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• (0905)

[Translation]

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

We'll begin since we have a quorum. The others will join us later. As agreed, today we continue our work on the Action Plan for Official Languages.

This morning, we're hearing from representatives of the Department of Industry. Welcome.

[English]

It is a pleasure to have you here.

[Translation]

We'll begin with a brief presentation from our guests. Then we'll move on to a period of exchange, discussion and questions, as we are used to doing.

The floor is yours.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur (Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations Sector, Department of Industry): Thank you very much. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

First, I want to thank you for inviting us, in our capacity as Industry Canada officials, to talk to you about the department's efforts in implementing the federal government's Action Plan for Official Languages.

My name is Rachel Larabie-LeSieur, and I am Acting Assistant Deputy Minister in the Operations Sector of Industry Canada. With me is Mary Pavich.

[English]

She is director general of operations in the small business financing branch. Here also is Valérie Sirois, who is deputy director of modern learning. They have been instrumental. Both of them have played crucial roles in the implementation of the action plan initiatives under Industry Canada. They will be able to provide you with a lot of information, should you have questions that require detailed information.

I believe you all have copies of our presentation.

[Translation]

Has everyone received one? I hope you'll see at the end of this presentation that we've not only met our commitments under the action plan, but that we've also taken a step further. We have started a

dialogue with Canada's minority communities and have tried to put the emphasis on the needs outlined to us by the representatives of those communities.

Now let's go to the objectives.

[English]

They are twofold. First, I want to advise you on the overall action plan from the department's perspective, including some of our challenges, some of our initiatives, and some of our results. I also want to identify some of the impacts that have been generated by the action plan and that are felt throughout the department and within the minority communities.

[Translation]

As you are no doubt aware, the action plan is the biggest single investment that has been made in official languages since the act went into effect in 1969. Its effects are already being felt at our department. We currently have no doubt that this should continue in the coming years.

However, a certain amount of humility is called for here. Despite the good start we've had, we're very aware of the fact that we'll need a lot of time to test all these changes and see that the improvements we want are made. At the department, achieving all our objectives will require us to make a sustained effort. That will also be the case for our partners, particularly the people from the regional development agencies. We've achieved a lot in a short period of time, but much remains for us to do. Two of the five years of the plan have elapsed, and we're aware that the task to come is as hard as the one we've already accomplished.

Now let's move on to the next slide.

[English]

Under the action plan that was announced on March 12, 2002, Industry Canada was given the responsibility for two initiatives: the enhancement of the language industries and the economic development in minority language communities. The funding amounts total \$20 million for the language industries and \$30 million for the economic development, and all of this over a five-year period.

[Translation]

First, let me tell you about the language industry. The first challenge we faced was the fact that very few people knew what the language industry was. So we first had to agree on the meaning given to the term.

In fact, this industry has three sectors. The first, which we are all probably aware of, is language training. The second is translation. In a bilingual country, that's also an essential sector. Language technologies constitute the third sector. Here we're talking about learning software. There's currently a market in this field in Canada.

[English]

As demand for language products and services is growing world wide—and this is not strictly limited to Canada, there is international demand for these products—this represents market potential for Canada, and for this industry in particular, and meaningful employment opportunities for Canadians. In fact, I would like to give you an example. The Canadian industry...the translation association—I don't have their exact name—estimates that we will need to have in the order of 1,000 new translators per year in order to meet the demand in the next few years. So this is not insignificant.

Our challenges in addressing our responsibilities under the plan include the following points. The language industry is a very fragmented industry with no cohesive or coordinated focus. The industry has only very limited visibility. There is also very little in terms of investment in its research and development. Lastly, it has inadequate succession planning, and this goes to the filling of the gap.

• (0910)

[Translation]

To overcome these difficulties, we've focused funding on the research and spread of the language industry to correct existing deficiencies. Two initiatives were then introduced. A language industry association was created. This association, which has more than 160 members in Canada, coordinates activities, promotes networking, determines strategic orientations and assists the industry in reacting to this growing demand we've just referred to.

In addition, through the National Research Council of Canada, which is part of Industry Canada's portfolio, we've established the Language Technologies Research Centre, which is attached to the Université du Québec en Outaouais, located here in Gatineau. This research centre was created together with the university and the Translation Bureau of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

[English]

The overall budget for the last two fiscal years was \$8 million, which was split evenly between Industry Canada and the NRC, our principal partner in that endeavour.

Industry Canada so far has invested \$3.4 million of its allotted budget, and the NRC has invested \$2.3 million. The NRC has reallocated the remainder of the available funds to subsequent years in order to address industry needs.

[Translation]

It is important to note here that, even though we haven't yet received half the funding granted us under the action plan, the results we've achieved to date are very good. Of course, not a single cent will be wasted. Funds will obviously be carried over to future years.

The Language Technologies Research Centre I just referred to has already spread its wings. The Language Industry Association is already providing us with invaluable information in this research field.

We've also developed the Language Industry Program for small and medium-size businesses. This is a program of contributions and subsidies to enable SMEs to take advantage of the goods and services that are available in Canada and that will help them, as businesses, in dealing with the linguistic situation in Canada.

[English]

Through these and other products, we've begun I think to successfully brand the industry as an important component of the daily challenges faced by Canadians. Given where we were even two years ago, which was not very far along this continuum, we consider this a major achievement. For all intents and purposes, the language industries were practically unknown three years ago, or very dispersed and fragmented.

Let me shift now to Industry Canada's second initiative, the economic development of minority language communities. Some of our challenges there are very similar to those of the language industries, namely a lack of awareness by communities of the programs available through Industry Canada, and also a lack of awareness by our officials as to the needs and the priorities of the communities.

