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**Chair**

**Mr. Guy Lauzon**

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• (0905)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC)):** Good morning everyone. Welcome to the committee members and our witnesses.

We have two witnesses this morning: Mr. Daniel Jean and Mr. Marc Arnal. I believe that you will be sharing your time so that you can each make a presentation. Then there will be the first seven-minute round of questions.

Mr. Arnal, you may begin.

**Mr. Marc Arnal (Co-Chair, Community Side, Steering Committee Citizenship and Immigration Canada - Francophone Minority Communities):** Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

Ladies and gentlemen, first, I want to thank you for inviting us to take part in this meeting. Today, we are extremely pleased to present you with an overview of the progress in immigration as a result of the work done over the past four years by the Citizenship and Immigration Canada—Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee. As Minister Selinger from Manitoba said, this is clearly a federal title because it is so long.

On September 11, the Citizenship and Immigration Canada Steering Committee took another step forward with the launch of the five-years strategic plan on immigration. In actual fact, this is a 15-year plan, but targets have been set for the first five years. This strategic plan, which came out of the strategic framework, is the result of cooperation by many partners.

What is remarkable about our committee is that it brings together people from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, other federal departmental agencies with a stake in this issue, the Office of the Official Languages Commissioner, a number of provinces and community institutions for the Francophonie. Even with all these people, with some 40 or so individuals sitting around the table, we still managed to function, and I think we have achieved something quite remarkable.

For the communities, immigration has benefits that go beyond demographic statistics. I would refer you to the document for the list of those benefits.

We covered a great deal of ground in order to develop this strategic plan that we are presenting today. Five years have passed since the final report on the Dialogue round, organized by the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes du Canada,

recommended the creation of a national committee to develop an immigration action plan.

Four years ago, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration announced the establishment of the Steering Committee on which I am honoured to sit, along with representatives from the department and communities. Three years ago, the committee released its strategic framework, which is a key document because it contains the objectives that have guided their efforts since that time which include: increasing the number of French-speaking immigrants; enhancing the capacity of francophone communities to receive immigrants; and ensuring the economic, social and cultural integration of immigrants.

The plan we are talking about today continues the momentum initiated by the strategic framework by presenting three major policies that should guide the selection and focus of initiatives to be implemented: first, better integrating immigrants already settled within communities, which includes significant secondary immigration, particularly to western Canada; second, recruiting new immigrants; and, finally, integrating retaining and establishing these newcomers in communities.

For each of these policies, we propose a series of actions to be taken in various sectors and with various target groups. In order to ensure that this strategic plan produces results, each series of actions is accompanied by performance indicators that will allow us to determine if we have reached our goals.

Finally, still with regard to our three policies, the strategic plan identifies eight priorities for the 2006-2011 period: first, the implementation of and support for local networks responsible for coordinating francophone immigration to their region or their province; next, educating the local community; third, implementing English or French language training, based on needs, but within institutions of the francophonie where possible; fourth, research, in order to perfect our knowledge of what the reality is; fifth, supporting the creation of micro-enterprises; sixth, support for French language postsecondary institutions with regard to recruiting and integrating international students; followed by promoting and selecting potential immigrants; and finally, supporting French-speaking refugees.

When looking at these priorities, we see that there is much work yet to be done. In fact, we could say it has only just begun. Even if a number of things could be achieved through existing programs, the fact remains that some of these objectives require investments in new programs or the adaptation of existing ones. I am thinking of, for example, support for the creation of micro-enterprises and language training for the work place.

Obviously, implementing the plan requires a significant number of partners, such as federal institutions, provincial governments, municipalities, educational institutions, the private sector and community institutions.

The success of the strategic plan also depends on recruiting and establishing immigrants in the communities and reinforcing the capacity of those communities to receive those immigrants.

● (0910)

These objectives require increased cooperation from all the provinces. This also requires provincial involvement. We also believe in the importance of reinforcing language clauses in federal-provincial immigration agreements. For example, we are having trouble making Alberta understand a particular official languages clause.

Provincial commitment in this area makes a huge difference. For example, Manitoba is a leader in terms of initiatives to encourage immigration. Manitoba has set a goal of increasing the number of francophone immigrants from 4% to 7%. This province has adopted the means to achieve that goal by, for example, using the provincial nominee program. Manitoba's goal is 700 francophone immigrants out of 10,000, which is greater than the ratio of francophones in that province. We expect that this will have a restorative effect, as was the case with the Supreme Court rulings on French school boards.

I want to thank the support committee that coordinated the preparation of the plan and our consultant, Ronald Bisson, who worked with the committees.

In closing, I also want to thank everyone who helped us to get where we are today. I also want to say that the members of the Citizenship and Immigration Canada - Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee are depending on each and everyone of you to help us ensure that this plan is a success. It is important for our communities, obviously, but also for the development of Canada's values and languages.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Arnal.

Before allowing questions, we will hear from Mr. Jean.

**Mr. Daniel Jean (Co-Chair, Government Side, Steering Committee Citizenship and Immigration Canada - Francophone Minority Communities):** Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and members, I am pleased to be here today to talk to you about the Citizenship and Immigration Canada—Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee, its achievements to date and especially the priorities it has identified for the next five years. I am proud to co-chair the committee with

Mr. Marc Arnal, an ardent supporter of the program with extensive knowledge of francophone minority communities.

The steering committee was created in March 2002 to develop strategies to promote immigration to francophone minority communities. In November 2003, it released the strategic framework, which set out key objectives: increase the number of French-speaking immigrants to francophone minority communities and facilitate the reception and the economic, social and cultural integration of those immigrants into the communities. In March 2005, the steering committee published a progress report called *Towards Building a Canadian Francophonie of Tomorrow*, a summary of initiatives undertaken and planned between 2002 and 2006.

As you know, the steering committee launched its strategic plan at a media event in Winnipeg on September 11 that was attended by the Honourable Monte Solberg and the Honourable Josée Verner.

The strategic plan flows directly from the five objectives in the strategic framework, but more clearly identifies the challenges to be addressed, proposes focused actions for the next five years, and sets out a course for the long term. Marc Arnal has already presented the details of the plan to you.

When the strategic plan was launched, Minister Solberg announced the renewal of the steering committee's mandate for the next five years (2006-11) to ensure the implementation of the plan. The steering committee is made up of 10 CIC representatives from various branches and regional directorates, representatives from 12 federal departments, six provinces and one territory, one representative from the Francophone Intergovernmental Affairs Network, and 11 community representatives.

The success of the steering committee lies in the inclusion, contribution and commitment of key federal, provincial, territorial and community partners.

Examples of initiatives already undertaken include the new reception and settlement infrastructure within the francophone communities of Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg and Ottawa. Also, various tools have been developed to facilitate the integration of immigrants, like the reference guides on services available in French in six cities in Ontario. I would also like to emphasize the promotion and recruitment activities in countries like France, Morocco and Mauritius and the promotional events that were held in Nice, Brussels, Paris and Rabat to encourage skilled worker applications.

