2.5, \$3 or perhaps \$4 million. We want to take care of community radio stations because we think that's fundamentally important. However, a month and a half before the budget, we can't say we think we need \$18 million, when we're evaluating certain groups to determine whether the contribution of all the groups we support is significant and whether other groups should be supported.

Mr. Guy André: Ms. Frulla, you'll admit that a 10 percent increase in the past 10 years isn't enormous.

Hon. Liza Frulla: That figure isn't accurate. I'm going to ask Mr. Lussier, but it's more than that.

The Chair: Unfortunately, that's all the time we have for the moment. We have to be fair with everyone.

Mr. Godin, the floor is yours.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to welcome the minister and the people with her.

A Protocol on education has been signed. Is that correct?

Hon. Liza Frulla: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That was done just before the meeting?

Hon. Liza Frulla: It wasn't done this morning: on March 31, the texts were approved by officials and the Chair of the Council of Ministers of Education, Jean-Marc Fournier. However, the text of the Protocol also had to be officially approved by all the ministers. Last week, two ministers had not yet signed, and only one was left yesterday. Nunavut signed last night, and that's why I can announce it today.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'd like to know how the funds provided for by these agreements are allocated. In other words, how much money is provided for primary education, for secondary education, for post-secondary education and for immersion?

After signing an agreement with the province, will the federal government always have a say in the way the money is allocated and used, in order to be sure that it's being done in accordance with the agreement? Is that provided for by the agreement? It will no doubt be said that education is a provincial jurisdiction and that's why the federal government can't get involved with it. Where are we headed with an agreement like that?

Hon. Liza Frulla: First of all, the Protocol is a framework for action, and that's why it was important to sign it. I'm going to let Hubert give you the details on the figures. At bottom, there's \$655 million. How is that divided? I'll leave that to Hubert. The negotiations were completed and the provinces ratified the agreement.

The Protocol constitutes the action plan under which money will be paid. Where there is a Protocol and money, there are also responsibilities. The communities were asking us for more responsibility and tighter accountability. They also wanted to be consulted. All that is also part of the Protocol itself. We also had to agree with the provinces and the provinces had to accept it, which they willingly did.

That's why, every two years, as provided in the Protocol, we have to sit down and see whether there are any things to correct, in order to be sure that the terms and conditions of application are being met.

• (0940)

Mr. Yvon Godin: You're not answering my question.

Is any money provided for primary education, secondary education, post-secondary education and immersion? What are the amounts?

Hon. Liza Frulla: I'll let Hubert give you the exact figures because he has the tables with him.

Mr. Hubert Lussier (Director General, Official Languages Support Programs, Department of Canadian Heritage): The distribution of funds, as established under the Protocol and reflected in the bilateral agreements, is determined by two types of mechanisms. The base — or traditional — funding that precedes the action plan is essentially based on a historical distribution based on population in the provinces a certain number of years ago. The division between primary and secondary within the budgets of each province is negotiated bilaterally, on a case-by-case basis, based on the particular needs of the province or territory.

Like the base funding, the action plan funding, which represents new money, is thus divided between the two linguistic objectives: 60 percent is allocated to minority language and 40 percent to second language. The way that works out in each of the bilateral agreements with the provinces will also reflect the specific needs of the province concerned. Some provinces, where there are major post-secondary needs, will invest more in post-secondary education. Their action plans will reflect those needs. The way they meet their commitments will determine our payments because they have to submit a progress report to us to obtain those payments. They'll also be required to communicate with the public to ensure partners have access to the information.

That's essentially how it will work. There are general basic principles, but the details are negotiated based on the specific needs of each jurisdiction.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I find it hard to understand that there's been no increase under the Canada-community agreements since 1994, and that's what the communities have been complaining about since 1994. If there were, I'd like to know which ones because that was their argument in requesting \$18 million. How can it be difficult to convince the government to recognize all our official language minority communities? Perhaps you may not like the example I'm going to give you, but New Brunswick received \$120,000 for Canada Day, Ontario received \$700,000 and Quebec \$5 million, for one day, a \$5 million day, at the time when all the communities in Canada are trying to get money in order to operate. The well-being of the community of official language minorities is at stake, and you can't justify that to Cabinet.