[Translation]

We think this lack of awareness may derive in part from the fact that Industry Canada's programs are national in scope and very rarely target the official language minority communities.

One of the main difficulties stems from the fact that there is no regional development agency in southern Ontario, as there is everywhere else, including FedNor in northern Ontario.

Limited programming is nevertheless provided through the Community Futures Development Corporations Program — the CFDCs — and also under the Connectivity Program at Industry Canada. So components of our Broadband for Rural and Northern Development Pilot Program and components of the Community Access Program directly target minority communities in southern Ontario.

[English]

Under the economic development initiative, we received \$33 million over five years. The amount has been allocated to four major activities—outreach, communications and counselling internships, pilot projects, and the *Francommunautés virtuelles* program.

All the internships and pilot projects are delivered through regional economic development agencies, which report on the progress made on a regular basis.

[Translation]

The budget received to date is \$8.5 million, all of which has been invested, except \$240,000, which has been carried over to the next fiscal year after partnerships were negotiated.

With the regional development agencies, we've received roughly 25% of the total budget granted under the action plan. Once again, results are simply beyond our expectations.

● (0915)

We didn't think we would achieve so many things in two years. We have six full-time counsellors dedicated exclusively to Canada's official language minority communities; they were recruited and now provide consultation services. In fact, they form the link between Industry Canada and the communities. The needs are great, but the counsellors are meeting them in large part. Two more counsellors will also be recruited shortly.

Eleven pilot projects have been introduced with universities, colleges and special organizations. The *Francommunautés Virtuelles* program has produced 31 projects within a brief period of time: after only one year, 50 youths are taking part in internships.

[English]

In our recent consultations with the communities, we were told that they were very pleased with the progress that had been made. The feedback was generally very positive. Their hope, of course, is for continued momentum in the future.

Listing statistics and investments is one way to actually demonstrate the impact of the action plan to date, but there are other variables that I think we need to focus on where we could demonstrate the impact of the plan. I'm looking forward to sharing these with you right now.

[Translation]

In terms of significant impact, the creation of the Language Industry Association should be singled out.

[English]

Before this association was created, we had no database.

● (0920)

[Translation]

We had no data that would enable us to understand this industry. Now that the association is in place and networks are being established between organizations and researchers, we'll ultimately have the information we need to better understand the industry and make it known in order to realize its full potential. There was no basic data.

The association enables us to obtain this very important information. The Language Industry Program has already supported 51 firms and made it possible to lever \$403,490 in partner funding. An interest has been expressed through this investment.

We feel this awareness is only starting and that our products — the Canadian products from this industry — will be increasingly known both here and outside Canada.

[English]

The research that is being performed will position the industry in the context of our economy. This includes, for example, the assessment of language professions and the needs for the future. If the indications are correct—the indications actually come from a

study that was conducted by Stats Can—we see great potential for this industry in Canada, both domestically and internationally.

[Translation]

If I can come back to economic development.

[English]

if there is one statement that we can make at this point in time, it's that we are starting to make a difference, but we have a lot to do still. But we're starting to make a difference, and I think this is based on the feedback we're getting from the communities.

That being said, I think we've made important strides in building a strong and positive relationship with the minority language communities.

[Translation]

Let's be frank: this has not always been the case. Remarkable progress has been achieved in the past two years.

The department has established its own consultation process. We completed a second round of consultations in March. Individual meetings are held during the year, which has made it possible for a virtually constant dialogue with the communities to take shape.

The counsellors play an important role because they're present in the regions and very well known to the associations. In this way, we have a better idea of the communities' needs and concerns.

As I said, the communities didn't know us at first, and we at the department didn't know them well either. This dialogue is enabling us to better inform our managers about our mutual limits and needs. Our relationship with the regional development agencies, without which it would be hard for us to reach the communities, is solid. We're working in close cooperation with the agencies, probably more so today, because we not only talk, we act together. So we have a very concrete action plan. We have a common objective, and together we're trying to achieve it.

[English]

And this is happening throughout Canada. This is not happening only in Ottawa, it's happening throughout. There are meetings, as I was saying, where we are actually participating. We are also participating with the communities in the consultations that are being driven by the PCO.

Our regional councillors, the six of them who are in place now, have been praised by community organizations for their efforts, especially in Quebec, where anglophone associations have jumped on this opportunity to access information on our programs. I think one of the challenges we're facing in regard to these regional councillors is that we have to find a way to keep, to maintain, to make constantly available their networks and all of the information they have gathered. We have to find a way to secure the information.

● (0925)

[Translation]

I'm almost finished.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): We have to ask questions.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Yes.

We conducted four research projects in consultation with the communities. You'll find details on them in the annexes to this morning's presentation.

We didn't have a starting point; we didn't know the profiles of the communities, their presence, size, geographic distribution; we conducted studies that have enabled us to get to know them better and that will serve as a basis for economic development.

We're also working in partnership with Canadian Heritage, and we have a joint program — IPOLC — which has enabled us to invest in projects together.

In conclusion,

[English]

in the case of the language industry's initiative, we're seeing the start of some positive changes. Areas such as visibility and awareness of the industry and the research and development that goes into them will require time to fully develop, but we're well engaged. Even here, in the short period we're beginning to have an impact. I think we've started to address the growing demand for industry products and services. We've created baseline information, both for the industry and the communities, and we can actually follow the evolution and the success.

On the economic development front, there are partnerships—and you've heard me talk about the many partners we have out there—and communities in turn have started to increase their participation in existing programs, which is a good sign.

[Translation]

A sustained, long-term effort is necessary, and we must continue the actions we started when we determined the implementation outcomes.

Thank you.

[English]

I thank you all, honourable members of Parliament, for your time, and of course I'll be happy to answer any questions you have, along with my colleagues.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

We'll proceed with the discussion and question period.