Tremendous progress has been made, but much remains to be done, especially as we officially begin to implement the strategic plan.

To ensure implementation, we will set up a committee smaller in size and reporting to the steering committee. This implementation committee will establish and support the necessary relations and collaborations, identify the need for studies and research, and follow up on the priorities and strategic directions identified by the steering committee, the regional and local networks and its federal, provincial and community partners.

Part of the funding to implement the five-year strategic plan will come from existing programs.

First, the Action Plan for Official Languages, launched in March 2003, allocated \$9 million over five years to CIC to promote immigration within francophone communities.

Second, the additional settlement funds announced in the 2006 budget will support some of the initiatives of the strategic plan. These new funds will be used to meet the immediate needs of immigrants by improving existing programs and developing pilot projects for target client groups, including francophone minority communities.

Third, we will rely on the leverage effect that can be created by forming strong partnerships with other departments, be it the Department of Heritage, the Department of Health or others.

Fourth, the implementation committee will examine the existing funding mechanism for the implementation of the strategic plan and will identify shortfalls to ensure its success.

I would also like to mention some data that may help you in understanding the strategic plan. In 2001, about 3.1% of immigrants were French-speaking people who immigrated to francophone communities outside Quebec. The strategic plan sets a goal of increasing the number of French-speaking immigrants to francophone communities outside of Quebec, from 3.1% of Canada's overall immigration to 4.4% by 2008.

I would like to point out that, in the plan, we have also changed the definition of what we deem to be an immigrant whose first official language is predominantly French. Consequently, the objective is even more ambitious.

Based on historical levels of immigration, that could represent between 8,000 and 10,000 French-speaking immigrants outside Quebec every year.

● (0915)

Thank you very much for inviting us to make this presentation today. We would be happy to answer your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Jean.

Before we start with the questions, there is something that caught my attention. You mentioned that reference guides on services in French had been developed for six municipalities in Ontario. Which ones?

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** Mr. Chair, I do not have the names of those municipalities here, but I would be pleased to send this information to you.

**The Chair:** That information would be very interesting.

After much deliberation, I think that Mr. Murphy from the official opposition will ask the first question. He has been chosen by his colleagues.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** It is an honour to have the support of my team.

Thank you for your presentations.

I represent the riding of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe. As you are no doubt aware, Dieppe is experiencing both economic and population growth. This city has a population of approximately 20,000 people, almost exclusively unilingual francophones. The city

of Dieppe has a policy based on respect for the official languages. The language of business for the municipality is French and, if necessary, English. As you may know, the neighbouring city, Moncton, is officially bilingual, and 40% of residents are French-speaking Acadians. Finally, with regard to education and training in our region, our schools offer English immersion programs.

In listening to your presentation, I got the impression that there are no problems in regions outside the major centres for immigration in this country, such as Toronto, Vancouver and others. No doubt you are trying very hard to improve the situation.

However, when I look at the table on page 18 of your strategic plan, I am surprised. In fact, despite what you have said and the efforts you have made—which I want to highlight because we appreciate your efforts a great deal—statistics show that, in Moncton, the heart of Acadia, where the highest percentage of francophones outside Quebec live, only 60 immigrants out of 10,000 can speak both languages when they begin the trip that will take them to Moncton.

Could you tell me, and the people of my riding, if that number is enough? Is there anything else that we could be doing?

● (0920)

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** It is clearly not enough, Mr. Murphy. These are people who immigrated in 2004 and who reported having a knowledge of French or of both languages, French and English. Indeed, the number is low. I think this demonstrates the scope of the challenge we face in general.

The figures for Moncton are also low. However, initiatives were undertaken in your region, and I think they have a lot of potential. In our strategic plan, we show how our foreign student program can be used as a lever to attract immigrants, in this instance, students who want to remain in Canada after completing their studies, to promote francophone immigration.

A few years ago, Citizenship and Immigration Canada began testing initiatives that are now implemented nation-wide. The first initiatives were tested in your region two or three years ago. Students were allowed to work for over a year at the University of Moncton and other institutions in the region, two years after receiving their diploma. That way, they can remain in the region much longer after graduating and find a job. They can ultimately apply to immigrate, either through the New Brunswick Nominee Program or our federal programs.

When we talk about research, this is the kind of measure that seems to have a much greater impact on whether immigrants remain in a region such as Moncton. Other provinces have implemented similar measures, and we hope that this will lead to better results.

**Mr. Marc Arnal:** If I may, I want to point out that, in my opinion, we need to consider three things. First, people in other countries know relatively little about our communities. We noticed this when we travelled to places like South America and Central Europe. In many cases, people think that French is spoken only in Quebec. So there is an information problem, and CIC is working with us to develop tools that will make information about our communities more accessible.

The second point may not pertain so much to Acadia. In that region, francophone communities, because of their history, have often had to isolate themselves. This is clearly the case in my home province where, until 1957, I was forbidden to learn French in French schools. The provincial Conservative government of the day changed the law. These events have left scars; our communities are much less open. I think that they are becoming more open now, and this is reason for optimism.

Third, we have realized that integrating immigrants into a geographic community is not quite the same thing as integrating them into a linguistic community. In Moncton, we are working with Magma, an organization offering bilingual services. However, the *Société des Acadiens et Acadiennes du Nouveau-Brunswick* is helping out by ensuring that people know that services are available in French, that they enroll in French schools and, with regard to post-secondary studies that there is the University of Moncton, for example.

These are all reasons for hope. Furthermore, the New Brunswick provincial government has hired people to recruit people outside Canada.

• (0925)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Arnal.

We will continue with Ms. Barbot.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for presenting your action plan to us.

The objective to bring in francophone immigrants to your community is very commendable and no one can criticize you for wanting to promote this issue. However, when I read your document, I am under the impression that it is based on lip service rather than actual data. Moreover, you yourselves have said on several occasions that the data used was not reliable and needed to be checked. In some instances, the data has been interpreted incorrectly.

For example, on page 5 of the strategic plan, you said:

The second group of challenges relates to immigrant mobility. An immigrant population is highly mobile.

I do not think that this is true, but let's say that it is. You also stated that people who have already been uprooted once are more likely to be uprooted again. I do not think that this is true. However, you asserted, in the following paragraph:

Between 1981 and 1995, the percentage of immigrants who still lived in their initial province of destination was 85% for all of Canada.

In other words, this data contradicts what was stated previously. As far as I am concerned, an 85% retention rate is wonderful; it is much higher than the retention rates of several regions in Quebec with respect to people born in the province. I feel that your interpretation proves the opposite of what you stated at the outset. I would like to hear your comments on the matter.

You then go on to say, in the same chapter:

No data on the mobility rate of French-speaking immigrants within Canada are available.

If the data on the community in general has been misinterpreted and, based on what you have said, there are no documents on

francophones, I am wondering what you have based your action plan on.