Hon. Liza Frulla: As regards Canada Day, I'm going to answer you immediately. I readjusted the budget, and the provinces, including New Brunswick, will receive much more money this year, first of all.

• (0945)

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's about time!

Hon. Liza Frulla: Give me the time; I just got here.

Second, for the communities, there was an increase of approximately \$4 million in 1999-2000. Right now, we're talking about a 10 percent increase, which would represent \$3.5 million this year. We're talking about that.

We're talking about a significant increase. We have to be able to tell the communities, after conducting the evaluation... We don't do the community evaluation ourselves; they have to do it as well. I've gone to New Brunswick quite often, to Manitoba as well, and people who are very involved in those communities tell us that some associations, some groups deserve to be funded, and others less so, because times are changing. Some groups should also work together, or else merge. It's not up to us to do that; it's up to the communities to take that in hand. We'll present them with our evaluation and ask them what they think of it.

Second...

The Chair: I must interrupt you in order to respect each person's time.

Hon. Liza Frulla: All right, but I'll get back to this.

The Chair: Thank you. We will continue with Mr. D'Amours.

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

First of all, Ms. Frulla, I want to congratulate you. You've done what you said you would do, and the signing of the education agreement is proof of that. That's very important.

In my riding, there are two community colleges and the campus of the University of Moncton. If we want to move forward, it's important to help our various organizations providing instruction by giving them the necessary tools. I want to congratulate you on that this morning because it's extremely important for us, not only for New Brunswick, but for all the provinces and territories of our big, beautiful country.

Having said that, I'd like to talk about community radio stations. We've previously talked about community radio stations and their situation in our country, a particular situation, which is precarious in certain cases. Community radio stations are going through relatively hard times. We're talking about community radio stations, but, in fact, when you look at all our minority media, you see that the cultural aspect is very important. Could you talk to us about that? Will some aspects of this action plan help our communities that depend on the media, which are extremely important? Do you have any resources in view to help us in the quite near future?

Hon. Liza Frulla: We're currently investing more than a million dollars in minority media development. The minority media have suffered a great deal from all these discussions about the present situation: I'm talking about the sponsorships themselves and the attention paid to those events. I don't need to tell you that the program has been abolished.

People often throw the baby out with the bath water because, contrary to all the figures given out, out of a \$300 million program at the time, \$200 million went to the communities. Events were announced. Very often, the community media, among others, and the local media benefited from this activity. Not any more. Obviously, it's a hard blow for both events across Canada and for the various media. I'm deeply saddened by that.

That said, a certain amount is set aside under the action plan to help and compensate the community media. That's being done right now. We're currently analyzing the situation together, and we're looking at all the damage. We have money to help the radio stations that are having more trouble.

We obviously have to adapt to the situation and to all the consequences we hadn't anticipated and planned for at the outset. So we'll have to help them financially. In some regions, community radio isn't community radio; it's the radio of the community. It's often the only medium that can maintain a dialogue with its community. We're definitely going to help it.

• (0950)

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: You're entirely right, Madam Minister, in saying that it's the medium of the community. In some communities, it's the only radio station. We have our private radio stations. They also have needs and received some assistance, at least some benefits, from the various programs in existence at the time. Can we expect to receive information in the next few months that will enable us to assist the radio stations in our communities in order to prevent them from winding up in a delicate situation? They're already in a precarious situation. The community radio stations, those that are there for their communities, are mainly located in the rural regions. Can we hope that, in the next few weeks or months, they'll be provided with the necessary help to make it through this crisis?

Hon. Liza Frulla: The answer is yes, and I'm going to let Hubert Lussier give you the details. Eileen Sarkar will handle the negotiations based on the Protocol of Agreement with the provinces. The idea is to complete the bilateral negotiations on education so that the Protocol can be genuinely adapted to the needs of the province.

New Brunswick won't be treated in the same way as Saskatchewan. Ontario is very different from the others. We agreed on that with the ministers of Education. Hubert Lussier will handle the situation of the community radio stations, among other things.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: Thank you, Madam Minister.

We've given certain radio stations emergency assistance in recent weeks. Some were in a very difficult situation. One of them is in Ontario, the other in New Brunswick. I don't think I'm telling you anything new on that point.

Over the longer term, the challenge is to work with the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada to develop models that we

hope will be applicable in particular to small radio stations operating in the toughest markets. They're not necessarily competing with other private French-language radio stations, but their market is very narrow.