We'll start with you, Mr. Lauzon.

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

One-third of the population of a city in a riding I represent is Francophone. It's similar to other minority communities. The language of work everywhere in the city and industry is English.

How could your programs help us to improve the situation, to promote the use of French and to increase Francophones' chances of working in their mother tongue? Are there any known programs to help us?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: In fact, the purpose of the action plan is to promote the vitality and development of the cultural communities. Some of our assistance programs for small and medium-size businesses are accessible to the communities. Francophone entrepreneurs interested in submitting a business plan or anything of that kind can access the programs of the regional development agencies and the department. However, through this program, Industry Canada does not, as such, have a mandate to promote French as a language of work. Instead we promote the vitality and development of the minority communities.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: What role do the counsellors play when they go to the communities to help improve official languages?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: In fact, the counsellors' role is to help the representatives of the communities — I imagine their Francophone communities in your case — learn more about the programs that are available and to facilitate their access to them. As you know, the multitude of existing programs is often a labyrinth in which it's hard for people to find their way. The counsellors' role is to make Industry Canada's programs and any other program from which a minority community could benefit better known.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Are there only six counsellors in the entire country?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: There are six right now. There's also one in southern Ontario, in Toronto. We're recruiting one for northern Ontario. We believe there will be 10 or 12 in Canada as a whole within a few months.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: How many Francophone minority communities are there in the country?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: There are a number. The ratio is high, I admit. There are 813 Francophone groups, 288 of which are in Ontario.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: And there are six counsellors.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: In fact, there are two in Ontario.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: You mentioned 11 pilot projects involving the universities and colleges. Could you tell me more about them?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: I can definitely name a few for you. However, if this interests you, we can send you a more complete list. In Ontario, together with the Collège d'Alfred, we're conducting a pilot project in distance training, environmental management and organic farming. We're also implementing a program in cooperation with the Faculté Saint-Jean of the University of Alberta, pilot projects on distance learning, courses for nurses and computer courses to make training and learning in French accessible. There are also pilot projects at the University of Moncton, the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick, the Université Sainte-Anne and elsewhere across Canada. In Ontario, the pilot project is being carried out in cooperation with the Collège d'Alfred.

● (0930)

Mr. Guy Lauzon: What's that project about?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: It's a distance training, environmental management and organic farming project.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: You say you're carrying out 31 projects involving Francophone communities? Is that correct?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Yes. In fact, Ontario is a big player in this area, probably because there's no agency in southern Ontario. Once again, I can give you a few examples.

A virtual student office has been established by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges. The Alliance nationale de l'industrie musicale has created ANIMusique.ca, a music site. The Commission nationale des parents francophones is implementing Le partage du savoir des parents, a project that's also on the Web. The Cité collégiale here in Ottawa offers tourist training on line. The Chambre économique de l'Ontario also has a virtual twinning centre.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Is there a project offering English-to-French translation services? That doesn't exist anywhere?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: All we can offer that small business — let's take it for granted that it's a small business — is a catalogue of goods and services offered by the language industry.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I was thinking that could be one of your research projects. It would help Anglophone businesses a great deal. They don't have the ability to translate from English to French, and that's a drawback.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: I don't think there's anything in that area right now. We're going to take note of that.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: All right. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

We'll continue with Mr. André.

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

I see there are a lot of programs at Industry Canada. It's very dynamic, from what you seem to be telling us. You've improved your efficiency a little in recent years.

We know there are a number of Francophone minority communities in Canada. How do you target the communities to which you give more support, programs or projects? What criteria do you use in giving one community priority over another? Are they poverty or unemployment indicators? After all, we're talking about certain aspects of economic development.

Ms. Mary Pavich (Director General, Operations & Small Business Financing Branch, Department of Industry): Most of our programs are national in scale. We don't really target minority communities as such because these are national programs for small and medium-size businesses, for example. However, for the first time this year, we've tried to add accessibility criteria for the minority communities. For example, for broadband connectivity services, we've added a sentence to funding criteria stating that minority communities must always be given special consideration for broadband services.

Mr. Guy André: For what?

Ms. Mary Pavich: For broadband. It's our department's connectivity program.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: It provides high-speed Internet access.

Mr. Guy André: All right.

This broadband transmission system will really promote access to information for Francophone minorities.

Ms. Mary Pavich: That's correct, Internet access.

Mr. Guy André: That also concerns Quebec's Anglophone minority.

We know perfectly well that, in some rural areas, not everyone has Internet access. Do you have a program to promote Internet access? Is that one of your objectives? I imagine not everyone has Internet access in certain Acadian communities.

● (0935)

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: In fact, the department has three connectivity programs.

There's the Francommunautés Virtuelles program, which can be used if broadband service is in place. We also have a program that has enabled us to introduce broadband, or high-speed Internet, in some remote communities. We also have the Community Access Program. We've created a centre where people can go to use computers. There they can familiarize themselves with the technology and get access to everything that's available.

Mr. Guy André: It's something that's working relatively well, if I understand correctly.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: It's a program that's currently in place.

Mr. Guy André: It's a program that works.

Going back to economic development, your mandate includes an economic development component, and you have projects to stimulate employment a little in some communities, but you say you haven't established any criteria that would enable you to give priority to one project in one community rather than another project in another community. A project is presented nationally, and it's...

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: At Industry Canada, we have national programs which are not necessarily of the same kind as those offered by the regional economic development agencies. Economic development is the prerogative of the development agencies across Canada.

Mr. Guy André: All right.

Ms. Mary Pavich: However, we're developing a specific analytical framework for the minority communities so that the department's managers include the minority communities in their strategic plans, in all new programs that will be developed in the future and in the programs that are extended. This will be implemented this year.

