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Mr. Guy Lauzon

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• (0910)

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP)): I'd like to begin by wishing you all a good morning. As you know, the Standing Committee on Official Languages is currently on a cross-country tour. This is the first tour the committee has done in 25 years, since it was created. Last year, or two years ago, we decided to do this cross-country trip to meet people on the ground. This did not happen because of the election. We therefore started over. The election can come quickly to Ottawa and that is why we decided to get off to an early start this time around.

It is a great pleasure for this parliamentary committee to meet with you and to listen to you. Sylvie Boucher, Pierre Lemieux and Daniel Petit represent the Conservative government. To my left, is Jean-Claude D'Amours, who represents the official opposition, and Ms. Viviane Barbot, who represents the Bloc Québécois. My name is Yvon Godin and I represent the NDP. Normally I would be sitting beside Ms. Barbot. We have other people with us as well, the research staff, the clerks and the interpreters.

The committee gave itself the mandate to meet with people in their own regions, for the purposes of discussing the \$700 million action plan for minorities and assessing the current situation. At the same time, we would also like to learn about the health network situation.

We therefore welcome you. There will be three groups. Each group will have eight minutes. You were perhaps told that this would be three minutes, but I think that with eight minutes we will have had time to hear what you have to say. We will then move on to questions. Each questioner will have five minutes. We'll try to do a few rounds.

Who will begin?

Ms. Rauzon-Wright.

Mrs. Nicole Rauzon-Wright (President, Réseau franco-santé du Sud de l'Ontario): Good morning, my name is Nicole Rauzon-Wright. I am the volunteer President of the Réseau franco-santé du Sud de l'Ontario (Franco Health Network of Southern Ontario). Thank you so much for having invited us this morning. I am here today, along with Jean-Marc Boisvenue, to talk to you about the situation of French-language health services in Ontario, more specifically in Southern Ontario.

It is through the Société Santé en français that we obtained funding for Setting the Stage, a French-language health services planning project. This is a national initiative. Thus, this is not only happening in Ontario, but throughout Canada. The project is funded

by Health Canada through the Primary Health Care Transition Fund. It covers official language minority communities.

Mr. Jean-Marc Boisvenue (Executive Director, Réseau franco-santé du Sud de l'Ontario): Access to French-language health services in Ontario is by no means a new issue, having been of concern to both the community and the provincial government for some time. However, despite the progress that has been made since the adoption of the French Language Services Act in 1986, in Southern Ontario access to primary health care services in French is far from guaranteed. At the heart of the problem are a number of factors: few or no recognized access points, a shortage of French-speaking human resources, poor utilization of the existing resources, programs poorly tailored to the needs of Southern Ontario's diverse francophone communities, and francophone scant input into the planning and management of primary health care services.

Mrs. Nicole Rauzon-Wright: The Franco Health Network of Southern Ontario serves a vast territory extending from Penetanguishene in the north to Welland in the south, and from Peterborough in the east to Windsor in the west. The politicians around this table could never do any door-to-door campaigning because this is a vast territory.

Southern Ontario is a region of contrasts, marked by diversity and urbanization. A majority of the francophones belonging to a racial minority are found in Southern Ontario's major urban centres. The approximately 175,000 francophones in Southern Ontario are spread over 27 census divisions and form part of a total regional population of over 9 million.

Besides being in the minority in the province, we are also a minority within the smaller areas, that is, all the municipalities and all the counties. Although this francophone population constitutes the second largest concentration of francophones in the province—31.9% of the provincial total in Southern Ontario—it makes up only 1.9% of the total population of Southern Ontario.

This is what is happening in our region: there's absolutely no respect for the official language, that is French. We're constantly being compared to racial minorities, because they tend to be involved in a particular sector. For example, in the York region, we've been told that we are not a priority because it's much more important to focus on the Chinese population or the Italian population. The principle of the official languages is applied to newcomers to this country and yet there is no acknowledgement of French as an official language and the rights of francophones to demand services in French, especially health services.

Mr. Jean-Marc Boisvenue: These were the primary components of the work plan for Setting the Stage: a concerted action by the four Ontario networks; collaboration with government authorities; and collaboration with other provincial agencies.

It came as no surprise, in French please, that the two main conclusions of STS, Setting the Stage project, are that Southern Ontario is almost completely lacking in French-language health services and that francophones in the south wish to be served in their own language. Southern Ontario has only two francophone community health centres and six other health agencies that are fully or partially designated under the French Languages Services Act.

This is what people are experiencing. Seniors go to hospitals to obtain services. They have medical problems and they speak English with difficulty, but there is nobody there to speak to them in their language and thus avoid the potential for wrong diagnoses.

Take, for example, Jean-Marc Boisvenue, in Eastern Ontario, who is accustomed to having a family physician speak to him in French, as well as to his family. When he moves to London he has a hard time finding a physician. He therefore goes to a clinic where anyone can go, and takes a number. He speaks to a physician who tells me, because he works in the area of health research, that he does not understand why francophones wish to have services in French when they can speak English. We're not talking about 1950; we're talking about May, 2006.

Today, we want you to understand this above all: contexts vary. As the president stated, Southern Ontario is not Eastern Ontario, nor is it Northern Ontario. Even in New Brunswick, the context is not the same because of the potential critical mass of francophone communities. It is therefore important to emphasize the word context. There is a notorious lack of availability of French-language primary health services throughout Southern Ontario.

Finally, we drafted recommendations under our study. The recommendations of the Franco Health Network of Southern Ontario addressed the four strategic priorities identified at the provincial level, namely access points, human resources, training and prevention, and the planning and management of services. These priorities are keys to the development and implementation in Ontario of quality primary health care in French.

● (0915)

Mrs. Nicole Rauzon-Wright: I would now like to talk to you about health promotion and diseases prevention.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You have one minute left.

Mrs. Nicole Rauzon-Wright: Perfect.

We want health promotion and disease prevention to be the cornerstones of the francophone effort to take responsibility for their health, and that these approaches be based on a holistic vision of health and emphasis on health determinants, while also taken vulnerable groups into account.

Allow me to give you an example. Public health representatives, whose mandate is health promotion and disease prevention, are going to our francophones schools to talk about promotion and prevention in English only. On the other hand, other francophone

representatives are going to English schools and talk about promotion and prevention in English.

This makes no sense. The resources are not being used effectively to provide quality health services in French. I think this is because there is no acknowledgement of the obligation to provide health services in French to francophones in Ontario.

In conclusion, I would like to talk to you about planning and management within the network. We offered our services to the province in order to be able to act as agents for the LHINs, the local health integration networks, that conduct planning activities and health promotion. It is therefore important to have a support agreement with the federal government.

Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

Mr. Laliberté, you have the floor.

Mr. David Laliberté (President, Centre francophone de Toronto): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Could you please introduce your organization, for the record.

Mr. David Laliberté: I am the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Centre francophone de Toronto. My colleague, Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier, is the Executive Director. Our presentation will be brief.

For approximately 30 years, the Centre francophone de Toronto has been offering a broad range of services to Franco-Torontonians: clinical health, mental health, health promotion, settlement services and employment services for newcomers, legal aid services, early childhood centres and cultural services. Our centre is a type of gateway for the Franco-Torontonians Community.

We will attempt to give you a overview not of the francophone community in Ontario, which is much larger, but rather of the Franco-Torontonians Community specifically.

Our clientele has evolved considerably over the past few years. It is now mainly made of newcomers from countries such as the Congo, Tunisia and others. Therefore, the centre's clientele is mainly made up of newcomers living in urban areas.

This change of our clientele has changed our centre. It is important to remember that the Franco-Torontonian community differs from other communities that you met in Moncton, St. John's and elsewhere.

I believe that you have a copy of the document we submitted in French and English. We would like to be constructive and to give you concrete recommendations. That is why this document contents specific recommendations for the federal government, that focus increasing our partnerships with the various federal departments, such as Services Canada, Citizenship and Immigration, Heritage Canada, to name only a few.

Page 2 of our document lays out some principles that reflect the Official Language Action Plan and that the federal government should taken into account when it implements its own plan.

First, it is essential that services be set up in multi-disciplinary centres. I referred earlier to the concept of gateway or single window. This concept is very important in a city like Toronto, where the francophone community is spread over a rather vast territory where there is no francophone neighbourhood.

Services must be delivered by cohesive teams that have a critical mass of francophone stakeholders. The organizations must be well networked in the communities they serve and be linked to all the other smaller community organizations working in Toronto, so that they meet the needs of the community adequately. These organizations should be community governed, which is the case for the Centre francophone de Toronto. Our board of directors is a reflection of the francophone-Torontonian community.

I will now give the floor to my colleague, Jean-Gilles, who will speak to various issues in the health sector.

• (0920)

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier (Executive Director, Centre francophone de Toronto): David mentioned that the Community Health Centre is a multi-service centre and, in that respect, we truly are at the very core of primary health care services in Toronto. We offer a variety of services in this area and in French only.

We therefore have physicians, nurses, dieticians, social workers, mental health workers, etc. We have observed lately that Health Canada's recently funded regional French language health networks, through the Société Santé en français, are facing serious challenges in terms of their funding and their effectiveness. What Nicole and Jean-Marc had to say earlier is quite relevant, given that the Réseau franco-santé du sud de l'Ontario covers an enormous territory. This complicates matters when one wants to develop priorities at a local level because decisions will soon be made, in Ontario, by the LHINs, the Local Health Integration Networks, which make up the regional decision tables.

This lack of resources spread over a very vast territory presents serious challenges for implementing health language services in French. We would like the government to focus on this issue.

Mr. David Laliberté: Our brief outlines some of the legal issues. I will simply mention the Court Challenges Program which I am sure you are familiar with. This is an issue that the Centre francophone de Toronto is very concerned about. We have a legal aid clinic that attempts to represent the interests of the franco-Torontonian community. This community needs this program. Therefore, we are calling on the federal government to reconsider its decision to end its funding.

There is another important issue. As I mentioned, our clientele is mainly made up of immigrants. Our legal aid clinic offers services related to immigration and refugee status. We have noted a significant deterioration in the French language services provided by the Immigration and Refugee Board in Toronto. The Board has increasingly been referring those francophone clients who wish to obtain refugee status, to its Montreal office. Therefore, these individuals now have to attend their hearings via video-conferences.

We recently made an access to information request in order to determine how many members of the francophone community were being referred to the Board's Montreal office, compared to the

anglophone community and we noted a huge discrepancy. We believe that this seriously harms the refugee status claims process. Therefore, we are asking the federal government to consider this situation, with a view to restricting the amount of video-conferencing imposed on these very vulnerable people in Canada. It is also our intention to lay a complaint with the Official Languages Commission over the next few days. I simply wanted to mention this to you.

• (0925)

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I would like to now address some priority issues related to the federal government's funding mechanisms as they relate to settlement and employment support services.

As you know, these agreements are entered into on an annual basis between the federal government, the departments and the agencies. Contrary to the agreements that the centre has reached with other funding services, more specifically at the provincial level, the funding agreements with the federal government are not true accountability agreements because the federal government's commitment is only that of contributor. They do not give the agencies a clear mandate to provide a service on behalf of the federal government. This raises significant legal issue for the members of the boards of directors.

Second, the process for transferring federal funds to community agencies is very costly because it involves contributions and funding transfers optional on reimbursement. The provincial government, on the other hand, simply uses an allocation method and conducts an annual audit. The problems we are describing to you may be rather practical type problems but they make the life of organizations in francophone minority communities very difficult. These funding agreements are very cumbersome to manage and the same types of complaints have been expressed by many other groups.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You can tell us more during the question and answer period.