The flexibility afforded us by the action plan, which is limited, will, in particular, help us develop some things with ARC this year, which will be able to consolidate the foundation of community radio.

In addition, traditional assistance is still available for the equipment of community radio stations when they set up. This is for the set-up and renewal of the physical equipment of those stations. This is the full set of equipment that they have. Obviously, if we had additional resources, we could do more to guarantee them a more solid basis.

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

[*English*]

We'll now go to the second round, and this time it'll be five minutes each.

Monsieur Poilievre.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Thank you for being here today, Ms. Frulla.

The members of the Conservative Party of Canada believe that education is the most important principle in the context of our national challenge of becoming an even more bilingual country. I congratulate you on your efforts to improve our system. I'm pleased to be speaking to you today.

Of the \$751 million provided for in the action plan, \$381 million has been set aside for education. Your 2003-2004 Annual Report states that only \$10 million has been spent, approximately three percent. The provinces and territories expect to receive funds, and the department has spent only approximately three percent of the budget. Without negotiating agreements and protocols, how will the federal government achieve its educational objectives set out in the action plan?

• (0955)

Hon. Liza Frulla: As regards the first part of your question, which concerned what happened last year, I'll ask Hubert Lussier to answer. Then we'll talk about objectives.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: The action plan funds are spread over five years, but they aren't spread evenly. Funding will be allocated in increasing amounts, with the smallest investment in the first year and the largest in the fifth. That's what explains the modest amount — you mentioned it — of investment for 2004-2004, which was the first investment year.

That's understandable for the reasons you yourself referred to. The cash investment was announced in March. It couldn't be expected that very large amounts would be given to the provinces — amounts they would have wanted to use properly — without giving them significant advance notice.

Hon. Liza Frulla: The first year was obviously modest, as Mr. Lussier said. First, we were thinking about the introduction. In the second year, there were bilateral agreements. We had to agree with the provinces. Last year, there was an adjustment, from what I was told, because there was new funding. So we had to agree on how to do things. We reached an agreement for 2004-2005 only. That's been done. The provinces have until June 30. They've done cash management, and they're going to spend it.

For the current years,

[English]

they have their four years. We were asked to negotiate three, but we thought, really, with the provinces, four was much better.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Thank you.

Could you explain to us why Canadian Heritage can never sign the protocols with the Council of Ministers of Education or the bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories on time? The agreements of 1993 and 1998 and those of 1998 and 2003 were signed late, and those of 2003 and 2008 are late as well. Why?

Hon. Liza Frulla: I can't really talk about 1993 and 1998. However, I can tell you that it's a bit like when you negotiate a collective agreement. The more partners there are, the more intense the negotiations are, as I said earlier. In addition, there are new funds in these cases. It should be borne in mind that the 1993 and 1998 agreements still apply. There's no problem with the funds that were there at the time; however, since the action plan has new funds, we had to sign a new agreement rather than extend the one we previously had. Of course, in this kind of situation, you sit down at the table with the provinces and territories. In addition, the needs are very different now.

The province of New Brunswick argued that it was the only bilingual province in Canada, which is an entirely accurate argument. You definitely have to adjust to the needs in New Brunswick in a bilateral context. You can't deal with that province in the same way as Saskatchewan, for example.

In Quebec, the minority language is English. That's a different case. As a result of all those differences, you have to negotiate. Some want more, others want less, and that's normal. The parties have to agree amongst themselves. That's why we've signed a four-year rather than a three-year agreement, as was planned.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Poilievre.

We'll continue with Mr. Godbout.

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): It's my turn to congratulate you, Madam Minister.

We're all obviously looking forward to these agreements being signed.

●(1000)

Hon. Liza Frulla: We are too.

Mr. Marc Godbout: Having sat on the Council of Ministers of Education, that is on the other side of the fence, I can tell you that it's

a pretty tough customer when it comes to negotiating. Obviously, signing a four-year agreement is a very good thing.

There's an accountability framework, of course, and they're going to submit reports to you. However, what still concerns me — and this was referred to earlier — is called the black hole, a phenomenon that occurs in the provincial context. Funds come from the federal government through transfer payments, and we're never sure where they go or where they should go.