Mr. Guy André: All right.

The Chair: Mr. Godin.

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

I'd like to welcome you.

I don't want to suggest that the Acadian Peninsula isn't well organized electronically speaking. I could say that New Brunswick is the most advanced province in Canada from the electronic and computer standpoint. Companies have carried out pilot projects there before implementing them elsewhere in Canada. Back home on the Acadian Peninsula, fibre optics has been around for a long time. For TVA to broadcast a program in New Brunswick, they still have to send the cassette to Gaspé by bus. We're going to try to help the Gaspé Peninsula acquire high technology.

Can Industry Canada help a community like that on the Gaspé Peninsula make progress in the high technology field in order to promote dialogue in the broader Francophone community?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: It's clearly a priority of our department and of our minister to continue with the Broadband for Rural and Northern Development Pilot Program to enable remote communities, those in the outlying areas, to have the same access to economic development because that's part of the infrastructure.

Mr. Yvon Godin: What I was saying earlier might have seemed somewhat amusing. You said people were starting to do certain things. It's about time! We've been waiting 400 years. We talk about the two official languages in Canada, then we start. I'm sorry to see that Industry Canada is just starting. It should have been at this point a long time ago. I'm not just talking about the Gaspé Peninsula. I remember the member from the Témiscamingue region said there were still party lines in his region not so long ago.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): And it's still true.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's still true. The Internet hasn't gotten there yet.

How can Industry Canada play its role as a leader in helping the remote Anglophone and Francophone communities? In the Gaspé Peninsula, in Rivière-au-Renard, for example, there's an Anglophone minority. The same thing is true in Hearst and Kapuskasing. I know because I went there. There's been no technological progress there. Does Industry Canada only work for Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary? There's a problem. We don't need a big study to know that: it's been that way for 400 years. I'd like to know what you're doing to help the minority communities in those regions.

• (0940)

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: In fact, the purpose of the connectivity programs that have been in place at Industry Canada for a little more than 10 years now is precisely to reach the remote communities. At the outset, these aren't necessarily minority communities, but they are remote communities. Industry Canada wants to include all Canadians, whoever and wherever they may be, and to give them an equal chance at economic development.

Now we've added a prism that will enable us to evaluate the needs of minority communities in the implementation of the Broadband for Rural and Northern Development Pilot Program.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You mentioned the other agencies, such as ACOA, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, which comes under Industry Canada. I'll give you an example. I phone the minister's office because I want a meeting. You referred more to economic development than to service in both languages. In the next five minutes, I may be able to address the other problem.

So I call the ACOA office, and an Anglophone answers. I ask to be served in French. That person answers that the main language of the office is English. I say I want a meeting in French. I learn that I can't have one because the person who speaks French is in Fredericton and they can't bring him back because he's busy. That's happened here in Ottawa over the past seven months. It seems the department feels it's exempt from having to provide service in both official languages. Ultimately, they probably thought I was going to rattle the cage a bit. They stopped the meeting in Fredericton, they put the person on a special flight, he came here and we had the meeting. That's service. If a member of Parliament has to go through that, imagine how it must be for an ordinary citizen.

How can Industry Canada follow up with other services that are under its responsibility to ensure that people are served in the language of their choice, as provided by the act in Canada?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: That's a parallel component. This morning, I was asked to tell you about economic development programs for the Francophone communities. The question of service in both official languages is part of the requirements related to positions in general. The economic development agencies are part of Industry Canada's big family, but each has a minister responsible. The agencies do not report to the Minister of Industry.

Mr. Yvon Godin: They don't report to the minister?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Each agency has its own minister.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, but they report...

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: They're part of the big family.

Mr. Yvon Godin: There's a limousine, but it's a bit smaller than that of the Minister of Industry. They're part of the family, but Industry Canada nevertheless has a responsibility. If agencies are under its responsibility...

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: It doesn't have air conditioning.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: I'll take note of that, and I'll bring this concern to their attention.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you. How much time do I have left?

The Chair: You have one minute and five seconds, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Let's go back to economic development in the regions that have high unemployment rates and minorities. In my region, for example, the unemployment rate is 20%; I know of one company that submitted a request to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, which reports to Industry Canada. You may tell me you can't speak on behalf of ACOA, but a contract was signed in a region where the unemployment rate is greater than 20%, a \$450,000 contract. When the minister, who came from Prince Edward Island, took up his position, he said he had to terminate the contract because he was in competition with Prince Edward Island. What's more important, regional economic development or when that hurts the minister's region?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: You probably know how I'm going to answer. I can't speak on behalf of ACOA. I don't know how it operates. I'm at Industry Canada. It's unfortunate, but that's the way it is. I'm not in a position to answer you.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Yvon, we'll have to invite them.

The Chair: We're going to invite them at the end of the week. We'll continue with Mr. Godbout.

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, madam. I'm pleased to see you here today.

I admire your honesty. I had a few remarks to make, but you anticipated them. It's true that Industry Canada may have gotten involved a little late in development, in the economic development of the communities, among other things. I'd like to focus my questions on economic development.

Human Resources Canada established RDÉE Canada, the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité, to optimize the economic potential of the Francophone and Acadian communities. Those people were recently told that they must not touch economic development, but only employability, training and labour adjustment. That created an enormous void. They have a national network. Could a partnership be considered between Human Resources Canada and your department? That covers all of Canada. Right now, you're neglecting one region, my region: southeastern Ontario, not just the south. That would give you a complete network. Is that conceivable, a partnership between Human Resources Canada and the entire network of RDÉE Canada, which is working wonders right now in terms of employability and was doing the same thing for economic development?

