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Mr. Pablo Rodriguez

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• (0905)

[Translation]

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

We are here this morning to continue our work on the Action Plan for Official Languages. Before we go any further, I would like to welcome Mr. Bergeron, who is replacing Mr. Desrochers. Welcome to the committee, Mr. Bergeron.

As you may have noticed, our meeting is divided into two parts. The first deals specifically with the Action plan on official languages, as I was mentioning. The second will be an in-camera session where the committee will discuss travel, if it is to take place, which will most likely not happen. We will also deal with Mr. Godin's motion, which was tabled at our last meeting but not debated. We will also briefly discuss the report dealing with bilingualism in the public service.

I will stop there. I would like to welcome our witnesses. Welcome to the committee, Ms. Hamelin, Mr. Saucier and Ms. Burton. If you wish, you may begin with an introduction. Following that, we will move to a period of discussion and exchanges with members of the committee.

Mr. Michael Saucier (Director General, Labour Market and Official Language Minority Communities, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

I'd like to introduce my colleagues, Lenore Burton, who is director general of learning and literacy,

[Translation]

and Michelle Hamelin, director, Official Language Minority Communities Secretariat.

Thank you for the invitation to appear before the Standing Committee on Official Languages. On behalf of the Deputy Minister at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, I am pleased to report on our progress at the mid-way point of the five-year Action Plan on Official Languages.

[English]

Our mandate is based on section 41 of the Official Languages Act, in particular part VII, which deals with enhancing the vitality of English and French linguistic minorities in Canadian society.

How do we accomplish this mandate? We do it in two ways: by consulting with the official language minority communities and by resourcefully using the reach of our programs.

[Translation]

Two national committees were created representing the official language minority communities—the CNDÉE, or Le Comité national de développement économique et d'employabilité, and the National Human Resources Development Committee for the English Linguistic Minority (in Quebec).

These joint committees, representing the federal government and the official language minority communities from across Canada, (RDÉE Canada and the Community Table) play an important role in encouraging human resources and economic development through community capacity building. They also foster cooperation among all the partners, whether they are federal, provincial, territorial, municipal or at the community level.

[English]

When the action plan for official languages was launched in 2003, HRSD saw it as a way to breathe new life into our linguistic duality. This complements our work at HRSD in the sense that we often represent, through our programs and services, the face of the federal government in communities across Canada.

The action plan deals with community development and, among other things, calls for greater access to the economic development tools inherent in the knowledge economy. One initiative in which HRSD can take pride in is our work with the official language minority communities.

[Translation]

Both the Commissioner of Official Languages and Canadian Heritage have recognized this initiative as “a model that needs to be replicated.”

After consultations with the official language minority communities, a new Enabling Fund of \$12 million annually for three years was announced March 23 by the honourable Claudette Bradshaw, the Minister of State (Human Resources Development) and the Honourable Mauril Bélanger, the Minister responsible for Official Languages and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

As the Minister of State said at the time: “This Fund gives evidence of the Government of Canada's continued commitment to strengthen the linguistic duality that is at the heart of our country's identity.”

● (0910)

[English]

Having the Privy Council Office co-chair the joint national committees will ensure increased horizontality of the enabling fund. Along with other key federal departments, a horizontal results-based management and accountability framework was developed to focus on results, impacts, and effects of programs. The enabling fund is the first and only federal program directly linked to PCO's horizontal results-based management accountability framework, as it relates to the action plan for official languages.

HRSD has signed 14 contribution agreements to communities' organizations across Canada, for a total amount of about \$12 million in fiscal year 2005-06. This has ensured the continuity of funding and services to the communities so important to their development.

[Translation]

At the same time, the implementation of this new program brings new assurance of stability to our community partners.

The Secretariat of Official Language Minority Communities at HRSD, which was established with a mandate to work with francophone communities outside Quebec and the anglophone community in Quebec as target audiences, will manage the Enabling Fund contribution agreements with these communities.

The Enabling Fund will be reviewed in 2008 during the government-wide evaluation of the Action Plan for Official Languages.

[English]

HRSD also supports the action plan on official languages in other ways, most notably through its literacy programs and the youth employment strategy.

About \$7.4 million was provided over five years to strengthen family literacy in official language minority communities. So far, all the moneys allocated each year for projects within the scope of family literacy have been spent. To date, the national literacy secretariat has spent some \$3 million, including program and operating costs, for family literacy initiatives that support the action plan. Some of these projects will continue until 2008, and it is expected that all funds budgeted for the next three years will be fully spent.

[Translation]

Since the implementation of the Action Plan for Official Languages, the Youth Employment Strategy has assisted 1,429 official language minority youth in gaining career-related work experience. These work experience for youth far exceed the original objective of 650.

Although no additional funding was provided for the National Job Bank, the department undertook several actions to improve service in both official languages—thereby living up to a commitment made by HRSD.

Through the integration of dictionaries, NOC-specific lexicons, pre-translated checklists and the development of translation memory,

the automated translation of ongoing information is advancing rapidly.

Our department also participates on Citizenship and Immigration Canada's steering committee to better integrate francophone immigrants into the labour market. Since 2003, HRSD has been working with government, community and private stakeholders to reduce the systemic barriers facing French-speaking immigrants in accessing the labour market.

[English]

In conclusion, as you may have observed in the 2003-04 status report we have sent to the committee, we are working on many fronts to live up to the spirit and commitments of the action plan on official languages and part VII of the Official Languages Act. In particular, we are excited about the prospect of working over the next three years with official language minority communities that are truly benefiting from our longer-term vision.

[Translation]

We would much appreciate receiving recommendations from members of the Standing Committee on Ideas and Strategies to advance the vitality of official language minority communities.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Saucier. That was brief and to the point.

[Translation]

I think that it is the first time that a witness has finished his presentation within the specified time. Thank you.

We will start the first round with Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to our witnesses for appearing here today.