Do you have any hope of establishing slightly more reliable indicators than in the past with the Council of Ministers of Education, so that the communities, school boards and the general public can be more sure that those funds will really go where they should go?

Hon. Liza Frulla: That's why the Protocol was necessary. I'm not going to claim the situation was easy. We were advised to simply negotiate bilaterally and to set the framework aside. But we gave ourselves another chance. I must say that it was my colleagues who advised me to do so. At one point, we were tempted simply to proceed bilaterally, period. My two colleagues convinced me to make another try. The fact is that, in proceeding bilaterally, we negotiate with one province at a time, as a result of which it's not equal. Some provinces have more experience than others. For example, Manitoba and New Brunswick automatically opt for a consultation and accountability mechanism. Other provinces are less used to this kind of situation or have another, different way of operating.

However, if we're drafting the text of a Protocol stating that accountability must be reinforced, that means that there will be two systems: it will be equal across Canada, even if some provinces are a little ahead of others because of their Francophone population. We also have an obligation to consult the community.

Now we're getting ready to start another discussion, and that will focus on Bill S-3. If the bill is passed, it will also reinforce consultation mechanisms, which would then become subject to legal action. All that's being put in place and means that, ultimately, we'll be held more accountable.

Mr. Marc Godbout: Unless I'm mistaken, you've set aside an amount for horizontal programs under the Protocol.

Hon. Liza Frulla: That's correct.

Mr. Marc Godbout: Can you give us a bit of an idea about what might come out of those horizontal programs? I know that the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones has proposed a national strategy. Is it on the projects you intend to examine?

●(1005)

Hon. Liza Frulla: Indeed, we've retained a certain amount, and the partners are in agreement, a certain amount to give us some leeway so that we can act bilaterally or directly, or support certain initiatives that further improve objectives. Those initiatives must obviously improve the objectives we've set under the action plan. That's why we've retained that leeway so that we can intervene with the various partners.

Mr. Marc Godbout: You referred to Bill S-3. Mr. Chairman, we'll undoubtedly have an opportunity to see the minister again on that matter because that's a subject in itself.

Thank you for your answers.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godbout.

Mr. André, it's your turn.

Mr. Guy André: I'd like to come back to the OLSP. Unless Mr. Arès, the President of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, deceived us, the \$24.4 million budget has not been increased since 1994. You said there were automatic renewal agreements for the Francophone colleges and universities outside Quebec and that we could anticipate a four percent increase in their budget.

You said you would probably increase the OLSP budget by 10 percent in 2005, but there has been no increase since 1994. Why wouldn't these groups automatically receive a four percent increase per year?

Hon. Liza Frulla: In fact, it's \$28 million. The amount was increased by \$4 million in 1999.

Mr. Guy André: It's \$24.5 million. There was probably a \$3 million increase, which now amounts to \$28 million.

Hon. Liza Frulla: Hubert tells me that the \$24 million is for Francophones only; if you consider all assistance to the minority communities, including Quebec — because it should be excluded — it's \$28 million. That's part of the total assistance to the minority language communities.

Mr. Guy André: That budget has been frozen since 1994. There hasn't been a four percent a year increase. Why?

Hon. Liza Frulla: Currently, we could grant a \$2.5 million to \$3 million increase under the action plan. However, the president says it's not enough. I understand that it's not enough, but it's there.

Now that the education and services questions have been resolved, I've agreed with the communities. I'm trying to reach a bilateral agreement with them which would mean that they would review all the organizations and work with them to make some more efficient, if necessary.

Mr. Guy André: You talked about evaluating their actions. That's done; the process was...

Hon. Liza Frulla: It's being done.

Second, I agreed with the communities to prepare a brief based on a policy to ensure a longer-term increase mechanism. But two months before the budget, we can't suddenly say that \$18 million would be nice. It's impossible for us to defend that. We have to sit down together.

Mr. Guy André: You're saying it's being done. We talked about evaluation a few months ago. What does that mean?

Hon. Liza Frulla: It means that it has to be accepted by both sides.

Mr. Guy André: So there are still no established criteria or any agreement on the evaluation process.

Hon. Liza Frulla: Yes, there is, since we've had meetings. They've conducted consultations. Now we're sitting down together

and asking each other a number of questions. What are the resources? Where are we most active? What are the organizations and mechanisms — we won't tell them what to do — that they still support? What's the necessary increase, not only for next year, but for the years to come?