We will now move on to the Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario. Ms. Jomphe-LeClaire, you have the floor.

Mrs. Marcelle Jomphe-LeClaire (Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario): Good morning.

My name is Marcelle Jomphe-LeClaire and for the past three years I have been the President for the South-Western region of the Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario. I am also the Secretary and Treasurer of the provincial board. My region extends from Oshawa to Windsor, and to Penetanguishene in the north.

At the provincial level, we are involved in projects involving strategies and partnerships. Member clubs are grouped in five major regions. In the east, it is the region of Ottawa, that is, the south-central and south-western areas. It is easy to become confused, but schools fall under the south-central area, whereas we are in the south-western part. We also have the central-northern and the upper-northern regions.

The federation supports coordination and training, and is involved in regional projects. It has 90 local clubs which represent approximately 8,000 members. FAFO encourages clubs to diversify their membership and to give them the opportunity to develop as people, but also to provide information in every sector to ensure their protection and that of the most disadvantaged.

This is the mandate of the federation: to acknowledge, promote and defend the rights of francophone seniors and retirees; to bring together people over the age of 50 so they can become more socially involved together; to identify the needs of seniors and retirees and to help them find the services they need so that governments, associations and private organizations can better target their services to this clientele. We need to provide communication, information, awareness and training services to our members in order to foster volunteering and openness towards others by creating alliances and partnerships.

Today, health care, justice, the fight against violence, a sense of belonging, committed volunteerism, employment retention, social commitment, communication and the dissemination of information are the organization's main concerns.

Since becoming a member of FAFO, I have realized that francophones, especially seniors, don't have it easy in Ontario. They have a lot of problems and must meet many challenges. Something a friend of mine said several years ago has stayed with me. This friend had moved to Oshawa, far away from her family. When she went to the hospital to give birth to her child, she did not understand English. The doctors and nurses were talking to her, but she did not understand. It was then, she told me, that it was not easy giving birth in English.

Some of our groups have been in this area for nearly 60 years. We celebrated the 50th anniversary of our club and the 40th anniversary of the parish. So we are dealing with many groups who have been around for a fairly long time. For those people who got together or who tried to learn English, things are going fairly well, but it really is difficult for those who cannot speak English. The health of seniors is in jeopardy when there are no services in French. One of the reasons or excuses we hear—it doesn't matter how you define it—is that we are located close to Toronto. It seems that many services are available in Toronto. But in our region, there are practically none.

I retired four years ago, and since then, I have tried to make progress in this field. I participated in information days for seniors living in Oshawa. Everything was done in French, which was greatly appreciated. But I think that there really is a lack of French services. We organize meetings precisely on health care services. We would really like to have some place where our members could go to be cared for in their own language, but that's difficult.

A person who has reached a certain age and who receives a medical prescription, and who is told by the doctor to take these pills twice a day does not always remember what instructions were given. This person might then take the medication three times a day or only once. This endangers people's health, and it's not a new phenomenon. The situation must be addressed. In Oshawa, I really feel that our municipal counsellors—in fact, we are in election mode—and members of Parliament want to help. These people truly want to discuss these matters with us to find a solution.

● (0930)

However, one problem remains. People still believe that francophones represent an ethnic group, as someone mentioned a little earlier.

Last year, I sat on a city hall committee. We were dealing with the WinterLights Celebrations. It involves people visiting various Canadian cities, and the one with the best Christmas decorations is chosen as the winner. Last year, Saint John, New Brunswick, won. At a meeting of this committee, I was asked how we celebrate Christmas, that is, francophones, as an ethnic group, at the Amicale du Centre Communautaire Francophone de la Région de Durham, in Oshawa.

City hall representatives should be more in touch with our reality. I told that we do not form an ethnic group. Canada has two official languages: French and English. The people around me were stunned.

A lot of work still has to be done to raise awareness, and we absolutely have to make sure that francophones have access to services in French if they want to live their lives fully.

I was born in Quebec but raised in Ontario. I learned English in school. This may have made life easier for me, because if I go some place where no one speaks French, I can easily express myself in English. However, it's not the same situation for other people. When I go to Montreal or some place where most people speak French, I feel at home, I feel I am in my element. I think that we need this. There's no doubt that francophones need to have access to services in French to live their lives fully.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

We will begin with the official opposition.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours, you have five minutes.

● (0935)

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

I would like to thank you all for being here this morning. It's very important that we travel across Canada to give you the opportunity to express yourselves.

I represent a riding in northern New Brunswick. The reality is a little different there because our province is officially bilingual, but it seems that the realities of day-to-day life are similar.

Ms. Jomphe-LeClaire, I just want to say something as an aside. I hope that you were not told in New Brunswick that you represent an ethnic group.

Mrs. Marcelle Jomphe-LeClaire: No, that was in Oshawa.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: That reassures me. I would have been in utter despair if that had happened in New Brunswick.

I have a question for each of you. I know that my government colleagues, the Conservatives, do not like to hear people still talk about the elimination of the Court Challenges Program. They made this very clear at our most recent meetings. They can't stand hearing francophone communities talk about that any more.

You may have turned to the Court Challenges Program in the past. If so, in what circumstances? It might be interesting to find out. The committee in charge of defending the Montfort Hospital used the program. The hospital is truly a torch bearer for the francophonie. Given the fact that the Court Challenges Program is no more, how will this affect your organizations and your communities? Will it be possible to ensure that services will still be available in French outside Quebec?

We share the same goal. If we want to continue to live in French and to make sure that our children and grandchildren continue to receive services in French, and to speak the language, we need to provide them with the tools to do this. Indeed, communities are not wealthy enough to defend themselves; they need help.

I would therefore like to know whether any of you have used this program in the past, and if so, in what circumstances. Further, does the elimination of this program threaten the French language in your various areas?

Mr. David Laliberté: I will give you the point of view of the Centre francophone de Toronto. Our legal clinic has been in operation for about three years. That's fairly recent. To my knowledge, in our short life we have not had to use the Court Challenges Program.

However, it is very easy to imagine situations in which we might need the program, given the fact that we have a legal aid clinic. These are simply theoretical examples, not facts. For instance, a new entrant to Canada, say a francophone from Africa or from any other place in the world where French is spoken, might feel he has been discriminated against within the process to determine whether or not he is a refugee. This person could turn to us and ask us to launch a legal challenge under section 15 of the Constitution or under any other provision of the Charter. In that type of situation, we would probably need to turn to the Court Challenges Program, if it still existed.

It probably won't, but if it did, we could easily turn to it in that type of situation.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Could you otherwise not launch a challenge?

Mr. David Laliberté: Yes, probably, for the simple reason that our legal aid clinic is funded by Legal Aid Ontario, which provides funding for specific cases.

Often constitutional challenges under the Charter have broader implications for society in general and not just on one individual in particular. It is therefore difficult to obtain funding for legal procedures.

There's no doubt that a program like the CCP could be very useful.

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

Would anyone else like to respond?

Mrs. Nicole Rauzon-Wright: I would like to speak to the issue of legal challenges.

Given our mandate, and following the many meetings we have had with francophone communities, I feel more and more that people

are extremely upset that they cannot have access to services in French. People are just as involved now as they were 20 years ago, when they were fighting for French schools.

A person or a community which cannot access French services would probably want to challenge the situation. For instance, if the Centre francophone de Toronto had to close its doors due to a lack of money, where could people turn to find the resources they would need to fight for these services?

It is important to consider everything that is happening within the francophonie, and more particularly what is happening in French.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

Ms. Barbot, you have the floor.

• (0940)

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Good morning. Thank you very much for being here today.

What has emerged from today's testimony is a rivalry of sorts which exists between the respect for the Official Languages Act and the presence of immigrants; this has not emerged from other testimony we have heard elsewhere. I would like to take a closer look at this matter.

Elsewhere, we were told that the francophone community was trying to attract French-speaking immigrants to increase its population and to ensure that activities were available to a greater number of people.

Ms. Rauzon, you said that, generally speaking, the French language is not really respected as an official language, and you made a connection with... I have lost my train of thought.

Mrs. Nicole Rauzon-Wright: I will clarify what I said. At a certain point, francophones began to settle throughout Ontario. When I talk about the francophonie, I am not referring to colour or race.

New immigrants in Ontario tend to settle in certain areas. For instance, Chinese immigrants will move to places where there are a lot of Chinese already, and as a result they can say that they represent 10% or 13% of the population. Consequently, regional organizations or public health organizations will translate their documents in Chinese or in Italian, but not in French.

We are not against immigration. I am in complete agreement with immigrants moving to Ontario. However, I want the federal government to impose on organizations the obligation to translate their documents first in French, and then in other languages, because these people also need access to services in their language.

But the opposite is happening today.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Thank you for that clarification.

Canada has two official languages. As far as I know, Chinese is not an official language and, from a constitutional point of view, it is unthinkable that it should become one anytime soon. Therefore, we must lobby in every part of Canada—and that is why we are here—so that francophones have access to services in their own language. I myself am an immigrant and it seems to me that it is up to immigrants to integrate with the help of services available to them when they arrive in Canada. In fact, immigrants must be aware of this even before coming to this country.

Further, I understand how hard it is for seniors, for instance, not to have access to French services in their own country. The same applies to young people. I may be bilingual and may not want to be served in French. I understand completely where you are coming from.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I would like to make a brief comment.

The Centre francophone de Toronto is a crossroads of services. In fact, Toronto is the city which each year receives a significant proportion of new entrants to Canada, as well as a significant number of new francophone entrants. In that situation, the Centre francophone de Toronto becomes the gateway to the country.

Our approach at the centre is based on case management. We have an internal reference process which is very structured, and which helps new entrants so that they do not have to look for the services they need in French. It is the people who work at the centre who find the services and help new immigrants to access integrated services because they desperately need them right away.

In the first five years after arriving in Canada, new immigrants desperately need health care services, social services and often also legal services. With staff that comes from 25 different countries, we do our best to help new immigrants access the services with our multi-disciplinary team.

That is probably the secret of our success. Since we are in a minority situation, it has really helped to have these multi-disciplinary centres throughout the country. We have adapted particularly well to the situation in order to serve newly arrived immigrants who have many significant and urgent needs which need to be addressed.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You only have 45 seconds left. Mr. Boisvenue would like to speak.

● (0945)

Mr. Jean-Marc Boisvenue: I would like to reiterate that in southern Ontario, immigrants whose language of instruction is French are an integral part of our community; they are our partners.

I said a little earlier that eastern and northern Ontario were different. New entrants do not only go to Toronto; they also go to London, Windsor, Hamilton and Welland. In eastern Ontario, it seems that new entrants had chosen the Ottawa area, but they are also settling farther afield.

Our challenge does not have to do with “immigrants” per se. The challenge is that, for instance, you could go to the London Health Sciences Centre, or to the North York Hospital, and find publications in four or five different languages, but not in French. That is the challenge we are facing.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Good morning. I would like to thank you for your presentations. As was said at the beginning, we form a team of members from every party who has come to meet with you and to listen to you.

I think I heard something negative about the CCP. But that is not the case. We are here to listen to you and to hear what you have to say. That is important for us. You are completely free to talk about your successes, your challenges or your concerns.

I would like to congratulate you because your presentations have helped me better understand your specific needs and what you are trying to achieve in southern Ontario. Thank you for that. Well done.