Your total budget to improve the situation of minority communities, if I understand correctly, is approximately \$3 billion per year.

● (0915)

Mr. Michael Saucier: The budget is \$12 million per year which gives us \$36 million over three years. This is specifically to assist minority communities through the Enabling Fund.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Ontario receives \$15.5 million out of the \$36 million.

Mr. Michael Saucier: The Ontario RDÉE is allocated approximately \$2.1 million out of a total amount of \$12 million.

[English]

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Ontario is supposed to receive \$15.5 million, according to the briefing notes. Is that right?

Mr. Marion Ménard (Committee Researcher): It was in the report of HRSDC.

[Translation]

Mr. Michael Saucier: I understood the question, Mr. Lauzon. As far as the Enabling Fund is concerned, we are discussing an allocation of \$2.1 million. In the report we have submitted to you, we are referring to spending from previous years, which covers programs that are not included in the Enabling Fund, which at the time was called the support fund, and also internal departmental programs.

[English]

Mr. Guy Lauzon: The briefing note here says that the Ontario region set up projects totalling \$15.5 million in order to promote the vitality of the Franco-Ontarian community. As you know, in my community of Cornwall, for example, about one-third of the population is francophone.

First of all, approximately how much would go there? I'm sure you don't have the specific numbers, but what exactly will our share of that \$15.5 million do for our francophone minority community? That's what I'd really like to know.

Mr. Michael Saucier: In the report we provided, entitled "2003-2004 Status Report for the implementation of section 41 of the Official Languages Act", there are details of numerous projects that were undertaken under section 41 of the Official Languages Act. It gives the office that was responsible for the program, a short description of each of the initiatives, the dollar values, and the number of clients that were helped as a result of this.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: There's something I'm having a hard time understanding, Mr. Saucier. I'm not aware of any program targeted at the minority community in my riding. Are there some? Is it specifically for minority communities?

Mr. Michael Saucier: The enabling fund, or the support fund that is a precursor to the enabling fund, was specific to minority communities, and that's the \$12 million I referenced. Those are funds that are provided to—

Mr. Guy Lauzon: But there are projects totalling \$5.5 million in the province of Ontario geared to projects for minority communities. Are they targeted strictly for minority communities? It would seem that with a third of my population being involved in a minority community, they should have a third of the funding, you know, *grosso motto*.

As I said, I'm not aware of any HRSDC funding that is targeted to the francophone community. Now, I might be wrong, but I'm just not aware of any.

Mr. Michael Saucier: Your point is well taken. Our funds are allocated to help the population in a particular community, so they would help minority communities on either the anglophone or the francophone side. The programs we have that are specifically targeted to minority communities are under the enabling fund, or the support fund part of that. So the majority of our programming—

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Is this information wrong, do you think?

• (0920)

Mr. Michael Saucier: No, it's not.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: When I was with HRSDC, we didn't discriminate whether the person belonged to the minority community or not; we just gave the project, and by happenstance it might have

worked out. But this seems to indicate this is specifically to promote projects in the minority community.

Mr. Michael Saucier: I guess there are two points I should make here. One is that the support fund—now the enabling fund—is specifically targeted to minority language communities across the country. The report you're referring to here is on projects that happen to support the minority communities. It's a result of regular programming and budgeting that happened, as you referenced—

Mr. Guy Lauzon: It could be that in my community this money is going to the anglophone workers rather than the francophone workers, and we wouldn't know that.

Mr. Michael Saucier: This particular report reflects moneys that were spent in support of minority francophone communities in Ontario.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Are you saying there are some projects that are specifically dedicated to the minority community in my riding?

Mr. Michael Saucier: What we reported on are activities that happen to support francophone minority communities in Ontario, and that's what this report reflects.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: But you can't identify them.

Mr. Michael Saucier: Yes, they're in this report.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

I would encourage you to send us a more detailed breakdown of the distribution of funds.

Mr. Michael Saucier: Mr. Chairman, there is a list in the report. However, if you require more information, we could provide it for you.

The Chair: These reports were sent last night. We will receive them today. You will have the details today, Mr. Lauzon. Merci, monsieur Lauzon.

We will continue with Mr. André.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Good morning, Mr. Saucier.

In 1999, the Department of Human Resources Development created the Official Languages Minority Community Support Fund to promote economic development in these communities. Two committees were put in charge of managing the funds. The National Committee for Canadian Francophonie Human Resource Development, now called the National Committee for Economic Development and Employability, and the National Human Resources Development Committee for the English Linguistic Minority Community. These committees have a mandate to stimulate economic initiatives in the communities and to challenge the participating departments to become involved.

But in February 2004, the new Department of Human Resources and Skills Development announced its intention to review the mandate and objectives of the fund. They were suspending the allocation of funds for an indeterminate period. The result? Several development projects were suspended while they awaited new funding.

Faced with the numerous criticisms of the community stakeholders in these areas, the department set up a transitional fund covering the period up to March 31 of this year.

Why did the department suspend the allocation of funds in February 2004? What was the justification for this? What is the department's current thinking regarding the support fund for economic development? Is the government challenging the relevance of the fund?

Mr. Michael Saucier: Thank you for your question.

We held consultations with minority francophone and minority anglophone communities. While awaiting the conclusion of these consultations, we decided to set aside developing a new program before all discussions and analyses were completed.

On April 1st 2005, the new Enabling Fund was established permanently over a period of three years. For one year, during the 2004-2005 fiscal year, we continue to provide funds to promoters and organizations that received money in the past. We continued to support them, that is contributions were continuing to be made; however, it became necessary to renew these agreements to make sure the program would be ongoing until the end of the 2004-2005 fiscal year. Nonetheless, since last month, we have entered into a new program with 14 promoters for contributions over three years.

● (0925)

Mr. Guy André: So this fund will be ongoing.

Mr. Michael Saucier: Yes, exactly.