A lot of projects are under way and everything is important, but we really had to reach agreements on education.

Mr. Guy André: However, Ms. Frulla, you must admit that those communities have been abandoned. You're giving them a 10 percent increase in 2005, whereas the funds they receive have been frozen since 1994. I believe that's a kind of abandonment. Perhaps they weren't one of the priorities.

Hon. Liza Frulla: You have to beware. We're talking about support for the minority language. That's English in Quebec and French elsewhere. However, all actions count as well. You can't just work in isolation.

The action plan has been added, and that means a lot of money, \$1 billion. There's been money from dedicated funding. There are specific components, including the CTF and the CBC. A number of support measures have been taken in recent years.

Now let's go back to our isolation and to the communities. I've made a commitment to inviting the communities to sit down and

• (1010)

[English]

we will build a case.

[Translation]

I'm prepared to submit this matter to the Minister of Finance as soon as possible and to address it based on next year's budget. Until then, we'll add the 10 percent that comes out of our funds.

The Chair: We'll continue with you, Mr. Godin.

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

Madam Minister, you say we can't request changes two months before a budget. So I'm going to point out that the communities have been talking about this lack of funding for more than a year in the context of the committees.

Hon. Liza Frulla: That's a fact.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Madam Minister, if it's a fact, then don't tell me there's a problem because we're two months away from the budget. On April 9, a few days ago, *Le Droit* published the following item on the Commissioner of Official Languages:

Testifying before a parliamentary committee the day after the budget was tabled in February, the Commissioner of Official Languages, Dyane Adam, deplored the fact that the budget made no provision for official languages, despite the commitment the government made to official languages in the last Throne Speech. She reminded Minister Frulla of her commitment to sign the Canada-community agreements by the end of March.

These matters were discussed. I find it hard to accept the fact that you come here and tell us not to request money two months before the budget. The Throne Speech stated that funds would be allocated to this. However, the budget makes no provision for them. Something's missing somewhere. I too think that the communities should take charge of themselves. I can guarantee you they're doing that, but they're tired. In the communities, I've met people who work full time and do volunteer work in the evenings. These people work miracles.

The community of Bathurst, New Brunswick, for example, received \$32,000 for its activities, and that was reduced to \$27,000. These people wonder how they're going to make it, when they could barely do it with \$32,000. We're requiring the communities to do everything: the advancement of French, activities and so on. Now they even have to pay these costs instead of the Government of Canada. This is how far things have gone.

Where do the negotiations stand? I'm told to go sell my goods to the Council of Ministers. Don't those ministers have a community? Are our minority communities so hard to sell? I simply won't accept it. What is your government going to do for the minority communities? The agreements aren't signed, summer is coming, and a lot of activities are scheduled. The communities themselves are saying it: they can't go any further. They're using their own funds because they believe in the cause, Madam Minister.

Hon. Liza Frulla: I'm from a minority myself. It isn't in Quebec, but, if you consider America as a whole, you can very well understand.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You always have to fight, Madam Minister.

Hon. Liza Frulla: There's one point that should be added. Money has been given for services and economic development. There's been money, but not everything's related to Canadian Heritage. There's now money for community support in the other departments.

When you talk about Canadian Heritage... There's money that's been given elsewhere. The action plan provides money for services. That money is distributed elsewhere and by other departments. Our department negotiates specifically on the specific needs of the communities.

The problem is this. We all agree there are needs. We all agree there are additional funding needs. You have to put together a solid case for each government, regardless of the person in my position. You have to get there. Is it \$4 million, \$8 million, \$10 million, \$15 million, \$18 million, \$25 million?

•(1015)

Mr. Yvon Godin: We've been talking about this for a year. Madam Minister, you say they can't request money two months before the budget. They've been talking about it for years. We're regressing. The community of Bathurst received \$32,000. Now it's getting \$27,000. Something's missing somewhere.

Hon. Liza Frulla: That's false. You shouldn't say that...

Mr. Yvon Godin: You met the people in Timmins, Ontario. They don't have the tools to work.

Hon. Liza Frulla: I know. I agree.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's so easy to get \$5 million for Canada Day in Quebec. There's nothing left for us.

Hon. Liza Frulla: Canada Day is something else. We're going to have more for that. I hope you'll be happy. That said...