My question is for the person in charge of the Centre francophone de Toronto. I read your letter. I like what you do and I like your approach. I would like to know whether it would be possible for you to replicate your model elsewhere, because it seems to be working. You provide a great many services in your region. Is it possible to have other such centres in southern Ontario?

Mrs. Nicole Rauzon-Wright: I can answer that question. Two weeks ago, in a small town, called Midland, in northern Simcoe county, I took part in a consultation meeting with the provincial government to set up a community health centre.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux That is wonderful!

Mrs. Nicole Rauzon-Wright: Community health centres go a long way toward addressing the needs of francophones. They are not the whole answer, since if you are in hospital for open heart surgery and no one can speak to you in French, you will still have a problem. However, health centres meet many needs for francophones.

It is always a question of funding and available staff. Moreover, our anglophone partners still have to realize that if francophones were served in their own language, it would free up the English-speaking system. Francophones who go somewhere and hope to receive service in French often go back two or three times because they are never clear about the answers they have been given.

I can tell you that the network had to make 6,000 phone calls to find 275 pharmacists who could speak French in Ontario. So that gives you an idea of how much work we need to do to be able to help our communities.

So it is always a question of funding and of having the staff we need to make these centres run. We are also aware that we will not have all the advantages in southern Ontario that people have in Toronto. However, we are prepared to start with a 100% guarantee of bilingual services, that is, having anglophones served in English and francophones in French. But there has to be a guarantee.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: That is important for us. We created a \$64 million, four-year program to improve services to francophones in minority language communities and invested \$120 million extra in community associations that provide services specifically...

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Did you want to say something, Mr. Pelletier?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Go ahead, please.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: If I may, over the past few years, the Centre francophone de Toronto has been called on to make presentations not only in a number of regions of Ontario, but in other regions of Canada, to describe the integrated model of coordinated services provided by the Centre francophone de Toronto as a service approach to facilitate access, particularly for minority communities.

We mentioned the five principles that guide our organization and our service structure. We obviously believe that these principles, if they were embodied in the funding agreements between the federal and provincial governments and between federal sponsors, the departments and service agencies, would have a fundamental impact. We apply these principles at the Centre francophone de Toronto and, as a result, our services meet the needs of the community effectively and efficiently.

I am not saying that this comes without challenges. When we need to transfer or share information at the centre, for example, when confidential information needs to be shared with a doctor about a lawyer's client, it is not an easy process, even though our aim is to serve our clients well. There are a number of sources of consent that must be obtained, but these are operating challenges that have to be met so that we can really target our clients' needs. These are lessons that we have learned, working in a minority environment, and the Centre francophone de Toronto gains experience in this area every day, which we would be pleased to share with other regions of Ontario and also of Canada.

The Centre francophone de Toronto is not a community health centre. Once again, I want everyone to be aware of that. We are very much a multiservice centre that offers legal services, settlement and employment services. We also sponsor cultural activities; in fact, we hosted Pierre Lapointe three weeks ago. So that gives you an idea of the range of services that we offer to serve the francophone community with a good range of complementary services.

• (0950)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

As I said to the other groups, I am going to put on my usual hat as the committee member now and ask some questions.

I looked through your document, and you say that you offer a range of services and one of these, I see, deals with early childhood.

What can you recommend for that age group? What problems arise and what recommendations could you make to the federal government?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: Thank you very much for that question.

One of the aspects that we did not have time to touch on in our presentation is this issue of early childhood services. The Centre francophone de Toronto is an early childhood development centre: we offer specialized services on an individual basis in the area of early childhood development and children's mental health, and we have a centre for parents. Our early childhood development centre is recognized by the provincial government, and we are a partner in the Head Starts Strategy, which is a major provincial initiative, which was supported by the federal government until recently, through the approach of universal day care.

In minority communities—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Excuse me. You said that the initiative was supported until recently—

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: The federal government has stepped back significantly from funding early childhood services.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): What are you referring to?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: To the universal child care plan, for example. That issue is important for French-language minority communities, since language acquisition happens to a large extent at the preschool level. At the Centre francophone de Toronto, we realized that we needed to step in day cares and provide specialized services in French. There are about a dozen francophone day cares in the Toronto region. So we work with those agencies by providing specialized help when they are handling problems with French-speaking children, who sometimes have development problems.

To get back to what I was saying about the Head Starts strategy, we were expecting to see a very substantial increase in the number of francophone day care spaces as part of the universal plan. That has not yet happened, and we would really like to see the federal government resume a leadership role in funding early childhood development programs, since those programs are crucial for francophones living in minority communities, particularly for new immigrants.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): But the government is saying that it is providing families with \$100 a month for each child under the age of six and that it has created day care spaces. This does not seem to be the case where you are concerned, since you are saying that you have not received anything.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: We received some funding, but there are major gaps. The change in the federal government's approach has had a major impact on francophone communities.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Was that funding already in place? If so, did it stay at the same level?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: The Head Starts Strategy, which is a provincial initiative, had to be largely suspended for subsequent years. Most of the new subsidized day care spaces under the universal program have had to be suspended.

• (0955)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You said that some health institutions did not even have any brochures or documentation in French. Would you recommend that the federal government fund the translation of this type of documentation as part of its action plan?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: We need to avoid putting the spotlight on this whole issue of the translation of documentation. It is important to translate brochures and distribute the information, but the heart of the problem is the lack of qualified service providers that can offer as broad a range of services as possible.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): But they should at least have their documents translated into French. I would like to hear from Ms. Rauzon-Wright about your needs in this area.

Mrs. Nicole Rauzon-Wright: We know that the federal government will allocate funds for health promotion. The funding will be sent to a group that will distribute it or to a public health agency. The problem is that the funding does not come with any obligation to provide services in both official languages.

When major public health programs are established, we have to wait for three years for the services to be translated into French. Then it is too late to serve francophones. Moreover, translating these services into French is not enough to meet the needs of the various francophone communities, which are dealing with problems that the anglophone communities are not facing. A small francophone school in a village or a small community may not be large enough to obtain the services.

I recommend that the federal government tie its funding to the obligation to serve francophones in French.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

Mr. D'Amours.

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

Before asking my questions, I want to come back to what my Conservative colleague said about the Court Challenges Program.

I completely agree that we are here to listen to you. Were you listened to and consulted before the Court Challenges Program was cut? That would have given you an opportunity to make your views known and explain how important it was to keep that program.

You represent more than 1,000 or 2,000 people: you represent the majority of francophones in Ontario. Were you consulted? Were you listened to? Answer yes or no so that I can move to another issue.

Mrs. Nicole Rauzon-Wright: No, we were not consulted.

Mr. David Laliberté: No, we were not consulted. However, I would like to point out that the CCP is an important program and should be reinstated, as my colleague Jean-Gilles said earlier.

The most important aspect of French-language service is the services provided by people. It is very important to have brochures in French and programs such as the Court Challenges Program, but what francophones really need is to have more high-quality services available in Toronto.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Laliberté, to have more services when there is no guarantee that you will be able to advocate to obtain those services?

Mr. David Laliberté: No, I—

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: If I may, I would like to ask Ms. Jomphe-LeClaire a question.

Ms. Jomphe-LeClaire, you represent seniors. For francophones and francophone seniors, literacy is an on-going challenge. It is not an issue that is unique to seniors, but it still concerns them. Moreover, seniors are the country's main source of volunteers. Francophones are no exception to that rule, since they give even more of their time to their communities and their organizations.

Are you concerned about the cuts to literacy programs totalling \$18 million? I know that they are trying to justify that decision by saying that they are investing \$80 million. I have been hearing them say that for the past week.

Are you concerned that your members cannot easily understand... Let us take the example of prescription drugs. If a francophone in your community goes to the hospital and a doctor prescribes medication, how can he take care of himself if he has difficulty reading the instructions?

• (1000)

Mrs. Marcelle Jomphe-LeClaire: A person in that situation would definitely not be able to take care of himself properly. That is why francophone seniors are in poorer health than their anglophone counterparts. Studies have shown that to be the case. Many seniors cannot read or read with great difficulty. Maybe they can read a little bit in French, but not in English. So those cuts will certainly affect the health and lives of seniors.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: They are already being affected.

Mrs. Marcelle Jomphe-LeClaire: Yes.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: So these cuts will affect them even more.

Mrs. Marcelle Jomphe-LeClaire: That is right.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: These people are being left in much distress; the risk is already there.

Mrs. Marcelle Jomphe-LeClaire: Yes, definitely.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Chairman, do I still have some time left?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You have one minute left.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Let us talk about the Summer Career Placement Program and the official languages implications.

In your various organizations and networks, do you need to use the Summer Career Placement Program? We want our young people to stay in the regions and speak their mother tongue. That federal government program enabled young people to stay in their regions and gave them the tools they need to move ahead.

Do you not feel that it is dangerous, for our francophone communities outside Quebec, to cut 50% of the funding for such a program? I see this as a major problem for francophone communities in our area. It is already difficult to keep young people in our regions, so it will certainly not be any easier in the future.

I would like to know whether this kind of program provides tools and assistance to young people.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I speak about two aspects. The first is the availability of francophone work places for young people who want to start their careers or work in a French-speaking environment. In minority communities, it is very difficult to find such work places for young people. There are organizations that can do that. The Centre francophone de Toronto is well placed because there are a number of contact points with these young people. Those are opportunities that we can offer.

The other aspect is counselling for career development and reintegration into the labour market. Those services are funded by Service Canada and should be offered in French, since those who need the services sometimes have problems relating to their knowledge of English.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Ms. Boucher, it is your turn.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Thank you for having come here to meet with us. I find it very interesting that, as a government, we are here to take notes and find out what you need. You are at the very core of the francophone community in Toronto. It is good for us to understand things and see them from a different perspective.

My first question is for Jean-Gilles Pelletier.

What is your greatest challenge right now in your community? I would also like to know what you consider your greatest achievement. How did you succeed in that achievement? If you had any approaches to recommend to the government, what would they be?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I would like to thank you for providing us with this golden opportunity to talk to you not only about our biggest challenges, but also about our greatest successes. I will start with the success stories, since it is easier for me to do so.

As it turns out, our greatest success is our integrated services model. I think it has taught us a lesson and we are going to try in extending it as much as possible to the entire country. It might actually have a domino effect. We discussed this, I have talked about a lot today, and David also referred to it. It is not easy implementing such a model. I refer to this as a success story, and that is true. But it is also a huge challenge, as it is not easy setting up a centre that relies on 13 different backers and provides 37 separate programs, each and everyone of which requires its own brand of bookkeeping.

When it comes to accountability, our centre enjoys the support of federal, provincial and municipal backers, provincial foundations, and so on and so forth. This all requires a very complicated operations management process. This is a huge challenge which we face on a weekly basis. It is no easy task but we step up to the plate with good old fashion hard work. We think it is important for the clients to have that kind of access to integrated services.

Our greatest challenge is keeping the pieces of the puzzle intact, making sure we are able to serve and accommodate people in an appropriate setting, in other words, in adequate premises. In our brief, we refer to the maison de la francophonie. The Franco-torontonians community is looking at this issue right now. Would such a facility be useful? Would it meet needs in terms of access to integrated multi-disciplinary services? Would it be feasible to set up such a facility? Do we have enough money to set up a maison de la francophonie?

Such facilities exist in several Canadian cities, but not in Toronto. Steps are now being taken to change this. We need to have a better understanding of the issues faced by the Franco-torontonian community in order to assess their needs. And in order to meet these needs, there will come a time when we will be knocking on the federal government's door.