Mr. Guy André: I have another question. Currently, how do you evaluate the efficiency of your programs for francophones living in a minority setting? What evaluation process do you apply to make sure these programs truly meet the needs of those concerned?

Mr. Michael Saucier: That is an excellent question. It is a considerable challenge.

In my opening remarks, I said that there would be an evaluation for the Action Plan on Official Languages in 2008. The Enabling Fund will be subject to a separate evaluation, stemming from the program. From now until 2008, it is important that we develop an evaluation framework to understand how we confront these challenges.

In the meantime, the program has established goals to make sure that partnerships are being developed in the communities, that we are meeting the communities' priorities as set out in the yearly plans, and that money earmarked for each community is spent according to the goals identified.

In 2008, there will be an evaluation of this fund. At that time, we will have an answer as to the effectiveness of this Fund.

Mr. Guy André: If I understand correctly, you are currently unable to tell us what percentage of this Fund is actually allocated to those in need.

Mr. Michael Saucier: Firstly, I must say that this Fund was only implemented one month ago. We drew lessons from previous programs. For this reason, the current Fund is slightly different from the support fund that we had previously.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. André.

[English]

The clerk informs me that the reports arrived at 8:30 this morning in his office. So he'll be distributing them after the meeting.

[Translation]

Mr. Godin.

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

I just want to say that I find it unfortunate, if not completely unacceptable, that this report comes to us right after our meeting with the department. We knew ahead of time what was on the agenda. I would have liked to have the report made available before this meeting: we would have been able to study the findings and endorse them. I deplore this situation.

Thank you for appearing before the committee. Funds are allocated, agreements are concluded, but can you give us an example of what constitutes a regional program. What is its objective? What is it comprised of and is there a guarantee of a follow-up?

Mr. Michael Saucier: Mr. Godin, I could answer your question in two ways. Regarding the Enabling Fund currently being implemented, we concluded a contribution agreement with the RDEE Canada for New Brunswick. This organization is responsible for ensuring that the needs of the communities in the province are specified and that francophones in New Brunswick are represented. I don't know if you had the opportunity to see the 2004-2005 RDEE Canada annual report, tabled in March of this year. In it, details are provided on activities that took place over the year in New Brunswick with respect to programs for young people, the economy, partnerships, and goals of the action plan for New Brunswick. The report also presents an overview of the years to come.

The second aspect deals with programs that the department has set up with a view of helping young people, aboriginals, and the unemployed. In New Brunswick, that is part and parcel of an agreement that we have just signed with that province. New Brunswick is responsible for programs focused on the labour market. For its part, our department continues to assume responsibility for assistance programs targeted to young people and to aboriginals.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I already asked the department questions on that topic during previous meetings. I'd like to know, when you talk about the labour program, are you talking about phase 2 of employment insurance?

Mr. Michael Saucier: I'm talking about programs that were transferred to New Brunswick.

● (0930)

Mr. Yvon Godin: I will give you an example. New Brunswick received \$93 million in 2004-2005, whereas Quebec obtained, I believe somewhere around \$800 million. One must consider the population of each province. In Quebec, there are 7 million people. I'm not questioning this fact. However, even when we call for a follow-up, one is not given: funds are just handed over.

In the past, we had a literacy program, and I was quite happy about it. It targeted people who had no more than a grade 6 or 7 level of education. These people were made to believe that it was high time for them to take themselves in hand, that training and education would be provided to them, allowing them to complete their high school studies so that they could go on to a college or university. However, from one day to the next, it was decided that these people were no longer eligible, whereas they had already begun their classes. They were made aware of the objectives, which took time. All of this occurred, classes were held, but the 93 million-dollar phase 2 employment insurance program was interrupted under the pretext that there were too many participants. A reduction in the number of participants eligible was ordered and from that point on the program was only open to those with a grade 10 level of education or higher.

All of the people we had made aware of that new reality, these people who were really in need, and who had involved themselves in this program were excluded. I will give you another example. In my province there are literacy organizations that employ teachers who have to pay for the buildings' hydro bills. Teachers and students alike—and I'll tell you what's going on—have to bring their own toilet paper to school. Obviously, the program is not working. We need something else. These facts were made known to the provincial minister; it is common knowledge.

Mr. Michael Saucier: I would like to ask my colleague, Lenore, to talk to us about literacy in New Brunswick.

[English]

Ms. Lenore Burton (Director General, Learning and Literacy Directorate, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development): I can't speak authoritatively about the money that is spent out of employment insurance part II, but we have a special family literacy program in the national literacy secretariat for the official language minority communities. One of the projects is in New Brunswick, with the Fédération d'alphabétisation du Nouveau-Brunswick. It's worth a little over \$550,000 over the next four years. We put that in place in 2004-05.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: In light of what I've just described to you, do you believe that will improve the situation? Take the Acadian Peninsula, as an example. The average level of education is grade 8. This is due to the fact that many people left school to take summer jobs in fish-processing factories. The employer told that he was going to keep them working for him. Therefore people ended up quitting school. As a result, there is a considerable illiterate population.

But today, these factories are shutting down, these people are waiting, with neither a job nor an adequate education. It's a well-known fact, and the statistics prove it. Then we came up with a program according to which phase 2 would train people, educate them, prepare them for integration into the labour market. We worked hard in the communities and were able to raise awareness among people who, at the ages of 35 or 40, didn't want to return to school. Yet, both the federal and provincial governments abandoned them.

●(0935)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Over to you Mr. D'Amours.

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

Thank you for being here today. I would like to ask you a few questions on how the Youth Employment Strategy operates, among others. I noticed in your written brief and during your opening statement that 1,429 young people from official language minority communities were able to gain some experience in their jobs. You say that that figure exceeds the initial goal of 650 young people.

One has to realize however that 650 young people represent but a drop in the bucket. In fact, the needs are much greater. Personally, I think 1,429 is very little. You set the objective of 650 young people, but 1,429 is not much better if we consider the needs of minorities, both in the anglophone community in Quebec and the francophone community outside of Quebec.