As regards the action plan itself, you said that Parliament intends to accept between 225,000 and 250,000 immigrants in 2006. During the launch, the target was set at 4.4% based on general data. If the number of immigrants remains the same between now and then, that would mean, based on your figures, that anywhere between 9,900 and 11,200 francophone immigrants per year could settle in a francophone community outside of Quebec. Moreover, you stated:

According to estimates, approximately 15,000 French-speaking immigrants should settle outside of Quebec over the next five years.

I am wondering what is true. You talk about 15,000 immigrants, but that figure represents only a quarter of the objective you set. In other words, your own estimates lead us to believe that the number of francophone immigrants will represent only to one quarter of your target. However, you have set your target at the maximum rate. This does not make sense to me.

Given that statistics are essential to assessing whether or not a program has been successful or failed, I would like you to provide us with data on the number of francophone immigrants who have opted to settle in a minority francophone community in 2004 and 2005; in other words, I would like to know what data you based yourselves on.

• (0930)

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** I will respond to your first question regarding the statement that immigrants are more mobile. The mobility rate for individuals born in Canada is 85% and this rate varies greatly from one region to another. We are making our comparison at that level.

With regard to the plan and our experience of the past few years, we decided to redefine the standard on francophone immigration. By redefining the standard, we are no longer talking about immigrants who voluntarily report having knowledge of French. We are now talking about immigrants whose mother tongue is not French, but whose first official language is French.

What we want are immigrants who will use French, who will settle in francophone communities and contribute to the vitality of those communities. After a few years, we realized that, based on available statistics, those who voluntarily reported having knowledge of French or English often had only a limited knowledge of French. Therefore, those individuals would not settle in francophone communities and live in French. We know that the availability of data is limited and I want to talk about this later.

Page 4 of the strategic plan reads as follows:

The Strategic Plan modifies the definition of the term "French-speaking immigrant" as an immigrant whose mother tongue is French, or whose first official language is French if the mother tongue is a language other than French or English.

Based on the former definition, the one to which Ms. Barbot is referring, we nearly reached our objectives at least twice in the past four years. However, we know full well that this definition will not give us the kind of French-speaking immigrants we want. Why?

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** Why then are you continuing to use this definition in the strategic plan? That is what I do not understand. You are saying that the reality shows that these immigrants will not settle in francophone areas. Therefore, the plan should be amended accordingly, in order to work.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** That is exactly why our forecast is for 15,000 people, instead of 10,000. If I were to tell you the number of individuals who are reporting having knowledge of French, that figure would be approximately 9,000 or 10,000 individuals.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** I am not asking you to tell me which figure is correct. Base your plan on what you consider to be the true figures.

**The Chair:** I am sorry but your time is up. I know that Mr. Godin has an extremely important question. Ms. Barbot can continue during the next round.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You talked about foreign students being encouraged to stay here after their arrival. That was what you said.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** Those who want to remain, yes.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Could not Canadian students studying abroad be good ambassadors to encourage new students to come to Canada?

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** Absolutely. It would be an excellent idea to use the networks of alumni who return to their home country. They could encourage new foreign students to come to Canada. Similarly, students who had a good experience in Canada could encourage other people to come here.

Yes, such individuals could probably be used as ambassadors.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You are talking about Canadians who go abroad.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** Yes.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That is a major decision. Last week, the government abolished funding for study-abroad programs. We have just lost all our ambassadors at foreign universities.

● (0935)

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** When you ask the question, you answer it.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Is there a problem?

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** That is not a question that I can answer.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I think that you can. You just said that Canadians who attend universities abroad could act as good ambassadors and encourage immigrants to study in our universities. Abolishing this program is therefore a poor decision.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** You are referring to a measure that was adopted last week. You are making assumptions about the impact of this measure could be. There will still be students who will study abroad. As I said, having Canadian students study abroad and talk to people about immigrating or coming here to study is a good thing, but if you consider all of our recruiting measures, this is but a secondary one. It is not really important.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Nevertheless, this is one of the measures that we now have. If this program is abolished, there would be fewer measures.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** We would have to look at what impact that will have on the number of students who continue studying abroad.

Usually students who study abroad try to acquire experience or study in a field where being abroad is advantageous.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You are contradicting yourself. My question is clear. Are Canadian students who study abroad good ambassadors? Could they encourage other people to come to our country, yes or no? Your answer was yes. If we were to abolish the program, we would lose some of the immigrants who come to the regions.

**Mr. Marc Arnal:** Mr. Godin, I believe that I can provide you with the view of the University of Alberta, as I am one of the deans there. Our university feels that it is important for our students to acquire international experience. This decision may affect the socio-economic profile of students able to participate in such exchanges.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Consequently, the people from lower-income groups who had an opportunity to get government money to assist them in studying abroad will no longer have this possibility. The children of wealthy families will not have this problem, since they can use their dad's credit card. However, the ordinary student will no longer be able to rely on the program.

**Mr. Marc Arnal:** Currently, my eldest son is studying in Japan, and dad's credit card is paying for it. I think that it is difficult to assess the impact of this decision, but your assumption and mine are plausible.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** My next question deals with immigration. What are you doing? I ask this question at nearly every meeting. We do not have much trouble attracting immigrants to the Acadian Peninsula. The problem is that our people immigrate and go to Moncton. That is our biggest problem. In the Moncton region, there are 20 francophones and 46 individuals who speak both languages. We do not have figures for the anglophones. As for the francophones, let us look at what is happening in the Atlantic provinces.

In Halifax, for instance, we are told that there are 18 francophones and 138 individuals speaking both languages. That is not very much for the Atlantic provinces. The francophones do not count for very much. What has happened on the francophone side?

With all due respect, I am proud of that. The figures for Quebec are not even included. I think that we need to have these figures so that we can understand the situation in Quebec. We have nothing about Quebec.

When we visit our embassies abroad, we try to find out what you are doing to encourage francophones to go to Canada. I do not see any mechanisms that have been set up. In some countries, in some of our embassies, there is not even any information available in French. What does the Department of Immigration have to say about that? We have been talking about this matter for a very long time. I personally have been asking this question of Immigration Canada for the past five or six years as part of our committee work.

I understand the people from Quebec. If they go to France, to Africa or certain key areas, they are not going to want to encourage immigrants to settle in Moncton. They will try to convince them to settle in Montreal or Quebec City. Do we have anything to counteract that? One would think that you are satisfied with having Quebec look after the francophones and having the anglophones go to the rest of Canada, to Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg and elsewhere. That is borne out by the statistics.

● (0940)

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** First, you have to accept the fact that what we are trying to do is hard. That can be seen from your question. Mr. Arnal described the situation earlier. It is clearly not just a matter of convincing immigrants that Moncton or Saint-Boniface is going to be their destination; it's a matter of convincing them to come and stay there. So it is not just a matter of recruitment; there is also an integration and retention effort involved. That is why this strategic plan covers all of these issues.