• (0945)

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: We're quite familiar with RDÉE. They're invited to our consultations and they've taken part in a fairly intensive dialogue with us over the past two years. I have no objection to exploring the possibility of a partnership with RDÉE and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Mr. Marc Godbout: That would definitely be interesting. Why reinvent the wheel? My colleague Raymond may tell you about initiatives that have been carried out in Saint-Boniface. The economic development they've done — perhaps somewhat in spite of themselves — is incredible. We need someone to carry the torch.

I'm troubled when I look at page 19 of your presentation; it's true that you go through the economic development agencies. However, am I to conclude that, because of that, you haven't invested a single cent in economic development in the southeastern region of the province, where approximately 30% of the Francophone population outside Quebec lives?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: In fact, specific, targeted programs have been implemented by Industry Canada in southern Ontario, in particular community access centres. Here we're talking about Internet access and virtual communities.

Mr. Marc Godbout: I know that infrastructure is important, but here I'm telling you about economic development projects designed to directly encourage Franco-Ontarian innovation and business, among other things. You don't find those agencies here, in the region, and you don't have a network. We talked about RDÉE, which

could definitely meet this need. However, I hope there have been economic development projects in the meantime.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: In fact, one of Industry Canada's challenges is to understand the national scope of programs already in effect and to see how they can be allocated and made accessible to the minority communities.

We didn't have any basic data enabling us to understand the allocation. Now we can understand it better, and the same is true for the communities. The counsellor in Toronto can work with businesses and see whether some of the programs would be accessible for them.

Mr. Marc Godbout: There are definitely networks, even if it's just the RGA. This obviously doesn't just concern eastern Ontario and western Quebec; however, entrepreneurs could help you establish contacts.

In addition, one of the problems we've experienced with Industry Canada on a number of occasions is that the communities have to meet the criteria of programs which have generally been conceived on the basis of the Anglophone majority.

Do you now automatically create separate programs specifically intended for the economic development of Francophone communities, without there necessarily being an equivalent on the Anglophone side?

• (0950)

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: In the context of the current effort, I can't say that's been considered.

Mr. Marc Godbout: However, you're going to consider that at the department. I think this committee would take a favourable view of you starting to think in terms of our specific needs.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: We feel that making existing programs accessible to the minority communities is already a step in the right direction. However, we're not at the same point as you in the progress we've made.

I'd like to go back to your previous question. I think it's important to note the role that the CFDCs, which are present across Ontario, play in the rural areas. These are valid contacts for the Francophone communities.

Mr. Marc Godbout: There again, my community and that of Mr. Lauzon, Cornwall, aren't included in that scenario. I think that has to be taken into consideration.

Do I still have a little time?

The Chair: A little.

Mr. Marc Godbout: Money has been set aside for that purpose under the Action Plan for Official Languages. As my friend Godin would say, we've already been waiting for 400 years. However, I'd like to know whether your department would be prepared to double those amounts so that things can move a bit more quickly. Have you received any requests for more than was announced in the action plan?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: We're currently operating on the figures that were stated. In fact, after five years, how are we going to ensure that the progress achieved will be maintained and continue to operate as we've learned to do in the past two years? The continuity of investments is one of the real challenges we'll be facing.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godbout. That's all the time we had.

We'll now begin the second round.

[*English*]

This time, five minutes each.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Poilievre.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Good morning, and thank you for coming.

My first question is quite general. I represent the riding of Nepean—Carleton, which is located in the Ottawa region. One phenomenon that concerns me relates to the public service. The President of the Public Service Commission, Ms. Barrados, has moreover taken an interest in it, and it's the problem of unilingual Canadians who have to fit into a more bilingual public service.

I'd like to know whether the people in your department have successfully adapted to this situation or whether there are problems. In general, many English-speaking Canadians fail French exams, particularly the oral exam. Is that a problem in your department? Where necessary, what measures are you taking to solve it?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: I'm unfortunately not in a position to tell you that because it goes beyond my area of authority. Industry Canada obviously attaches a great deal of importance to access to services in English and in French across Canada. However, as regards specific problems related to that, I unfortunately can't give you an answer.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: All right.

I have a question that concerns our subject. You told us, in the past, the department had misunderstood the interests and needs of the minority communities. Thank you for being so frank. I'd like to know what answers you found to solve that problem.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: We found some partial responses in the research that's been done. In particular, we submitted maps to the minority communities that we consulted in March showing the distribution of the communities across Canada based on certain criteria: areas where representation is five percent, where it's more than 10%, where there are more than 500 inhabitants, and so on. So we have an idea of the size and distribution of the communities, which we didn't previously have.

We also know now that there is a much larger number than we had originally imagined. In particular, there are 125 Anglophone communities in Quebec. So we have basic data that enable us to better understand the situation. We also have the analytical framework we want to put in place to ensure there is a minority communities component in program access.

• (0955)

Ms. Mary Pavich: Internally, for example, we have an awareness program for the managers of each unit so they can better understand

the minority communities' needs and priorities: for example, what are the minority communities, where are they located, what are examples of good projects that have previously been carried out with minority communities, and so on.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Ultimately, have you tried to determine more clearly whether Francophones in particular were satisfied with the services your department provides? We've heard complaints from Francophones regarding services offered by the departments in general. Do you have any evidence that Francophones are satisfied with the service your department provides?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: What I can tell you, and what has come out of the consultations we've conducted, is that the Francophone communities are currently satisfied with the work we've done in the past two years to enhance economic development.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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.

I have two questions. First, I'm going to discuss a very specific project, which illustrates the problems we're having with Industry Canada.

In French-speaking Manitoba, for example, we're talking about broadband services. That may work better in your province, Yvon, where you represent 33% of the population. In my province, we represent four percent of the population. Francophones had organized a project that would have covered all the Francophone villages in the province and offered services in both official languages. That project was set aside because the committee that made recommendations to the minister consisted solely of Anglophones. The funds were ultimately given to the Anglophone communities, which went after our small communities like Notre Dame de Lourdes, and services are now being offered in English only. It's shameful.