•(1005)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you very much.

Do I have any time left?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You have a minute and a half left.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I would like to ask Ms. Rauzon-Wright the same question, if I may.

Where do you live? What is your community's greatest challenge? What is its greatest achievement? Perhaps you are able to give us some potential solutions for the future.

Mrs. Nicole Rauzon-Wright: I would like to clarify something. The network's coverage is from Penetanguishene to Toronto and from Peterborough to Windsor. Jean-Gilles would have a job for life if he decided to go to all these communities and try and get community centres built. The problem is that nobody wants to travel 75 kilometres in order to get information only to have to turn around and come all the way back. So, we really need to multiply and set up similar centres in our communities.

When it comes to laying the ground work, our greatest achievement, in my opinion, was making federal and provincial politicians aware that there are in fact Francophones outside Quebec, that we form a vibrant community and that we will continue to fight in order to get health care services in French.

I moved to Ontario 25 years ago; at that time, schools were a big problem. We were sent off to the schools the anglophones were not interested in. Students with problems were taught in the broiler room. I am not making this up: there really was a table in the boiler room, and that is where the children were taught. So, we really have come a long way in this regard since the French-language Services Act was passed in Ontario 20 years ago. We are now at the stage where time has come to deal with the health care issue. We sit back and watch astronomical sums of money being spent on health care. We need to make sure that some of this money flows down to francophones.

So that was our greatest achievement, and our biggest challenge is staying the course.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Ms. Barbot, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Thank you.

I listened to everything you said and what strikes me in particular is the fact that francophone communities outside Quebec should not be immigrants in their own country. The lack of services leads me to believe that people do not have access to what is rightfully theirs. Mr. Graham Fraser, the new Official Languages Commissioner, has the advantage of being familiar with the situations of both communities because he is an anglophone and has lived in Quebec. You will surely be pleased to learn that he defines governmental responsibility in terms of services, in other words, services which francophones living outside Quebec are entitled to and which are there for Quebec anglophones. They need to be able to live in an environment which respects them fully, in which they feel comfortable, in which they can completely be themselves, and in which they can go about their business in their own language.

This is not some psychedelic invention; it is enshrined in the Constitution. Governments need to take this fact into account and they must realize that they have a duty to act in that regard. We, in Quebec, and we, of the Bloc Québécois, are trying to build bridges. Of course, we are working on another national project, but it remains that we feel we have a responsibility and a connection with francophones outside Quebec. We would like to build a stronger sense of solidarity with them, but we also feel we have a duty towards francophones living outside Quebec.

Ms. Rauzon, the first letters of your name are *r*, *a*, and *u*. I have a cousin whom I am very close to. She is my husband's cousin, whose last name is Roson. But the first letters of her surname are *r* and *o*. She told me her father was originally from Ontario, but she does not know the other members of her family at all. There is no contact between the two sides and there are practically no Rozons living in Montreal any more. However, it is clear that there is a very real connection.

I will conclude by asking Mr. Pelletier a question about funding. Of course, funding is the cornerstone for all of your groups. Do you receive statutory funding? Are you recognized? You basically do the work of the government. Do you have to fight for funding all the time? Cutbacks are being made. Have you lost a third of your funding? What is the real situation?

•(1010)

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I can't talk about my real life—

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: No.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: ... I will talk about the life of the organization.

Provincial funding has become much more stable. There is a mechanism, if I can use that expression, because your question is very specific. The funding we receive from provincial departments comes in a form of grants. This type of funding is much more regular and the areas of responsibility contained in agreements are much more clear and specific, not only as far as the centre's responsibilities are concerned, but also the responsibilities of the funding organization, given the fact that it is asking the centre to carry out work on its behalf.

As for the federal government, it works in a completely different way. There are very few funding agreements by way of grants; the funding agreements are by way of contributions. This is a basic problem for several reasons.

First, the contribution agreements must be renewed every year. It is very rare that a contribution agreement is spread out over several years, and if it is, it would be for very specific projects, with a beginning and an end, after which the whole process would begin anew.

Second, let's talk about the funding process. It involves transfers based on refunds. This complicates things: there is a lot of paper work and organizations have to deal with a lot of red tape, much more so at the federal than at the provincial level, in fact, the paper burden, in my opinion, is four or five times heavier with the federal government. This is scandalous. There is no doubt that the federal government imposes accountability requirements when it transfers money to agencies. That is understandable, but the provincial

government has managed to establish rules which are more flexible and which are also adapted to the size and the capacity of smaller community agencies.

I would like to add a few words on that subject. I have high expectations of a group of experts which was given the mandate to review and make recommendations on the implementation of Treasury Board's draft policy on transfer payments. This group was created by the federal government, for which it should be congratulated. It is chaired by Frances Lankin, who is the president of the United Way in Toronto. I had the opportunity to take part in consultations with Frances Lankin to help her better understand the impact these types of transfers have on agencies, and in particular francophone agencies in Toronto. Several of the points I raised in my presentation today were points I addressed during my presentation to Frances Lankin. I would really like this committee to make recommendations which will then be implemented by the various federal government departments; that would make life much easier for us. I am not saying that accountability should be removed; I am just saying that manageable accountability measures should be imposed on agencies, and everyone should agree on the objectives, but we should have tools which are easier to manage to help us measure outcomes.

Thank you for your question.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Good morning.

I would like to begin by thanking you for being here today. I listened closely to what you had to say. I am a new member of Parliament since I am a Conservative from Quebec. It has been said that our kind is a mystery.

I am pleased that you are here today. For the first time in 25 years, as our chairman said, we are visiting you. Whether decisions are taken or not, the fact remains that we came to see you. I think this is a sign of respect towards minority francophone communities. You have shared some of your problems with us and we have listened. That is why we are here. Whether what you say about the government is positive or negative is not the point. What matters, however, is that we establish a relationship.

We visited Newfoundland and Moncton, among other places, and one issue in particular caught my attention. The population is aging everywhere, in Quebec and elsewhere. Medical care therefore becomes extremely important. People have told us that it is hard to keep French speaking staff. It is not enough to speak about this problem: we have to make sure that the services are available.

Which leads me to my next question. We need to be realistic and not create problems where there are none. We have to make sure that things work. Your physicians are paid much more than those in Quebec. How do you retain your French speaking doctors?

That seems to be a problem for you. The French speaking population is growing old, in my province and yours as well. This issue will become urgent soon. Have you already considered a range of solutions or have you begun to apply some of them?

Mr. Pelletier or Mr. Boisvenue may respond.

•(1015)

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: David would like to say a few words.

Mr. David Laliberté: I will let Jean-Gilles speak in a few moments so he can answer your question about physicians.

As far as federal government funding is concerned, we are asking that several issues be improved. However, I want to insist on the fact that the federal government is a very important partner, or rather an essential partner, for the Centre francophone de Toronto.

Of course, problems do crop up, but our federal partner has helped us a great deal and has always supported us. I do not want this discussion to end on an entirely negative note, since there are many positive aspects to this story. In fact, we have just received an increase in funding for our citizenship and immigration activities. We really appreciated that. I think that the money will help the francophone population in Toronto to grow.

Of course, as in any relationship between two people or two entities, there is room for improvement. That is why we are here today. I also hope that you will take the list we have attached to our document in that spirit.

I will now let Jean-Gilles say a few words.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: Thank you. That was an excellent clarification, David. Again, I must say that the funding we receive from the federal government for official languages is crucial for our organization, as well as for the francophones who benefit from our services.

Mr. Petit, you asked how it was possible for us to retain bilingual staff in a minority environment. There are three possible answers. I am sure that Jean-Marc and Nicole would also like to speak to that.

In a minority francophone environment, professionals must be paid well. Francophones have to be trained in French in Ontario. However, I have to say in all honesty that, at the centre, some of our professionals are Francophiles who speak excellent French. They did their postsecondary studies in French and have devoted themselves to the francophone cause. That's terrific. So in that regard, we can congratulate the federal government for having invested as much as it did in education in both official languages.

The third point is the most fundamental one, which is that you have to create a work environment which accommodates professionals. I am not only referring to the area of health care, but also to the areas of social services, early childhood education and interdisciplinary practice, all in French. It is very difficult to achieve this if you do not have a critical mass of stakeholders. Doctors, including those who work in Quebec's local community service centres, say that they make a lot less than their peers in the rest of the country, but that their working conditions are better. And that is why they stay in Quebec.

The same is true for doctors and professionals who work at the Centre francophone in Toronto. They have the opportunity to work in French in an interdisciplinary environment which promotes collaboration. They feel they get the support they need. They don't feel alone.

For anyone who works in isolation in their given field, be it law, psychology, medicine or any other area, the fact of working alone is very difficult. Working in a team can make all the difference.

•(1020)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you, Mr. Pelletier.

I would like to give Mr. Boisvenue a few moments to respond.

Mr. Jean-Marc Boisvenue: We are in a process of conducting a follow up of our study. We are determining who, in southern and central Ontario, speaks French and who is providing service in French. We have discovered many important surprises. For instance, 265 out of 1 500 drugstores provide services in French. We have to find and identify French speaking service providers and make them known to francophones. The same goes for dentists, orthodontists and others. We will cover all services, but that will take time.

Somebody asked whether there were successes, to which I can say yes. Société Santé en français is a huge success. Health Canada funded this organization, which has unable francophones to raise their profiles in various provinces. We have positioned ourselves in Ontario to play a key role with local health integration networks, which will look after the planning.

Société Santé en français is indeed a success. This organization is now operating at the local level. The work is ongoing, and it will go on for a very long time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Now I would like to use up my allotted time.

We heard comments about immigration and other things, but as far as I am concerned, I think that people who immigrate to Canada are no longer immigrants, they are Canadians. On the other hand, we must remember that Canada was founded by francophones and anglophones. They are the founding peoples. For this reason, the Official Languages Act recognizes that this country has two founding peoples. I think that we agree on this?

We have an Official Languages Act, but we nevertheless need a minister for official languages and a parliamentary committee that does follow-ups to ensure that the provisions of the Official Languages Act are followed. We know that the problems are mainly found within francophone minorities.

Would you agree with me in saying that the government has a basic responsibility? It must stop sitting between two chairs and it must provide us with tools. We must stop apologizing for having received money and overflowing with gratitude while saying that all is well. Things are not well. If they were, the lady who represents senior citizens would not have anything to complain about. She cannot get service in French in Oshawa although there are many francophones in that city. It is full of people from New Brunswick! The same thing is happening in Windsor and in St. Catharines, Ontario. Francophones are leaving New Brunswick to settle in your cities, but there are also francophones from your region that move to our region.

Without having to beg, would you tell the government that it must provide services to Ontario's francophone minority?

Mrs. Marcelle Jomphe-LeClaire: I would certainly tell it that I want the same services as the ones that anglophones get, but I want them in French. I do not want books that are translated from English to French; I want books that are adapted to the needs of francophones.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

Mr. David Laliberté: We agree on one basic principle: The francophone population must have access to services in its language. If you want to know whether francophones should have services comparable to those given to anglophones, our answer is yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): All right, but what is the federal government's responsibility in this matter?

Mr. David Laliberté: This cannot be done over night, but the government must try to promote—

• (1025)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): I know that this is a big challenge, but francophones have been in Canada for 402 years. The 400th anniversary was celebrated two years ago. We were here first; do you remember?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I would like to follow up on what David just said.