In terms of immigration, take the very good example of Manitoba. For years, that province had been dealing with demographic challenges. So why do you think that Manitoba is now managing not only to recruit immigrants, together with the federal government, but also to keep them? It is because they set up reception structures, targeted the type of immigrants who would want to stay in Manitoba and lastly, designed recruiting tools with us and developed some of their own. That is what we have to do. The job has to be done in several stages.

Research shows that if a person has lived temporarily in Canada, as a student or temporary worker, the chances of that person settling and staying in the community where he or she lived temporarily is much higher than for a person coming from a broad as an immigrant, first settling in Toronto, for example, and then deciding to go and live in Alberta because the job market was better there at that time.

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Mr. Jean, but I know Mrs. Boucher has a very important question to ask.

**Mr. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Good morning.

I find it a very interesting idea to promote the Francophonie by seeking out francophone immigrants for integration into minority francophone communities. That is a huge undertaking, but I think it could be beneficial in the long run and make the Francophonie what it should be.

Could you tell me how each of the minority francophone communities reacted to the strategic plan when you presented it? What was their reaction?

**Mr. Marc Arnal:** We have been working on this for four years. Our approach involves doing pilot projects here and there in the regions. So people see progress being made. They reacted well to the plan because in their view, it provides for more action and more longer term support. So there has been no criticism of the plan in the daily and weekly newspapers outside Quebec, quite the opposite.

Now, I think it is time to deliver the goods. One thing that is felt to be crucial is the establishment of intra-provincial networks so that we can see how things are going. At the same time, something has to be done about the attitudes of people living in our communities, for

the reasons I mentioned before. We have to make sure the people come and have a positive experience.

All that means a lot of work. But it looks like the communities are on board. It also entails—and this is not necessarily easy—a redefinition of our communities' identity reference points. It is no longer about the Canadian born, old stock francophones that our communities were talking about 10 or 15 years ago. The Francophonie has changed.

Had nothing been done, there would have been a crisis in Toronto and Ottawa. Indeed the Africans came, largely from Sub-Saharan Africa, and demanded to participate in our communities. Our communities were reluctant to alter their identity reference point. That is happening now, and it is moving at an incredible pace. I think that in 20 years, when people talk about what our communities are currently going through, they may say that they went through their own little quiet revolution.

**The Chair:** Did you want to keep going, Ms. Boucher?

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Godin was talking earlier about Quebec, which has its own immigration system. That does not take anything away from the francophonie.

You said that in terms of immigration, there will be readjustments in minority settings. On our side, federally, we have to help these people put in place a reception structure for immigrants.

Francophone immigrants recruited abroad come mainly from the Maghreb, Africa, etc. The main criterion for their integration into our committees is still having French as their first language, right?

● (0945)

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** Well, that is what we have been doing over the past few years when we have made targeted efforts with committees in certain population pools. As for immigrant integration, do not forget that when francophones go to work in Manitoba or Alberta, for example, English is the language of work. Not only are we going to help them integrate economically and socially, we may also give them English classes to help them find work.

**The Chair:** The first round is over. We will start the second round with Mr. Simard.

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

Welcome, gentlemen. I am sorry. I always have a meeting at 8:30, which causes me problems. If I ask any questions that you have already answered, do stop me.

As you know, I am from Manitoba and I am fairly familiar with the immigration program and how it works. In Manitoba, we have a policy of broadening the cultural space. We had no choice. Our numbers were dropping and, like Mr. Arnal said, the francophonie is changing in Manitoba. We have always pulled together to defend ourselves against outsiders, but the face of Saint-Boniface is completely changing. You find people there from communities from all over the world. It is refreshing and we have no problem with that.



The challenge is still with the funding. Our reception structure is quite small; there are just a few people working there. People want to come and settle in the francophone community. The problem is that it is very expensive to settle in our community. African francophones have even settled in Winnipeg's poor neighbourhoods where there are gangs, etc. We do not give them preferential treatment, but it still a huge problem.

Some families arrive with 12 or 14 children. Recently, two families arrived in the evening with 22 or 24 children. The situation is a challenge for people working in reception centres, who take them home. We are really at the beginning of the process. There are still some problems, but the main problem is with the funding.

Does your plan deal with that? It could be very expensive.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** All right.

The integration challenges faced by immigrants in general, which are certainly as substantial as ours, as well as certain challenges peculiar to francophone immigrants, led the government to announce a significant increase in funding for integration. Excluding Ontario and Quebec, \$77 million in new funding will be invested in the coming years. For Ontario alone, the figure is \$230 million.

These funds will be spent on immigrant integration programs. Clearly, some of that funding will promote immigration and help meet the specific integration needs of francophone immigrants.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** You also referred to Manitoba as an exemplary province.

I think provincial cooperation is probably key. The same thing will have to be done in the other provinces. For example, the provincial nominee program has been incredibly successful. The initial goal was 600 people. It has now passed the 8,000 mark, and the goal is to reach 10,000 people per year. It is a very targeted program. People are sought out to make up for specific labour shortages. The program works well.

The province has set a goal of at least 7% francophones, which is higher than the francophone population of around 4%. If we want to maintain our population, we have to exceed 4%.

As you can see, provincial awareness and cooperation are essential. Otherwise, it does not work.

The other problem is finding jobs. People come to our community and it is extremely hard to find them work. Although my office is not an employment centre, I have received some 20 requests for assistance. People who have been here for two or four years still have no work.

In Manitoba, we are seeing a new wave of immigrants from Quebec. Some people come and settle in Quebec first, and then come and settle in our community and elsewhere in Canada. It is a new and interesting trend.

I do not know if anyone has any comments on that, but I know that things are working well in Manitoba. However, our success comes with its share of problems. We are not well enough equipped to receive immigrants.

● (0950)

**Mr. Marc Arnal:** What started the whole movement in Manitoba was a mission to Morocco, where presentations were made. The *Société franco-manitobaine* wound up with some 20 people on its doorstep one fine day, and was not at all ready for them. That is what led to the establishment of structures.

Our problem, to date, is that the funding for these centres is often very ad hoc. In addition, we had to convince people that integration into a minority francophone community and integration itself were two distinct things. In fact, I said so earlier.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Arnal and Mr. Simard.

We will now go to Mr. Petit.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** Mr. Bouchard would like to speak.

**The Chair:** It is Mr. Petit's turn. Then it will be Mr. Bouchard's turn.

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** This is not the regular order, but I thank you.

My question is for Mr. Arnal. I am a member of the Conservative Party. The main subject of today's meeting is the plan presented by our minister, Mr. Solberg, entitled *Strategic Plan to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities*.

First of all, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that this is the only committee where there is unanimity, on this case, unanimity regarding the minority situation of francophones. So this is not about the linguistic duality. Our committee must go beyond partisanship, because we are all in a situation of survival around the table, since we are francophones. We set aside the partisanship that may be found in some other committees or issues. It is very important that we have solid support for the program. When Mr. Simard, from Manitoba, or Mr. Godin, from New Brunswick, talk to us, they need to feel that there is unity, because otherwise, your program will not work.