If we had a bill like Bill S-3, for example, the department would have to consider the consequences for the communities before making this kind of decision. As regards broadband services, I can tell you that was a bad experience back home. The problem was that there were no criteria favouring the minority communities. You're starting to put that in place. I don't know whether it's too late, but we lost an opportunity to provide all our communities with broadband services and to offer services in both languages.

I'd like to hear your comments on the subject.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: I didn't take part in that program. It's delivered elsewhere in the department. I know you often hear that as well. I believe that, in wanting to put an analytical framework in place, we're recognizing the fact that, in some cases, either these criteria didn't exist or they weren't given the weight they should have been given.

At the start, I talked about sensitizing not only the communities to what's going on at Industry Canada, but also managers to what's happening in the communities, which is really part of our program.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Action should really be taken because there's a risk we'll lose the communities. Moreover, it may be too late. That brings me to my second question.

There has to be a cultural change at Industry Canada. You said your employees were not necessarily aware. I entirely agree. I believe that, when the communities deal with you, the answer they essentially get is to go see Canadian Heritage. That's the feedback we're getting from our communities. I believe Industry Canada has a responsibility to contribute to the development and vitality of the Francophone communities. Economic development is part of their survival strategy. So you really have to impose a change of culture at your department.

I wanted to know how you went about raising awareness among your officials. Do you realize that the Francophone communities outside Quebec or the minority communities have specific needs? Often some have further to go than others. So there's a lot of catching up to do.

● (1000)

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: I believe we're entirely aware of that. You should know that the communities with which we've had talks, dialogues, in the past two years haven't been reluctant to tell us that. I believe the awareness is there now. One of our responsibilities is to see that that awareness spreads across the department.

I also think we have to play a special role in the regions. In fact, we have a counsellor in Manitoba. One of the things we can do in return is to work with the counsellor to see how we can respond better to the needs of the small communities on a more timely basis.

Hon. Raymond Simard: But some tools are already in place. Mr. Godbout referred to the RDÉE, the sectoral table with the departments and community representatives. We're told that Industry Canada isn't a strong participant in this regard, that Human Resources and Skills Development Canada has really played a fundamental role, but that Industry Canada isn't playing the role it should play. And yet you already have the tools in place. It's all well and good to say here today that things will improve. The structure for you to participate has already been in place for three, four or five years. But we don't see you participating.

So I'd like to see some real action on economic development for Francophones outside Quebec. That's really essential to our survival. It's no longer a question of culture. We've gone beyond that. Now we have to move on to economic development.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Yes.

Thank you.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, go ahead.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, thank you for being with us this morning.

I believe there are definitely some potential improvements to be made, at Industry Canada as well as in a number of departments, particularly since Industry Canada started addressing official languages a bit later than other departments.

Having said that, I should add a comment in your defence. I've toured a number of Francophone and Acadian communities in recent years. While I've heard harsh criticisms of certain federal government services and departments, I've also heard eminently positive comments on numerous occasions concerning Industry Canada's work and the fact that Industry Canada renewed the agreements with the communities much more quickly.

However, I was a bit confused when I heard you say that, apart from the programs of the economic development agencies, the department itself only had national programs. That surprised me somewhat because I had the impression that IPOLC, for example, was an agreement of the department itself, not the economic agencies, with Canadian Heritage.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: It is indeed an agreement between the department and Canadian Heritage. However, it's not an Industry Canada program. The program belongs to Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Even if there's a contribution from Industry Canada.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Yes. We're a partner.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I also believe I understood there is a will. You said earlier that a criterion had been added taking the minority communities into consideration.

Is there a will at the department to have Canadian programs that can address the Francophone, Acadian and Anglophone communities in Quebec much more directly?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: We haven't yet considered that.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: You haven't yet considered that.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: That's correct.

● (1005)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: On page 20 of your presentation, you state:

Investments are proportional to the demographic weighting of the minority communities.

What do you mean by that?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Look at the previous page. Industry Canada appears in the table. The table also shows a figure of \$37 million for 2003-2004. By some strange coincidence — it may be a coincidence or an accident, we don't know — it appears that the distribution of these programs corresponds to the geographic distribution of the communities. The distribution seems proportional to the presence of the minority communities across Canada.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I'd also like to ask you a question about this table. We're talking about Industry Canada's investments in the official language minority communities. However, you've just told me that there was no program as such at Industry Canada that provided...

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: It's done by extrapolation.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: It's done by extrapolation. That means that you deduct from the existing programs what's been invested in the minority communities, and that equals the sum of \$37,537,000.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: That's correct.

Ms. Mary Pavich: That doesn't include programs for which we could identify minority clients. It doesn't include a lot of other programs in which minority clients took part. We have no idea of the other part of this equation.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: What proportion of similar departmental budgets does this \$37 million figure represent?

Ms. Mary Pavich: I unfortunately don't know. I can't tell you.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: You can't say.

You say you're counting the various programs — or at least establishing a proportion. Are you talking about programs of the economic development agencies? Is that what you're referring to? If you consider the \$4 million figure for Western Canada, the \$3 million for FedNor, the \$13 million for ACOA and the \$9 million for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, that seems to correspond roughly to the proportion.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: If you total up the targeted programs, you'll see it corresponds quite closely to the amount Industry Canada spent on minority communities where it was possible to identify that.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Was that proportional to their demographic weighting?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chairman, I find this breakdown interesting, since I think it's more consistent with the actual situation than the one that was presented to us on Tuesday.