The federal government does not want to invest in important matters over which it has no jurisdiction, such as health. But there are many other fields. However, the federal government can reach agreements with a province in order to promote the development of its French-language minorities. Side deals have been concluded for decades.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Mr. Pelletier, several persons are recommending five principles regarding the federal funding of health care. Should we add a sixth principle stating that federal health care funding is conditional on offering services in Canada's both official languages?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: This is a point that Nicole and Jean-Marc stressed earlier, namely that funds should be granted conditionally. Of course, we entirely agree with this approach, even though there are not millions of ways to make this work in sectors that are strictly under provincial jurisdiction. Conditions can be included in agreements, but ultimately, funds are needed to get the services off the ground.

Mrs. Nicole Rauzon-Wright: I would like the federal government to remember the following statement that almost made me lose control of my car on highway 400. It was made by Mr. Graham Fraser, the Official Languages Commissioner. He said that it is high time for Canadians to realize that French is not a foreign language but that it is the language of our country.

If we all followed this principle, there would not be any more problems. French is the language of our country; and consequently, any funds granted by the federal government must be accompanied with the obligation to provide services in both of Canada's official languages.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to sincerely thank our witnesses. We are going to carry on with our work. If you want to stay here as observers, you are welcome.

The committee meeting is adjourned for five minutes.

- _____ (Pause) _____
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- (1035)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Good morning. Welcome to our committee.

[*English*]

I'd like to welcome you here.

[*Translation*]

Welcome to the Standing Committee of Official Languages. This parliamentary committee has been in existence for the last 25 years, and this is the first time that it is criss—crossing the country to meet people on the ground.

Our tour began on Monday in St. John's, Newfoundland; on Tuesday, we travelled to Moncton; and yesterday we were in Sherbrooke. Today we are in Toronto and tomorrow we will be in Sudbury.

Our tour will continue on in the month of December, when we will be travelling to Vancouver, Edmonton, Regina and Manitoba.

The goal of this tour is to meet with people and collect their thoughts on the Official Languages Action Plan for 2003. We want to know how the action plan is serving minority populations in Canada, francophones outside Quebec, and anglophones inside Quebec. Yesterday in Sherbrooke, we met precisely with anglophones.

I'm happy to welcome you here this morning.

• (1040)

[*English*]

Canadian Parents for French in Ontario. It's something that is very important to us. We have met in Ottawa before, but maybe it's not the same group. You're very welcome.

We have here today Sylvie Boucher from the Conservative Party—the government—Pierre Lemieux, and Daniel Petit.

[*Translation*]

Opposition members sitting on this committee are: Jean-Claude D'Amours, from the Liberal Party, the official opposition; Ms. Vivian Barbot, from the Bloc Québécois; and myself Yvon Godin, member for Acadie—Bathurst, NDP.

This tour was not launched because there's a new government in power. It was this parliamentary committee that asked for authorization from Parliament to travel to the regions and talk to Canadians about the action plan.

I would ask that you begin by introducing yourselves as well as the group and association you represent. You each have eight minutes for your presentation.

We will begin by hearing from Canadian Parents for French.

[English]

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy (President, Canadian Parents for French (Ontario)): Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Monika Ferenczy, and I'm the president of Canadian Parents for French, for the Ontario branch. With me is Betty Gormley. She is our executive director for the Ontario branch.

We would like to speak to you this morning about French second language instruction in Ontario.

Ontario currently lags behind other provinces and territories in initiatives to enhance French second language, FSL, instruction in Ontario schools. This delay is due to the lack of FSL policy and human resources at the Ministry of Education and a lack of consistency in program offerings and program delivery models in school districts.

Minimal direction and leadership from the ministry has made it necessary for Canadian Parents for French (Ontario) to rely on its volunteer membership to address shortcomings at the local school board level in FSL program delivery. CPF volunteers monitor FSL program access and program quality issues with 60 English language school boards in Ontario.

Cuts to FSL programs and initiatives at the Ministry of Education over the last 15 years have mobilized volunteers to support local school programs by organizing enhancement activities, including performances by French artists, French summer day camps, French public speaking events, French story time at local municipal libraries, rendezvous events to meet other FSL or francophone students, and many other initiatives to promote second official language learning. CPF (Ontario) greatly appreciates funding for these opportunities through the Department of Canadian Heritage.

With the signing of the Canada-Ontario agreement on minority language and second official language instruction in 2005-06 to 2008-09, unprecedented progress was made toward support and revitalization of core French and French immersion programs for Ontario schools. There are currently 968,000 students enrolled in FSL programs in Ontario, and close to 115,000 are enrolled in French immersion.

As a result of the agreement, an action plan was created by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities that outlined activity strategies, expected outcomes, performance indicators, and required accountability measures in order to reach the goal outlined in the Canada-Ontario agreement. For the first time in over 15 years, school boards received two additional memoranda from the Ministry of Education on how funding provided through the agreement was to be used at the local level to enhance FSL programs and how school boards were to report back on FSL expenditures.

A follow-up study by CPF (Ontario) of how the funding was spent at each school board indicated that funds went mostly to basic expenditures for these programs, such as the purchase of material resources and teacher professional development. In many school boards, this funding represented the first ever dedicated funds to actually be spent on FSL programs. The current reporting framework of the Ministry of Education does not require school board financial

reports to reveal how annual second official language funding amounts are allocated or spent.

Currently, one individual is assigned at the Ministry of Education to the FSL portfolio, overseeing close to 970,000 students in 60 school boards across the huge geographical expanse of Ontario. Issues regarding equity of access to French immersion programs, such as through transportation or special education services, and program quality are inadequately addressed. With the additional responsibility of administering all aspects of the Ontario action plan, it is unrealistic to assume that Ontario will even approach the goal of Plan 2013 to achieve linguistic duality for the students in this province without additional human resources at the ministry level.

A key component of the Canada-Ontario agreement includes an ongoing consultative process to chart progress toward the goal of doubling the proportion of graduates functional in their second official language over the duration of the agreement. Currently, CPF (Ontario) is represented on the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities advisory committee on French language post-secondary education, whose mandate is to explore ways to improve student access to diverse programs of study in French after high school. CPF (Ontario) has requested the creation of an FSL advisory committee at the Ministry of Education, but one does not yet exist.

• (1045)

Regular communications, status reports, and recommendations continue to be forwarded to the attention of the Minister of Education. The issues presented—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): I want to ask you if it would be possible for you to go a little bit slower, because of the translation, if you don't mind, please.

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: Okay.

CPF (Ontario) has requested the creation of an FSL advisory committee at the Ministry of Education, but one does not yet exist. Regular communication, status reports, and recommendations continue to be forwarded to the attention of the Minister of Education.

The issues presented in these reports have not been addressed in the Ontario action plan, and no responses to recommendations have yet been received by our office. However, CPF (Ontario) continues to work with parents, teachers, school boards, other parent groups, the francophone community, and FSL researchers to further enhance FSL programs in Ontario schools in 2006-07. Our expanding partnerships will benefit FSL students and contribute to their success as they use their second official language.

Canadian Parents for French (Ontario) would like to put forward the following recommendations to the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Recommendation 1 is that the committee recommend that each provincial ministry of education create a department dedicated to the administration of French second language programs in the province to develop new policies and monitor FSL program access and implementation, and that this department be adequately staffed with personnel having French second language expertise in order to meet the objectives of the province's action plan.

Recommendation 2 is that the committee recommend that each provincial ministry of education establish a French second language advisory committee, comprising FSL education stakeholders, to adequately address the consultative process as articulated in the province's action plan and the Canada-Ontario agreement, a component that Canadian Parents for French (Ontario) deems necessary.

Recommendation 3 is that the committee recommend that each provincial ministry of education modify the reporting framework for school boards to include detailed and transparent accountability for all annual second official language/French second language funding in their annual financial reports, and that measures for compliance be clearly communicated to school boards as an expectation of the ministry.

Recommendation 4 is that the committee recommend the continued monitoring of provincial action plans to meet the objective of Plan 2013 and achieve linguistic duality for young Canadians, and that the committee recommend the renewal of federal-provincial agreements as an ongoing commitment of the Government of Canada towards linguistic duality.

Our final recommendation is that the committee recommend that Canadian Parents for French (Ontario) continue to receive funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage to further enhance opportunities created for students to learn and use their second official language in contexts outside of school programs.

Thank you. Merci.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you. I wish to remind the committee that we must adjourn at noon. We will leave at 1:30 p.m., and so I would like for everyone to be in the main lobby at 1:15 p.m.

You may check out of the hotel and settle the bill once we are finished at noon. Afterwards, you can return to this room for lunch.

I now hand the floor over to the Assistant Director of Glendon College, York University.

•(1050)

Mrs. Louise Lewin (Associate Principal, Glendon College - York University): Good morning.

My name is Louise Lewin and I am the Associate Principal responsible for student affairs at Glendon College.

First of all, I would like to point out to you that Glendon College is the bilingual liberal arts faculty of York University.

From its beginnings, in 1966, the college has had a special mission. Its first Principal, Escott Reid, was convinced that a new generation of bilingual men and women had to be educated and committed to the public affairs of the country.

From that time on, Glendon would offer a complete range of liberal arts programs, both in English and in French. Thanks to Mr. Reid's commitment and that of his successors, Glendon has remained faithful to this vision.

Glendon has a very particular responsibility with regard to the Franco-Ontarian minority. The southern region of Ontario is now home to almost one-third of all Franco-Ontarians, and it is the only area of the province where the number of francophones continues to increase.

In order for this community to continue to develop, it is essential that the new generation have access to French-language post-secondary studies. This is the challenge we face daily, as Glendon College is the only establishment providing French-language university education in Southern Ontario.

To this day, undergraduate students must complete courses in both official languages. This distinguishes the college from all the other liberal arts institutions in Canada.

All our disciplinary programs are bilingual, with the exception of French, English and Hispanic studies of course, because they involve the study of the language. Also, all full-time professors must be able to teach in both languages. It goes without saying that Glendon's support staff is also bilingual.

Today, the college has 87 tenured professors as well as 2,400 students. It offers 21 undergraduate programs, 8 certificate programs and masters programs in French studies and in translation.

The college has 2 residences, and 400 students, that is to say 20% of the student population lives on-campus.

The Frost library houses more than 65,000 French documents.

The college has just launched a School of Public Affairs at Glendon. This is the first school of public affairs in Canada that is both bilingual and dedicated to graduate studies. When it is fully functional, the school will offer a Master's degree in public and international affairs, professional development programs for senior management, stays for mid-career officials, and finally, a research centre on public and international affairs.

Taking its mission to heart, the college has become a bastion of the Ontario francophonie. Our teaching staff is very involved in the community and has developed a relationship with the Agence universitaire de la francophonie, the Consortium des universités de la francophonie ontarienne, the ACFO, the Théâtre français de Toronto, the Salon du livre de Toronto and many other organizations.

On the national scene, Glendon has welcomed the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association and the rally organized by Canadian Parents for French.

The French for the Future organization holds a one-day cross-country conference for which Glendon hosts the Toronto portion. Moreover, the campus will host a symposium on official bilingualism that will be held in the spring of 2007.

Glendon is home to a research chair on Quebec studies which is funded by the Quebec government, the only one of its kind in English Canada. The incumbents are well-known Québécois intellectuals such as Jean-Louis Roy, Bruno Ramirez, Daniel Salée and Simon Langlois.

•(1055)

The chair made it possible to hold annual symposiums on the Canadian and Quebec francophonie, on Quebec and americanization, on social changes in Quebec and on relations between Ontario and Quebec.