We may ask questions, but we have to present a common front, because we are all in a situation of survival. We all come from different provinces and we are all trying to find a way to enhance our culture and language throughout the country, throughout Canada.

You know, as I do, that the Conservative Party has created some tools. At the outset, some things must be acknowledged. We enabled Quebec to sit at UNESCO for cultural matters. We therefore have a vision. It must not be forgotten that Quebec is the centre and image of francophone culture are in Quebec. This did not exist beforehand.

In your presentation, you mentioned that immigrants like to have court services provided in French. You, like me, know what the language situation is like in the courts. In serious cases, we need to be able to understand the accused's language. Bill C-23, an Act to amend the Criminal Code (criminal procedure, language of the accused, sentencing and other amendments), which was tabled by the Conservative Party, ensures that the judge and the jury are able to understand the language of the accused.

Furthermore, we have just signed an agreement between Canada and France to assist, for instance, Haiti or the Democratic Republic of Congo, etc. As you can see, we are doing our best. You also said that when progress was achieved in the area of language rights for francophones in your province, it was the Conservative Party that had brought about the changes.

It is important that you be able to answer my question. We are working together for our survival because we are all francophones. Pierre Lemieux is a Franco-Ontarian, we have a Franco-Manitoban, a francophone from New Brunswick, a Quebecker and our chair is another Franco-Ontarian.

How are you going to do about this? You have drafted a strategic plan in cooperation with several federal departments, notably the Department of Citizenship and Immigration—we know that outside of Quebec, it is the Department of Citizenship and Immigration—the Department of Canadian Heritage, provincial and territorial departments and members from francophone communities. We know about this, and you spoke about this a short while ago.

This endeavour has enabled you to create some synergy amongst interested parties and to get the most out of will and vitality of the receiving communities. My question is therefore directed particularly to Mr. Arnal, unless Mr. Jean wishes to complete his answer. Could you provide the committee with some examples of initiatives that have come out of the communities to integrate immigrants? We have a problem with successful francophone minority communities. It has been implied that your strategic plan is pie in the sky. Do you have any examples that will show us that there have been some success stories? I am hoping that is the case.

● (0955)

**Mr. Marc Arnal:** Yes. There have been several. I think that we mentioned the fact that francophone communities had set up reception services in Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Toronto, etc. for francophone newcomers. I would also like to mention that we may have given the impression that Quebec was not involved in this initiative, but that is far from being the case. In Quebec, for instance, the SAIC subsidized a project making it possible for the Fondation de la tolérance, which is from Montreal, to visit francophone and immersion schools in Alberta. While not a huge grant, this \$8,000 made it possible to tour throughout the province. The purpose of this tour was to make people understand that any form of intolerance could eventually lead to extreme forms of intolerance.

Gerry Clément, who is the Assistant Deputy Minister at the Manitoba Department of Labour and Immigration, went to Nova Scotia for consultations. The Nova Scotia department wanted to know what Manitoba was doing to integrate official languages objectives into provincial immigration targets. Mr. Clément met and spoke with these people. Similar concepts are now being prepared in Nova Scotia. The Commissioner of Official Languages was asked to assess language provisions to determine their effectiveness. All kinds of things are happening. Immigration steering committees have been set up in all provinces of Canada, with the exception of Newfoundland, I believe.

In the Yukon, the Association franco-yukonnaise provides reception services to all immigrants who arrive there. As you can

see, things are moving. You think that nothing is happening or that everything is happening somewhere up in the clouds, but things are actually taking place at the grass-root level and changes are occurring.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Arnal and Mr. Petit. Your five minutes are over.

It is now Mr. Bouchard's turn.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your presentations.

You presented your strategic plan as well as the initiatives and objectives that have been established. I would like to know whether the francophone immigrants are more inclined to choose big cities such as Toronto or Vancouver and to settle there rather than opt for smaller communities.

When they settle in large cities such as Toronto, Vancouver or other large urban centres, how long does this French dimension remain vibrant as compared to the situation in smaller centres? Is it more viable in larger centres or in smaller ones?

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** At the outset, we know that 70% of immigrants—and here I'm referring to immigrants in general and not to francophone immigrants specifically—settle in the three main centres. It would appear that francophones are inclined to settle in urban areas, but not necessarily in the same numbers as immigrants in general.

In addition, we noted—and the plan refers to this—that francophone immigration was much weaker than general immigration and that creating relatively significant pools in Toronto or in Vancouver was definitely a good idea. Indeed, these pools will probably be able to attract people in the future.

As far as regionalization is concerned, the plan states that we want to continue encouraging immigrants to settle in all francophone communities able to integrate them. However, we are now saying that it would be beneficial, given our objectives and given the low francophone immigration rate in Toronto and Vancouver, to promote the creation of francophone immigrant pools in these areas.

● (1000)

**Mr. Marc Arnal:** Reaching a critical mass, whether it be in the region or in small towns, is a key factor. For example, we realized that the community had been changed substantially when 200 Congolese families from Montreal were settled in Edmonton. Now that these families have settled, they have their own organizations, their religious ceremonies, their groups. They are using the institution I run as a community centre, and that attracts other people.

I will give you the example of my wife, who immigrated from India. Upon arriving here, her family settled in Spirit River, which is located way up in northern Alberta. They were the only Indian family in northern Alberta. The members of her family travelled every weekend, for four or five hours, in order to be with other Indian nationals. They then moved to Edmonton because there was an Indian community there.

In my opinion, everything depends on whether or not there is a critical mass in these locations. I think that you will see, during the next census, that the immigration rate in Edmonton, particularly immigration from sub-Saharan Africa, has increased considerably. This phenomenon is basically, the result of families we received in from Quebec.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** I am going to put the ball back into your court.

The key is to reach a critical mass of immigrants from the same ethnic or religious group. And yet, if this is your premise, I would like to be sure that the challenge for integration is not to set up ghettos or ensure that there is some place where 200 Congolese can set up their own institutions. The purpose of integration should be to enable these people to become full citizens. Based on your example, I do not get the impression that this is the case.

We are increasing the number of immigrants, but are we increasing the resources that will be needed for cultural purposes? Is the community making more efforts to assume responsibility for these individuals? I do not know.

Are you aware of programs that worked well? For example, in Sherbrooke or, more recently, in Saint-Hyacinthe, immigrants were retained because of work. Your document does not mention work whatsoever. When we talk about it, it is all very interesting and lots of things are discussed. There is this action plan and what is really happening, which perhaps explains why it is as though this was well done in a vacuum. I get the impression that this action plan was put together very quickly in order to satisfy I do not know what need, but it does not reflect reality. That is too bad.

I have the impression, when I read this action plan, that people are not aware of the work that you are doing and of all the efforts made.