In addition, I'd simply like to say, for the information of the committee and my colleague from Gatineau, that I consulted the Statistics Canada 2001 census data. Contrary to what we were told, the number of Anglophones in Quebec is not one million, but rather 557,000. If you add that figure to the number of Allophones, 756,000, there are indeed approximately 1.2 million persons in Quebec whose first language is not French.

The departmental representatives we heard from on Tuesday frequently repeated this error of including Quebec Allophones with the Anglophone community, whereas efforts have been made in Quebec since the 1970s to integrate the Allophone communities into the Francophone community or to integrate them more as individuals into the Francophone community.

I see the Department of Industry has taken this proportion into consideration, and I'm grateful to you for that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

And I believe the francization efforts have produced results. I'm an example of that, as my mother tongue is Spanish.

I give the floor over to Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I won't ask the question I want to finish with. I accept the fact this belongs to ACOA. It's the problem of the minister responsible for ACOA.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: We'll invite him.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We'll invite him.

I have a piece of information for Mr. Simard. It was said that one-third of the population of New Brunswick is Francophone and that it was perhaps for that reason that they got it. No. New Brunswick has a provincial program that applies across the province. I don't think we got it because of the Francophones. These were pilot projects. If they were supposed to work well, they would have been implemented in other provinces.

New Brunswick was used because it was a small province. For once, we got lucky, even though our unemployment rate is 20%. We were lucky to get it. It wasn't Industry Canada that implemented it, and the department won't get the credit for it. That was done through telecommunications companies.

I'll ask my last question because I'd like to know what can be done. I'm going to give you my comments. Back home, we have the Community Access Program, which is related to computers in the libraries, schools and municipalities. I think the program is a good one. It enables people to communicate with the entire world because not everyone can have a computer at home. It's an Industry Canada program. Are you going to tell me that it's an ACOA program?

• (1010)

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: No, it's ours.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's yours.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: I'll take the credit when I can.

Mr. Yvon Godin: All right. If you want to take the credit, do it. But tell me why, in the last year, the people in the communities who work on a volunteer basis to implement this program were forced to work very hard to obtain funds from Industry Canada. You take the credit because it's an Industry Canada program. It took months and months to get the funds, and you troubled the people a great deal.

Do you think the emphasis could be placed on this program? As the member for the region, I can tell you that people throughout the riding want this program to continue because it helps the community. I can guarantee you that the community wants this program.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: That's precisely the feedback we're getting as well. The Community Access Program meets real needs. I must tell you that the program was cut by 40% last year when it was renewed.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's very sad.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: It was renewed for two years. It's a limited-term program and it should end in March 2006. The department is currently working on justifying an extension.

Mr. Yvon Godin: When something works well, why do you cut it instead of going and studying something else? Here's a program that works well, and it's cut by 40%. It works very well. That's the message I want to send to Industry Canada on behalf of my fellow citizens. I'm sure I speak on behalf of a number of people in the province. If there are the same community access programs in other provinces, I can tell you this one works very well.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: It's a national program.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's a national program supported by the community, by the municipalities and by the schools. Everyone supports it. I haven't yet heard any criticism of it, and Industry Canada cuts its funding by 40%.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: In fact, it wasn't Industry Canada that cut it by 40%. That decision was made at the government level.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The Liberal government of Canada cut it by 40%. Is that clearer?

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I think it's because there's a lack of money.

Mr. Yvon Godin: As I said, someone cut it.

Thank you, that's all.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

[English]

We now go to the third round. Unless decided otherwise by the members, this will be our last round.

Mr. Scheer.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): After the work you've done in promoting some of these action items, would someone going into one of these regional offices be likely to notice an improvement in access to official language services?

Do you have a mechanism to evaluate this? Do you have feedback from people in the community who have noticed an improvement?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: It is too early for us to be in a position to evaluate the results. What I can tell you, though, is that if you go into a regional office that has a counselling officer, and if you have specific needs, your needs will be addressed. This is a relatively new improvement.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Your handout, in the section on economic development, says that one of the major challenges is that there is no targeting of official language minority communities. Is this something you're going to incorporate in your approach? Will you target minority communities in your IC programs?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: We have targeted programs in southern Ontario because there is no regional agency there. We're not looking at targeting any communities. We are trying to sensitize managers and policy-makers to the fact that programs should be accessible to official language minorities and that this should be taken into consideration at the time the program is developed or delivered.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: So it's not so much focusing on little pockets; it's more in delivery of the broad service. You're going to have mechanisms in place in those communities and try to institute sensitivities there.

• (1015)

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: It's to improve access. Now that we are better equipped, we can share more information about where we think the needs are across Canada.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Okay. That is all I have.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, sir. It's Mr. André's turn.

Mr. Guy André: This is our last turn. You're answering the questions very well and this is a pleasant meeting.

From what I understand, in the context of the Action Plan for Official Languages, you offer a series of services to the minority communities: internships in telelearning, distance training and economic development.

With regard to the sums allocated for economic development under the Action Plan for Official Languages, the Commissioner of Official Languages raised this point: [...] the sums allocated for economic development in the action plan are relatively modest in the context of the overall budget. Excluding the amounts devoted to the connectivity and knowledge economy projects, only \$8 million remains to improve consultation and information services for economic development programs.

Certain elements of the OLMCs should be added to that.

First, do you think those amounts are currently adequate? Second, what programs and services that your department doesn't offer would be necessary to meet the present and future needs of the official language minorities?

We've examined a series of services, but are there any present needs that are not being met for lack of a budget, or actions that could be taken?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: First of all, we're working with what we have. If we had more, we could obviously have a much more ambitious program. That's clear and precise.