In the summer, Glendon welcomes hundred of young people from Quebec and English-speaking Canada, as part of the initiative Explore. This second language bursary program is funded by the government of Canada and is an opportunity for students to take intensive language training and immersion for five weeks.

Students come to Glendon from all over Canada and more than 50 other countries. They receive a Canadian education with international flavours. Our focus on bilingualism prepares our graduates to work in the public sector and abroad at all levels.

Life at Glendon is a fully bilingual experience. Services on campus are provided in both languages. As a result, the educational and cultural atmosphere is highly stimulating. We have a theatre, an art gallery and numerous other services for our students.

Francophone and anglophone students feel at home at Glendon. They share the same goal, which is to obtain solid liberal arts education and master both official languages and both cultures of our country. In the classrooms and during extracurricular activities on campus, francophones and anglophones from Canada and elsewhere meet in an atmosphere of understanding and respect in an environment that encourages the discovery of others and oneself.

I have three recommendations for the committee. Here is the first: in order to continue to create what we call the Centre for Excellence for Bilingual and Francophone Post-Secondary Studies in Southern Ontario, in order to be able to bring together institutions such as Boreal College, Glendon College, the New School of Public Affairs and, also, in order to be able to award teaching certificates to immersion and French as a second language teachers, we need more resources.

Glendon is a small university, and we are already operating at full capacity. In order to be able to take in more students and provide more services, we need more resources, we need new residences, we need to build buildings. I know that our principal is working on securing funding, but we also hope to obtain your assistance.

I have two other recommendations that relate directly to students. It is important—and the new commissioner on official languages said it very clearly—to help our students to study outside the country, outside their province. In order to do this, naturally, students need assistance particularly financial assistance. At the moment, our students receive minimal assistance and unfortunately at the university, we do not have the resources we need to help more students take part in this kind of project. So we would also like your help in this area.

The final recommendation concerns enrolling students from Quebec at the college. We recognize that there has been a significant drop in the number of Quebec students at Glendon and we want more Quebeckers, we want them there for a number of reasons including cultural reasons, social reasons and with regard to bilingualism. Changes to bursaries for Quebeckers studying outside

Quebec has unfortunately led to this significant drop in students. So we would like your assistance in order to try to get these students back and provide an opportunity for students from Quebec to come and study at Glendon.

On that note, I want to thank you and I am prepared to respond to any questions you may wish to ask.

•(1100)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

We will now hear from Mr. Raymond Th  berge, Director General of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

Mr. Raymond Th  berge (Director General, Council of Ministers of Education, Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My name is Raymond Th  berge and I am the director general of the Council of Ministers of Education. My presentation will be divided in four parts. First, I would like to give you an overview of —

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Four parts, eight minutes.

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: I will take less than eight minutes; the four parts are very short.

In the first part, I simply want to tell you about the CMEC. Then, I want to talk about the protocol on official languages in teaching, challenges of education in minority communities and, finally, give examples of projects or events taking place in the provinces where francophones in minority communities are trying to face these challenges.

First, the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada, commonly called CMEC is an intergovernmental body founded in 1967 by ministers of education to serve as a forum to discuss policy issues, a mechanism through which to undertake activities, projects, and initiatives in areas of mutual interest; a means by which to consult and cooperate with national education organizations and the federal government; and, finally, an instrument to represent the education interests of the provinces and territories internationally.

For example, CMEC contributes to the fulfilment of Canada's international treaty obligations such as the Lisbon Convention; provides a national clearing house and referral service to support the recognition and portability of educational and occupational qualifications; develops and reports on education indicators; sponsors research in education-related statistics; administers Canada's national official-languages programs—the second language bursary program and the official language monitor program—and, finally, consults and acts on a variety of issues in elementary, secondary and post-secondary education.

In fact, CMEC is a forum for Canada's ministers of Education, who are responsible for primary, secondary and post-secondary systems. On November 3, 2005, the Chair of the Council of Ministers of Education and the minister of Canadian Heritage signed the Protocol for agreements for minority-language education and second-language instruction [2005-2006 to 2008-2009].

In its Action Plan for official languages, released on March 12, 2003, the government of Canada identifies education as one of its priorities to provide new impetus to linguistic duality in the country. Through the protocol and related bilateral agreements, Heritage Canada is contributing to the funding committed by provincial governments for minority language and second-language teachers. All the provincial and territorial governments are using this funding to help put in place projects to meet the specific needs of students, teachers and francophone school boards in minority communities across Canada.

Francophone school boards in minority communities throughout the country are facing similar challenges: difficulty recruiting students which leads to relatively low percentages of a potential pool of students with rights at their schools; difficulty retaining students which is expressed by a significant drop in staff, particularly at the secondary school level; mandatory provincial and territorial curriculums that are not always sensitive to the identity and community requirements of francophone schools and minority communities; the scattered nature of the francophone population particularly in rural regions; and, finally the high proportion of students with rights from exogamous families or families where French is not the language most used at home.

In order to respond to these challenges, I would like to tell you about various initiatives undertaken by francophone school boards in minority communities. These are only a few examples and not all of the activities undertaken.

The Francophone School Board of British Columbia implemented a program called SOS Devoirs, which is a hot line where a student can call in they need to speak directly to a teacher. A chat site accompanied by a virtual library is also accessible 24 hours a day. The students also have an e-mail service where any questions on the curriculum can be answered. Furthermore, the Francophone School board of British Columbia continues the implementation of a plan to integrate 800 new portable iBOOK computers to facilitate the use of new technologies.

• (1105)

In Alberta, the *Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord* established an ad hoc committee on the condition of francophones to implement initiatives promoting French language and culture in its schools. The *Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord* is also looking into the feasibility of implementing a model for the management and programming of junior kindergarten classes. Produce a three-year plan to help integrate preschool age children into the francophone community schools.

The *Conseil scolaire du Sud de l'Alberta* is currently implementing the international baccalaureate program in all its schools.

In Alberta and in Manitoba, the Education departments are currently implementing humanities programs that include a francophone perspective. In Alberta, the Education Department is supporting the implementation of curricula by producing manuals that are specifically designed for teachers of such programs and this is being done in French and in English.

In Saskatchewan, all the schools in the *Division scolaire francophone* has access to a distance education program by using

videoconferences and multimedia tools over the Internet. In this way, the council is able to offer fair educational services to eligible persons in rural and urban areas.

In Ontario, since 2004, the Education Department adopted a language policy to ensure the vitality of that province's francophone community. This policy lays down guidelines that allow all the institutions involved in francophone education to ensure that French culture and language are transmitted and enhanced.

In Nova Scotia, within the framework of a pilot project, the *Conseil scolaire acadien provincial* is in charge of producing curricula. The council is currently planning the creation of working groups for devising, drafting or validating curricula. These documents will help teachers implement the programs.

The francophone school boards, the directorates in French education, departments of education and NGOs involved in francophone education are constantly seeking to identify possibilities of collaboration in view of formulating projects that will avoid redundancy in several key sectors.

In conclusion, the CMEC is currently working on two Canada-wide projects in the field of teaching French as a mother tongue in a minority environment. We are currently developing a tool for teaching oral communication; this project is led by Ontario. There is a second project, led by Prince Edward Island, which aims at producing a set of tools for teaching written communication.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you, Mr. Th  berge.

Now, Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours, you have five minutes to put your questions and hear the answers.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you all for having gone out of your way to testify before the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

[English]

First, I would like to thank the Canadian Parents for French for the dedication you've put into making sure your kids are able to speak and write in the other official language of this country.

I'm from New Brunswick, and I can tell you that I heard about your group in the last Parliament, when I was first elected. I was on this committee, and it was the first time I heard about the work you have done in the country.

I would like to say thank you very much.

[Translation]

Certainly, everyone is doing their share of the work to move Canada's bilingual issues ahead.

Ms. Lewin, you mentioned something that I cannot ignore. It involves giving our young people who want to study in French the opportunity of benefiting from other experiences. As you said, this means giving them an opportunity to travel to other provinces.

You also mentioned something else, namely, the possibility of travelling to other countries. If we want to give our youth a full opportunity to develop, we must give them as many different options as possible.

Since you opened the door on this issue, I would like to know what you think about the cuts amounting to more than \$11 million in the funding of training programs for our students abroad. Basically, does this not go against what you are saying? In fact, you are asking for help, but a few weeks ago we learned that the conservative government had slashed a little more than \$11 million from the funding of training courses for students abroad.

I thought that this was a marvellous experience for these young people! This allows them to acquire more learning for the benefit of our country as well as additional tools that may be more difficult to find here.

I would like to hear what you have to say about this. You are asking us for something, but basically, this is something that once was but is no more. What is your position regarding this?

Perhaps others could also answer this question.

• (1110)

Mrs. Louise Lewin: This is my position, and this is why I mentioned it. I live this experience with my students. In fact, I have just come back from visiting universities with which we have exchange programs, and I see our students blossom when they go to other universities, and in other provinces or in other countries. I feel that this is such a wonderful experience that I find it hard to accept that the government is cutting these programs and not, on the contrary, offering more opportunities to students.

My position is that this is very regrettable. Can we do something about it?

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: You know, Ms. Lewin, when the cuts were made, we were told that the government was trimming the fat. Is it acceptable to talk about trimming the fat, when what these programs are trying to do is to give our young people, our students more experience and more training so that we can build a better Canada?

Mrs. Louise Lewin: It is not acceptable. Is that what you are asking me? I find this very unacceptable.

People talk about globalization. As you say, there is a lot of talk about having our students go out and get the tools they need to help our country move forward, but they are not being given resources or help to do this. I find that unacceptable.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Ms. Ferency or Ms. Gormley, you want your children to be able to learn our country's other language. Do you think that the possibility of studying abroad in francophone countries would help your children achieve their potential in the Canada of the future?

Mrs. Monika Ferency: Yes, absolutely. We need to do that. Promoting or finding opportunities for our young people to go abroad in order to practice their French and understand its importance is something that we also do as parents.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: That means that when we look at the reality—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Your five minutes are up, Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Lemieux.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: May I have a second turn, Mr. Chairman?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): I'm sorry.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): It was my mistake.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Absolutely. Go ahead.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): I made a terrible mistake and I apologize from the bottom of my heart.

Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Thank you very much for appearing before us, ladies and gentlemen.

I had an opportunity to meet with Ms. Lewin at Glendon College. That is one model for promoting the two official languages. I prefer to use the term official language rather than second language or minority language. The latter term is a bit condescending. Moreover, the minority language is always French. Many people in francophone communities that we have heard from have said that they feel this way. Basically, it is clear that the status of French in Canada is not so much the result of a lack of knowledge but rather a lack of understanding that French is intrinsically part of Canada.

In Quebec, the Bloc Québécois favours a different solution to deal with that reality, which we have lived with and are still living with. But we are nonetheless very sensitive to what is happening elsewhere. I am particularly surprised to see that French is not the second language learned in public schools. I am very surprised in that, in Quebec, English is automatically the second language. Students sometimes do not learn to understand English well enough, but efforts are being made to correct that situation. Everyone agrees that people need to learn English as a second language. I have personally even taught English as a second language. The goal of having people learn English as well as possible is a crucial one.

I also want to talk about the need to give students and young professionals in Canada the opportunity to see what is happening in other places. Just the day before yesterday, at a press conference, people were talking about the fact that young professionals were losing the funding to go abroad. That is absolutely unacceptable. We are not in a world that is getting smaller: on the contrary. So we need to open the doors and give young people the opportunity to find out what is happening in other countries.