You said that the local coordinating structures will emerge from the communities. You also talked about networks. You said that you have been given funding. However, these groups have just had their funding cut off.

How can we, as a state, as a government, base our objectives on groups when we know that they do not have the means to do this work?

**The Chair:** Please provide a brief response.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** There are three very important points. First of all, the plan is very clear. Social and economic integration within all of the communities receiving these immigrants is very important. We are certainly not trying to create ghettos. Mr. Arnal said that having a critical mass creates a comfort zone, enabling immigrants to develop in their community. That is important.

Secondly, the plan states very clearly that its success depends on employing students and economic workers. This is very important. There is no point in recruiting immigrants if we cannot keep them in the community because we have no work for them.

Thirdly, as far as funding is concerned, I do not know what programs you are referring to and which have allegedly been cut. Funding for integration has been increased by \$307 million, with \$77 million going to provinces other than Quebec and Ontario, and

with \$230 million as part of the Canada-Ontario agreement. So the funding has been increased.

• (1005)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Jean.

It is now Mr. Godin's turn.

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

In 2002, the Commissioner of Official Languages published a report entitled "Official Languages and Immigration: Obstacles and Opportunities for Immigrants and Communities". Does your plan deal with the obstacles highlighted in this report?

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** We have covered a great deal of ground since this report was published. In 2002, further to discussions with the Commissioner of Official Languages, we included, at the outset of the process, very clear objectives in our act. We want to promote the linguistic vitality of francophone communities. We established a strategic framework. Since then, we have all of the concrete tangible measures which we referred to today. We have done a great deal of work on our integration plan.

Does all of that respond to the challenges noted in 2002? Probably not. Let us be honest, we still have a lot left to do. We changed the numbers. The objective is even more ambitious than it was when our first publication came out, in 2003.

Progress has been accomplished. The most recent report published by the Commissioner of Official Languages clearly pointed out that the future and vitality of francophone communities depend on changes in the diversity of francophone communities.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mention was made of the reception services set up in several large cities. Mr. D'Amours is not here, but I believe that he had a pilot project in the Madawaska region.

**Mr. Marc Arnal:** It was in Saint-Léonard.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That is correct.

Was this reception service successful? Did the province and the federal government participate in this project, as a partnership?

**Mr. Marc Arnal:** That is correct, the provincial government participated in this project and, on the federal side, Immigration Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the department responsible for rural development all participated. I believe that this project worked rather well, but it also had its problems, created by a difference in opinion between the main promoter of the project and certain members in the community.

Another reception service has been established in Prince Edward Island. It is starting to get off the ground now. The project was running well for a certain while in Saint-Léonard, but there are currently some problems. It did, however, enable us to set up another development centre in Prince Edward Island. This one appears to be running well because it does not have the interpersonal conflicts encountered in Saint-Léonard.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I would think that if I were an immigrant, I would need some support, but perhaps not. I see Mr. Petit smiling.

It is important to know what resources have been earmarked for this activity. Is money available? Are there any regulations? Is there such a centre in Moncton? I know that we don't have one in my region, in the Acadian Peninsula.

**Mr. Daniel Petit:** Immigrant integration and orientation programs do exist. We have programs that provide them with certain tools, particularly language training, etc. The francophone reception centres try to satisfy some very particular requirements. I recently visited the centre in Edmonton. The centre provides, for example, homework clubs for young children. You can imagine the situation where a family of immigrants whose mother tongue is French decides to settle in Edmonton. Both the father and mother are working, so they are in the process of integrating economically into Canada. Their child attends French school. Our traditional immigration services would have not been able to provide this type of support for the children. They can now deal with the reception centre and there is a website for immigrants, where all of the services are provided in French. The reception centre has produced a variety of publications.

• (1010)

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin, your time is up.

This morning, we have a special guest, the Honourable Mauril Bélanger, who will ask you a question.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I would like to congratulate the Faculté de Saint-Jean. Now that I am in the opposition, I have learned to enjoy the summers a bit more. My wife and I indulged in a vacation in Tunisia. I met with our ambassador there, on a courtesy call. He told me that the next week, there was going to be a forum on education. I asked to see the list of Canadian institutions that were going to be participating and saw to my great delight that the Faculté de Saint-Jean was one of them, as was the Université de Moncton, by the way.

Mr. Godin, I must tell you that to my great disappointment, the University of Ottawa was not there. I went and spoke to them about it afterward! Please convey my congratulations to the Faculté de Saint-Jean.

I have a few questions to ask. There was a goal of increasing the percentage to 4.4%. Where are we at with that today?

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** Under the strategic plan, that standard was redefined. The old standard had to do with immigrants who voluntarily declared on their immigration application that they knew French or English. Of course, only in the economic class is knowledge of English or French assessed objectively and with tools. No assessment is done for the other classes. After assessing that objective for a few years, it was decided that that was not really what we wanted. We are now targeting immigrants whose first language may not be French, but of Canada's two official languages, it is the first one they know. It is their dominant official language when they come to Canada. We want to bring this kind of people into the communities. If you measure the current results against the old objective, you can see that we are very close, but the objective has been redefined. We want it to be immigrants whose dominant official language is French. As a result, our objective is far more ambitious.

We probably won't reach it for 10 or 15 years, but it is a much more laudable goal.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Don't forget that the objectives have to, to some extent at least, come from the act. It says in the preamble to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act that Canada's immigration programs have to respect and reflect the country's current demographics. The 4.4% objective came from the act, in a way. So we can't stray too far from that either.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** That's right, and that's why we have kept the 4.4% objective. However, since we also have a more ambitious standard, we need to give ourselves more time to meet it.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I have another question. The department has a new program that municipalities are currently participating in. I think it might be called Emerging Cities. Do you know what I am talking about?

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** In our agreements with the provinces—as you know, immigration is an area of shared jurisdiction—cities are encouraged to become increasingly active in immigration. Under the agreement with Ontario, there is also a tripartite agreement that will be signed with the City of Toronto.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I am very aware of the agreement reached between Canada and Ontario. I insisted that there be a role for the AFMO, the Francophone Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

I would like to give you an example. I went to Halifax, and the municipal authorities were patting themselves on the back. They were proud because they had finally become active in immigration issues. I asked them whether their program had a language component, and the answer was no. I was surprised that the department did not insist that there be such a component in the programs they participated in. Municipalities are interested in such programs because they realize that their populations are declining. Because the department did not insist on making language a prerequisite, there was no such component.

• (1015)

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** Concerning provinces, they have been encouraged to imitate what is being done in Manitoba, that is to say to adopt specific objectives for Francophone immigration in order to promote it.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Don't you think that we should maybe do more than only encourage? Isn't there a legal prerequisite, Mr. Jean? I ask you with all due respect.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** In the agreements signed with the provinces, we included a provision asking them to make efforts in this respect. On a practical level, we want to show the other provinces the results achieved by such initiatives as those in Manitoba, in order to encourage them. We also hold meetings with the communities in the municipalities and provinces so that they encourage their provincial authorities to do the same.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately your five minutes are up.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I would like to put my name in for the next round, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Very well.