As to the specific programs, that's not where the thinking we've done to date leads us. We think programs that can meet the communities' needs already exist, but it's a matter of awareness. That's where the counsellors in the regions, who work closely with the communities can make people aware...

Mr. Guy André: Make them more aware...

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Exactly: work in both directions, both within the department and regional office and with the communities. We want to build bridges.

Mr. Guy André: Could we achieve more awareness if there were more counsellors?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Yes, without a doubt.

Mr. Guy André: Hiring more might be a solution. You have 10 counsellors, if I've correctly understood.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: We currently have eight, and we intend to have 10 to 12.

Mr. Guy André: So that's a measure you could put forward.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Yes.

Mr. Guy André: Are you aware of any other needs that Industry Canada could meet through other programs or services if it had a bigger budget?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Ignorance of the programs' existence is one of the recurring problems. What programs in place at various levels of government could the communities use? An inventory of accessible programs would be a good tool and could facilitate the lives of the communities.

Mr. Guy André: You say there's a lack of information on programs on your Web sites?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: When a community comes to see us, it's often equally interested in knowing about the programs offered by other federal government departments, by the provincial government or, in certain cases, by the municipal governments.

Mr. Guy André: Industry Canada needs to do a better job of matching the various sectors with its resources in order to communicate more information.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Yes, because we think Industry Canada has more of a role to play as a catalyst. We want to equip everyone so they have access to the programs already in place.

• (1020)

Mr. Guy André: Are you short of staff to do that work?

Ms. Mary Pavich: We've created a Web site called CommunAction, but we haven't really promoted it. Not yet. We've tested the Web site to determine the communities' information needs. We created the Web site, and we've already received a few requests from the communities. We'll add them, but, as my boss just said, those requests concern the links between the departments because everyone takes part in economic development. What are the links between the departments? Who does what? How do you register for these programs? With whom? Who are the contacts? What are the links with community economic development, in their broad outlines, in the communities?

Mr. Guy André: So we could make two suggestions: more counsellors to raise more awareness in our communities and better cooperation between the various levels to improve the distribution of information. Could any other action be taken?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: That's what comes to mind. Mary, can you think of anything else?

Ms. Mary Pavich: We've decided to invite representatives of the communities to come and tell program managers about their needs. That will be done for the first time this year.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Mr. D'Amours, it's your turn.

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

Ms. Larabie-LeSieur, you may find me a bit blunt, but earlier you referred to a 44% cut to the CAP budget. That's 44%, not 40%, if the figures I received are correct.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: That's correct.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: You said it was a matter of budgets. You're the Assistant Deputy Minister. Aren't you responsible at the department for establishing priorities and showing that official languages are important to the department?

There are two elements. We talked about community access centres earlier. What has to be so justified with regard to the Community Access Program? What has to be justified, when this has to be promoted, and before March 2006? First, how is it that it was terminated in 2004? Doesn't your department attach enough importance to it to review its budgets in order to ensure certain services are provided?

In New Brunswick, all the budgets of the community access centres were cut. Some centres had to close for lack of funds. I believe they'll be restored in March 2006, but the cuts will remain in place until then. I think the department has a responsibility under the Action Plan for Official Languages to ensure these services are provided.

I hope that, in the near future, there will be some leadership in the department that won't be merely political and budgetary and that will ensure that these amounts are restored. They're not just intended for the minority communities, but only that aspect is being considered. The rest was cut. So people no longer have any choice. Forty-four percent is nearly half the budget allocated. It was an exceptional service. That was a comment.

There's another subject I want to discuss with you. It's important, and I want answers. And that's the community radio stations. Community radio stations are development tools for the communities. For many regions, they aren't just community radio stations, they're the radio stations of the communities. That's even more obvious in the riding of my colleague from Saint-Boniface. It's a major priority in my riding. There are three community radio stations in my riding. That shows you how important those stations are. In many cases, they are the radio stations of the community, the one and only minority language radio station in New Brunswick. Do you intend, in the near future, to offer financial support to these organizations, which promote the community and make people aware of the importance of listening and speaking in the language of their choice?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: I entirely agree with you. It's a very important tool. Community radio stations are not currently one of our concerns. They're more the responsibility of Canadian Heritage, with which I'll be pleased to discuss the matter to see what kind of partnership we can consider. I agree with you. Radio is a powerful tool for community development, not only for economic development.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: You know, time passes while you're discussing matters with other departments. Community radio stations have to face certain realities right now. Wouldn't it be important to make this effort at Industry Canada, without always having to go through other departments?

• (1025)

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: We have to comply with the department's mandate. Radio and telecommunications are not part of it, except for spectrum management. As regards broadcasting, we have to work with Canadian Heritage. I believe this is an excellent idea. We're going to validate it with the communities in our next talks, and we may make it the subject of a more specific consultation.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Could the question also be addressed from an economic development perspective? Their mandate is a community mandate, but they're a real asset in economic development terms.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: I entirely agree. I believe that the social, economic and cultural aspects of development are related. Community development is also part of all that.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: If I understand correctly, you're going to have talks with Canadian Heritage to see how it would be possible to help the minority community radio stations.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Yes, and I'm also going to speak with the community representatives at the next meetings.

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

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Mary has just reminded me that the social economy can also provide the communities with promising outlets.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Is that your responsibility?

Ms. Mary Pavich: That's for Ontario.

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Here we're talking about the regional economic development agencies.

The Chair: That's Canada Economic Development in Quebec.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Would that be ACOA in New Brunswick?

Ms. Rachel Larabie-LeSieur: Yes.

Ms. Mary Pavich: Indeed.

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

The Chair: Thank you very much for being here with us and taking the time to answer every question. That completes the first part of our meeting. We'll now take a two-minute break. We'll then continue the meeting in camera and consider the future business of the committee.

[The meeting continues in camera]

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