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's one example I'm giving you. Cabinet has no problem with some things. It has problems with other things.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, I must interrupt you in order to respect each person's time. We'll continue with Mr. André.

Mr. Guy André: My turn comes up quickly. I thought I had just spoken.

The Chair: I wanted to disturb you a bit. We'll continue with Mr. Vellacott.

[English]

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Here's just some very quick background, Madam Minister. You know these facts, of course, but there's the \$381.5 million of the \$751 million the Government of Canada has spent through your department to invest in the action plan through these education agreements. On page 30 of the 2003-04 annual report of the official languages branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage, it says only 2.75% of that \$381.5 million—in other words, \$10.5 million roughly—has been spent by the department to date. I was quite taken aback to read that very small percentage, 2.75%, of that \$381.5 million.

So with that as background, you can respond to that, but some have suggested this. Would you be open to the next evaluation of the OLEP's overall performance being conducted by the Office of the Auditor General in order to identify—you know there are obvious weaknesses in the program—those weaknesses in the program's delivery?

Hon. Liza Frulla: First of all, the question has been answered. When they proposed the action plan, the first year it was *déjà entamés*, and the money is progressive. For the first year of the whole action plan you had the 3.5%, and then year after year the percentage gets bigger and bigger. It's progressive and it was planned that way to start off with. That's one.

Two, as far as looking at our way of doing things is concerned, the Auditor General can always come and look at our books. They do it for Canadian Heritage, they did it in this case, and they're doing it for all of our programs, so we don't have any problem with that.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Do you think the next evaluation could or should be done by the Auditor General's office?

Hon. Liza Frulla: Well, an evaluation if need be, but it's very important to see that within...this was a long-term plan, *le plan d'action*, and within this long-term plan there was a way of having the money flow. The first year it was a very small sum and the second year a little bigger, and now that we have the four-year entente for education that's specific for every province, we are going to be on target. If anybody wants to evaluate, they can evaluate; we're very open.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Okay. Some have suggested, because there are obvious weaknesses—flaws in the program—that it might be a very good thing to have her office in to do the....

Others have even gone so far as to suggest that maybe the administration of the official languages in education program be assigned to a federal department other than Canadian Heritage, because they're not particularly of the view that Heritage is getting the job done here.

Would you agree to that?

Hon. Liza Frulla: Well, Heritage has been doing it for 30 years. Heritage is responsible for the whole.... "Heritage" doesn't really describe exactly what we're doing—

• (1020)

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: You don't think it should be done by somebody else?

Hon. Liza Frulla: Heritage is really responsible for culture within Canada, and we also have multiculturalism within the Heritage portfolio.

Saying that the job has not been done.... It's the first time we've had to negotiate 28 ententes and we have to negotiate with all our partners and provinces, so it doesn't go as fast—and I understand that—as the milieu would like, in certain cases. But let's face it, this is the way the government has to work.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: So you support this, doing such a small amount, 2.75%, at this juncture? I understand it's growing. I'm just asking if that model, that particular method and system of doing it, is maybe open to question.

Hon. Liza Frulla: You'll notice that it's in every program. You will notice, if it is in anything—official languages or whatever—that the first year you implement any program, anywhere in the government, it starts off slower. Knowing that, we can't put money there knowing that it will not be spent, because there is the implementation process to be thought of.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: But it doesn't need to be that way. Certainly I would agree, budget-wise right now, that the Liberal government is back-ending a lot of programs, with its dribs of money coming out initially, and then 10 years down the road, when who knows who the government is at that point, that's when the dollars are coming. It's easy to do that, make little dribs and drabs of commitment early on, and then later, when who knows whether you're in government at that point, that's when the dollars come.

Is this necessarily the way to do it, because somebody is doing it at this present point that way?

Hon. Liza Frulla: Well, I'll tell you, when you have to negotiate.... When I was at a provincial level, the government was a Conservative government and the Conservatives did exactly the same thing.

We have to understand that if you have an agreement based on five years—the plan of action, as far as the objective goes, is over 10 years—if you're responsible, and you do have—

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: This is just to 2007.

Hon. Liza Frulla: Yes, yes, but not this one. For us, it's going to go for four years, but this is how it's done, because then—

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Mr. André, this time it's really your turn.