Ms. Barbot, you have the floor.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** I would like to come back to the initial document. The plan sets out the general strategies, priorities and examples of initiatives, but does not describe the process that led you to develop this plan.

Could you describe your approach? How were you able to develop this plan? With whom did you meet in your consultations?

**Mr. Marc Arnal:** I think I can describe the process and tell you what, in my view, was the key element.

The people around the table came from various communities, bringing with them their local issues. There were also representatives from various departments, with their list of programs, criteria, regulations, etc.

I believe that our approach started to bear fruit once people—as Mr. Petit said earlier—considered the problem, and not their programs or geographic locations. From that moment on, we were able to develop an action plan that is, in certain respects, suitable and not overly aggressive.

For example, everything having to do with housing—Mr. Simard addressed this earlier—is a phenomenal problem. All you have to do is come to Edmonton to understand that the Francophone neighbourhood is one of the areas that are in greatest demand and where house prices are at the high end. That leads to problems.

There is also the question of international tuition fees. Quebec and a number of Francophonie member States have reached bilateral agreements, under which foreign nationals pay Quebec tuition fees. Provinces that compete with Quebec for students and charge \$16,000 a year for school tuition have to be very persuasive. There are some issues that we have not talked about, but do exist.

I believe that the plan does reflect a consensus. I am most proud of the fact that people who attended the meetings put aside their personal circumstances. They wanted to settle a collective problem by using their various skills, but not limiting themselves only to the programs they were required to work with.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** Within the same context, I would like to know on which analyses you based your decision not to exclude Toronto and Vancouver from the preferred areas where francophone immigrants could establish themselves?

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** This comes back to the issue of critical mass Mr. Arnal referred to earlier. The numbers are so small that the problem of concentration, which exists for immigration in general, does not apply here.

In fact, having pools of a few hundred francophone immigrants settle in Toronto or Vancouver is a good way to establish francophone immigration in those areas. This is how we came to that conclusion.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Jean and Ms. Barbot.

Mr. Shipley, you have the floor.

• (1020)

[English]

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Thank you for coming out.

It's interesting. I'm filling in this morning and appreciate the opportunity to be here.

As I look through the original part of your study, on page 17, I'm wondering about the number of immigrants settling outside Quebec who claim to know French and English. Then there's the superior knowledge of French as opposed to English, and then the superior knowledge of English as opposed to French.

When we look at the number of immigrants who have come in since 2002 to 2004, there's about a 20% total increase. The number of immigrants who have a superior knowledge of French has dropped, and the number who have a superior knowledge of English, as opposed to French, has risen.

In terms of working knowledge and the ability to settle into your community, be fluent, and work, can you help me to understand the significance of those numbers and what they actually mean?

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** Actually, this one of the reasons we justify changing the performance measure we've been using. As I said, if we were to go with what was put in place in 2003—4.4%—we're very close to meeting that objective, because that was based on people who declared voluntarily on their application for immigration that they knew French.

First of all, we know there's a bit of inflation on what people declare as their actual proficiency. In the immigration program, there's only one category for whom we measure objectively with tests, the knowledge of French or English, and that's the skilled workers, that's the economic class. The table you refer to refers to the economic class.

So when you look at more reliable measures and see the percentage of immigrants who had French as their first official language—their mother tongue may be different, but French was their first official language—you can see that in 2002, based on our data, it was 75%, and in 2004 it was 89%.

There may be some danger with the 2002 figure, because 2002 was the year when our new act came into force. and It was also the year when we started to use objective testing for all immigrants. So the data for 2002 may be reflecting a higher preponderance of “French as first official language” proficiency than is actually the case when you measure objectively.

What we mean by that is that when you come under family class, we don't measure your language proficiency. When you come as a refugee, we don't measure your proficiency. The only category that we really know, because we test with objective, standard tests, is the economic class of skilled workers.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** So there may be some interpretive measures needed in terms of understanding what those actual numbers are about then because of the kickoff in 2002.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** Absolutely, and that's why, in redefining the performance measures, we said we think we'll probably be welcoming, on average for the next three years, 5,000 people for whom French is their first official language. In order to bring it to 10,000, which is our objective, it's probably going to take us ten to fifteen years.

And we also admit in the study that the data that is currently available—whether it's obtained through our research tools in CIC or whether it's obtained through the census data—does not give you good information about immigrants whose first official language is French.

The census data gives you mother tongue, but it does not tell you, for somebody whose mother tongue is some African language, whether actually their first official language is French. This is where we have gaps in the data, and that's why it's so challenging for us, so we need to invest some attention to this.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Then I hear that part about the attention likely being redirected to some of those issues.

I had the opportunity only this morning to take a look at this. In terms of your strategic plan initiatives, can you quickly talk to me a bit about how you feel they can be effectively implemented within community groups?

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** I think what we say there is that we believe we now have pools in various provinces where the communities, in terms of awareness, are ready to welcome new immigrants and embrace diversity, in terms of having vibrant francophone communities. They have welcoming infrastructure and the potential to go and target immigrants who are not only going to be recruited but are going to stay in their communities. We believe we have a number of successful networks that can be established. That's where we want to favour our attention.

• (1025)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Shipley and Mr. Jean.

We are going to Mr. Godin for five minutes, with the last question of this round.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** We are talking about supporting immigrants, and I would like to give you an example of something happening back home in my riding. There's a physician who has been living in our community for the past few years. His family comes from an African country. He has settled among us and has a good reputation. He would like his mother-in-law to see her grandchildren—and this might be the only opportunity for her to do so—and the place where his family has settled, but Citizenship and Immigration Canada refuses.

Is this normal? The woman is 85-years-old; how likely is it that she would remain here? In such a case, can we say that we support immigrants?

I would be ready to sponsor her coming here and ensuring that she returns home. We have to consider the human side of such a situation. An immigrant should not be allowed to come here and then be told that he cannot see his family. I believe this is completely

inhuman. I have been working on this case for almost a year and I am trying to help the grandmother see her grandchildren.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** Thank you for your very good question Mr. Godin.

I suppose that this person would come as a visitor?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Yes, as a visitor.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** We definitely have—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I think the physician will have the means to pay for her meals once she is here.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** Over the past two years, we have instructed our missions to encourage them to assume certain risks with regard to visitors, particularly parents and grandparents. As you know, the waiting period for parents and grandparents who want to be sponsored as immigrants is quite lengthy. Of course, these people have to be given medical screening, among other things.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I understand that, but I only have two minutes left.

We talk about attracting immigrants to rural regions such as ours. You have to understand, we are not in Toronto; an immigrant will not likely be able to hide in a city like Bathurst, which is small. It is a small community, and everyone knows one another. I know the physician, as well as his wife. I am sure that the grandmother will board the plan to go back home.