I would like for you to talk to me about how the program operates. To my knowledge, changes were made over the last few years, if not this past year, making it increasingly difficult for smaller communities to access this program. Can you provide us with some details on this subject?

Mr. Michael Saucier: The Youth Employment Strategy was modified last year. It includes three programs: Skills Link, Career Focus, and Summer Work Experience. As in the past, the Youth Employment Strategy seeks to support young people between the ages of 15 and 30. The figures I mentioned reflect the number of young people who had to overcome obstacles in order to make a successful transition into the labour force. It concerns those who already finished their schooling. These young people come from minority communities. They are not the only young people from minority communities that we helped out, but that was the goal we had set. Each year, the Youth Employment Strategy helps more than 50,000 people, the majority of which land summer jobs.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: With respect to Career Focus and Summer Work Experience, there is an increasing number of changes with respect to student project financing, among others. The result is it is no longer evaluated in the same manner. Is it true that the assessment of the Career Focus program is now done in Ottawa, and no longer done in the regions?

Mr. Michael Saucier: At the moment, I cannot tell you how the funds are allocated, but I will be able to provide you with an answer later.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Indeed, I would like for you to answer me later on. In fact, when we talk about official language minority communities, we all know very well that there are not 5 million people living in one same city. We are talking about small communities that have specific needs.

According to what I've heard, there isn't much more at the local level. Who understands better the local situation than those who work directly in the communities? Now it has been centralized. In my opinion, it is increasingly important to look into decentralization. Who would be in a better position to ensure that the goals of minority communities are met if not those who work in the regions?

I would like for you to either confirm or invalidate what I have just said about the transfer of programs from the regions to the centre. If such is the case, I would like you to tell me the procedure to follow to restore power to the regions, in order to make sure that in the future, it is those who know and understand the local setting, and not those who work in the centre and are unfamiliar with our regions, who will ensure that the objectives are achieved. Therefore, I will be expecting you to send me a written document.

Let us now turn to literacy programs. As a result of my experience, I was extremely surprised to learn of the needs with respect to literacy. Since there are now community colleges and university campuses located in the regions, I thought that there was no longer a considerable need. Do you believe that in a not-so-distant future, additional monies will be set aside to help people in our communities learn how to read? Let us see what the current needs are in terms of employment. Let us take for example someone who wants to work as a maintenance worker, or a floor sweeper. A grade 12 education is required.

My father never completed grade 12, for many reasons. At the time, when people got the opportunity to work, they took so in order to meet their family's needs. I don't get the impression that we are supporting people in a good way. We are not helping them find a decent job easily, we are not using today's criteria of the system. When I talk about the system, I'm referring to contemporary society. A grade 12 education or higher is required in order to fill a position, whereas people do not have more than a grade 9, or grade 10 education, sometimes less. Are we doing something to improve this situation? Are we going to invest additional funds to that end over the next few years?

● (0940)

[English]

Ms. Lenore Burton: In the action plan, the national literacy secretariat was given \$7.4 million over five years. The focus of our effort is family literacy in francophone minority communities. Year 2003-04 was a year of development and consultation with francophone literacy groups on the needs and the population bases in the country, so that we understood where the communities were, and then an assessment of the needs—where the big gaps were—so that we could focus our attention on that. In 2004, after consultation with the communities, we began by helping support the capacity of those organizations, then developing linguistically relevant, culturally sensitive material for the family literacy, and training practitioners. In 2004-05 we began to roll out the big projects across the country. We have projects in every province and territory except Nunavut.

The Chair: We're going to open the second round. We start with Mr. Vellacott.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Merci. Thank you.

Thank you for being here this morning.

I have some questions as pertain to my particular area. It's nice to get this report and begin to look through some of that now. I understand that in the province of Saskatchewan there were about 20 projects set up, I think in the last report year, and a contribution of

\$100,600 for summer jobs, which allowed many minority community students to find summer jobs.

As I'm poking through that very quickly, I'm trying to get a sense of whether these are actual jobs provided or whether it is actually giving minority community students resumé skills and this type of thing in terms of finding a job. I'm not really much aware, obviously, and I'm not slighted by that necessarily, but I don't know how they advertise and how the word gets out. I know sometimes with these things, information is at least relayed to the members' offices so we can post it, publish it, and so on, and assist in that way. I would like to understand what the nature of this was. With the 20 projects in Saskatchewan, was the purpose for building a resumé, or were there actual jobs provided to these students?

Mr. Michael Saucier: If the 20 projects that we referred to are the ones under the summer career placement program, these would be jobs that students would have over the summer period in which the department, through the program, provided wage subsidies to employers to hire students. So they are actual jobs. As for whether there's any opportunity in regard to developing resumé and other job search techniques, that would be incidental to the program. The intent is to provide support to employers to hire students in their communities.

● (0945)

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: So it wouldn't be, for example, that they're doing a fence painting contract or an arena refurb project. It's rather finding what jobs are out there and then because they're minority language students, giving them a leg up, if you will, into these situations.

Mr. Michael Saucier: In this particular case, this is in regard to employers who may come from the private sector, the public sector, or the not-for-profit sector who happen to be providing support to students who are in minority language communities. So it could be a number of projects like the ones you have mentioned. It could be working in a particular part of a company's normal operations. So there are many examples. It just happens that these are individuals who met the eligibility criteria that were specific to the program.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Basically, if I can understand this correctly, then, there's obviously a much larger sum of money—a figure of \$100,600—in terms of summer career placements and so on specified to be then for the bigger package, for those who meet a criterion of being a minority language or French language student in this case.

Do you have an idea, in my province or just overall, of what is the distribution of government service and funds between the anglo and franco communities in respect to your particular program? Is it fifty-fifty? Sixty-forty? Twenty-eighty?