Globalization is also taking place here. So we must not prevent our young people from seeing other societies up close. It is not enough for them to simply say that they have met someone who is Chinese; they should go to China. My own son went to China and Japan to study. He also studied in Germany and did work in Austria. We need to make sure that our young people are able to understand the world in which we live, so that they can be the best possible ambassadors for Canada.

My comments are more general, I will admit, but I think that it is important to emphasize this point.

Mr. Th  berge, you talked about your organization and the fact that it is important to strengthen relationships with the linguistic minority. I think that we really need to avoid talking about linguistic minorities and talk instead about official languages. I am a feminist, and having been the President of the Quebec Federation of Women, I know that the minority label can sometimes be useful in moving things forward. However, the Official Languages Act does not talk about minorities but rather about the rights of francophones and the rights of two peoples with respect to the relations between them. Regardless of everything that is happening in Quebec, I think that we need to promote that idea.

I would like to hear your comments on that.

• (1115)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You have 1 minute and 30 seconds to respond.

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: I simply want to make a comment on the use of the expression "minority language." I am a francophone from Manitoba. I know very well what it means to live in a minority context. I think that we should use the term "official language," but in a minority context. English dominates in some contexts, but our use of language needs to evolve as changes and circumstances dictate.

I definitely have the impression that, with time, we will begin to use much more positive expressions than "minority language."

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: French is also compulsory for at least four years in the other provinces. Usually, it is between grade four and grade nine. This is the case in Ontario.

As regards the expression "official language", this is what is now used with school boards so that they can understand the value and relevance of this. We want them to understand that this language is not a second class language, but an official one. In that sense, we might say that school authorities that stop giving French training after grade nine in their regional schools are preventing their students from accessing this official language.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Mr. Lemieux.

• (1120)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Thank you for your presentations. As we said in the beginning, we are here as a team of members of Parliament from the different parties, ready to listen to you and to hear what you have to say about your successes and your challenges. Education is really important, and I am really glad that it is being discussed in detail.

[English]

We had a little exchange about the exchange program; that is important, but certainly what I have heard in our travels now through different communities is that here in Canada it's extremely important that we promote the teaching of official languages in our school systems for our children here at home. In other words, it's so important because it's more than just a language; it's also that the culture is there as well.

What I've heard from parents, what I've heard from teachers, and what I've heard from people who have presented to us is that it is

extremely important to have education here at home and to offer those services in French in official minority situations.

We can talk about the cut—that's fine—but we also need to be fair. We need to take note, for example, that in 2004-05 the government spent \$49 million in Ontario for official languages education—directly for that. Also, I think to be fair we need to mention that there is a new agreement in place, a four-year agreement of \$1 billion. That's an arrangement between the federal government and the provinces for official languages education. I think we need to put the whole picture in context.

I was happy to see that you remarked on that in your report. I think that \$1 billion program really kick-started a lot of initiatives at the provincial level right here in Ontario for you.

[Translation]

This is meant to help English-speaking children as well as French-speaking children.

However, I would like to find out something from the two associations present here. You would like to have more immersion, and this is good, because French is one of our official languages.

[English]

How do you respond to that, Mr. Th  berge? Do you work together? Is there a network? Is there mutual support for this initiative?

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: Yes. When we negotiated the protocol, it was a pan-Canadian initiative. It takes into consideration both the second language community and the French as a first language community. It's all part of the package. It's a multilateral agreement, and then there are bilateral agreements negotiated between the federal government and each province. It's up to the province to develop its own action plan with respect to first language instruction and second language instruction.

I would concur with your comments in that the protocol has been a tremendous boost to the teaching of official languages in Canada. I would hope that we would have a renewal of the protocol in the near future.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Very well. Thank you.

Have I any time left?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Yes, you still have one minute and a half.

[English]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: I'd also like to know what sort of networking occurs.

[Translation]

This morning, we heard that there are various organizations and that in southern Ontario, there is a Franco-Ontarian population of 175,000 persons.

Regarding education, although we are in Toronto now, how are you collaborating with the various groups and associations in southern Ontario, and not only here in Toronto?

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: First, we attend all the conferences. I attended a symposium on the *Aménagement linguistique* policy in Ottawa to find out exactly how the francophone community has planned its success.

With this knowledge, we would like to produce more strategies and plans of our own for promotion. We are also in touch with other parents' organizations that are working on improving the quality of education.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: There is a network, and you are exchanging information.

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: Yes, there is a network of parents' and teachers' organizations at the provincial and national levels. On the national level, our national office is in charge of the linking, and we are in charge of it on the provincial level.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: All right. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

[English]

As my colleague Mr. D'Amours said, Canadian Parents for French was in Ottawa, and I really, honestly, appreciate that you're here today.

One of the questions at that time that was brought to us—not a question, but a worry—was that there were not enough French immersion schools, there were not enough places. The problem we had in New Brunswick was that the parents wanted to send their kids to school, but there were no places.

If you look here at 115,770, it's pretty impressive, right? I feel it's impressive. Out of a million people, maybe it's not, but I still say that people have.... I have three daughters, and I'm so pleased that they have learned English. In some other countries they learn five and six languages, and here we fight over two. It's just unbelievable. It seems to be that our country needs something to fight about. In some countries it's religion, in some other countries it is colour, and here it is language.

What can the government do? What you have said, Ms. Ferenczy, is that money is coming in, but we don't really know where it's spent. We just heard the representative of the government, Mr. Lemieux, say that they're putting in \$1 billion, but what you said is that we don't know where the money goes.

Especially because education is a provincial jurisdiction, what would you recommend to the government if they give money through Official Languages, if they give money to provinces to do a certain task? Our country has two official languages, and the reason for that is that they are the two

• (1125)

[Translation]

founding nations. Thus, we recognized that both languages spoken by these two nations would be both official languages.

[English]

Now what do you recommend we put in our report?

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: What we would recommend is that there be some parameters for reporting measures that are specifically

data-driven so that there are statistics available to say what percentage of growth was achieved in enrollment figures for students in immersion in particular. In some school boards, there are buildings that are closed as schools, but the school boards will not open French immersion programs in those empty buildings, and parents line up at four o'clock in the morning to sign up their children for these programs. So there's a lack of access.

There is, we believe, adequate funding for French as a second language through the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario. However, that funding is not reaching its destination, and that is where we need to collaborate to have some tighter accountability measures at the local level so that it transfers to pupil places.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Yes, but then what I hear is that the problem is not the will of the people and Canadians; it is the will of the government to make sure you get it to them. If people line up at four o'clock in the morning, I think we should take into consideration that the will is there.

We're trying to make it seem as if people don't want to do it, but it's not true.

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: No, that's a perception that is not completely true for Ontario, because we know there is great public demand for French immersion and for quality programs, and we know that French immersion programs can grow in exponential numbers. However, that access is not available yet. If that access is made available, then there will be students, and there will be statistics to show the potential real growth.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Ms. Lewin, you said earlier that you would like to have more Quebecers come to study at your university.

Have you any reservations regarding Acadians?

Mrs. Louise Lewin: Of course not. I knew that this question was coming, because I emphasized Quebec and not the other provinces.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): We must not forget that we were the first to come here to Canada.

Mrs. Louise Lewin: It is a fact.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): We celebrated our anniversary two years ago, whereas Quebec will be celebrating its anniversary in 2008.

Mrs. Louise Lewin: I should explain myself. The reason why I emphasized Quebec is that the vast majority of students at the *Collège universitaire Glendon* come from Quebec. Other provinces are represented, but not in large numbers. We would surely like to see those numbers rise.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Perhaps there is not enough publicity.

Mrs. Louise Lewin: No. We have covered almost everything. I think that we have done all that we could.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): There are some agreements with Quebec, but not enough. Are there any agreements with New Brunswick? It must not be forgotten that it is the only official bilingual province in Canada.

Mrs. Louise Lewin: I cannot tell you exactly why there are fewer students, but I do think that it is also a matter of financial assistance. University tuition is more expensive in Ontario than it is in Quebec, for example. Does that stop students? That may be the case in the other provinces as well. If finances are an obstacle, we should ensure that this is no longer the case.

• (1130)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me another five minutes; this is most appreciated.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): For the questions and answers.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Ms. Ferenczy, you said earlier, when you were talking about your organization, Canadian Parents for French, that the development of your children is very important, as is the opportunity to gain experience in other countries. I wanted to make a comment at that point, but I did not have enough time. I understood that this is what you want, what you are hoping for, but that you were not consulted and then the cuts came. That's what this mean. Once again, we have come back to the same thing.

What really got me earlier, was the comment made by my conservative colleague who said that we would put an end to the development of our young people, that we would educate them here, in Canada. That is one thing. However, my understanding is that they were going to be educated in accordance with the conservative doctrine and that we would not give them the opportunity to gain experience elsewhere.

That is exactly what I understood by the comment that we would educate our young people as we saw fit and that we would ensure that they would not discover what is going on elsewhere. We see this in other countries, at present. Indeed, in some countries, there is an attempt to do a complete about face, whether this be with respect to women or young people. We are presented with philosophies of this nature and I just don't get it.

However, we, the francophones outside Quebec, are trying to develop as much as possible. I come from a rural region of New Brunswick. You can't get any more rural than that. It is said that we live in the boonies, and that's true. Nevertheless, we travel in order to discover the world, to discover the other provinces in the country, to discover other countries and we are proud about that. I do not understand why the government does not want the same thing for its children. I am stupefied because I just simply don't get it.

I do not know if you wish to make any comments. If so, you may.

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: First of all, it is also a matter of geography. For some of our families, it is not possible to travel to other countries. Moreover, we would like to build our exchange programs between Quebec, Ontario and the other provinces, because exchanges are more achievable since they are less costly. However, we have to really work within our systems, because we cannot double the number of graduates without increasing all of the programming.

In addition, knowing two languages is really a source of Canadian pride. It is up to the school boards to provide this opportunity. This opportunity must be made possible through measures and action plans in the provinces themselves, because in the classroom, it is really the ministerial structures that help us.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: I'm going to stop you. I agree with you entirely when you say that finances stop parents, so that you depend on the provinces. I fully agree with you on that.

Why have you been reduced to that? Because the federal government slashed \$11.2 million from this program and, as a result, the government is really going to ensure that students will no longer have an opportunity to gain experience elsewhere.

When we want to provide something, we shouldn't just give up and lament the fact that our programs have been slashed. No. We must not accept these cutbacks, because these programs encouraged the development of our young people. This is how I reacted to that and I will react like this my entire life. Let us not lament the fact that we lost because we are a minority or because it's difficult. No. Let us ask for more. It is our duty to do so, as Canadian citizens. I am, nevertheless, in favour of what you're saying.

I know that I don't have very much time, Mr. Chairman.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You have 40 seconds remaining...

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Ms. Lewin, I would like to touch on one point briefly.

You said that you have 65,000 French books. That is extraordinary for a university. At the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, on which I sit, we heard the other day a request for more French books in universities and colleges in order to ensure that students studying in French have their manuals in French.

Do you acknowledge that more assistance from the federal government is required in that regard?

• (1135)

Mrs. Louise Lewin: Absolutely. Yes, we always need more help. We have to make choices based on the money available to us. And while 65,000 books is an extraordinary number of works in French for such a small institution as ours, as you said, the fact remains that it is also a question of space. We cannot keep all of the documents that we would like to, even documents in French, because we don't have any more space. So we have to expand.

That goes back to my first recommendation: we need resources, etc. In expanding, we could also increase...