I find it is completely inhuman to attract an immigrant to a rural region and then not be able to help him. I am currently giving a statement to Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Their people are not acting appropriately at all. They are not showing openness towards rural communities, where there are no immigrants. In the few communities where there are some, they cannot even help them.

It is possible that the physician could lead a good life in Toronto, where there are many Africans and their families, but back home, he is alone and cannot even receive his own mother-in-law, who wants to visit her grandchildren.

I'm not expecting an answer. This is a message I want to send to Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** From a systemic point of view, I totally agree with you. I do not know what is wrong in this specific case, but I am certainly willing to discuss it with you after the meeting.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** Allow me to add that this case is not unique. In my riding, a vast majority of immigrants, and this is systematic...

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Ms. Barbot, but Mr. Godin has not finished.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** Indeed, I did not ask for your permission to speak, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I must say that this is a broad problem. An immigrant who moves to a small rural region will be isolated, because such regions do not attract a vast number of immigrants.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** Generally, Mr. Godin, Canada accepts 82% of people applying for a visa every year. Of course, there are specific cases or circumstances. You have informed me of a specific case, and I would be pleased to speak about it with you later, given that we cannot talk about it publicly.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I realize that full well, and that is why I did not mention the name of the person in question.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** I am familiar with Bathurst. I come from Matane, in the Gaspé.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have but 12 minutes left to do another round of questions.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** We will run out of time.

**The Chair:** Indeed.

Each member could have two minutes, but I do not know if this is the will of the committee members. Do you want to go around the table one more time?

**Mr. Daniel Petit:** We should be allowed to have two more minutes.

**The Chair:** All right then, we will go around the table one more time, and each member will have two minutes.

• (1030)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Chair, I have four questions to ask. I would be willing to obtain the answers in writing.

First, there was a problem regarding the recognition of credentials for Francophone immigrants. In fact, professional bodies often conduct their business in English. Can you tell me whether any progress has been made in this respect? If not, what will be done to persuade and, if need be, force professional bodies to recognize the credentials of Francophone professionals?

My second question regards the language training of refugees, primarily. It appears that outside Quebec, except for perhaps one place in Ottawa, not much is happening in French.

Is this still the case? As well, what is the reason for the reluctance to provide immigrants and refugees who are neither Anglophone nor Francophone with training in both official languages? Frankly, Canada could perhaps be encouraging bilingualism, not unilingualism.

Third, the Official Languages Action Plan launched by the previous government in 2003 contained a \$9 million commitment for immigration. It appears that this amount will have to be increased to implement the action plan.

Mr. Arnal, in your opinion, how much money would be needed to renew the action plan from 2008 through to 2013?

Lastly, the current government seems to be heading towards a proactive immigration policy, that is to say it will choose refugees or, at least, focus on something different from what we have at present.

Mr. Jean, what discussions were held and what decisions were made, if any, with regard to the strategy of choosing refugees? If this is the government's strategy, will it be looking for Francophone

refugees? Up until now, my understanding is that all the refugees selected by the government were not Francophones.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bélanger, that is exactly...

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** These are quite interesting questions, and I would like to get some answers.

**The Chair:** We move on now to Mr. Lemieux.

You have two minutes.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** I would like to say that I am pleased with the plan you have submitted. In my view, you have examined the existing problems and challenges and have tried to target your efforts in order to overcome them. Your plan contains specific measures and objectives. I appreciate the fact that there are federal, provincial, regional and community objectives to be achieved over a five-year period. Indeed, it takes time to obtain concrete results.

For an immigrant, the decision to move to a given area is complex because it involves a number of factors. These include the size of the city, cost of living, employment and the region's accessibility.

I would like to know how you intend to integrate all these factors in your next reports. As an incentive for immigrants, you try to target the minority language issue. However, there are other issues, beyond your control.

How will you take these factors into consideration, when you report on your data and achievements?

**The Chair:** Can you answer in 30 seconds, please.

**Mr. Marc Arnal:** We do not claim to have all the answers. However, one of the things we did regularly was to consult with Quebec, which has made great efforts to integrate people into rural communities. The government of Quebec is cooperating with us in this area. There are a series of factors we don't know about and which vary from one population to another. We might ask ourselves, for example, whether the availability of health services in French is a factor. We do know, however, that the attitude of people in host communities is a factor.

There is a research component in our application. We need to ensure that this research is carried out, that researchers examine these questions and that in two, three, four or five years, we have a clearer understanding of the factors that might affect integration and retention.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Arnal.

Mr. Bouchard, you have two minutes.

• (1035)

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be brief.

You said that you did a tour of South America were surprised by the fact that, when asked about Canada, people associated the French fact only with Quebec. I would like to know whether your strategic plan includes measures to change this perception among immigrants. In fact, I believe that in many embassies around the world, Canada is perceived as a purely Anglophone country.

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** First, in recent years, we have been using material dealing with Francophone communities in minority situations. We have made it available to our embassies abroad. We are currently developing a Web portal, which will be a gateway for immigrants looking for information. There is an enormous number of people who visit our Web site for that purpose. It is a good tool to promote French communities across Canada and provide information on host communities. Furthermore, we will definitely continue to raise our staff awareness.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We will now move on to Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Given that French and English are Canada's two official languages, I was wondering, when immigrants are invited to come here, whether they are offered training on our laws. Are they told that Francophones can live and work in their own language? Is there a program to inform immigrants that they can feel comfortable living in French, and that Canada is a great country where the French fact is not only used for promotional purposes?

**Mr. Daniel Jean:** I would like to say two things. First, regarding integration programs, there is an orientation program that deals with institutions and those kinds of things.

Second—and this is where there is a specific need—there are Francophone reception centres and arrangements such as those described by Mr. Arnal a little earlier when he spoke about the city of Moncton, where there is an arrangement between Francophone communities and our integration service providers, whereby this kind of information is given to immigrants.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** And yet, if there are no French brochures in an embassy, it will be difficult to convince people to come to Canada by telling them about our Official Languages Act, that they will be served in French, that they will be able to stand up for their rights in French and, if they have any problems with that, that they will even be given money to challenge the government in court.

**Mr. Marc Arnal:** We have invited people from Foreign Affairs to sit at our table, in order to raise their awareness of this issue. We cannot hide the fact that there were two types of disinformation. There were people who came to Canada and who believed that they would be able to speak in French to all passersby on Main Street in downtown Edmonton. Imagine their disappointment!

Then, there are people who believe that the Francophonie stops at the Ottawa River. It just doesn't work that way.

We are working with people from Foreign Affairs and CIC to better represent Canada abroad. The fact that we had an ambassador to Morocco who was from Alberta has also greatly helped us. She worked hard with her colleagues to raise their awareness of Canada's makeup.

**The Chair:** This concludes our session. I would like to thank all my colleagues, as well as Messrs. Jean and Arnal.

We will suspend the meeting for two minutes.

*[The meeting continues in camera]*

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