Mr. Guy André: Madam Minister, let's go back to the OLSP budget. In your last meeting here, you talked about evaluation criteria and a minimum budget of \$32 million or \$33 million that you granted to the OLSP.

Hon. Liza Frulla: Twenty-eight million dollars.

Mr. Guy André: You're referring to the amount?

Hon. Liza Frulla: Yes. In addition to those under the agreements, other amounts are allocated, to the FCFA and to the community radio stations, for example.

• (1025)

Mr. Guy André: So the OLSP budget is \$33 million?

Hon. Liza Frulla: Roughly.

Is that correct? Thirty-three million dollars.

Mr. Guy André: All right. That's fine. I have no other questions on the subject.

In another line of thinking, you referred to cultural festivities. That's also of great concern to me. You're familiar with the question because you're from Quebec. The program that funded certain activities, certain cultural festivities, has now been cut, and there's no more funding because of the sponsorship affair.

I find it unfortunate that the public should pay for actions that were taken because that really puts a number of activities in doubt. I come from a rural community where there are a lot of small activities, and this program was the economic support of a number of cultural festivities.

Are you planning a program, a way of funding these festivities in the short or medium term? Pressure is being put on. People are asking the federal government to reinvest in those activities. It could be a program managed by the SADC, for example, or by other local structures. Money isn't lacking in the federal government, in any case.

Hon. Liza Frulla: No provision is made for that in view of the present climate. That's another subject, but the Department of Canadian Heritage has a program called Arts Presentation Canada. It subsidizes cultural and professional activities. If requests are made for cultural and professional projects, people can get involved in that. There's also an agency called EDC, Economic Development Canada, which can lend a hand in international tourism events.

There's definitely a loss as a result of all these activities, not only in Quebec, but across Canada. For the moment, there's no response to our requests for assistance. For the moment. For the moment! We can't say the situation won't change, but, for the moment, that's unfortunately the way things are.

Mr. Guy André: It's because of the sponsorship affair. It seems that our communities are suffering the consequences of that. The federal government should find a way to set up a program and to let our communities know it's going to continue supporting them. I can tell they're protesting loudly.

Hon. Liza Frulla: We support them. I think they're receiving assistance for some of their activities. In other cases, what can I say? The program no longer exists. Once again, I find it unfortunate that everything's been bundled together and that the program no longer exists. The baby's been thrown out with the bath water.

Mr. Guy André: All right, that's fine.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. André. We'll continue with Mr. Simard.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to welcome our guests. Madam Minister, I'd like to congratulate you as well. In visiting the communities, you saw it was important to sign agreements on education. It was urgent. I congratulate you on the work you've done.

Mr. Nouvet, who is from the health field recently appeared before this committee. We can use health as an example. Things are working very well in that field. Of the \$119 million provided for under the agreement, \$108 million has already been committed. Mr. Nouvet told us this success was the result, among other things, of the fact that the communities had taken an active part in the process from the outset.

I'd like to know whether you've considered using that as a model. When a system works well, there may be some benefit in drawing on it. I'd like to know whether you've considered the possibility of applying that model to education and, if so, in what terms.

Hon. Liza Frulla: We still come back to the same thing. The communities have obviously been involved in this kind of case. I come back to my initial premise, and I repeat that the communities must be supported so that they can act as watchdogs for our action plans. You don't need to convince me. To date, I've kept the promises I've made. Nevertheless, I won't make any specific promises here if I can't keep them. I'm sorry, but that's how I've operated throughout my life.

I said the community should be supported so that there's follow-up and so they can play their role. As I say, we're now going to set up a file on a more ongoing basis so that it's possible to plan rather than operate one year at a time, a situation I detest. That's the objective. I won't stop saying it, but I want it to be very clear.

That said, the agreements on services are something new. Things are going very well with regard to health services, but there's also economic development. That's new as well. It is important that other departments feel really responsible for supporting Canada's official languages and that they understand that that support is not provided solely by Canadian Heritage. Giving them specific responsibilities is the only way to ensure that they will participate fully in this initiative to support the official languages.

Hon. Raymond Simard: I'm going to continue in the same vein. Some witnesses from the post-secondary education field and the school boards said they wanted to ensure that funding would be targeted. Reference was made to the black hole. I know my colleague Mr. Godbout has spoken about that as well. That was definitely a subject of concern.