Mr. Michael Saucier: I can speak specifically to the enabling fund or, prior to that, the support fund. The split is about 77% of the funds to the francophone minority communities and about 23% for anglophone communities within Quebec.

Now, that's specific to the enabling fund. In regard to our actual expenditures as reflected in the annual report, I don't have the actual totals in front of me, but they can be calculated from the information in the report.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: So in terms of the greater percentage—77%, as you're saying—what is the rationale or the premise for that? Help me out in terms of why we have that kind of skewed difference. Is it because it's harder in terms of the spread of the country? I'm trying to help you on that one.

What would be the reason, the rationale for the big difference, the disparity there?

Mr. Michael Saucier: It's an excellent question, and one we're going to be taking a very close look at during 2005-06. We have a few years of experience based on the old support fund. The experience to date has been on historical ways that we've been dealing with these communities as they have evolved over time, so the manner in which dollars have been allocated has been to a large extent based on the experience and the effectiveness of projects. We want to develop a more precise, objective formula by which we allocate the funds across the country, so this is work we're going to be undertaking this year.

But yes, your point is also well taken in regard to the efficiencies that can be gained in regard to economies of scale and the reach of our programs. For example—and I'm rounding the numbers up here—we have roughly a million anglophone Canadians in minority communities within Quebec and about the same number of francophone individuals outside of Quebec. So it's about a fifty-fifty split. But of that spread of population, a good percentage of the individuals in Quebec are closely found in the city of Montreal, so you have a gathering of individuals who can be served more efficiently through less administration, and therefore a bit of a diversity in regard to the allocation.

That said, we do recognize the need to review and come up with an objective formula.

The Chair: Okay.

We'll now turn to Mr. Godbout.

• (0950)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Good morning to the representatives from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Indeed, you announced that \$36 million would be set aside for what is commonly known as RDEE Canada. I was in Vancouver a few weeks ago. We know that the group working in British Columbia did excellent work with the Canadian Olympic Committee. In fact, I believe that British Columbia was recognized for having been able to make presentations in French.

However, people are telling me that under the new protocol, they are being asked to stay out of economic development, and involve themselves strictly in the training and adjustment of workers. I was really surprised by this. In fact, I know the author of this report very well, and the initial thesis was that for official language communities, professional training and economic development could not be separated. The two go hand in hand.

I hope you will correct me and tell me that this is not what your department is in the process of doing. There are many success stories, particularly in and around Mr. Lauzon's riding, where terrific

economic development occurred in conjunction with training of the labour force. Does your department really intend to forbid these groups from participating in economic development? If so, then, there isn't any respect for developing official language communities.

I hope I'm mistaken. I simply want a confirmation that indeed I am mistaken.

Mr. Michael Saucier: Mr. Godbout, you have asked me that question several times, even about the new Enabling Fund. The mandate of our department and of the program that was implemented is to help communities in the area of human resources development, in order to prepare a human resources plan and develop skills in communities to promote economic development. However, it is vital for the program that we have contact with other departments and other levels of government to get their help for economic development.

For example, we are working closely with the Department of Industry, which is responsible for economic development. The National Committee for Canadian Francophonie Human Resources Development, which includes Industry Canada and the Western and Atlantic economic development agencies, was established to deal specifically with economic development.

As you mentioned, the B.C. people, or those who said that assistance for economic development is no longer available, are right in a sense, if you look specifically at the Enabling Fund or the former support fund. It is not that it cannot be done; it is simply that it is important to create partnerships with other departments, with municipalities and with the provinces to find solutions, for example, to problems relating to job creation.

Mr. Marc Godbout: This was a success story. It worked. However, the criteria may have been different than for the anglophone programs, which is something that some departments have always had a problem with. The communities always have to meet the criteria, or else they are shut out of the program. This was something that worked. If you need Industry Canada, form a partnership with Industry Canada. But it is wrong to eliminate all the programs that deal with communities until Industry Canada gets involved.

The program produced an extraordinary impact over the past five years. While you are waiting to create a partnership, at least allow them to continue with their initiatives. The Canadian Olympic Committee, for instance, would really like these people to continue their economic development efforts, since it gives bilingualism more credibility in British Columbia. That is just one example, and there are many others.

There was the program to buy seats in francophone institutions. Then they said that individuals had to get their training in the institutions. That is putting the cart before the horse. There are no francophone programs. First, they have to be created and then the communities can be persuaded to take advantage of them, since they have never had access to these programs.

The development of francophone and Acadian communities should not be looked at through an anglophone majority lens. That will never work. You did a great thing by acknowledging that the communities' situation was special and that things needed to operate differently. Now you are coming back to the original criteria, which never worked for these communities. That is what worries me. There needs to be much greater sensitivity about the way...

Is my time already up?

•(0955)

The Chair: It was very interesting. Thank you, Mr. Godbout.

It is your turn now, Mr. Bergeron.

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

If I may, I would like to focus on the issue raised by Mr. Vellacott. Correct me if I am wrong, but my understanding is that the department's efforts to comply with the Official Languages Act and the Action Plan for Official Languages are split into two major categories. First, the department is working to improve skills in the two official languages so as to be able to provide services to the official language minority communities in both official languages. Second, it is providing money directly to these communities to improve literacy skills, increase employability and so on.

With respect to funding for minority communities, I would like to ask whether you could provide us with a breakdown by community or by minority, if I can put it that way. If I clearly understood what you said earlier, you cannot give a breakdown, except for the program that you mentioned.

Mr. Michael Saucier: Funds allocated under the program are done at the provincial level. It is like a region. For example, the monies given to Saskatchewan are used to help Saskatchewan. It is not on a community basis.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: You do not have the percentage of funds earmarked for francophone and Acadian communities, and that earmarked for the anglophone community in Quebec.

Mr. Michael Saucier: I have the following information: approximately 77 per cent of the \$12 million Fund is earmarked for francophone communities, and 23 per cent of this amount is set aside for anglophone communities.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Is this roughly the same ratio for all programs?