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

It is now Ms. Boucher's turn.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Good morning, everyone. I am pleased that you are here, today, sitting around this table. The committee is travelling in order to do some work and prepare a report which will be most interesting. It will be interesting for us, in the government, as we have heard all of your challenges as well as your criticisms. We understand what these challenges and criticisms are and we have taken note of them. We are here to work and, in particular, to find solutions for everyone.

As a francophone, I understand the situation very well. Since I come from Quebec, I don't have the problems facing French-language minority communities, but, having visited several communities, I do understand what these problems are very well.

That being said, you're all facing major challenges.

Ms. Lewin, I would like you to explain the biggest challenge you're facing at present, for your university and, as well, I would like you to give me some possible solutions that would help you with one of your biggest achievements, because that may help us.

Mrs. Louise Lewin: I'm sorry, you asked about the biggest challenge. What was the second question?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: What is your greatest success? Tell us how you achieved it, because this may give us ideas for upcoming projects. In fact, there will be other projects in the future and this may provide us with ideas and possible solutions.

Mrs. Louise Lewin: The biggest challenge is to make our students bilingual within our community called Glendon College. Approximately 20 per cent of our 2,400 students are francophones. The others are students who took core French or French immersion at school. We need to make them even more bilingual, and this could be done with additional resources.

Students need to be highly motivated, and we congratulate them for this undertaking. However, upon their arrival, they have to make decisions with regard to the grades that they will get or the challenges they will have to face. If they take courses in English and they are therefore required to do their work in English, they think that, ultimately, their grade may be lower and perhaps they may not achieve their objectives later. So, our challenge is to make our students more bilingual.

I want to come back to the exchange programs. These programs certainly may be one solution. Sending our students into a francophone environment, be it in another country or in another province, would be ideal. Everyone knows that. By immersing oneself in the culture and the language it takes less time to achieve one's goal.

We are trying to create this within the walls of Glendon College. Ms. Barbot, who was here, perhaps saw that kind of work we are doing. We are trying to create a community to provide them with this, but within a minority context. That is our biggest challenge, in my opinion.

The second question concerned our greatest success. At the risk of sounding a bit strange, our greatest success is continuing to exist with the same challenge. It is continuing to be there and, furthermore, not only our teachers, but also our directors, continue to share the same goal of turning students into bilingual citizens. This is an excellent achievement, because we are celebrating our 40th

anniversary this year. As a result, 40 years later, we are still facing the same challenge, and we are standing strong.

• (1140)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Do I still have a few minutes left?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You have two minutes left.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I want to ask the same question to the representatives of Canadian Parents for French.

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: Our greatest challenge is access to programs, at the local level, where people live and where kids go to school. For example, a school may be closed because, due to a lack of funding, it was impossible to implement an immersion program to improve French, so that students can have the opportunity to speak in French and communicate in their language during events, for example.

So, it is access to programs and the quality of these programs.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Thank you.

Ms. Ferenczy, in your presentation, you said there was a federal-provincial agreement to improve programs. You also said that the funds had been used primarily on basic program expenditures, particularly course materials and teacher-training materials. In my opinion, the Government of Ontario must also be contributing. So, I want to make sure I have understood correctly.

What are you doing to influence how this money is spent? This would be quite understandable.

Furthermore, I'm going to try to give an answer to Ms. Lewin. She talked about the fact that Quebec students were no longer enrolling in Glendon College. Obviously this comes down to economics; no one can deny it. It is much more expensive and much too expensive for the average student.

Also, in your academic programs, you put a great deal of emphasis on the social, economic and cultural aspects, but I haven't seen the political aspect. Yet, linguistic duality and the promotion of a second language are at the heart of the Canadian reality.

This is extremely important to Quebecers and, by the same token, there's a preference to teach students either in French or in English. Francophones have access to English universities, which I consider quite adequate, or they can go abroad. So it appears that there is a lack of interest. My children studied abroad; this was their choice. One of them studied English in Ontario but it was just for a summer.

If I have any time left, I'd like to know how your academic programs could be more attractive to some of our students, even considering the cost factor? Have you assessed this?

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: First, to answer your question, we need frameworks of responsibility in order to see exactly where the funds are being allocated and spent. Otherwise it is difficult for us to generate or create data bases to promote our work, because we are unable to determine the shortfalls in the system.

Mrs. Louise Lewin: With regard to our programs, I think that it's a bit difficult to know what attracts students. As such a small university, how could we create two new programs for just one group of students?

On the other hand, we have noted that the international studies program had attracted a number of students from Quebec. This seems to be a trendy program that attracts students to Glendon. So, we are trying to develop it further. It started off as a small program, and this year it became a department. So we are trying to use it to attract students.

The Quebec chair also allows us to talk about Ontario and Quebec and to open this area up to students. We are trying to attract as many students as possible during the conferences organized by the chair.

• (1145)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You have one minute left, Mrs. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Since I only have a minute left, I will let someone else such as Mr. Petit speak.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit: You are giving me a minute?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): No, you have five minutes.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Thank you. First off, I thank you for being here today.

As a member of Parliament I sit on the government side, this is my first term. It is the first time in 25 years that the committee has gone out to meet with official language communities. And it is an honour to have you here. Of course, you may have noticed that this is not unlike what happens in the House of Commons: there is criticism, there are allegations. We're used to it. All right? Don't be afraid, the Liberals are sitting on that side, but they are quite pleasant, really.

Ms. Ferenczy, you said something that troubles me a bit. You used a term which I know well: accountability. We Conservatives, unlike the Liberals across the way, get excited when we hear the word, we really do.

As a government, this is what we've done. We gave one minister, namely Ms. Verner, a number of responsibilities; she is the Minister for International Cooperation as well as the Minister for the Francophonie and Official Languages. That is certainly something new. It gives her title greater significance. When you refer to accountability is it because you would like to know what part of provincial grants come from the federal government? I would like you to explain what you mean. I took some notes, but I want to be sure that is what you're referring to. My question is for Ms. Ferenczy, who raised the issue.

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: Yes that is precisely it. It would be at the provincial, regional and even municipal levels, because school boards are linked by region.

Mr. Daniel Petit: So, some of the money comes from the federal government?

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: To the department.

Mr. Daniel Petit: But you are unable to identify that amount, is that correct?

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: It is granted to the department, and the department get the school boards the money. That is where it becomes difficult to follow, because the funds are then put in a global budget.

Mr. Daniel Petit: All right, I understand. So, in actual fact, you cannot follow the money and ensure accountability?

Mme Monika Ferenczy: That is correct.

Mr. Daniel Petit: All right. My other question is for Mr. Théberge.

You really intrigued me, Mr. Théberge, when you referred to a series of projects in British Columbia, Alberta and in Manitoba. I am quite well aware of what is going on in Alberta, my children study there, at the Collège Saint-Jean in Edmonton. I think everyone is aware of that establishment, attended by the francophone elite in Alberta.

Mr. Théberge, you read a document earlier on. I do not know if those were personal notes. Did you submit it to the committee?

Mr. Raymond Théberge: Yes.

Mr. Daniel Petit: All right, then I am sorry. I would have liked a copy of it. I would like you to explain to us a little bit about the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada. Being a new MP, I know very little about you. I would like to know who you deal with and how you operate.

Mr. Raymond Théberge: It is often my job to try to explain to people what we do. The Council of Ministers of Education of Canada is a corporation which was established in 1967 and brings together all Ministers of Education in Canada, from the primary, secondary and post-secondary levels. Unless I am mistaken, we currently have 19 Ministers of Education in Canada.

The CMEC manages a series of programs. It is responsible notably for administering official languages programs for the Department of Canadian Heritage, more specifically second language study grants and official language monitors programs.

We have groups that are responsible for research and statistics, we have a partnership with Statistics Canada called the Canadian Education Statistics Council. We are also responsible for primary and secondary level matters, including French teaching in minority environments. We develop tools, etc.

The role of our organization is to support the work of the Ministers of Education in Canada. Through the chair, we often hold meetings with the federal government, for instance on international activities or in the course of negotiating official language protocols. This program has been in existence here for almost 30 years.

So that is what we do. That being said, it is up to the provinces to manage their systems. It is up to them because it is a provincial area responsibility. We offer the ministers a forum, because education is a provincial area of responsibility in Canada.

• (1150)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Could I get my minute back?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): If you give it away, you lose it.

Do you have recommendations for us? There is French immersion, but what about follow-up? Because the problem is that sometimes young people go to school to learn, but afterwards there is no follow-up and no practice. Yet, that is what language is all about, is it not? For instance, if you want to become a welder, you have to practice. Otherwise, you will not make it. That is how it goes, even when it comes to language.

I left home at 16 to go live in northern Ontario. When people used to say to me that the rest room is clean, I thought they meant to say that the restaurant was clean, but through practice, people learn and they understand. Where I come from, for instance, francophones learn English in school, but that is not really where they learn it, because there is no follow-up.

What would you recommend, within the Framework of the Official Languages Action Plan, when it comes to the way money given to the provinces is used and the creation of a program to ensure follow-up and to give young people a chance to practice a second language?

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: We want to suggest that students, particularly those between the ages of 9 and 11, be offered the opportunity to explore and use French, at an age when they are beginning to think about their learning. For example, ideally speaking, if every 5th Grade student in Canada could come to Ottawa, see Parliament and hear people speaking in both official languages in the same city, it would be an extraordinary trip that would allow them to discover a community where people speak both languages.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): We used to have the Terry Fox Program. I remember it, because there were some members of Parliament who did not participate. Within this program, we would send five students from our riding to stay with another family. For example, a francophone student would go and spend the summer living with an anglophone family, and the child of the anglophone family would go spend the summer with the parents of the francophone student. It was a good program.

There were even some years where we invited 10 students. However, some people did not wish to participate because they found it was too complicated. I felt it was a very good program that gave our young people an opportunity.

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: We have some similar exchange programs, but there are some families that prefer not to host a child. There are also summer camps that children can go to. Another example is the Quebec program, that gives a good opportunity to a child that has all the necessary assets to be successful.

If there were programs for French as a second language, whereby students could receive a scholarship to pay for all the materials and that would provide all the necessary opportunity to support their motivation, regardless of the economic status of the family, we would see their success.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): I would like to come back to the issue of responsibility. It is true that education is a provincial area of responsibility. As far as the action plan and the extra funds to help communities are concerned, if I understand correctly—and I do not want to put words in your mouth—when the government negotiates with the provinces, you say that since the money to do something specific comes from elsewhere, you do not really want them to become involved in education at the provincial level, because it truly is a provincial area of responsibility. You would like there to be an agreement under which federal funding would not serve only to...

In one province—it was not Quebec—the federal government had given money for French-language education. We realized that the money had not been spent in the right area because no one had really said where it should be used. It was simply said that because it was not in their area of jurisdiction, the federal government should not have become involved. They were asking for money and expected to use it as they wished.

● (1155)

Mrs. Monika Ferenczy: The money must be specifically earmarked.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Thank you.

On that note, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, I would like to thank you. This meeting was important to us. It will allow us to draft a report that we will table in Parliament and that may influence the government in its decision-making.

I would like to thank you sincerely. It was an honour for us to be here in Toronto, to meet with groups from the region. This afternoon, we will be visiting the Centre francophone de Toronto. It will be very interesting. We do not simply hold meetings; we also visit establishments in order to see what is happening on the front lines. Tonight, we will leave for Sudbury, where we will be holding meetings tomorrow.

And so, I thank you once again. I wish you a good day and a good week.

The meeting is adjourned.

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