A follow-up is done every three months in the health field. So it's monitored very closely. I'd like to know whether funding is targeted

under the Protocol of Agreement so as to achieve the objectives of the action plan. I'd also like to know how often follow-ups are conducted.

Hon. Liza Frulla: Once you have the Protocol of Agreement, reporting should be done every year. The review, however, is conducted every two years. It's a review not of the Protocol — the Protocol, it's also the percentages — but a review of all actions. We want to know whether, together, we've achieved the objectives we set for ourselves. We also want to know whether the ultimate objective, which is that 80 percent of rightsholders can have access to educational institutions, has been achieved. So there's reporting every year and a review every two years.

There are also the bilateral agreements with the various provinces to adapt the Protocol to their needs. The education issue is negotiated at this stage because Manitoba is different from New Brunswick, which in turn is different from the others. That's where that will be negotiated.

I have to tell you something because there was a discussion on the subject. There's a very obvious, very specific will in the provinces to be serious about applying these services. It must nevertheless be known that the provinces are participating a lot... They're giving a lot.

• (1030)

The Chair: Thank you.

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

The Chair: There will be a second round before we continue in camera. Mr. Godin, over to you.

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

Madam Minister, my colleague Mr. André referred earlier to the sponsorships and said that that might have affected the agreements. Did I understand correctly?

Hon. Liza Frulla: No, that didn't affect the agreements. The sponsorships involved support for activities across Canada, in all regions. That could be tourist or economic activities.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Was the Journée de la fête nationale des Acadiens et des Acadiennes, August 15, concerned? You're all welcome to come.

Hon. Liza Frulla: That's a good example. Canadian Heritage is partly responsible for that, in the context of Arts Presentation Canada. There's another part that doesn't apply to the program.

Mr. Yvon Godin: All right. I understand. Let's get back to the question of the agreement. It was said that the agreement has a budget of \$18 million and that the minority communities across Canada are requesting... No money was allocated to the agreement in the budget. Is the government saying we should wait until next year, that it's over for this year, that we should forget it? If you analyze the budget, you see there's a \$4.2 billion corporate tax cut, but no one's troubled about that. Here we're talking about \$18 million for the Francophone communities. Does that mean the government doesn't have that money for the minority communities in Canada and that we should forget about it until the next budget? Otherwise, when will the communities be able to have an agreement?

Hon. Liza Frulla: First, I'm going to be very clear. A \$2.5 to \$3 million increase may be available in the present budget. That's a genuine possibility for this year, for 2005-2006. The money is there and the possibility is real. The money is available.

Second, there's also this desire to sit down at the table with the present chair or with the new chair who will be in place in June. First, there has to be the transition, and then you have to get to know the new chair's vision. We have to respect that. There's this will on both sides to sit down and draft a brief.

If you're telling me we've given the corporations a tax cut of a few billion dollars, I'll answer that we allocated \$1 billion to agriculture last week. We can give you lots of examples.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, but they're still losing their shirts.

Hon. Liza Frulla: One billion dollars for agriculture is good. That's in addition to the other amounts for agriculture.

I agree. The need was there. It was identified and the action measures were entirely precise. That's what we're doing now with the communities.

I want to tell you we first have to draft this brief. Apart from that, it's not money...

Mr. Yvon Godin: My question, Mr. Chairman, is this: must we wait for the next budget? Is there a chance we'll have a bigger

increase than \$2.5 of \$3 million? Is that possible before the next budget?

• (1035)

Hon. Liza Frulla: I'm obliged to answer that that's the responsibility of the Minister of Finance. We don't encroach on the areas of others. Consequently, I'm obliged to answer that \$2.5 to \$3 million is available this year. We're going to prepare a file in anticipation of the next budget. If I can present it earlier, so much the better, but for the moment we anticipate that it will be for the next budget.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Will we be given the excuse that there's only two months' notice?

Hon. Liza Frulla: That doesn't mean it won't necessarily be the step that should be taken, but I'm obliged to give you that answer.

The Chair: Madam Minister, Ms. Sarkar and Mr. Lussier, thank you very much for coming.

Let's take a two-minute break, but only two minutes, because we then have to discuss a number of matters concerning the committee's business.

[Proceedings continue in camera.]

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

**Also available on the Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le réseau électronique « Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire » à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.