Mr. Michael Saucier: Michelle.

Mrs. Michelle Hamelin (Director, Official Language Minority Communities Secretariat, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development): Our existing programs are like the Summer Employment Programs. There is an awareness campaign, and young people and employers send in applications.

Prior to receiving these applications, it is difficult to know how much money will be allocated for such and such a program.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: A program such as the Summer Employment Program is not geared towards official language minorities.

Mrs. Michelle Hamelin: We rely on this program a lot to support official language minority communities. We also use our existing programs to support employers in the communities, as well as young people. Our existing programs are used a lot in order to support our communities.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I understand that we cannot do a breakdown beforehand, but do we have an idea of the breakdown for all programs targeted for both communities after the fact?

Mr. Michael Saucier: I referred to the annual report you received this morning.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: We may not have received it yet.

Mr. Michael Saucier: That piece of information is in the report. I did not make the calculation, but we can do so.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: We'll probably be able to do so once we have the data. Now, I would like to turn to the 77:23 ratio that applies to the \$12 million amount, to which you referred earlier.

You argued that this breakdown is done on a historical basis. At first glance, it seems to me that the ratio is spread out on the basis of the general population, wherein the Quebec population represents 23 per cent and the rest of Canada 77 per cent.

In my opinion, you argued somewhat peremptorily in my opinion that there was approximately one million anglophones in Quebec and one million francophones and Acadians outside of Quebec.

I do not want to start a debate over the figures with you, but allow me to point out that there is a mistake that is often made outside of Quebec and that is to assimilate allophones into the anglophone community and to calculate both groups as one million anglophones. If I'm not mistaken, there are not one million anglophones in Quebec.

I just wanted to clarify that point so that Mr. Vellacott does not get the impression that ultimately, 77 per cent of the funds are allocated to francophone and Acadian communities, and that in the end, there is the same number of francophones and Acadians living outside of Quebec as the number of anglophones living in Quebec. That is not the case.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that this is a widespread error to assimilate Quebec allophones and label them as anglophones, whereas since the establishment of the French-Language Charter, the goal is rather to assimilate allophones into the francophone majority, and not into the anglophone minority.

When you say that you want to eventually reassess the ratio of the monies allocated, I would not want to see you reassess that ratio based on the figures you used earlier, that is to say one million francophones and Acadians outside Quebec and one million anglophones in Quebec.

Without getting into a long debate, let's agree that francophone and Acadian communities in Canada are in much greater need of the federal government's support than the anglophone community in Quebec, which is already being substantially supported by the government of Quebec.

•(1000)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

We continue with Mr. Godin. It was a very good monologue. I would remind you that generally speaking, it is good to end on a question.

Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Nice speech, Mr. Bergeron.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: The affirmation ended with a question mark.

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

You said earlier that you used the Student Summer Employment Program to help them...

Can you tell us if this program is going well? I believe it was working well. Finally we have a program that works well, one that did not involve too much red tape.

Why were funds cut? This year, according to what is being said, there have been cutbacks.

Mr. Michael Saucier: Funds for the Summer Employment Program?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes.

Mr. Michael Saucier: To my knowledge, the funds remain at the same level as in previous years; at least, the national total remains the same.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The same?

Mr. Michael Saucier: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In my region where 80 per cent of the population is francophone, it was said that there were cutbacks. According to what you are saying, that means that funds earmarked for the francophone minority could have been cut and placed elsewhere.

• (1005)

Mr. Michael Saucier: At the national level, there is a formula devised to allocate approximately \$90 million. This could result in a decrease of the funds allocated in some areas and increase in other areas. I cannot answer for your region specifically.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I want you to come back to phase 2 of the employment-insurance program and the courses provided in community colleges. In the agreements relating to these, there is no appeal mechanism. Unfortunately, some people may enroll in a college, be eligible for employment insurance benefits, but we are not informed that they had to go through the New Brunswick human resources office, for example. A person can therefore be enrolled without having made an application. If they try to rectify the situation, the person is told that it is too late because they did not deal with the office and therefore their application cannot be considered. There is no appeal system. Who is admitted? How is the choice made? All that relates to training and to what should be done to help minority communities.

Mr. Michael Saucier: You are referring to New Brunswick employment programs that were transferred to the province. The example you gave us exists in theory.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Why would you not negotiate an appeal system? The program was approved and a contract was signed between New Brunswick and the federal government. Before paying

out money under Employment Insurance, why not include an appeal system among the criteria? Under the previous system, one could turn to employment insurance as well as apply to a college. The employment-insurance program allows for an appeal. Now there is no appeal possible.

Mr. Michael Saucier: The system has been based on the person since 1996.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I know very well that it depends on the person in question, but usually the person has no means to appeal. They are treated unfairly. They do pay taxes. In any system, there should be a possibility to appeal. It should not be based on the individual, left to confront a huge bureaucratic machine. This morning, I filed a complaint with you, after having done the same with the minister. We want an appeal system. One of the 28 recommendations on employment insurance is that an appeal system be set up.

Some members: Oh! Oh!

Mr. Yvon Godin: You might find that funny, but for those on the ground, it is not funny at all.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Unless you have any objections, we will have a third round before going to committee business.

[*English*]

We will start this round with Mr. Lauzon.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I met with the president of the Cornwall Cultural Centre on Monday morning. She complained about the lack of resources to improve the situation of francophones in Cornwall. After quickly reviewing your annual report, I realized that the Cornwall Employment Centre has a budget of approximately \$2 million to manage projects in Cornwall and Hawkesbury. If my figures are correct, the city of Cornwall, with a population of 45,000, received almost \$275,000, and Hawkesbury, with a population of approximately 8,000, received \$1.7 million.

How are the needs of minority communities determined and identified? Can you tell me what the criteria are?

Mr. Michael Saucier: There are two ways of proceeding. First of all, each local office has an operational plan through which they determine the communities' objectives, and how they hope to meet them. This plan is developed with the people of the community, for example people from the Chamber of Commerce, from other departments and other municipalities. Our department's programs and services are available to the community.

Secondly, an organization or company wishing to receive assistance from our department can submit projects directly. When you look at the figures—you have compared Cornwall to Hawkesbury—it would be important to specifically identify the projects. However, in the end, it seems to me that projects were accepted where needs were identified. I do not believe that it was decided to give Hawkesbury six times more money than Cornwall.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Where is the money sent? Is it sent to the director of the employment centre?

Mr. Michael Saucier: It depends on the program, but generally speaking, the director is responsible for the Cornwall region.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: That is not fair. When a town of 8,000 people receives \$1.5 million and a population of 45,000 gets only \$275,000, something is wrong.

• (1010)

Mr. Michael Saucier: I reiterate, the projects are accepted based on the needs identified. Are there projects from Cornwall that were not supported?

Mr. Guy Lauzon: They have just told me that they are trying to get funding but that they have not managed to do so. There are 15,000 francophones who are not receiving services in our region. They require assistance. It is very strange.

Mr. Michael Saucier: Are you talking about the cultural centre of Cornwall? We can follow up on that file.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: There are several, and that has been the case for 43 years!

Mr. Michael Saucier: If I understand correctly, this happened recently. Was it this week, or yesterday morning?

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I will give the rest of my time to Mr. Vellacott.
[English]

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: My surmise is that when it comes to employment, many of my francophone bilingual students in the province of Saskatchewan, here in my Saskatoon area, are not at a disadvantage. They in fact probably have the kinds of skills and abilities that make them a cut above in some respects. I would almost think these kinds of funds and dollars could be used for other students who want to become more bilingual.

In terms of their just going straight into the labour market, there's maybe something I don't comprehend here. Maybe more discussions will bring that out, but how are they necessarily at a disadvantage when, in my view, their bilingual skills put them at a decided advantage in the labour market? So I'm just wondering, maybe the additional funds would be better spent strictly for language training or something like that instead of this situation where they get a bit of a leg up now. I'm not necessarily sure about that, as I think they're already at a considerable advantage.

Mr. Michael Saucier: As to this particular program, summer career placement, its objective is strictly to assist students by providing work experience. The challenge of language training is very much an issue, but it's not one this program is addressing. Providing support through wage subsidies to employers was specific to individuals in the minority community.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Is it that they're at a disadvantage, supposedly?

The Chair: Mr. Vellacott, you are 20 seconds over.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

I give the floor to Mr. André, for five minutes.

Mr. Guy André: Good morning, Mr. Saucier. I will continue the introduction begun by my colleague Stéphane Bergeron during his last presentation.

Basically, the major issue is this: What criteria do you use to determine the needs of the various communities in Canada? We talk about anglophone communities in Quebec and anglophone communities outside Quebec. What criteria do you use in order to identify the needs of these communities, before setting up a program?

I ask the question because I realize—without going on about it—that there does not seem to be any strategic planning. There is funding for a program that we set up in all communities, but we are left with the impression that there is no real comprehensive study of the needs, that is to know what services and institutions to support in a given community, compared with another that has fewer services. How do you decide on the establishment of various programs, and what criteria do you base it on?

Stéphane mentioned the ratio 73:27 for the communities in Quebec and those elsewhere. Do you have such a criterion? Do you act according to the needs identified within a strategic planning framework?

Mr. Michael Saucier: First of all, we identified the sponsors in each province. Outside Quebec, they are the RDEE that are on the ground and receive funding from our department to support them. We ask each RDEE to provide us with an action plan to try and meet the needs of the communities. We count on the RDEEs to do the bulk of the work, because they are the ones who are on the ground and who are working with people. They come from the communities and they try to draw up a five-year plan. We have just completed such an exercise. In fact, we had asked them to draft a five-year plan in order to meet the communities' needs, that will result in their economic development. In order to do so, for example, we have to emphasize human resources development, and a profile of each community that can tell us what they have today and what they need. The information thus obtained will help us to determine the criteria we will use to decide what funding to grant the organization.

On the other hand, we have several programs, for example...

• (1015)

Mr. Guy André: How do you explain Mr. Lauzon's remark on the disparity between the budgets compared to the populations? Will the presence of a more dynamic director, more successful in his lobbying of the department and filing more applications explain why some communities are granted bigger budgets? Is there truly planning and a real organization, based on the reality in the area?

Mr. Michael Saucier: It depends on the program. Generally speaking, the allocation of funds for employment program targeting minority communities is based on a formula. That is the first thing we do. We have a global amount for the entire country that is divided by region. For our department, a region is the equivalent of a province or a territory. The region receiving the funds decides on distribution, according to where the local offices are. Once again, we use a formula. The money received by a local office is determined by the action plan, or the operational plan of each of the offices.

Mr. Guy André: Is the money divided between the different regions distributed according to needs or on the basis of the population, of the minority? How is the money distributed within a region?

Mr. Michael Saucier: It depends on the program. The formulas are rather detailed. They take into account, for example, the population, the rate of unemployment, and the level of education of the population.

Mr. Guy André: As far as minorities are concerned, does that include all of the services a minority group would have access to within its territory? You said it is based on the population.

Mr. Michael Saucier: Again...

Mr. Guy André: Do you understand what I mean?

Mr. Michael Saucier: Yes. In the case of several programs there is no specific formula to meet the needs of minority communities.

The Chair: That is very interesting.

Thank you, Mr. André. You have managed to ask four questions within the five minutes you were allocated. That is a record, this morning.

Mr. Simard.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I may have the opportunity to share my time with my colleague, if there is any left. I have only one brief question to ask.

Four or five years ago, there was a committee created called the Sectoral Table. There were nine departments and nine community representatives on it. The underlying idea was precisely to make the departments accountable in terms of minority communities. I can tell you that the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development was, without any doubt, the most active department. I congratulate you for that.

Earlier on, you talked about the Department of Industry. I would like to know if you have witnessed better cooperation recently between the departments. For example, I know that Health Canada seems to be doing good work. The Department of Citizenship and Immigration is doing more; this is true of Justice as well. However, there are still shortcomings on the side of the Department of Industry. Are you seeing better cooperation?

The communities in the country have told us that you have imposed a very heavy administrative process on them, which essentially is unreasonable. They have no difficulty with accountability, but they are telling us that the pendulum has swung all the way to one extreme. It seems there is a will to bring things back into balance, in order to allow them to function adequately. I do not know if you are working on this as well. Those are my two questions.

Mr. Michael Saucier: This is something that all the organizations, even the departments, stated forcefully during the consultations that we have just completed regarding the implementation of the Enabling Fund. We were told that we had to work better together. Yes, we have seen an improvement in this regard recently.

I would like to emphasize that one of the changes that we have made quite recently is that the Privy Council Office will now co-chair both national committees. This is a significant change. We

hope that the other departments will also cooperate more. In the past, it was the Department of Human Resources that was the co-chair, but it was hard for us to get the others to participate. The presence of the Privy Council should help improve the situation. We had our first meeting of the francophone committee last month. We will have the first meeting of the anglophone committee in May. Yes, we have seen an improvement and we hope that this change will help improve the situation even more.

As to your second question...

• (1020)

Hon. Raymond Simard: It dealt with communities.

Mr. Michael Saucier: Yes. It is a significant challenge, and for a long time we have been unable to decide between results, risks and control. There is no question of the pendulum swinging to the control side. We have received several requests and observations from the educators, the organizations and even our own staff. We need to change our way of managing the contribution agreements. The department has set up some pilot projects with a view to decreasing the administrative part of its management of the contribution agreements. We certainly agree that this must change and we hope, with the setting up of the pilot projects, that we will be able to see the changes within the next two months, or at the latest, by the end of the year. We will then be in a better position to emphasize the outcomes. We want results, not control.

The Chair: Ms. Boivin, you have one minute.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): Thank you. I will try to put two questions, which should set another record.

First, where did you get your statistics comparing one million anglophones to one million francophones?

Mr. Michael Saucier: It was in the 2001 census.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Thank you.

At the beginning of your presentation you said that the implementation of the Action plan for official languages has reached the half-way mark. Now you are here to report on the progress that has been made. Could you tell us today what programs or services you still need in order to reach your objectives?

Mr. Michael Saucier: This is an excellent question, and it was raised during the consultations we just finished. We were asked to make the program more flexible. Now, the new Enabling Fund constitutes a substantial change. For instance, formerly, with the support fund, funding was based on the employment-insurance account which means that there were restrictions on the kinds of programs and activities that could be supported.

Now, the new fund is based on a Treasury fund, which means that the restrictions are no longer the same: there is more flexibility. For instance, we are allowed to raise awareness about activities in communities. For instance, in Prince Edward Island, we recently made a CD and a DVD to spread information about the community. This is something we could not do in the past.

Mr. Godbout already mentioned the economic development aspect. This is still a big challenge. For us, this means that we will have to work very closely with other departments that have more mandates than we do. I must emphasize the importance of creating partnerships.

• (1025)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Boivin.

Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, I was looking at the notes from the Parliament Library and wondering how, for instance, we can explain that there were 20 projects in Saskatchewan for a total contribution of \$100,600, and eight projects in Manitoba, totalling \$420,000. There must be many small projects around. Where are we going? In New Brunswick, we got \$1.5 million—it may seem like a lot—, but there were 61 projects. If we look at the Manitoba numbers in the same way and multiply its 8 projects by 3, we get 24 projects. Now, in New Brunswick, we have 61. What can we say about the quality of such projects? How are they helping the communities? As my colleague Guy André asked, does it depend on how easily an applicant can get funds? I am not sure if my question is clear. I am trying to follow my trend of thought.

Mr. Michael Saucier: Glancing over the figures, one notices that the funds are used differently in each province. With respect to the three provinces you mentioned—Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and New Brunswick—all of these provinces have signed into a labour market agreement, meaning that we are not talking about funds [*Inaudible*], but rather youth projects, and housing projects. This is how communities set up their priorities identified in the Action Plan for Official Languages.

I want to come back on how funds are allocated. I think they are funds for youth projects. A formula was used to identify how funds were allocated. We then evaluated how the financed projects corresponded to minority communities. If so, it was reported as such. I don't believe that the issue goes any further than that.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You talk about study-work programs for youth. Are there two programs? For example, an amount of money is set aside for a program to hire a certain number of students through the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development. The department has another program, I think, that focuses on another component. If not, only the employers and the communities will make an application to bring in students. I don't see how a difference can be drawn between Saskatchewan, that received \$100,000 for 20 projects, and Manitoba which received \$402,000 for eight projects.

Is it because employers and municipalities are less aggressive in their efforts to hire students?

Mr. Michael Saucier: No. Firstly, as you said, there's an amount.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I know that it can look bad if a Liberal member received more funds than a member from Saskatchewan. Mr. Simard, in your shoes, I wouldn't have mentioned that.

Mr. Michael Saucier: To provide you with a detailed answer, I would have to know how the distribution is made, and find out exactly what the 20 projects in Saskatchewan, 8 projects in Manitoba, and 61 projects in New Brunswick were about.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Could you please forward this information to the committee? Thank you.

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

Unless I am told otherwise, our round of questions to our guests is now over. I would like to thank you, Ms. Hamelin, Mr. Saucier and Ms. Burton. Thank you for coming. Thank you for taking the time to answer our questions. We will be awaiting some answers and documents from you.

We will take a two-minute break before resuming the work of the committee in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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